



Urban cities and migration in the context of international migration from India to gulf countries: A critical analysis

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Abstract

Urban cities convey significant influence in global migration, specifically to the example of Indian migration to the Gulf countries. Here we can consider these urban spaces as a nexus of economic and social mobility in India, and as many of these urban cities are the starting points of and facilitators of the labor migration of Indian-origin populations to the Gulf countries. The labor migration of Indian-origin populations to Gulf countries can be driven by limited job opportunities, income inequality, and enhanced labor wages outside of India. Gulf countries create opportunities for low- and semi-skilled work which attracts many Indian-origin migrants, often coming from urban and peri-urban areas. The anticipated move of labor from urban India to Gulf countries has important implications for sending and receiving locations via urban growth, remittance behaviour, and shifting socio-economic profiles. Many challenges and barriers accompany some of the migration process, including poor labor practices in the absence of legal protections, and socio-cultural alienation through the resulting community disconnects. Critically reflecting on this unique mechanism of migration - urbanization, migration networks, and labor market demand - will enable discussions around the transnational migration corridors between India and the Gulf, and draw attention to deeper implications of this corridor at multiple scales. The findings of the study show that there is a well-developed cultural mechanism of urban city-based migration in rural North India, in the context of Gulf migration via internal migration to Indian cities. Therefore, it is also found that there was deep penetration of the culture of internal migration to Indian cities under the push- and pull factors of Gulf migration because internal to international migration involves a dual-step process, transforming short-term migration into long-term migration. Consequently, it can be concluded that both internal and international migration were city-based—internal within India and international to Gulf countries—reflecting colonial and post-colonial cultural influences during the post-modern phase of urban migration in India, especially in the context of Gulf migration. Therefore, the study's findings provide an insight into the relationship between sustainability and migration, viewed from retrospective to prospective perspectives of the study design. #

Keywords: Migration, Gulf nation, North India, Impact, Globalization

Introduction

Historically, urban cities in India have served as key nodes in the international labor migration system, particularly for migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Kochi are initial departure points, providing the infrastructure, networks, and recruitment agencies that facilitate overseas employment. The prospect of higher wages and improved living conditions, along with better employment opportunities, continues to drive migration, especially among low and semi-skilled workers, resulting in large-scale movement to Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain. This migration is primarily driven by economic disparities, lack of employment opportunities, and urban poverty in India. Although migration expands employment options for migrants, it also presents inherent challenges. In host countries, many migrants may find themselves in precarious working conditions, unable to utilize their skills and experience, or facing legal vulnerabilities without access to safety nets or protections. Conversely, urban cities experience the effects of migration differently; even with initial departure points, they must adapt to socio-economic impacts such as labor shortages in certain sectors or increased dependency on foreign remittances within host communities. Cities in India will continue to grapple with the impacts of global labor mobility, including changing migration patterns, demographic shifts, and the emergence

of new economic nodes for urban development within a globalized context. This critical analysis will draw from questions of urbanization and labor mobility in relation to transnational migration development policies at the level of emigration. This will further our understanding of the India–Gulf migration corridor and highlight the dynamics of large-scale employment outflows in global labor mobility and urbanization, raising questions about community development and systemic changes across multiple temporal and spatial scales.

Kerala led the initial phase of labor migration from India to Gulf countries, due to its long historical tradition of migration. However, recent phenomena have seen migration from Kerala shift toward North Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, driven by the deepening globalization of migration and the Gulf migration culture in rural North India (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2014-2015, p.4; Taukeer, 2017^[1, 18], pp.561-574). Different migration trajectories exist from South and North India, with Kerala's migration primarily based on skilled labor facilitated by vocational training institutions, which provide training to Kerala's migrant workers, whereas Uttar Pradesh lacks similar institutions. This results in unskilled and semi-skilled migration from Uttar Pradesh to Gulf countries amidst the globalization of Gulf migration in rural North India (Zachariah & Rajan, 2012, p.4). The culture of Gulf migration from rural North India relies heavily on well-

