

Changing Pattern of Interstate Labour Migration to South Indian States, 1991-2011

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Abstract

Between 1991 and 2011, India underwent significant economic and social transformations. This study analyses the evolving dynamics of interstate labour migration to South India during this period. It focuses on key aspects of this movement, including its magnitude, origins, demographics (in terms of age, gender, and education), and types of employment, utilising data from decennial censuses. Preliminary findings suggest that the number of migrants relocating to South India increased substantially during this timeframe. There were also notable changes in the age composition and educational qualifications of labour migrants. Additionally, the employment status of migrants in these states experienced significant shifts. The percentage of main workers—those employed for the majority of the year—has decreased since 1991. In contrast, the proportions of "marginal" and "non-workers," which include those engaged in informal or seasonal work or who are unemployed, have increased considerably. This trend indicates a potential decline in the quality of employment opportunities available to migrants in South India. The study reveals a significant rise in interstate labour migration among South Indian states, particularly pronounced in 1991. However, subsequent decades witnessed a shift in migration patterns, with states from other regions of India gaining prominence as origin points. Furthermore, the share of migrants from states with lower Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) scores has risen over time. These states are characterised by high levels of poverty, hardship, and restricted access to essential services, prompting individuals to migrate to South Indian states in search of better livelihood opportunities.

Keywords: South India, labour migration, decadal change, demography

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Introduction

India, a nation renowned for its diverse socio-economic landscape, has a long and intricate history of internal migration. Labour mobility has been a cornerstone of the Indian economy for centuries; yet, its patterns and drivers have undergone significant transformations over time. This study examines the evolving dynamics of inter-state labour migration to South Indian states between 1991 and 2011, a period characterised by rapid economic growth and considerable regional disparities.

Interstate labour migration in India is a complex phenomenon driven by the human desire for a better life, work, and living standards (Das & Saha, 2012). Migrant workers aspire to improve their consumption and quality of life by relocating to larger cities and more urbanised states, which offer more resources, better educational facilities for children, and a wider array of employment opportunities. However, the pattern of migration continues to evolve due to fluctuations in the demand (the ageing population of Kerala leaving the state with elderly dependents relying on fewer working individuals) and supply (the abundant young population of states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh seeking work) of labour across different regions, as significant geographical disparities exist in employment prospects between states, districts, and even within a state (Mukherji, 1991; Deshnigkar & Anderson, 2004; Bhagat, 2009; Deshingkar & Akter,

2009). Furthermore, the unequal development and urbanisation of states serve as key motivators for internal labour migration in India. The central, eastern, and northeastern sections of India exhibit low levels of urbanisation, prompting workers to migrate to the southern and western regions (Bhagat & Keshri, 2018), which boast greater job opportunities. In destination cities or states, this influx of workers from less developed areas meets the short-term demand for low-wage labourers willing to work without long-term benefits, such as tenure security, minimum wage compliance, pensions, or insurance. Additionally, these labour migrants aid numerous industries in sustaining operations in destination areas. They even undertake odd jobs such as rag picking, sweeping, and providing domestic assistance to support themselves and their families (Kusuma et al., 2014; Babu et al., 2017).

The article focuses on interstate labour migration to the South Indian states, which increased significantly between 1991 and 2011. This rise is attributable to various factors, including economic changes, agricultural difficulties, and the expansion of transportation infrastructure. Economic liberalisation measures introduced in the early 1990s led to rapid economic growth and industrialisation in several parts of the country, particularly in the South, resulting in a high demand for a workforce. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector in

many regions of India, particularly in the eastern and central areas, has faced considerable challenges, as evidenced by decreased agricultural production, mounting debt, and limited job opportunities. This situation compelled a significant number of individuals to relocate to other regions of the country in search of better livelihoods (Mishra & Nayak, 2020; Mishra, 2020). Moreover, the development of transportation infrastructure, such as highways and railways, facilitated the movement of people across the country, making it easier for migrants to reach their destinations.

