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Migration of Agricultural Laborers in Karnataka - A Study

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Abstract: ***Migration is a major option for agricultural labours for their well-being in urban areas. Majority of the agricultural labourers migrate from rural areas for the purpose of business, employment, education etc. The force which motivates the labourers to migrate to urban areas has been the economic suffering they face in their native places due to unemployment, low wages at the origin, poverty, agricultural failure, large family size, underemployment, and natural disasters. The study shows that the reasons for migration of agricultural labour in Karnataka have been poverty related ones. The study also talked about the effects of agricultural labour migration in Karnataka. The migration of agricultural labour results in serious problems as the sector is unorganized, faces exploitation and malpractices. The paper is depended on secondary sources of information gathered from different publications.***

Keywords: Migration, Agricultural Labour, Resources, Employment, Poverty

I. INTRODUCTION

Karnataka is the eighth largest populated statein the county. About 70 per cent of the population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture for livelihood. Labour is one of the most significant factors in determining the national income. Poverty is one of the main hindrances for the growth of any country, but it is a critical phenomenon where a unit of society is unable to achieve the basic requirements of life like food (including water), shelter, clothing, education, sanitation and healthcare. Rural population fails is getting any non-farm employment; agriculture is the main livelihood and in this sector seasonal employment is found. Thus, labourers face many problems. Seasonal migration is a fact in rural Karnataka. Migration has become inevitable for people from regions that face usual shortages of rainfall or where population density is high in relation to land. Areas facing unresolved social or political conflicts also become vulnerable to high out-migration. Poverty, lack of local options, lack of local work trigger the situation and result in migration. Agricultural labourers move from one place to another depending on the demand for their labour. The women migrant workers are mainly engaged in nursing, and domestic services. In urban areas, many migrant women work as housemaid. They have their permanent houses in rural areas. They remit money to their family in the villages. Yearly once or twice they visit their native to meet their family members. This type of labour movement is called circular migration. In temporary or circular migration, workers move to their destinations for a limited period of time and after finishing their work they return to their homesteads.

II. MEANING OF MIGRATION

The term migration refers to the people's movement from their native place to a new place, maybe permanently, temporarily or seasonally. The labour market for migrant workers in agriculture in notably disorderly, partly, because such workers employment relationship is temporary.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A very brief review of studies on the topic has been made here under:

M.H. Wani, Yousuf Shahid, S.H. Baba and S.A. Wani (2011), in their research article entitled Agricultural Labour Migration: Causes and Implications, found that the agricultural wage rate is low compared to the industrial sector. Their study also found that rural labour and particularly the youth have better propensity to migrate in the urban areas like better education, employment opportunities arising from urbanization as well as the changing market context as economies become more liberalized and globalized.

K. N. Doddamani (2014), in his research paper entitled "A Study on Migration of Agriculture Labourers from Hyderabad Karnataka Area to Maharashtra", argued that regional disparity is the major reason for increasing seasonal migration of agricultural labourers in Hyderabad-Karnataka area. The study further found that migrants from Hyderabad-Karnataka are the main labour source in the building and construction industries in the cities elsewhere. These labourers move because of high wages; majority of

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the migrants are landless. They find it very difficult to survive because of the adverse environment in agriculture sector. The study also found that majority of the migrant labourers is from socio-economic and poor financial background. After migrating they could improve their financial position, health, education, and social status.

A study on Agricultural Labour Migration and Remittances in Karnataka State of India, made by B.N. Venu, K.B. Umesh and G.M. Gaddi (2016), found that migration was a major option for agricultural labourers in rain-fed areas of Karnataka for their better livelihood. Most of the labourers migrate from rain-fed areas to irrigated areas. The study also found the youths in rural areas are increasingly migrating to industrial sector in urban areas. Majority of labourers migrated seasonally and the frequency was the highest (70%) in rain-fed situation. In rain-fed situation, after sowing season they were migrated to other regions and return at the time of harvest.

M.S. Sidhu, P.S. Rangi and K. Singh (1997), in their research article entitled A Study on Migrant Agricultural Labour in Punjab, found that the major factor which motivated the labourers to migrate to the state capital for employment was the economic suffering they faced in their native places due to low wages, underemployment, unemployment and low earnings from their meagre owned assets of land due to low agricultural productivity. The study also found that majority of migrants belonged to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh states, of the age group between 20 and 40 years and 87 per cent to the lower castes.