developed social networks and both formal and informal recruitment agencies that facilitate migration from rural North India to Gulf countries in the twenty-first century (Sasikumar & Timothy, 2015, p.15; Rahman, 2001^[15, 17], p.15). Based on the above concise introduction part, it can be analyzed that North Indian-based Gulf migration is based on the phenomena of the long historical consequence of colonial migration in British India and its reflection in the form of modern internal and international labour migration in rural North India. Therefore, it can be also analyzed that the entire function of Gulf migration is based on past migration phenomena with a long historical journey of migration where both internal and international migration was directed toward Calcutta-based migration and international colonial migration to European colonies via internal migration to Calcutta. Therefore, there are colonial linkages in the present phenomena of migration from North India to Gulf countries via internal migration to Delhi and Mumbai in the context of cordial linkages between colonial and post-colonial experiences of migration in the historical framework.

In these consequences, the major background of the research paper is based on an explorative based study about the process, determinants and consequences of Gulf migration in rural North India from the perspective of globalization of Gulf migration in rural North India. Therefore, the major research problem of this research paper is based on trying to give a pathway to answering unfolding questions concerning the Gulf migration in rural north India from the perspective of the socio-economic and cultural paradigm of migration. In these perspectives, the objective of the research paper is based find out the socio-economic and cultural facts of the process, determinants and consequences of Gulf migration in rural North India, because North India is well known for its long historical consequences of migration and its cultural reflection in the form recent Gulf migration in the twenty-first century of migration. As a consequence, the present research work is so relevant in the context of the role of sustainability in migration with its limitations and function by the cultural economy of migration under the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 of the United Nations. In these consequences, the next section of the paper is based on a review of the literature under the technique of retrospective to the prospective manner of the study design from its past to present, with future implications of the study under a sustainable approach.

Review of Literature

Rural- Urban Migration: Push Factor

The situation-oriented approach explains the nature and causes of migration through push and pulls factors. The push and pull are important economic and non-economic factors associated with the process of migration. Push factors are the negative factors in the place of origin, while the pull factors are the positive factors in the destination. Apart from both intervening and personal factors of migrants influence the processes of migration from roots to destinations (Lee, 1966^[10], pp.49-50). Rural to Urban migration is stimulated primarily by rational economic considerations, and the decision of migrants to migrate depends on expected wage rates rather than actual differences in wage rates between urban and rural areas (Todaro, 1980, p.371).

In India, rural to urban migration is led by low productivity and insufficient performance of the agriculture sector, associated with a limited opportunity of employment, disguised unemployment, and low wage rates. Apart from social and political situations also pushed the people for migration from rural areas to urban areas for livelihood (Mehta, 1991, pp.731-744). Labourers are being shifted out from the agriculture sector due to low productivity, seasonal jobs and low wage rates; therefore, they are going to the non-agriculture sector as well as migrating to cities and other countries for employment due to better employment opportunities and higher wage rates. Rural labourers are migrating from the agriculture sector due to low productivity and low wage rates to high productivity with high wage rates in manufacturing and service sectors (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India 2015^[1], pp.1-60).

Out of the total 1.02 billion population, a total of 307.1 million people were reported as migrants by place of birth in Census 2001^[2], relative to 229.8 million in Census 1991. Therefore, decadal variation in the internal migration was 32.9 per cent relative to the growth of the Indian population, which grew by 21.5 per cent between Census 1991 and Census 2001 (Census 2001^[2], Government of India). Out of the total 1.02 billion population of India, 31.2 per cent of the population lived in urban areas in the Census 2011, relative to 27.8 per cent in the Census 2001 (Census 2001^[2] and Census 2011, Govt. of India).

The proportion of the urban population in India is less compared to 54 per cent of the global level. The annual growth rate in the change in the urban population is 1.1 per cent in India, relative to the global average of 0.9 per cent. Approximately, the total urban population is 410 million, while the estimated Indian urban population would be 850 million by 2050. It may be both challenges and opportunities for the urban economy of India. It is not being increased by positive population growth, changes in rural and urban boundaries, but significant migration of people from rural to urban areas (UN DESA, 2014)^[5].