The selection of Andhra Pradesh (including present-day Telangana), Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu as the focus of this study on interstate labour in-migration is based on several key factors. These South Indian states are prominent recipients of migrant labour, exhibiting substantial and sustained in-migration flows driven by their diverse and relatively advanced economies. This diversity encompasses strong IT and service sectors (Karnataka and Kerala), a robust manufacturing base (Tamil Nadu), and a mix of agriculture, alongside growing urban and industrial sectors (Andhra Pradesh). Their higher rates of economic growth and rapid urbanisation, particularly the development of major metropolitan centres, create significant labour demand, serving as powerful pull factors. Furthermore, according to NITI Aayog's MPI ranking, these states collectively

ranked as the top-performing region. Finally, each state presents unique migration dynamics, such as Kerala's unique case of high out-migration coupled with in-migration, making this region a compelling case study for understanding the complexities of internal migration in India.

Therefore, the study aims to analyse the trends and patterns of interstate labour in-migration to South Indian states (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu) from 1991 to 2011.

Specifically, it aims to (1) identify the primary source regions of interstate labour migrants to each of the South Indian states; (2) analyse the socio-economic characteristics (e.g., age, sex, education, occupation) of inter-state labour migrants to South India; and (3) compare and contrast the patterns of inter-state labour migration across the four South Indian states. By examining these factors, this research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the drivers, characteristics, and implications of interstate labour migration within this dynamic region of India.

Data and Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research approach, utilising secondary data analysis. The main data source used is the Census of India for the years 1991, 2001, and 2011. Census data provide information on reasons for migration, as well as the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the migrants, their last place of residence, and the

duration of their residence, which are used to identify interstate migrants. The analysis focuses on migration flows to four Southern Indian states: Andhra Pradesh (including the present-day state of Telangana), Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. The study period of 1991-2011 allows for a comparative analysis of migration patterns before and after economic liberalisation. The analysis includes:

- Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and migration rates, provide an overview of the volume and direction of migration flows.

- Growth rate analysis: Decadal growth rates are calculated to assess changes in migration over time.

- State-wise and labour-type analysis: Migration data is disaggregated by state and by labour-type migration to identify specific trends and patterns.

Key Findings

Understanding the reasons behind interstate migration is crucial for effective policymaking and regional development planning. The Census of India provides valuable data on these motivations, categorising them primarily as work/employment, business, education, marriage, moved after birth, moved with household, and others (Census of India reports). Although self-reported and potentially subject to individual interpretation, these categories offer valuable insights into the primary drivers of migration. Analysis of Census data reveals a clear gendered

pattern; economic factors, specifically work and employment, as well as business, are the primary motivators for male migrants, reflecting their role as primary breadwinners. Conversely, marriage and movement with the household are significantly more prominent reasons for female migration, highlighting the influence of socio-cultural norms and patriarchal structures.

The data in Table 1 specifically examine interstate in-migration to South Indian states and the change in the magnitude of inflow over two decades, from 1991 to 2011, based on the reasons for migration. Regarding the overall change in inter-state migration to these four states, it is evident that during the first decade (1991-2001), only Karnataka demonstrated a significant increase in the influx of inter-state migrants by 30 percent; aside from Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh recorded a growth of 4 percent, while Tamil Nadu experienced a negative rate of change (-14 percent). Between 2001 and 2011, Tamil Nadu saw a decadal growth rate of 127 per cent in interstate migrant inflow. Alongside Tamil Nadu, the other three states also witnessed substantial growth in migrant inflow: Kerala by 44 per cent, Karnataka by 57 per cent, and Andhra Pradesh by 54 per cent, respectively.

Besides this aggregate change in the magnitude of the flow of interstate migrants to South Indian states, the magnitude of the inflow of migrants based on the reason for migration has also changed over the

two decades. Between 1991 and 2001, as indicated in Table 1, the number of migrants arriving in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh for business, educational, and family reasons declined significantly. Furthermore, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh saw a 23 per cent decrease and a 7 per cent decrease, respectively, in the inflow of migrants coming to the states for employment purposes. Meanwhile, Karnataka was the only state to witness positive growth in the influx of migrants, largely due to these factors.

