

The Life and Times of Migrant Workers in Chennai

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1 Introduction

Tamil Nadu is one of the most industrialised and urbanized state in the country and fast growing economy particularly since the 1990s. In the midst of the ongoing economic slowdown across the world, Tamil Nadu has posted a growth rate of 12 percent growth in 2011-12 as against the nation's overall growth rate of only 6.5 percent. With regard to employment in the states, organized sector employment constitutes 10 percent of the total employment. The rapid growth in manufacturing and service sector created a massive demand for workers in various activities. The small and medium scale manufacturing enterprises as well as construction firms were experiencing enormous labour shortage. It was at this time the migrant workers from the North and the East of the country started flowing into various sectors. What started as trickle has swelled into the most important labour supply stream. The entire manufacturing and the services sector of the Chennai hub increasingly depend on the migrant workers. This phenomenon of ever expanding migrant workers in various employment centres is widely reported in the state. Our present paper is an attempt to study such migrant workers.

1.1 Definition of “Temporary Migration”

Since the study aims at capturing the living and working conditions of rural-urban temporary migrant workers the scope of the proposed definition for the present study is much broader, and deviates especially from the narrow definition used in India. In India temporary migration, seasonal migration, short-term migration and circular migration are used interchangeably. The Census defined it as referring to those staying away from their usual place of residence for less than one year. The National Sample Survey (NSS) earlier (55th Round 1999-00) referred to those staying away for two month or more but less than six months but later (66th Round 2007-08) defined temporary migrant “as a household member who has stayed away from his or her usual place of residence for one month or more but less than six months in the last 365 days for employment or in search of employment”.

We define, for the purpose of the study, a temporary or circular migrant worker as a person who stayed away from his or her village for work or seeking work and is bound to return to the usual place of residence after a certain period, the

period could be relatively short as in seasonal migration in India or long as in “peasant migration” in China.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:-

- i. to analyse the impact of migration on employment, income, debt and asset position of rural migrant households,
- ii. to understand the factors that contribute to the present state of neglect and poor mobilization of urban migrant labour, and
- iii. to unravel the social, political and cultural implications of the present state of living and working conditions of the urban migrant labour based on an in-depth field study

1.3 Methodology of the Study

The study relies on the fieldwork involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the migrant workers. This was supplemented by case studies, on-site observations; informal discussions with workers, employers, officials and interactions with local citizens and workers.

We were in no position to undertake a systematic random survey as the universe remains unmapped and hence a complete list of migrants is not available. Given this constraint, we were to undertake the survey of migrant population by identifying work locations of migrants in the city. In identifying the locations, we went by *a priori* knowledge about the work spot where migrant workers were located in large numbers. Moreover, we were also constrained by access to the migrant workers. We moved from one location to another through references so as to cover the planned number of sample workers. In a way it is a snowstorm sampling method at two levels. One employer would refer us to another employer. At another level, one worker team would refer us to another worker team. There were many times that the investigation team was denied access to the workers by the supervisors and contractors. Investigators visited the camping workers during the night for the interviews. Many interviews were not possible during one visit. As the workers were very tired after a long day, the survey progressed very slowly. An equal constraint was the language. None of the investigators and associates was equipped with even functional knowledge of any

North Indian language. It was with the help of long time migrant workers who had acquired a working knowledge in Tamil, that we could undertake the survey.

We have used a structured questionnaire with close ended questions for survey. The responses were coded for further processing. Few questions yielded poor responses from the respondents. For instance, the steps in migrating to Chennai did not come out clearly in the questionnaire based survey whereas it was quite evident when we did the case studies. More important issue is the attractiveness of cheap food available in Tamil Nadu. The quantitative survey failed to capture this dimension whereas our one to one interaction with open ended questions invariably highlighted this issue. We will discuss this phenomenon in detail in an appropriate section.