Rural- Urban Migration: Pull Factor

Economic factors are more visible than non-economic factors in the entire processes of migration, including the availability of jobs or better jobs, higher wages and standard of living to attract people for migration, as well as social networks working among migrants from their roots to destinations, which work as pull factors in the migration. Migration from rural areas to urban areas is being driven by the failure of the rural labour market and is being attracted by the expansion of job opportunities in urban areas. Therefore, development-related factors between the root and destinations determine the processes of migration (Jayraj, 2013^[6], p.51). Globalisation of the market-based economy contributed to the observable growth of structural inequalities in the segmentation of society as well as the economy of India. It worked as push and pull factors in the process of labour migration (Ghosh, 2014^[5], p.65). In the case of rural out-migration within India, nearly 80.0 per cent of the out-migrants were engaged in the economic activities after migration (NSSO 64th round survey 2007-2008, Govt. of India, 2011^[3, 13, 21]-2012). Internal migration was reducing the unemployment rates in the state of Kerala. With respect to out-migration from Kerala to other states of India, migrant labourers used to engage in the private sector

for employment. Internal migration did not reduce the unemployment rate but also gave gainful opportunities of employment to labourers (Zachariah & Rajan, 2012, p.98). The informal economy is growing more rapidly relative to the formal economy, accounting for 60 per cent of the GDP and more than 92 per cent of the workforce. Informal sectors gave way to solutions of unemployment and poverty-related problems because there are more jobs available in the informal sectors in the urban areas. If the wages were not higher in the urban areas relative to rural areas, but the availability of jobs attracted underprivileged people from rural areas. These labourers are engaged in non-farm jobs where entry barriers are low, like security guards, street vendors, bicycle rickshaw pullers, housemaids, porters, attendants, and petty traders. The migrant labourers had to work in an environment of exploitation and insecurity in the informal sectors in the urban areas (Deshingkar, 2008^[3], p.168-169). Underprivileged people used to migrate from rural areas of *Purvanchal* and *Bundelkhand* regions to Allahabad city in Uttar Pradesh to pull a bicycle rickshaw to support their family income at the root. They were forced by precarious occupational conditions and little income from the root (Majumder, 2014^[11], p.133-141). Labourers migrated to recognised labour-squares in the cities of Uttar Pradesh due to the availability of jobs in the construction sector. They worked in the highly vulnerable bottom segmentation of the labour market with no job security as well as social security (Panday, 2017^[14], p.29).

Urban Cities: Working and Living of Migrants in the Urban Area

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 provides rules and regulations about inter-state migrant labourers at their destination. Under these regulations, the role of the state is defined as a regulatory body between migrant labourers and contractors/employers regarding ensuring the social, political and economic justice of inter-state migrant labourers at their destination (Govt.of India 1979, p.1-18). Migrant labourers had to face problems of social and political exclusion. The system of government also harasses the migrant labourers as well as deprives them of basic human needs at their destinations (Bhagat, 2011, p.93). Seasonal- temporary and low-category migrant labourers are placed in a vulnerable environment during their work in cities of India (Srivastava, 2011, p.190). Metropolitan cities of India, namely Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata, were the largest destinations for temporary and seasonal migrant labourers. Total number of in-migrants was estimated to be the largest in Greater Mumbai Urban Agglomeration with 2.4 million, followed by 2.1 million in Delhi UA and 0.82 million in Kolkata (Census 2001^[2], Govt. of India). Mumbai district is an entirely urban district; along with Mumbai Urban Agglomeration, it was one of the largest metropolises in the world (Census 2011, Govt. of India). City of Mumbai is also known as the “commercial capital of India” due to its ports, manufacturing industries, government and financial institutions, trade and services. Mumbai represents the most diversified and vibrant economy of India (Risbud, 2003, p.3). The city of Mumbai was the hub for migrant labourers from both Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, who are called *bhaiya* by the local people of Mumbai. These labourers have to face problems of regional

