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OUT-MIGRATION FROM BIHAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Nandan Kumar¹ and R.B. Bhagat²

INTRODUCTION

The heavy flow of out-migrants from Bihar has always been a part of scholar's interest, as it became a metaphor of out-migration led by under-development and poverty. The violent reaction of the political class and host community to Bihari migrants has further accelerated the debate on different issues related to outmigration from the state. Bihari migrants are facing increasing hostility from political class but the ongoing policy of urban planning, which is flipped towards the richer section of urban residents and is also increasing difficulty to survival of poor migrants. In this scenario, it is important to understand the actual pattern of out-migration and its importance for the community of origin.

Migration is an intrinsic part of process of development. It illustrates a dynamic link between both area of origin and destination. Migration operates within the framework of social, cultural, economic, and institutional conditions at both the sending and receiving ends and it plays an important role to alter the conditions of the entire space within which this processes operate (de Haas, 2008). Migration is often rationalized as an outcome of asymmetry of development between area of origin and destination. However, there is complete disagreement regarding the outcome of migration at area of origin (de Haan, 2000). The developmentalist views argue that with flow of migration, counterflows of capital (remittances and investment) and knowledge are also generated to area of origin, which can be invested and are believed to subsequently stimulate development and modernization. Pessimist view believes that in the capitalist system, the process out-migrants from area of origin is a part of the larger process of draining away of resources from an underdeveloped region to developing region. The heaping of resources from periphery (underdeveloped region) to core (developing region), further accentuate in development of under-development at periphery (Hagen-Zanker 2008). The recent literatures on out-migration however don't rule out the relationship between core and periphery on entire development space, but it emphasize on the critical role of remittance in the process of development at periphery (McCdownell and de Haan 1997).

In this study, the volume, trend, pattern and causes of outmigration has been tried to explored. The amount of remittance is also assessed and its role to support the household has been examined. The main source of data for the present study is Census of India, 2001 and NSSO 64th Round, 2007. Census data is useful to understand the volume and stream of out-migration because it is based on complete enumeration. While, NSSO data give extensive information on causes of out-migration and remittance send back to the household.

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THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF OUT-MIGRATION FROM THE STATE

The scenario of development and poverty in Bihar make it as critical example of the peripheral region in the entire space of development. Entire state is considered as the pocket of chronic poverty. The backwardness of the state of Bihar is reflected in the lower agricultural output, skewed distribution of land and higher incidence of landlessness, higher dependency on agriculture and lack of industrialization and several socio-economic and institutional barriers. The stagnation in all sectors of economy in the past led to lower per capita income and higher incidence of poverty in the state. The lack of infrastructure, institutional barriers and poor governance in the state has developed a milieu of underdevelopment and the state is described as 'the state without hope'. This situation is considered as the leading factor of heavy out-migration from the state of Bihar (Sharma 1995, Sharma 2005).

The current phenomenon of labour migration from the state of Bihar can be traced back to colonial period. This region started to experience labour out-migration at the earliest. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the pattern of regional inequality and underdevelopment fostered in colonial period. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, when the British Raj stabilized, law and order and civil administration improved. In this period, some development in irrigation facility and improved trade due to improved communication networks (roads and railways), led some agricultural development and specialization in cropping pattern in the western tract of India, while the eastern region, where the population pressure was highest, couldn't experience such kind of development (Derbyshire, 1987). The *Zamindari System* of land settlement, in which the Zamindars were having the right to dismiss the rights of tenants in case of their incapability to pay high demands of rent, led to a much skewed distribution of land and a large proportion of landlessness among peasants. The commercialization of agriculture also increased without any increment of production, increased their misery further, which led them to migrate to the different parts of the country, particularly towards the eastern region of India and even foreign countries for their survival (Sharma, 2005). In the later half of the nineteenth century, an eastward trends of migration became well established, particularly migration from western part of Bihar to Bengal and Assam (Davis, 1951). The migration stream was dominated by lower caste and landless laborers, who were staying at bare subsistence level and ready to respond to the fair high wage gap between their native place and east. They found employment in the mills, factories, docks and coal mines, or on the roads and railways, or in harvesting the crops of other districts of West-Bengal. This migration was mostly seasonal, and improved communication through railways made it possible for them to migrate easily and come back for agricultural and other activities at their native place (Yang, 1979). The circular migration was critically important for agricultural laborers and marginal farmers of Bihar for their bare subsistence. When the peasants and laborers were not able to get enough from cultivation, this migration was playing an important complementary role to fulfill their minimum needs (de Haan, 2002).