However, during the latter decade (2001-2011), Kerala experienced a decline in the flow of interstate migrants for business and family reasons, while Andhra Pradesh observed a shift in migration patterns after birth. In addition to this, all four states reported significant growth in the flow of interstate migrants for various reasons. However, Kerala recorded a growth rate of three digits, namely, 725 per cent, in the inflow of interstate migrants due to movement after birth, while the growth for all other reasons remained in double digits. Karnataka, on the other hand, registered a double-digit growth rate for all migration reasons. Conversely, Tamil Nadu noted triple-digit growth in education—198 per cent, marriage—129 per cent, family movement—138 per cent, and movement after birth—272 per cent. In comparison, Andhra Pradesh experienced growth rates of 151 per cent and 595 per cent in education and family movement, respectively.

Nevertheless, in absolute terms, employment has consistently been one of the primary reasons for interstate migration. In 1991 and 2001, employment ranked as the second most significant reason for interstate migration to Kerala, following family movement. However, in 2011, employment became the most popular reason for such migration. In Karnataka, employment was the third most common reason for migration in 1991, trailing behind marriage and family reunification; by 2001 and 2011, it had risen to second place. In Tamil Nadu, employment consistently remained the third most popular reason, after marriage and family movement, throughout all the years. In Andhra Pradesh, employment was also the third most popular reason, following marriage and family movement, in both 1991 and 2011. However, in 2001, employment secured the second position, surpassing family movement.

While conducting a detailed analysis of interstate migration for employment purposes across South Indian states, it became clear that Karnataka had the largest proportion of interstate migrants who moved for work-related reasons. The proportion and absolute number of migrants to Karnataka increased significantly, from 38% in 1991 to 52% in 2001 and 53% in 2011. On the other hand, the proportion of migrants to Kerala and Andhra Pradesh has declined over time (Table 2), with the notable exception of Tamil Nadu, where the

ratio fell to 15% in 2001 from 23% in 1991 before rising to 18% in 2011.

Over the years, the educational profile of interstate migrant workers in South Indian states has been steadily increasing. This shift is significant as it indicates a growing skilled workforce migrating in search of better opportunities. This trend has several important implications. Firstly, it suggests a potential for higher productivity and economic growth in destination states, as

skilled workers bring valuable human capital. Secondly, it highlights the evolving nature of migration patterns, moving away from purely unskilled labour migration. Finally, this shift emphasises the need for policies that support the integration and utilisation of skilled migrant workers in destination states, such as recognising educational qualifications and facilitating access to professional networks.

Table 1
Absolute and Decadal Change (1991-2011) in Interstate Migration to South Indian States Based on Reasons of Migration

States	Kerala					Karnataka				
	1991	2001	Decadal change %	2011	Decadal change %	1991	2001	Decadal change %	2011	Decadal change %
Employment	110923	124292	12	154749	25	300963	489784	63	781998	60
Business	10410	8625	-17	8189	-5	55157	55488	1	74397	34
Education	7980	5756	-28	9953	73	59630	75225	26	102587	36
Marriage	84330	88362	5	121964	38	511966	597406	17	871999	46
Family moved/ Moved with Household	138733	126220	-9	58999	-53	381276	383295	1	650135	70
Moved after birth	-	23381	*	192811	725	-	144424	*	216846	50
Natural calamities	1540	-	*	-	*	17530	-	*	-	*
Others	83171	77623	-7	107758	39	273709	328849	20	549698	67
Total	437087	454259	4	654423	44	1600231	2074471	30	3247660	57
States	Tamil Nadu					Andhra Pradesh				
Reasons of Migration	1991	2001	Decadal change	2011	Decadal change	1991	2001	Decadal change	2011	Decadal change
Employment	179939	138081	-23	263085	91	203014	189031	-7	281141	49
Business	30890	11986	-61	17452	46	36747	28355	-23	44977	59
Education	34160	19842	-42	59162	198	17870	9561	-46	23951	151
Marriage	255067	172833	-32	395024	129	372086	353261	-5	558334	58
Family moved/ Moved with Household	208011	149668	-28	355703	138	238308	46025	-81	319699	595
Moved after birth	-	54551	*	203029	272	-	209814	*	93675	-55
Natural calamities	2000	-	*	-	*	4520	-	*	-	*
Others	132929	180211	36	357316	98	121596	191363	57	270113	41
Total	842996	727172	-14	1650771	127	994141	1032753	4	1591890	54

Source: Census of India & Author’s calculation

(Note: No data was available on migration for those who moved after birth in 1991 or for natural calamities in 2001 and 2011.)