and cultural identities during their working and living conditions in the city of Mumbai (Gavaskar, 2010^[4], p.17-21). Migrant labourers of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are being engaged in the informal sector. The entire system of their occupations is being functioned by their own social networks, which are designed by their ethnicity based on homogeneities in their regions, economic and cultural practices at destination (Kumar, Mathur & Hatekar, 2012^[8], p.90-96). The economy of the city of Mumbai is led by industry, business, finance, real estate developers and media. All these circumstances created opportunities for jobs for migrant labourers in the informal economy. Hence, underprivileged migrant labourers lived in very vulnerable conditions. They also socially and politically encountered each other. Migrant labourers were unable to access the facilities of a house in Mumbai (Jha & Kumar, 2016^[7], p.69-77). The State has failed in its role in providing social and political protection to migrant labourers in the city of Mumbai (Vyas, 2016^[20], p.83).

Methodology

Based on the above concise review of literature, major objective of the proposed study is based on cultural ethnographic study of the process, determinants and consequences of cultural impact of rural-urban migration on urban cities. Therefore, sampling of the proposed study is based on qualitative study design for collection of qualitative data from 180 return migrant labourers in purposively selected district- Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. Technique of collection of primary data is based on multi-stage based field surveys in sample district in both rural and urban areas of Lucknow district in 2018. Collected primary data was analyzed by narrative, description and case study. The social norm of migration, local recruitment agents, and an established diaspora make migration to Gulf countries a common and accessible behavior. Emigration is also driven by economic necessity, as families see it as a way to secure financial stability through remittances. Issues related to dependency, labor shortages, vulnerability caused by migration, and inadequate support for returnees also require attention. This data clearly highlights the urgent need for targeted development policies in these districts. Such policies should include skill development, awareness about migrant rights, and reintegration programs for returning migrants to ensure that migration is a voluntary choice rather than a necessity.

Result and Discussion

Migration and Urban Cities

It is found that labourers migrated from Lucknow to Greater Noida, Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore for the purpose of employment. The process of internal migration was driven by the availability of opportunities for employment with a higher wage rate relative to the root. They migrated to cities with hopes of finding jobs with higher wage rates relative to their roots. They learned the skills of the occupation with earnings in the labour market of Delhi and Mumbai. It is found that social network system determined the destinations of migration because labourers migrated to cities from help of their family members, friends and relatives those were already engaged in the employment in Greater Noida, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad but it is found that a vast majority of the labourers migrated to Delhi and Mumbai due to the

availability of the kinship network in Delhi and Mumbai relative to other cities of India.

Labourers temporarily migrated to Delhi and Mumbai because it was found that they worked for eight to ten months in Mumbai and Delhi. The nature of migration was based on the seasonal and temporary migration from rural and urban areas of Lucknow to Greater Noida, Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. The route of internal migration was based on the following three patterns of migration:

1. Migration from rural areas of Lucknow to urban areas of Lucknow,
2. Migration from Lucknow to Greater Noida in Uttar Pradesh,
3. Migration from Lucknow to Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Hyderabad, but the vast majority of the labourers used to migrate to Delhi and Mumbai