The westward wave of labour migration from Bihar started in the decade of sixties, when the green revolution started in the north-western part of India, created an unprecedented demand of laborers in agriculture. Starting in the early

1970s with a small trickle to the rural areas of Punjab it soon took the form of a flood during the next one decade. Soon the influx of migrants spilled over to the neighbouring state of Haryana (Bremar, 1985). After the decade of eighties, labour demand saturated in the area of green revolution because of the changes in cropping pattern and mechanization of agriculture in green revolution areas. The recent move of labour migration from Bihar is the move towards big cities such as Delhi, Bombay, Surat, Kolkata, and Hyderabad etc (Karan, 2003). Some studies have reported that the volume of migration also increased drastically since then. Out-migration started from all the section of the state, cutting across the hierarchy of caste and class. The migrants who used to migrate to rural area for agricultural wages, used to move seasonally, however the recent urban-ward movement is more permanent in nature (Karan 2003, Singh *et al.* 2005). Laborers are involved in a variety of occupations like those of security guards, rickshaw pullers and collies, etc (Sharma, 2005). Migration is now viewed as finite stage of life-cycle of people of Bihar, as male member of household approach to a certain age, they send away to earn. The remittance is playing a critical role to support livelihood in the state (Dishingkar *et al.* 2006).

LEVEL AND TREND OF CURRENT OUT-MIGRATION FROM BIHAR

Table 1 shows the total number of out-migrants and their proportion share to the area of origin-by using the data of place of last residence of census 2001. The Table shows that the volume of out-migration from Bihar is very high. More than 5.2 million people from Bihar counted in other states of India, which is nearly 6.3 per cent of total population of the state in the same census year. In addition to that, a slightly higher volume of out-migrants (5.5 million) were captured by using the place of birth data. The Table shows that male population of Bihar is more out-migratory than female as male out-migrant comprise 7.1 per cent of total male population as against the 5.6 per cent of total female population, nevertheless the volume of female migration is also equally significant. The propensity of migration of urban population of Bihar is very high than rural population; out-migrants from urban area comprise 10.1 per cent of total urban population of the state, whereas out-migrants from rural area comprise merely 5.5 per cent of rural population of the state. But as the level of urbanization of the state is very low (only 10.5 per cent, according to census 2001), the volume of out-migration from the urban area of the state is very low in comparison to rural area and out-migration from the state has largely become the phenomenon of rural outmigration.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Out-migrants from Bihar to Other States of India

	Number (in Thousand)				Percentage to Population of Bihar		
	Rural	Urban	Unspecified*	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Male	2,390	495	165	3,049	6.2	10.6	7.1
Female	1,711	381	119	2,211	4.8	9.4	5.6
Total	4,101	876	284	5,261	5.5	10.1	6.3

Source: Census of India, 2001, D-2

*Area of origin is not specified

Table 2 shows the streams of out-migration from Bihar. The rural to urban stream of out migration is the predominant stream which comprises around 55 per cent of out-migrants from the state followed by rural to rural out-migration with a share of around 23 per cent of total migrants. The share of urban to urban migration stream is around 15 per cent to the total of out-migrants and urban to rural migration constitute the least fraction (only 2 per cent) of total out-migrants. Again, the Table reveals out-migration from the state is especially a move towards urban areas, since around three-fourth of migrants move to urban areas of the other states. Again the Table indicates the gender differentials to the selectivity of area of destination. Among male 80 per cent of out-migrants move to urban area, while around 63 per cent of female out-migrants move to urban area. On per thousand males, only 573 females move to the urban area, while to the rural area their ratio increased to 1339. The overall sex ratio of out migrants is 725 females per thousand males.

Table 2: Streams of Out-migration from Bihar to the Other States of India, 2001

Place of Last Residence	Place of Enumeration	Percentage of Different Stream			Sex-Ratio (Female/ Male)
		Persons	Males	Females	
Rural	Urban	54.74	61.83	44.97	527
Urban	Urban	14.46	14.30	14.68	744
Unspecified*	Urban	3.90	4.03	3.73	672
Total	Urban	73.11	80.16	63.38	573
Rural	Rural	23.21	16.54	32.42	1421
Urban	Rural	2.18	1.92	2.55	962
Unspecified*	Rural	1.50	1.38	1.66	874
Total	Rural	26.89	19.84	36.62	1339
Total	Total	100	100	100	725

Source: Census of India, 2001, D-2

*Area of origin is not specified

Table 3 shows the duration of stay of out-migrants at their place of current residence. A major chunk of out-migrants (around 42 per cent) was staying at their place of current residence for a period less than 10 years, which is defined as inter-censal migrants. The proportion of inter-censal migrants among male out-migrants was higher (around 46 per cent) than female out-migrants (around 38 per cent). Even among the recent out-migrants (migrated in last 1 year), the proportion of male out-migrants was higher (around 5 per cent) than female migrants (around 3.5 per cent). The rural-urban difference in duration of stay is not very significant.