Table 2

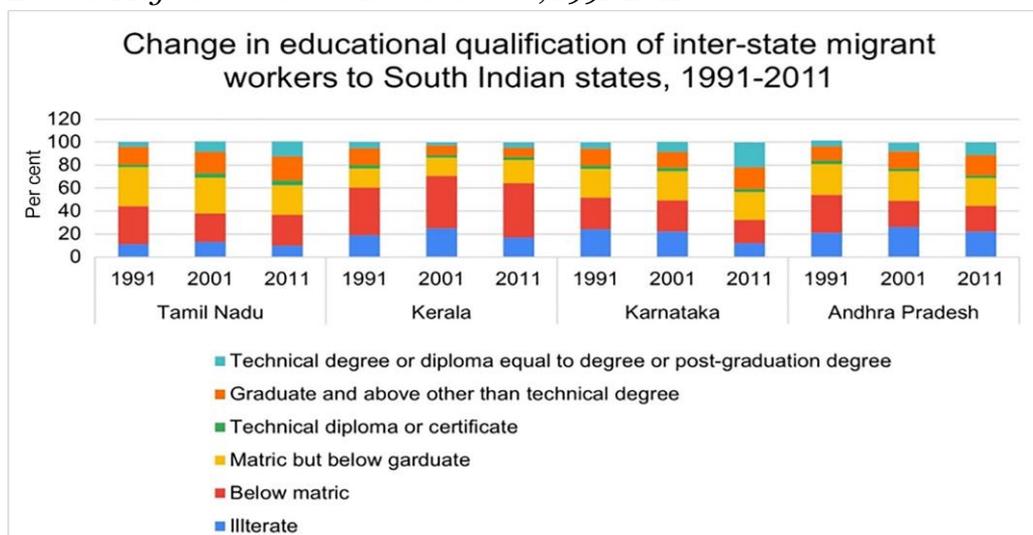
Share of Interstate Labour Migrants in Each South Indian State in 1991, 2001 and 2011

States	1991	% Share	2001	% Share	2011	% Share
Kerala	110923	14	124292	13	154749	10
Karnataka	300963	38	489784	52	781998	53
Tamil Nadu	179939	23	138081	15	263085	18
Andhra Pradesh	203014	26	189031	20	281141	19
Total	794839	100	941188	100	1480973	100

Source: Census of India

Figure 1

Vertical and Horizontal Change in Educational Qualification of Interstate Labour Migrants to South Indian States, 1991-2011



Source: Census of India & author's compilation

Figure 1 illustrates the vertical change in qualification levels of migrants across different years and states. Conversely, horizontal change denotes a shift in the qualification level of migrants within a specific state over several decades. During the period from 1991 to 2001, the percentage of interstate labour migrants who were illiterate increased in all South Indian states but subsequently declined again between 2001 and 2011. In Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, the proportion of migrants

holding graduation degrees and above, excluding technical degrees and diplomas equivalent to degrees or post-graduation degrees, has increased over time. In Kerala, the majority of inter-state migrants who migrated for employment had below-matric qualifications for all the years.