In an article entitled Labour Migration in India: Trends, Causes and Impacts, Tilak Sanyal and Kingsuk Maity (2018), identified the trends, causes and impacts of labour migration in India. The authors observed that uneven development has been the main driving force behind migration. Moreover, wage discrimination, disparities in socio-economic conditions also encourage people to migrate, 'push' and 'pull' factors, operate both simultaneously. Finally, the authors discussed about the possible impact of labour migration on the migrants family members and on the source and destinations.

A study entitled Migration Effect of Agricultural Labourers on Agricultural Activities, of Omprakash Parganiha, M.L. Sharma, P.M. Paraye and V.K. Soni (2009), carried out in the selected eight villages of two regions like Simga and Palari of Raipur district during the year 2001-02, found that migration is mainly due to the uneven development of agricultural areas, particularly landless farmers.

IV. OBJECTIVES

The following two are the objectives of the present paper.

A. To identify the reasons for migration in Karnataka.
B. To study the effects of agricultural labour migration in Karnataka.
C. To identifying the problems of agricultural labour migration in Karnataka.

1) Paper Scheme: The paper is descriptive and analytical in nature, based on secondary sources of information gathered from different published sources like, books, journal articles, and other relevant websites.

V. REASONS FOR MIGRATION

A. Migration- the Reasons

Here, using secondary data, published by the Census of India in the year 2011, some issues of migration particularly of the reasons and tenure of migration are briefly discussed. There are many reasons for migration. Data related with these are provided in Table 01.

Table-01 Reasons for Migration

Reasons For Migration						
	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
	Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Others	Total
Rural	4,685,704 (25.32)	10,283,325 (55.58)	1,658,738 (08.98)	1,347,636 (07.28)	526,329 (02.84)	18,501,732 (100.00)
Urban	3,464,243 (32.99)	4,047,626 (38.55)	1,370,010 (13.05)	1,129,371 (10.75)	486,911 (04.67)	10,498,161 (100.00)
Total	9,134,767 (28.50)	15,943,566 (49.80)	3,230,348 (10.08)	2,630,383 (08.20)	1,104,178 (03.42)	32,043,242 (100.00)

Note; Figures in brackets show percentage to total, horizontal.
Source: Registrar General of India, Census 2011, Data on Migration, Karnataka State

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The data presented above (Table- 01) mention the reasons for migration. It is found that of the total migrants, as per the 2011 Census, a notable proportion of 28.50 per cent migrated for employment, about 49.80 per cent of the migrants migrate for the purpose of the business, 10.08 per cent of the migrants migrate for the purpose of the education, 08.20 per cent migrated due to marriage, and 03.42 per cent assigned other reasons for migration.

B. Migration-The Tenure Issue

Further, it would also be appropriate here to give data related to tenure of migration. Table 02 gives data as related to migration took place for a period up to ten years.

Table-02

Period of Migration (up to 10 years Tenure)

Migration (up to 10 years tenure)						
	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
	Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	others	Total
Rural	5,738,013 (44.26)	2,113,394 (16.30)	3,624,619 (27.97)	829,735 (06.40)	657,566 (05.07)	12,963,327 (100.00)
Urban	3,640,460 (42.44)	1,718,804 (20.01)	1,921,660 (22.36)	722,121 (08.41)	582,805 (06.78)	8,585,854 (100.00)
Total	9,378,477 (43.52)	3,832,198 (17.78)	5,546,279 (25.73)	1,551,856 (07.22)	1,240,371 (05.75)	21,549,181 (100.00)

Note; Figures in brackets show percentage to total, horizontal.

Source: Registrar General of India, Census 2011, Data on Migration, Karnataka State

Data presented in Table-02 show the figures related to migration in Karnataka for tenure of 10 years. Of the total migrants, as per the 2011 Census, 43.52 per cent of the migrants migrate for the purpose of the Employment, 17.78 per cent for purpose of the business, 25.73 per cent for education, 07.22 per cent due to marriage, and 05.75 per cent due to the other reasons for tenure of 10 years.

The question of migration for a period above 10 years would also be pertinent here. The data related to which are presented in Table 03.

Table-03

Migration (over 10 years Tenure)

Migration (over10 years Tenure)						
	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
	Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	others	Total
Rural	9,228,136 (46.19)	2,571,109 (12.87)	6,657,027 (33.32)	828,748 (04.14)	689,897 (03.48)	19,974,917 (100.00)
Urban	3,868,825 (43.34)	1,744,065 (19.52)	2,124,760 (23.78)	647,660 (07.25)	546,414 (06.11)	8,931,724 (100.00)
Total	14,560,074 (45.47)	4,841,288 (15.10)	9,718,786 (30.33)	1,595,595 (04.97)	1,236,311 (04.13)	32,042,212 (100.00)

Note; Figures in bracket show percentage to total, horizontal.