Though the migrant workers are all pervasive, we have surveyed three important sectors in which migrant workers are employed in large numbers. They are the construction sector, manufacturing sector and service sector. All these three sectors are very visible and employ very large number of workers both migrants and non-migrants. All fatal accidents reported in the media either in the construction site or in any manufacturing company mention the migrant workers to be the victims. Similarly, any visit to a restaurant, right from the road side tea-stall to posh restaurants will indicate that migrant workers are employed in large numbers. Their actual numbers cannot be estimated with our existing data sources. But the numbers are so large that their presence has several impacts on the socio-cultural fabric of the city. The local vegetable markets in many parts of the city display the prior list of each vegetable written in Hindi. Small shop keepers and the city bus conductors are conversing with the migrant workers in Hindi. In some industrial areas, one has to know Hindi to find their way. Many industrialist, restaurant owners and service providers claim that these sectors in Chennai will hardly survive without the migrant workers.

Thus, our survey has covered three important sectors that employ migrant workers viz. manufacturing, construction and services. We have interviewed a minimum of 100 workers in each sector and all together we have interviewed 315 workers.

The report has four sections. The first section deals with the socio-economic profile of the migrants. The second section is on the process of migration. Employment and earnings of the migrant workers at the destination constitutes the third section. The fourth section discusses the life of the migrant workers at the destination. Remittances and its impact on the lives of the migrant

workers are discussed in the penultimate section. The last section concludes our discussion.

2. Socio Economic Profile of Migrant Workers

Tamil Nadu used to be the source of migrant workers to Karnataka, Kerala and to some extent to Andhra Pradesh as well. The drought prone western and northern districts used to be the origin of migrants to Bangalore. The inter– state water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu resulted in the insufficient water flow in the Cauvery basin. The entire cropping pattern changed from a two crop sequence to a single crop sequence in most part of the delta. This had resulted in reduction in scope for employment for agricultural workers in the Cauvery delta. Millions of workers migrated to Kerala to fill the vacuum created by the Kerala workers who had migrated to the shores of western Asia. These are some migratory streams originating from Tamil Nadu in recent times. Historically, it had sent millions of workers to Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, West Indies and to so many other destinations to work as plantation workers and unlike in the recent past, these historical migrants had migrated forever. The migrants of the recent past are predominantly seasonal migrants who migrate for some time during the year and return to their base but only to go the destination again in search of work.

The growing urbanization, rural road net works, increase in the rural non-farm employment have all combined to lead to a shortfall in the supply of local labour to the urban centers. Equally importantly, the demand for labour had witnessed an increase by several folds in these urban centers. The booming industrial, construction and service sectors required several million new hands particularly during the last decade. The construction boom was fuelled by the boom in the housing and infrastructure activities led by the growing software industry on the one hand and the investment by the state in new infrastructures. Despite mechanization to a considerable extent and new methods of construction, the demand for physical labour multiplied. Chennai industrial cluster witnessed enormous investments in new industries of various scales absorbed not only the local labour but also the labour from the hinterlands. Agriculture and other activities like silk weaving collapsed as they were out competed by the industries in wage payments to their workers. When the demand for labour grew further, even the supplies from hinterlands were insufficient and the more prosperous industries poached the labour of the less fortunate sectors. The small scale industrial sector and the service sector faced the crunch as the workers felt more secure in the employ of big industrial units. Though it is a mirage, the work

conditions were relatively better but not with the traditional lifetime security of employment and other benefits.

The service industry that was catering to the requirements of other sectors both locally and internationally boomed during the same period. This again drew people from all over but could never get the required numbers.

Inter state migrant worker stream which started as a trickle a decade ago, rapidly grew in numbers and turned indispensable for the economy of the state. By now it has evolved as a neatly worked out system with its components of the system of migration, hiring, provision of housing and other amenities, payments, remittances, return migration of these workers etc. A new migrant has to figure out the system and in no time he is part of it. Workers who have put in two to three years in Chennai act as the conduits for the new migrants both to introduce the system as well as to be the message bearers for the employers as direct communication is impossible without a common language.

Since our sample is not a systematic random sample, we are in no position to emphatically conclude the general characteristics of the migrant workers including their origin. The results of our survey may be biased as we chose the accessible locations and accessible respondents. Despite their non-generalisability, the survey data help us to provide a first cut picture. Having discussed the cautionary disclaimer, let us have look into the origin of the surveyed population.

2.1 Origin of the migrant workers

The surveyed migrant workers had come from twelve different States of the country and from Nepal as well. We discern during our field work that few migrant workers were from Bangladesh but they conceal their place of origin but claim to be from either Assam or West Bengal.