Over the years, the age composition of interstate migrant workers to South Indian states has shifted towards younger populations. This trend is driven by factors such as increasing educational attainment

Table 3*Age Composition of Inter-State Labour Migrants to South Indian States, 1991-2011*

Age composition of migrant workers	Percentage share of males			Percentage share of females		
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
0-14	2	1	0	8	3	1
15-19	4	7	5	7	10	6
20-24	9	18	17	13	21	19
25-29	13	21	22	14	21	25
30-34	14	17	18	12	13	16
35-39	14	13	13	12	11	11
40-59	36	21	20	26	18	19
60+	8	3	5	8	3	4

Source: Census of India & compiled by the author

in source states, which leads younger individuals to seek better employment opportunities in more developed regions. This shift in age composition has significant implications for both source and destination states. Younger migrants typically possess higher skill levels and are more adaptable to new technologies, contributing to economic growth in destination states. However, the departure of young, competent individuals from source states may result in a brain drain, which can hinder their long-term development. Policymakers in both source and destination governments must understand this demographic change to design effective policies that address difficulties and maximise the benefits of interstate migration.

Over the years, the age composition of labour migrants to South Indian states has increasingly concentrated within the 20-29 age group, which is also a significant portion of the young population, as per the National Youth Policy, 2014 (Table 3). However, in 1991, the majority of labour migrants were

between the ages of 40 and 59, indicating an influx of middle-aged workers to South Indian states. Furthermore, there was notable labour migration among females from the age group of 0-14 years; this illustrates the prevalence of child labour during the pre-liberalisation period. Additionally, with the implementation of the Child Labour Act in 1986, one can observe a considerable decrease in child migration for labour in the years 2001 and 2011. Regarding specific age groups, the majority of female migrants were aged 40 to 59 in 1991, later concentrating in the 20-29 age group in 2001, and by 2011, most female migrants were within the 25-29 age group. Meanwhile, males predominantly fell into the 40-59 age group in 1991, and, in 2001 and 2011, they were represented in both the 20-29 and 40-59 age brackets.

In 1991, the major labourers who migrated for employment were the main workers in all the South Indian states, followed by non-workers, with the share of marginal workers being relatively small (Table 4).

Table 4

State-wise Share of Type of Workers who Migrated for the Reason of Employment, 1991-2011

Years/ States	Main workers	Share of states in %	Marginal workers	Share of states in %	Non- workers	Share of states in %	Total	Share of states in %
1991								
Andhra Pradesh	1990269	77	20056	1	569478	22	2579803	40
Karnataka	1239139	85	12311	1	209304	14	1460754	22
Kerala	504070	83	15030	2	87211	14	606311	9
Tamil Nadu	1475935	80	13748	1	361937	20	1851620	28
Total	5209413	80	61145	1	1227930	19	6498488	100
2001								
Andhra Pradesh	9809060	42	2407758	10	11245077	48	23461895	36
Karnataka	6351786	38	1873521	11	8335070	50	16560377	25
Kerala	2242924	24	558429	6	6389128	70	9190481	14
Tamil Nadu	6530106	41	1256024	8	8038253	51	15824383	24
Total	24933876	38	6095732	9	34007528	52	65037136	100
2011								
Andhra Pradesh	15272056	40	3419805	9	19668783	51	38360644	34
Karnataka	10060989	38	2323839	9	14078342	53	26463170	23
Kerala	4201738	24	1170689	7	12490992	70	17863419	16
Tamil Nadu	11894251	38	2253600	7	17126256	55	31274107	27
Total	41429034	36	9167933	8	63364373	56	113961340	100

Source: Census of India and author's calculation (Note: The data of migrants are from all places to South Indian states, as data for inter-state migration for the type of workers was not available)

Furthermore, 40% of migrants citing employment as a reason for migration were heading to Andhra Pradesh, followed by 28% to Tamil Nadu, 22% to Karnataka, and 9% to Kerala. In 2001, the proportion of main workers declined significantly, while the proportions of non-workers and marginal workers increased considerably. Additionally, the share of total work migrants in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu decreased, whereas Karnataka's position improved.

Lastly, the proportion of primary worker migrants once again declined in 2011 in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, while remaining unchanged in Karnataka and Kerala. The proportion of non-worker migrants increased in all three states except Karnataka. The share of marginal workers also fell in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka but rose in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Overall, the total share of both primary and marginal workers decreased, whereas that of non-workers increased.