Source: Registrar General of India, Census 2011, Data on Migration, Karnataka State

Data presented in Table- 03 show the issue of migration over 10 year's tenure. Of the total migrants, as per the 2011 Census, a remarkable proportion (45.47 per cent) migrate for employment purpose, 15.10 per cent for migrate for business purpose, 30.33 per cent for education, 04.97 per cent due to marriage, and 04.13 per cent migrated for the others purpose than the above for a period above ten years in Karnataka.

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The reasons for migration can be listed as follows;

1) *Poverty and Indebtedness:* Poverty has compelled the agricultural workers to migrate to prosperous states in order to increase their incomes. All family members are not able to get employment in their villages due to low-productive agriculture. The perpetual indebtedness also compels the labour to migrate in search of employment.
2) *Backward Agriculture:* In their native areas, agriculture continues to be depressed due to lack of irrigation facilities and low productivity. Cropping intensity is low and agriculture remains a gamble will the monsoon. Thus, agriculture fails to provide employment to the local labour force. Moreover, they failed to avail the benefits of green revolution.
3) *Low Wages at the Origin:* The wages in their native are as abnormally low even less than half of the wages prevailing in potential states. Thus they earn more by working for longer hours and involve their women and children as well.
4) Lack of Employment: Employment opportunities in their home states are too meagre to provide gainful employment. Therefore, they migrate to states where they are absorbed in seasonal agricultural operations.
5) *Small Sized Holdings:* Most of the migrant's labourers have land but the size of holdings is too small to adopt new agricultural technology. Generally, the size of holdings varies between one to two acres only. In addition, the land is not much productive and depends upon rain. They are unable to use chemical fertilizer.

VI. EFFECTS OF MIGRATION

The migration of agricultural labourers has generated both positive and negative effects which are summarized below;

A. *Positive Effects*

The positive effects of migration of agricultural labourers can be;

1) *Utilization of Resources:* The migration of labour may result in proper utilization of land, capital and labour resources in out-migrating and in-migrating areas of the country.
2) *Improving the Economic Conditions:* The interstate migration of agricultural labour may improve the economic conditions of the workers due to enhanced wages and more employment opportunities.
3) *Source of Cheap Labour to Farmers:* The migration may also benefit the farmers as they are able to get relatively cheap labour.
4) *New Skills:* The migratory workers can acquire new skills to operate in new areas. It may also enhance their efficiency and hence more wages.
5) *Timely Completion of Sowing:* Migration may enable the farmers to harvest kharif crops particularly paddy on time to prepare land for wheat sowing. Late sowing reduces crop-productivity and enhances production cost especially on fertilizers and weedicides.
6) *National Integration:* Migration may also promote mutual cultural relations between the migrants and the local population. A peculiar relationship of oneness may be developed leading to national integration in general.

B. *Negative Effects*

The negative effects of migration of agricultural labourers may be;

1) *Depressed Wages:* Migrants have greater risks in employment as they leave behind their families and spend on travelling to reach the place of their work. As a result, they are forced to work at lower wages and for longer hours. Various studies show that the wages in Panjab would have increased to about Rs.30 per day during wheat harvesting in the absence of migrants at the time of green revolution.
2) *Social Problems:* Social problems such as crimes, drug addiction, creation of slums, health hazards etc. have also gone up significantly due increased migration.
3) *Less Real Gains:* The local labour used to enjoy a number of facilities like fodder for milch animals, fuel wood and collection of grain crops wasted in the process of harvesting. Since the independence of farmers on local labour has decreased, now they are being denied these gains.
4) *Tension:* Tension between the localities and migrants has also increased because they compete for employment. Had the labour not migrated the local labour would have got higher wages.

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C. Problems

The migration of agricultural labour results in serious problems as the sector is unorganized, faces exploitation and malpractices. These issues are mentioned below:

1) Weak and unorganized
2) Poor housing facilities
3) Low wages at the origin
4) Hostile attitude of local labour
5) Exploitation by contracting middlemen
6) Malpractices by some farmers as illegal confinement and forcing them to work or non-payment of wages

VII. SUGGESTIONS

A. A survey should be conducted to highlight the working and living conditions of the migrants so that the conditions may be improved.

B. During peak season the railways should run special trains connecting the supply and demand centers of agricultural labour. The railways should extended traveling facilities at concessional rates.