Table 3: Duration of Residence of Out-migrants from Bihar to other States, 2001

Duration of Residence	All Area			Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Less than 1 year	4.3	5.0	3.5	4.7	5.4	3.7	3.5	3.9	3.0
1-4 years	20.9	23.2	17.8	20.9	23.4	17.4	23.9	25.5	21.8
5-9 years	17.3	18.0	16.4	17.8	18.6	16.7	18.2	18.4	17.8
10 years and above	49.9	46.5	54.6	52.3	48.4	57.6	48.6	46.7	51.0
Unspecified*	7.5	7.3	7.7	4.3	4.2	4.6	5.8	5.5	6.4

Source: Census of India, 2001, D-3

*Duration of stay is not specified

DESTINATION OF OUT-MIGRANTS

Table 4 shows the place of destination of out-migrants and inter-censal migrants in the other states of India. The states where larger proportions of out-migrants were enumerated are west-Bengal (21.4 per cent), Jharkhand (20.5 per cent), Delhi (13.8 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (11.8 per cent), Maharashtra (6.9 per cent), Punjab (4.5 per cent), Haryana (4.5 per cent), Gujarat (2.8 per cent) and Assam (2.4 per cent). The destination of inter-censal out-migrants differs from the destination of all duration of migrants. Delhi which is the third major destination for out-migrants became first. Among major destinations, the states where the proportion of inter-censal migrants is higher than the proportion of all duration migrants are Delhi (18.9 per cent), Maharashtra (10.2 per cent), Haryana (6.9 per cent), Punjab (6.7 per cent) and Gujarat (4.6 per cent) and the states where the proportion of inter-censal migrants is lower are West Bengal (13.3 per cent), Jharkhand (13.8 per cent), and Uttar Pradesh (10 per cent). It suggests that the direction of move of out-migrants has shifted from eastern India towards the other regions of the country. In case of West Bengal and Jharkhand, the difference is more dramatic in case of male out-migrants, who migrate for the purpose of employment. The percentage distribution for male and female migrants separately for inter-censal migrants shows that in case of bordering states like Jharkhand (male 9.7%, female 20.7%), West Bengal (male 12%, female 15.6%), and Uttar Pradesh (male 6.8%, female 15.5%), the proportion of female out-migrants is higher than the male out-migrants who migrate particularly either for marriage or with their household. In case of distant states, the proportion of male out-migrants out-number the proportion of female out-migrants, such as Delhi (male 20.8%, female 15.5%), Maharashtra (male 12.6%, female 6.1%), Punjab (male 8.2%, female 4.1%), Haryana (male 7.6%, female 5.8%) and Gujarat (male 5.7%, female 2.8%).

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Out-migrants from Bihar to Other States

States	All Duration of Resident			Inter-censal Migrants		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Jammu & Kashmir	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3
Himachal Pradesh	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.8	1.1	0.4
Punjab	4.5	5.7	2.9	6.7	8.2	4.1
Uttaranchal	0.8	0.9	0.7	1	1.2	0.8
Haryana	4.5	5.1	3.7	6.9	7.6	5.8
Delhi	13.8	16.3	10.3	18.9	20.8	15.7
Rajasthan	1.5	1.7	1.3	2.3	2.5	2
Uttar Pradesh	11.8	6.5	19.2	10	6.8	15.5
North-East (ex. Assam inc. Sikkim)	1.1	1.3	0.8	1	1.1	1
Assam	2.4	2.8	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.4
West Bengal	21.4	22.5	19.8	13.3	12	15.6
Jharkhand	20.5	16.3	26.5	13.8	9.7	20.7
Orissa	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.4
Chhattisgarh	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.8
Madhya Pradesh	1.8	1.7	1.9	2	1.8	2.2
Gujarat	2.8	3.5	1.8	4.6	5.7	2.8
Maharashtra	6.9	8.9	4	10.2	12.6	6.1
Andhra Pradesh	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7
Karnataka	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.9	1.1	0.5
Goa	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Kerala	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Tamil Nadu	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2
Union Territories (except Delhi)	1	1.3	0.5	1.6	2	0.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of India, 2001, D-2

REASONS OF OUT-MIGRATION

The census classifies the reasons of migration in six broad categories. These categories are work or employment, business, education, marriage, moved with household, moved after birth (associated with the custom of Hindu family). The NSSO reveals the reasons of migration in a more comprehensive way, compared to census. It classifies the reasons of migration into 18 categories. Employment related reason is also classified into six categories, which are in search of employment, in search of better employment, to take up employment or better employment, business, transfer of service or contract and proximity to place of work.