Thus, this decadal trend indicates a troubling shift in the composition of migrant workers in South Indian states. The proportion of main workers, those employed for the majority of the year, has declined, while the percentage of non-workers who migrated for employment has increased. This change signifies a potential decline in the quality of employment opportunities available to migrants. It raises concerns

regarding the long-term economic and social well-being of these workers and could adversely affect both source and destination states.

Table 5, along with Figures 2, 3, and 4, illustrates the six leading origin states that dispatched migrant labourers to the four South Indian states. The data reveal a substantial proportion of interstate migration among the South Indian states.

Table 5
Top 6 Origin States to Send Interstate Migration for Work to South Indian States

Andhra Pradesh					
States/UT	Total interstate migration for work, 1991	States/UT	Total interstate migration for work, 2001	States/UT	Total interstate migration for work, 2011
Tamil Nadu	41950	Tamil Nadu	37454	Karnataka	47106
Karnataka	27005	Karnataka	29640	Odisha	44897
Maharashtra	22840	Maharashtra	29479	Maharashtra	43278
Kerala	14011	Orissa	23935	Tamil Nadu	41517
Orissa	13550	Kerala	14626	Bihar	17236
Rajasthan	6840	Bihar	9840	Uttar Pradesh	16200
Karnataka					
Tamil Nadu	124291	Tamil Nadu	167131	Tamil Nadu	204746
Andhra Pradesh	65456	Andhra Pradesh	121362	Andhra Pradesh	199501
Kerala	55095	Kerala	75215	Kerala	82697
Maharashtra	23731	Maharashtra	36685	Maharashtra	55014
Rajasthan	7460	Rajasthan	15843	Odisha	37178
Uttar Pradesh	4600	Bihar	13124	Bihar	35788
Kerala					
Tamil Nadu	90681	Tamil Nadu	92784	Tamil Nadu	72899
Karnataka	7580	Karnataka	9874	West Bengal	22318
Maharashtra	3450	Maharashtra	5382	Karnataka	12794
Andhra Pradesh	(2052).	Andhra Pradesh	3020	Odisha	7777
Delhi	800	West Bengal	1790	Maharashtra	6865
Uttar Pradesh	680	Orissa	1714	Assam	5780
Tamil Nadu					
Kerala	91123	Kerala	52141	Kerala	77955
Andhra Pradesh	32380	Andhra Pradesh	25814	Andhra Pradesh	44312
Karnataka	18970	Karnataka	16680	Karnataka	38357
Pondicherry	7490	Maharashtra	8339	Rajasthan	16683
Maharashtra	6510	Rajasthan	6504	Maharashtra	14884
Rajasthan	5300	Pondicherry	6373	Odisha	11580

Source: Census of India, compiled by the author.

However, over the years, their position has changed, specifically for Andhra Pradesh. Additionally, in the case of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha's

position improved between 1991 and 2011, and Kerala was no longer among the top states in 2011, making

way for states from other regions of the country.

In Karnataka, the top three spots were held by South Indian states. However, there is a shift in the bottom three states: Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh were replaced in the latter decade, and Odisha became a new entrant in 2011.

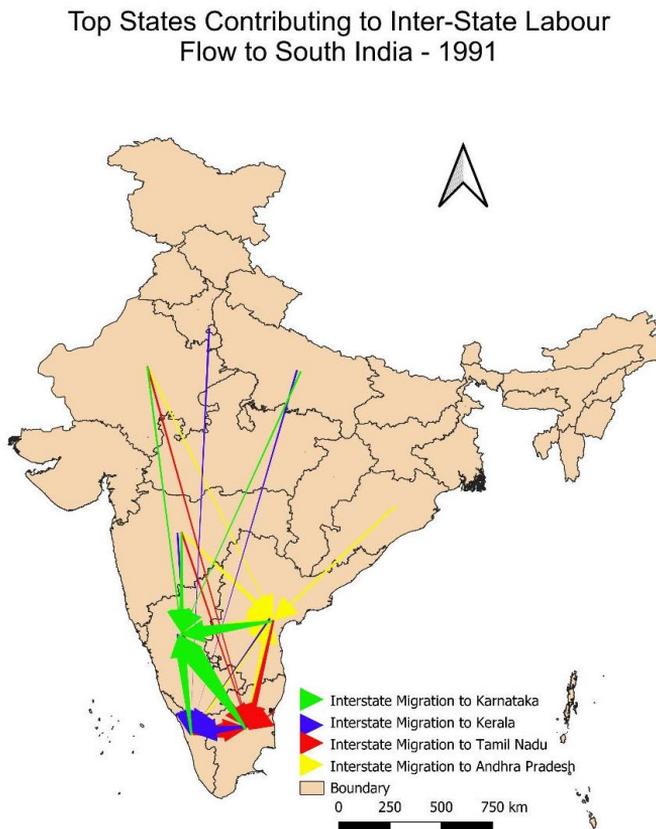
Tamil Nadu continued to be Kerala's primary state for sending labour migrants across all three data periods, although the rankings of other states fluctuated. In 2011,