C. The concerned state governments should open labour offices to guide the migrants about employment opportunities and wage rates to eliminate the middlemen.

D. The government should enact a legislation to regulate and standardize the working condition of the migratory labour. Administrative machinery should be set up for its effective implementation.

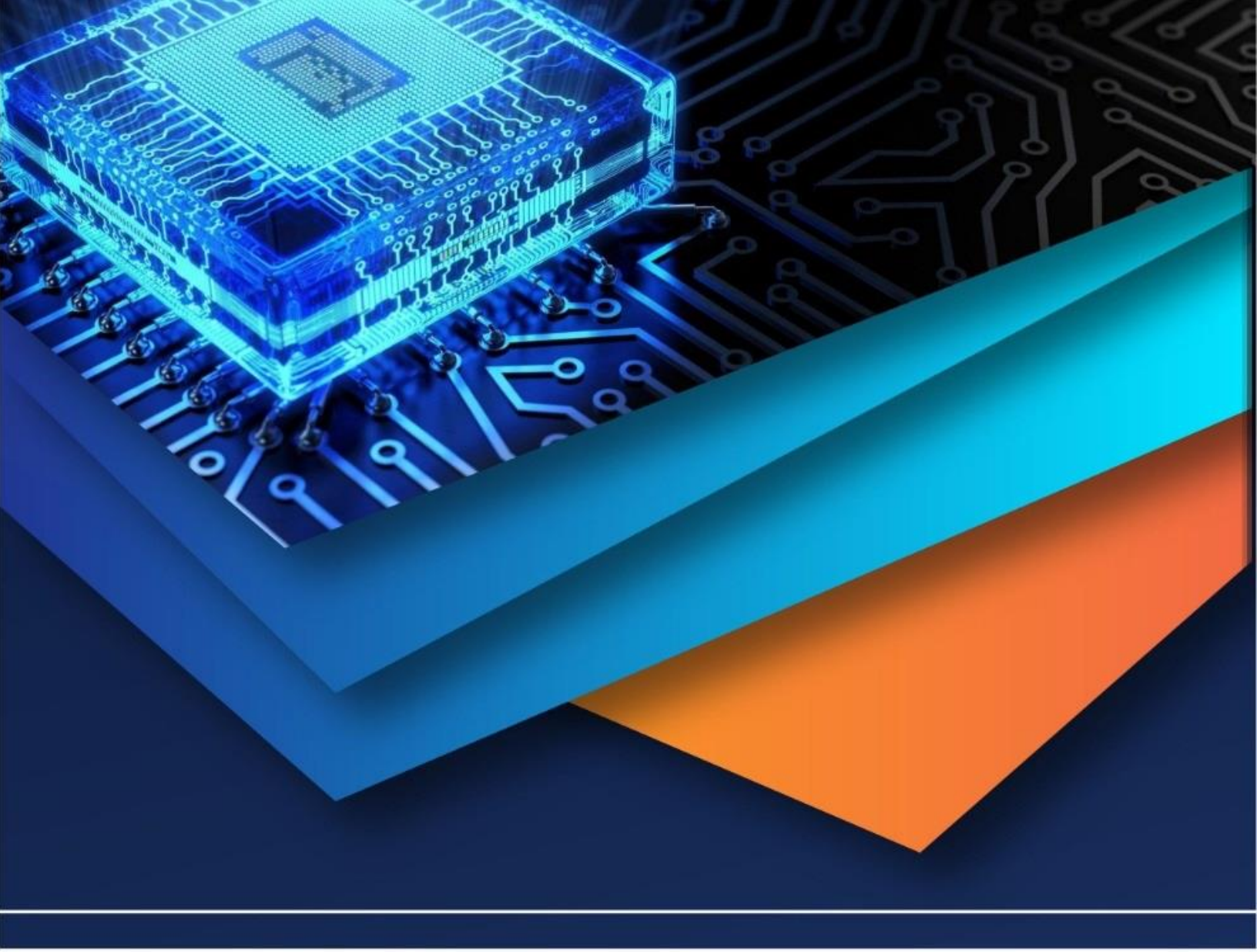
VIII. CONCLUSION

Now it can be concluded from the present study that majority of the agricultural labourers migrate to urban areas particularly to the construction industry because of high wages at the destinations. The researchers view that the government should aim at effective implementation of the MGNREGA and other programs, small scale industries should also be promoted in rural areas which will help mitigate the problem of increasing migration. Let us hope for the best.

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