Labourers migrate from the rural areas of Lucknow and its neighbouring districts, namely Sitapur, Barabanki and Raebareli, to the city areas of Lucknow for the purpose of employment. These labourers used to work in the bottom segmentation of the labour market because they worked as semi-skilled and unskilled labourers in the labour market. It is also observed that migrant labourers of Bihar and West Bengal were engaged in the labour market in the city areas of Lucknow. Among them, a vast majority of the migrant labourers used to work as manual labourers on the construction sites in Lucknow city. Caste played an important role in the selection of internal destinations in India. Labourers belonging to the upper caste, namely Syed, *Sheikh*, *Mughal* and *Pathan*, used to migrate to Delhi and Mumbai due to the availability of opportunities for jobs with a high wage rate. Apart from these, identities of the upper caste at the root pushed the labourers for migration to Mumbai and Delhi. Those migrant labourers belonged to lower caste namely *Ansari*, *Raen*, *Quereshi*, *Nae*, *Dhunia* were engaged in their intergenerational occupation in their root but they also migrated to Mumbai and Delhi due to higher wage rate relative to root. The occupation of dress-making is prominent in both rural and urban areas of Lucknow because it is a traditional and historical occupation of Lucknow. Both upper and backward caste Muslims were engaged in this occupation in the rural and urban areas of Lucknow. It is reported that they earned rupee 500 to rupee 800 per day. They also said that they were unable to save their income because they expended a vast share of their income on the consumption of food and non-food items in their family at the root. Hence, these circumstances forced the labourers to migrate to Mumbai and Delhi due to the availability of opportunities for better jobs with high wage rates relative to their roots. They easily saved their income in Mumbai and Delhi because they gained a higher wage rate, and they lived without their family. I found a case study about three migrant labourers, namely – *Juber* (32 years), *Pappu* (28 years) and *Abeed* (30 years), in the evening in the Hazratganj area of Lucknow city. They lived together in a single room on rent of rupees 3000 per month. They said that they worked as tailors in the showroom of ladies' garments under a Hindu lady who was the owner of this showroom. They earned rupees 500 per working day from Monday to Saturday every week. They said that girls were also working as beauticians in the showroom and earned rupee 500 per working day from Monday to Saturday

every week. These labourers were not allowed to leave the showroom during working hours from 10 AM to 6 PM. These labourers reported that they were being mentally harassed and humiliated by the owner, but they did not protest because they did not have any other source of income. Process of migration from urban areas of Lucknow to Delhi and Mumbai was different from the process of migration from rural areas in the perspective of education, skills, and occupation of migrant labourers because urban migrant labourers had professional degrees and they worked as skilled/professional in the labour markets of Delhi and Mumbai. Rural migrants were less educated and engaged in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations in the bottom segmentation of the labour market. Rural migrant labourers used to gain skills in their occupation during work in Delhi and Mumbai, while urban migrant labourers got training for jobs from training institutions before being involved in the labour market. The destinations of migration were varied according to the skills of the migrant labourers because skilled/professional migrants migrated to Bangalore, Hyderabad and Greater Noida apart from Delhi and Mumbai. These skilled/ professional workers worked in the multinational companies. Skilled migrant labourers were recruited by formal recruitment agencies of multinational and national companies with fixed annual packages and other employment-related facilities like free accommodation, travel allowances, etc., while unskilled and semi-skilled migrant labourers migrated from their roots to destinations with the help of social networks with their family members, relatives and friends who worked in Delhi, Mumbai and other cities of India.

Cultural Impact of Migration: Urban Cities

It is observed that the impact of Gulf migration created a socio-economic and cultural transformation in migrant households due to the depth penetration of the impact of Gulf migration in rural North India because migrant labourers used to send both economic and social remittances to migrant households and their community through individual and collective remittances respectively. These consequences led to the form of cultural migration in the context of the function of the social network system of migration from rural North India to Gulf countries via internal migration to Indian cities. Therefore, the impact of Gulf migration led to the process of migration from rural North India to Gulf countries in the context of internationalization of internal migration because the phenomena of internal migration were being replaced by international migration due to availability of the better jobs in Gulf countries compared to low wages in internal migration. These consequences were positively associated with the globalization of Gulf migration because it is well known that there is a significant impact of the nexus of the social network system of migration and globalization of migration led to the socio-economic and cultural transformation in migrant households through the investment of remittances in both productive and unproductive items. These perspectives can be realized as the impact of Gulf migration in the framework of economic transformation and its role in the building capacity of remittances in migrant households by process, determinants and consequences of Gulf migration in rural North India. From the perspective of the nexus of migration and development, the findings of the study show that there is a

significant cultural impact of Gulf migration on the reflection of the cultural behaviour of migrants in rural North India because return migrant labourers and their family members followed the cultural route of migration in the context of the explicit impact of the culture on migrant households. The impact of Arabic culture plays giving important role in the function of nexus of the mixed cultural landscape in the context of nexus between Hindi and Arabic culture in rural North India by the globalization of cultural migration in rural North India.