Assam entered the top six states, while Andhra Pradesh fell out, and the standings of West Bengal and Odisha improved.

Throughout the decades, Tamil Nadu has received the most labour migrants from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, making it the top-ranking state on the list. However, Odisha was a new entry in the top six list in 2011. Hence, it is evident that Tamil Nadu received the most migrants from the southern region of the country itself.

Figure 2

Top Six States Contributing to Interstate Labour Flow to South Indian States, 1991



Data source (Figures 2 to 4): Census of India

Figure 3

Top Six States Contributing to Interstate Labour Flow to South Indian States, 2001

Top States Contributing to Inter-State Labour Flow to South India - 2001

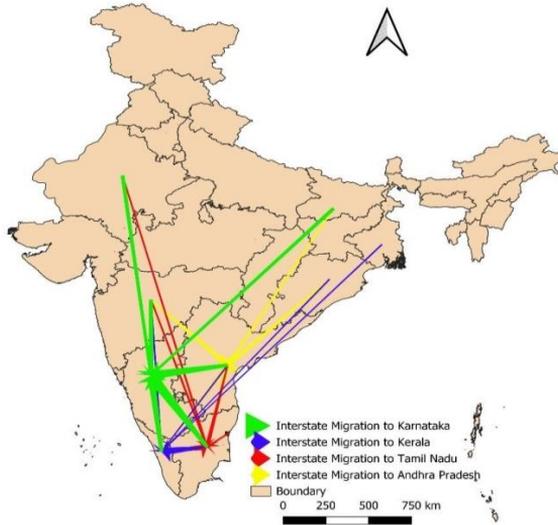
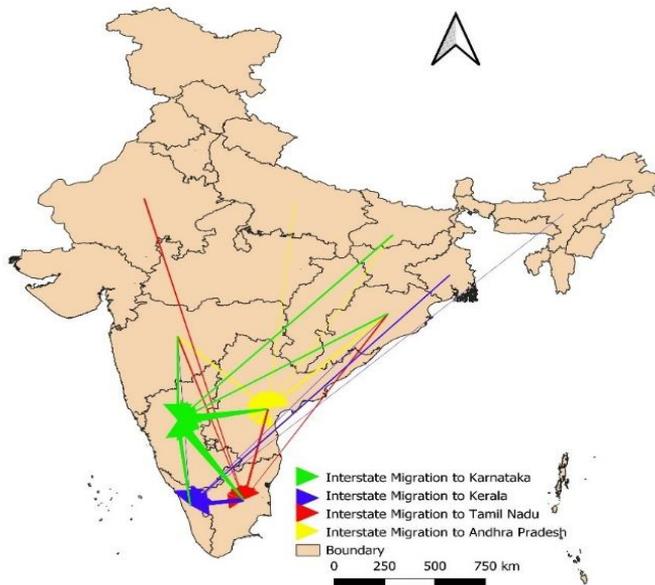


Figure 4

Top Six States Contributing to Interstate Labour Flow to South Indian States, 2011

Top States Contributing to Inter-State Labour Flow to South India - 2011



Note: The thickness of the arrows shows the magnitude of the interstate in-migration flows towards the South Indian States.)

