

***Title of the Thesis :***    **Labour Migration and Livelihood: A Study with  
Special Reference to Backward Districts of West Bengal**

**ABSTRACT**

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The intra and inter-regional migrations of labour within India as well as between India and other countries of the world have become an important dimension of contemporary development dynamics in developing nations. The existing literature in this area though covered the extent, trends and dimensions of labour migration in several states of India, there still remains a dearth of studies dealing with the issues of labour migration in West Bengal, specifically in the relatively backward districts. The present study thus aims at studying the magnitude, trends and pattern of labour migration in West Bengal as a whole and across the districts of West Bengal, the factors determining such migration, the flow of remittances to the concerned households, and the impacts of such remittance on the living standard of the families of the migrant labourers particularly in the economically backward districts of West Bengal.

The secondary data source, particularly the Census data, on this issue has serious limitations with non-availability of district-level migration data for 2011 population Census. So this had to be supplemented by NSSO data (2007-08) and the primary data source based on our sample survey (2013-14) in four backward districts of West Bengal.

The Census data evinces that there has been a sharp increase in the annual growth rate of rural to urban and urban to urban in-migration during 1991-2011. However, so far as the percentage share of the patterns of migration (such as rural-urban, rural-rural, urban-rural and urban-urban) in the total migration is concerned, the most prominent share is attributed to the pattern of ‘urban-urban migration’ and ‘rural-rural migration’ where the former reveals an increasing share while the latter indicates a declining share during the said

time period. The urban center of relatively developed districts of West Bengal could generate higher pull factors to attract the in-migrants. The higher expected urban wage of the destination district has always been a highly significant pull factor for the inter-district urban-urban migration in post-economic reform period. The average out-migration of male migrants remained higher compared to their in-migration for relatively developed districts of West Bengal. This may signify that the migrants of relatively developed districts remained better informed regarding the job opportunities. However, for relatively less developed districts of West Bengal the average out-migration was found to be lower than that of in-migration of male workers.

Several pull and push factors have been considered in explaining the inter-district variations in migration in West Bengal. The pooled regression analysis between inter-district migration and the district-level socio-economic variables for 17 districts of West Bengal, especially for male in-migration, suggest that more in-migration is caused due to economic development of a district and induce the workers to migrate from backward to developed districts. The districts with high rate of unemployment and low agricultural productivity have witnessed low in-migration. So, economic development is the key to the solution of migration problems. The coefficient of Probit Regression and its co-efficient of marginal effects (ME), used for analysing the determinants of migration at the household level using NSSO Unit Level data (2007-08), evinced that the average age and sex of the household head, educational attainments of the migrant, the average size of landholding etc. have significantly explained the migration decision. The member(s) of female-headed households, marginal landholding class in rural region, educational attainments below primary level revealed greater possibility of migration. Among the remittance receiving households, the share of female-headed households is found to be higher than the male-headed households. It has also been observed that the rural areas of relatively less developed districts of West Bengal received more remittance compared to the developed

districts. Receipt of remittance and its utilization also varied significantly across socio-economic groups as well as among households belonging to different religions. Remittances have filled in the income gap of the remittance receiving households and helped in alleviating poverty to a certain extent. This has also led to investment in human and physical capital at the household level. This study shows that with an increase in the receipt of monthly per capita remittance the incidence of poverty as well as depth of poverty of the household decreases. However, other general factors such as the dependency ratio, average years of education of the members of the households, size of land holding and supplementary income sources also play an important role in determining the monthly per capita income of the migrant households.

**Keywords:** Migration · In-Migration · Out-Migration · Remittance · Livelihood · Backward Districts