Table 5 shows the reasons of migration on the basis of NSSO 64th round data. This Table reveal an entirely different reason of out-migration of male and female. The Table shows that heavy male out-migration from Bihar is taking place exclusively for economic or employment related reasons. Around 30.7 per cent of the total out-migrants moved to search an employment, as they were not in employment at the place of origin. Around 23.8 per cent of entire male out-migrants left their place of origin to get a better employment than their previous employment at their place of origin. Around 34.3 per cent of male out-migrants moved when they got an offer of employment or better employment at place of destination. Other important causes of male out-migration is migration of parent or earning member of the family (3.9 per cent), business (2.6 per cent) etc. The NSSO data also suggest that female out-migration is heavily depending upon either the migration of parent or earning member of the family (61.1 per cent) or marriage (29.1 per cent). All the economic reasons together are responsible for the move of only around 4.5 per cent female out-migrants.

Table 5: Reasons of Migration from Bihar to Other States, 2007–08

Reasons of Migration	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
In search of employment	30.7	1.9	27.0
In search of better employment	23.8	0.5	20.8
Business	2.6	0.0	2.2
To take up employment / better employment	34.3	2.1	30.2
Transfer of service/ contract	0.9	0.0	0.8
Proximity to place of work	0.4	0.1	0.3
Studies	1.5	4.5	1.9
Health care	0.2	0.0	0.2
Marriage	0.0	29.1	3.7
Migration of parent/earning member of the family	3.9	61.1	11.2
Others	1.8	0.7	1.7
Total	100	100	100

Source: NSSO 64th Round, 2007

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF MALE OUT-MIGRANTS HOUSEHOLD

The NSSO 64th round captures socio-economic characteristics of left behind households. It makes possible to understand the socio-economic background of the household, from where the out-migration is taking place. In Table 7, the propensity of out-migration by the group of different socio-economic background has been shown. Among the migrants household, only those households are categorized from where at least one male member is migrated, the remaining households are categorized as non-migrants households. The inter-state migrant's households can't be separated from the data. However, around 85 per cent of male out-migrants from the state are inter-state out migrants, so the findings of out-migrants to all distance can be generalized to the inter-state out-migrants as well.

Table 6 suggests that among the caste groups, the propensity to migrate is highest among general caste (24.2 per cent), among OBC household out-migration took place from 22 per cent household and among SC & ST households the proportion of out-migrants is the lowest (19.3 per cent). The land holding determines the socio-economic status of a household in rural area. The distress migration from rural area is correlated to the smaller size of holdings of a household, which force them to out-migrate in absence of productive assets to survive. But at the same time, it has also been argued that migrants are not exclusively from the lower socio-economic stratum, because the household of this stratum can't bear the costs associated to migration. Out-migration is lowest (13.7 per cent) among the landless households (less than 0.005 hectare) compared to marginal and small farmers (less than 0.2 hectares). Further, Table 7 also shows that richer households have higher propensity to migrate compared to poorer households. This finding is consistent with other studies based on macro level data (Bhagat 2010).

**Table 6: Percentage of Households with any Male Out Migrants
Socio-economic Characteristics**

	Household having any Male-migrant		
	Yes	No	Total
Caste			
SC & ST	19.3	80.7	100.0
OBC	22.0	78.0	100.0
General	24.2	75.8	100.0
Land Holdings			
less than 0.005	13.7	86.3	100.0
0.005-0.01	22.1	77.9	100.0
0.01-0.20	25.1	74.9	100.0
0.21-0.40	20.8	79.2	100.0
0.41-1.00	23.7	76.3	100.0
greater than 1.00	22.0	78.0	100.0
MPCE Quintile Class			
Poorest	21.8	78.2	100.0
Poorer	21.1	78.9	100.0
Middle	19.1	80.9	100.0
Richer	25.2	74.8	100.0
Richest	28.4	71.6	100.0
Total	21.7	78.3	100.0

Source: NSSO 64th Round, 2007

IMPACT OF OUT-MIGRATION

Table 7 shows the contribution of remittances to total household expenditure. The average household expenditure of all migrants household is Rs. 35719, and remittances contribute around 42 per cent of it. The contribution of remittance is equally important for all the section of household. In the poorest quintile, in which around 20 per cent of entire household receive remittances which contribute more

than half (around 56 per cent) of total household expenditure. Even among the richest quintile, 26 per cent of them receive remittances which contribute to 43 per cent of their household expenditure.