The socio-economic and cultural impact of Gulf migration can be understood in following group discussion:

"We are Gulf migrant labourers, and we can never exist without the socio-economic and cultural impact of Gulf migration because Gulf migration works as bread and butter for them. We feel proud of Gulf migration because Gulf migration enhanced the socio-economic status of migrant households in the perspective of culturalization of Gulf migration."

These consequences can be analyzed by there was significant cultural impact of the Gulf migration on migrant households and their family members from the perspective of the nexus of migration and development in the context of globalization of migration.

Concluding Remarks

This pattern is explained by a series of socio-economic concerns such as unemployment, lack of industrial growth and lack of economic opportunity which force an individual to pursue work abroad. The financial advantages of migration in terms of remittances and household/provincial benefit are these must be weighed against factors related to labor exploitation, lack of legal protection and social disintegration for migrant workers. Both urban and rural districts are heavily affected by the migration process primarily in terms of economic aspirations, labor youth and demographic patterns. The analysis and implications highlight the need for integrated policies to promote skill development, safe migration practices and livelihood opportunities in India to make migration a choice not a necessity. Based on the above concise result and discussion part, it can be concluded that the process of migration from rural North India to Gulf countries is a recent phenomenon in the context of globalization of migration in rural North India where both internal and international migration is being considered as a cultural route of migration in the context of globalization of migration. Therefore, there was cordial nexus between internal and international migration where internal migration led to the culture of international migration by nexus of internal and international migration. From the perspective of the socioeconomic profile of return migrant labourers, there was social and cultural migration concerning the youth participation in Muslim communities where male-based society led to the cultural migration from rural north India to Gulf countries. These consequences can be realized as the impact of Gulf migration in the framework of culturalization of Gulf migration because migration created culture and culture led to the migration in the context of the nexus between migration and culture by the globalization of migration. These consequences can be analyzed as the positive role of both formal and informal agencies of Gulf migration where a well-developed social network system of migration works as a pull factor in the function of migration in the form of non-economic factors

of migration because the non-economic factor of migration re-placed to the economic factor of migration in the perspective of nexus between economic and non-economic aspects of migration. These consequences can be analyzed as the positive role of the Gulf migration where the matter of migration was considered as part of cultural livelihood. The impact of Gulf migration was also realized as a matter of development because the entire function of the investment pattern of remittances enhanced the socio-economic status of migrant households where individual remittances created a socio-economic transformation in migrant households by nexus of personal and collective remittances. From these perspectives, it can also be concluded that there is a significant cultural impact of the Gulf migration due to the positive role of the Gulf migration due to the nexus of Hindi and Arabic culture because the impact of Gulf migration was replacing the Hindi culture due to globalization of Arabic culture in Hindi belt region of North India. It was also realized that the impact of Gulf migration created a demonstration impact of Gulf migration in rural India as well as created economic transformation in migrant households where both physical and non-physical culture created a cultural pattern of migration in the context of globalization of migration. From the perspective of contradiction, discrimination and challenges of migration, it can be concluded that the consequence of Gulf migration created a socio-economic and cultural inequality within migrant households in the context of a pattern of investment of remittances in the production of productive and unproductive items. These consequences gave economic challenges in the function of migration by the negative aspect of globalization of migration in rural North India. Therefore, based on the above concise concluding remarks, it can be concluded the conclusion in the following way:

1. The matter of migration is positively associated with the socio-economic and cultural function of migration within the well-developed cultural region of migration because migration creates culture and culture leads to migration in the consequences of globalization of migration.
2. The consequences of globalization of migration paved the route of economic migration based on the function of migration system theory where both formal and informal agencies facilitated the migration by globalization.
3. The impact of Gulf migration created phenomena of economic production of remittances in the framework of culture by culturalization of migration in the context of the nexus of culture and globalization of migration.

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