Table 6

Decadal Change in Labour Migration from Worst Performing States in MPI to South Indian States, 1991-2011

Destination/origin states	1991	2001	Decadal change (%)	2011	Decadal change (%)
Andhra Pradesh					
Bihar	7760	9,840	27	17,236	75.16
Jharkhand	*	1,440	-	3,718	158.19
Uttar Pradesh	8470	8,755	3	16,200	85.04
Madhya Pradesh	3860	3,668	-5	4,939	34.65
Karnataka					
Bihar	2630	13,124	399	35,788	172.69
Jharkhand	*	1,975	-	8,828	346.99
Uttar Pradesh	4190	12,946	209	34,920	169.74
Madhya Pradesh	1330	3,074	131	7,869	155.99
Kerala					
Bihar	420	880	110	4,875	453.98
Jharkhand	*	351	-	1,339	281.48
Uttar Pradesh	510	1,555	205	4,402	183.09
Madhya Pradesh	460	711	55	1,339	88.33
Tamil Nadu					
Bihar	1440	3,445	139	10,905	216.55
Jharkhand	*	355	-	2,336	558.03
Uttar Pradesh	2246	2,782	24	7,911	184.36
Madhya Pradesh	1190	1,520	28	2,208	45.26

Source: Census of India, compiled and calculated by the author

(Note: Data for Jharkhand state is not available for the year 1991, as it was part of Bihar, which was later formed on November 15, 2000.)

Interstate labour migration in India is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including economic disparities between states. Individuals from states with lower Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) scores, often linked to limited economic opportunities and higher poverty rates, are more likely to migrate to states with higher MPI scores. Migrants from lower MPI-scoring states view these target states, primarily situated in South India, as offering better economic prospects, higher incomes, and more developed infrastructure. This perception draws

workers seeking improved livelihoods, prompting them to migrate in search of better opportunities. Moreover, this migratory pattern contributes to economic growth in destination states and remittances sent back to source states, which can potentially alleviate poverty in their regions.

the long term. However, it raises concerns about possible brain drain in source states, as well as the social and economic impacts on migrant communities.

The migration of labour migrants from the worst-performing states in India, including Bihar, Jharkhand,

Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh, has increased significantly over the last decade, as shown in Table 6. Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have witnessed a notable rise in the number of workforce migrants, particularly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In contrast, while the absolute growth in Kerala and Tamil

Nadu is relatively modest, the growth rate is considerably higher. Furthermore, when the combined data are analysed (Table 7), it is clear that the share of these states in total inter-state labour migrants has increased over time, from 4.34% in 1991 to 7.06% in 2001 and 11.13% in 2011.

Table 7

Share of Interstate Labour Migrants from the Lowest-Ranking States in the MPI to Total Interstate Labour Migrants to South Indian States, 1991-2011.

Year	Total interstate labour migrants to South Indian states	Total interstate labour migrants from lowest lowest-ranking states in MPI to South Indian states	Percentage share
1991	794839	34506	4.34%
2001	941188	66421	7.06%
2011	1480973	164813	11.13%

Source: Census of India, compiled and calculated by the author

Conclusion

The period from 1991 to 2011 witnessed a dynamic shift in inter-state labour migration to South India. While the region continued to attract significant numbers, the nature of this migration evolved. The age composition is likely skewed younger, with a higher proportion of young adults seeking employment opportunities. Education levels among migrants also improved over the two decades. South India occupied the top positions among inter-state migrant-sending states in 1991. However, their position deteriorated later, particularly in the case of Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, creating more space for states from other regions of the country. Moreover, the share of states with lower Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) scores likely increased, contributing a substantial share of labour migrants to South Indian

states. However, the composition of migrant workers within these states has changed. The share of main workers, those employed for the majority of the year, has declined since 1991, while the proportion of marginal and non-workers, including those engaged in seasonal or informal work, has increased. This shift could indicate the declining quality of employment opportunities available to migrants in South India. Understanding these evolving trends is crucial for policymakers in both source and destination states to effectively address the needs of migrant workers and promote equitable development across India.

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