Table 7: Contribution of Remittances to Household Expenditure, Bihar, 2007–08

MPCE Quintile Class	Percentage of Households Received Remittances	Amount of Consumption Last Year (in Rs)	Amount of Remittances in Last Year (in Rs)	% Contribution of Remittances in Household Expenditure
Poorest	19.5	18029	10128	56
Poorer	19.7	29349	13627	46
Middle	17.7	39986	14668	37
Richer	22.3	55157	17962	33
Richest	26.0	93105	39888	43
Total	19.8	35719	14939	42

Source: NSSO 64th Round, 2007–2008

Table 8 shows the first, second and third important uses of remittances in migrant households who receive remittances. Around 69.3 per cent of household mentioned the first use of remittance for food. Around 10 per cent of household used remittance for the other consumption needs. Around 6.5 per cent of household used it for health care, and around 6 per cent used it for other needs. The second use of the remittances reported by the households show that it was used to purchase household durables (24.6 per cent), followed by other items for consumer expenditure (24.4 per cent), education of the household members (24.3 per cent) and health care (15.4 per cent). The third use of remittances is mainly on other items of household consumer expenditure (28.3 per cent), health care (25.7 per cent) and household durables (12.5 per cent).

Table 8: Use of Remittances at the Household Level, Bihar, 2007–08

Use of Remittances	First Use	Second Use	Third Use
On food items	69.3	2.0	5.8
Others items on household consumer expenditure	9.9	24.4	28.3
Household durable	.8	24.6	12.5
For improving housing condition	3.1	3.3	5.4
Marriage and other ceremonies	2.3	1.0	1.9
Health care	6.5	15.4	25.7
Education of household members	.4	24.3	4.1
Debt repayment	.9	2.2	4.6
Financing working capital	.3	.7	.8
Initiating new entrepreneurial activity	.1	.1	.1
Saving/investment	.4	1.7	3.6
Others	6.0	.4	7.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NSSO 64th Round, 2007

Table 9 shows the differences in use of remittances to different wealth quintiles. Poorest households use remittances more for their need of food (78 per cent) compared to 53 per cent use among the richest households. The other items on household expenditure are also financed by remittances in a significant proportion, exclusively among the richer and richest households. The health care expenditure met by remittances is higher among rich compared to poor households. However, the fact remains among the migrant households irrespective economic status, remittances are source important of food expenditure in Bihar. Thus, the importance of remittances in mitigating food insecurity in Bihar is paramount and this must be recognised by policy makers.

Table 9: First Use of Remittances by Wealth Quintile, Bihar, 2007–08

The First Use of Remittances	Poorest	Poorer	Middle	Richer	Richest	Total
On food items	78.0	74.4	69.3	45.5	52.9	69.3
Education of household members	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	4.5	0.4
Household durable	0.1	0.4	0.7	2.1	4.7	0.8
Marriage and other ceremonies	0.8	3.4	2.5	4.1	1.0	2.3
Health care	2.7	6.7	7.4	13.4	7.3	6.5
Others items on household consumer expenditure	8.7	7.9	9.5	16.3	12.6	9.9
For improving housing condition	1.2	1.2	3.8	8.6	7.6	3.1
Debt repayment	0.3	1.1	1.0	1.8	0.4	0.9
Financing working capital	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.1	1.0	0.3
Initiating new entrepreneurial activity	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.1
Saving/investment	0.0	0.8	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4
Others	8.2	4.1	4.1	6.9	6.6	6.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: NSSO 64th Round, 2007

CONCLUSION

Out-migration from Bihar is a well established phenomenon started back in the nineteenth century seems shooted up in the recent decade. The flow and direction of migration has also been altered in course of time and most of the migration is taking place towards the north-western and western parts of India. The states like Delhi, Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat account half of the inter-censal migrants. The prime reason of such heavy out-flow is related to employment. People are migrating not only in the absence of employment at their native place but also to secure a better earning also. It seems that the out-migration for employment is taking place not only in poor and socially backward households but the members of relatively affluent households are also migrating either in the same proportion or even higher. Around one fifth household has received remittances sent by the migrants of the household. The remittances comprise almost half to one third of the household expenditure, irrespective of economic status of the households. It is mostly spent on food and other items of consumer expenditure, health care and education of the family members. The use of remittances for food and other basic needs is

almost similar across the different MPCE groups which suggest the importance of remittances for their survival as well as betterment across the economic classes. Remittances received through migration have provided an important cushion against food insecurity for many households in Bihar. This must be noted by the policy makers while formulating programmes for mitigating poverty in Bihar.

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