Largest number of migrant workers has come from Assam (about 23 percent) followed by Odisha (14.6 percent), West Bengal (14 percent) and Bihar (13.7 percent). Andhra Pradesh (9.5 percent) and Tripura (0.3 percent) are other important origins (Table 1).

Largest number of workers had come from North East followed by Eastern States. Together, they account for 60 percent of the workers surveyed in Chennai.

Northern region accounts for about 25 percent of the workers. Importantly, South accounts for only about 11 percent of the migrant workers (Table 2).

Table 1: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Origin, Chennai, 2013.

State	Number of workers	Percent
AP	30	9.5
Arunachal Pradesh	2	0.6
Assam	71	22.5
Bihar	43	13.7
Haryana	2	0.6
Jharkhand	28	8.9
Kerala	3	1.0
MP	2	0.6
Nepal	13	4.1
Orissa	46	14.6
Tripura	26	8.3
UP	5	1.6
WB	44	14.0
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 2: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Origin, Chennai, 2013.

Region	Number of Workers	Percent
South	33	10.5
North East	99	31.4
North	80	25.4
East	90	28.6
Nepal	13	4.1
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Having looked into the origin of the surveyed workers, let us now explore the socio-economic characteristics of the migrant workers.

2.2 Age of the migrant workers:

During our field work, we found most of the migrant workers to be quite young, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Our survey

data indicates that the average age of the migrant workers in the construction sector is the highest at 35 followed by those who are employed in services with an average age of 31. But the average age of migrant workers in the manufacturing sector was only 23 (Table 3).

Manufacturing employment requires some skill acquisition and also the flexibility and ability to work with machines. Many of the manufacturing processes are semi-automated and do not require very high levels of skill. The young migrant workers are thus found suitable and are engaged in the relatively more rigorous manufacturing employment. We have interviewed nearly 40 manufactures in Chennai about their labour practices. Most of them employ migrant workers directly or indirectly through labour contractors. They insist that their contractors get younger workers to work in their factories. This gets reflected in the average age of the worker in the manufacturing sector as compared to the other two sectors.

Table 3: Average Age of the Migrant Workers across Sectors, Chennai, 2013.

S. No	Sector	Average age (Years)
1	Construction	35
2	Manufacturing	23
3	Service	31
	Average	29

Source: Survey Data

2.3 Age selectivity and Place of Origin

There seems to be a pattern in the migration stream into Chennai from various destinations as far as the age of migrants is concerned. While the migrants from the Eastern and Northern India is relatively young (with an average age of 28 and 29 respectively), those who have migrated from the North East and South are older (with an average age of 38 and 39). Migrants from Nepal are also older with an average age of 33. The age selectivity could be due to the type of industry and the specific occupation in which they are employed (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of Surveyed Workers by Region and Average Age, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Region	No. of Workers	Average Age
1	East	90	28
2	North	80	29
3	North East	99	38
4	South	33	39
5	Nepal	13	33
	Total	315	29

Source: Survey Data

2.4 Caste composition of migrant workers:

Indian society is socially hierarchical and lowers the social order, less privileged the group would be. Given the social deprivation of the lower caste groups, the tendency to migrate in search of better livelihoods is higher among them provided the traditional hold of the upper castes are loosened. Let us explore the social composition of the surveyed migrant workers.

Scheduled Caste migrants account for nearly 43 percent of the surveyed population and 18 percent belong to OBCs. 'Others' constitute about 16 percent and STs around 7 percent. Just 1 percent of the migrants are from 'OC' group and the social background of 13 percent of the migrants remain unknown (Table 5).

We do not find much of a variation in the regional pattern. While SC migrants constitute more than 40 percent in the entire region, the OBCs account for about a fifth in the North East, East and Northern regions. STs account for one third of the migrants from Nepal.

Table 5: Distribution of Sample Migrant Workers by their origin and Caste, Chennai, 2013.

Region	Caste												Total	
	OC		OBC		SC		ST		Others		NA			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
South	1	3.0%	1	3.0%	2	6.1%	4	12.1%	16	48.5%	9	27.3%	33	100.0%
North East	0	0.0%	25	25.3%	42	42.4%	6	6.1%	11	11.1%	15	15.2%	99	100.0%
North	1	1.3%	16	20.0%	45	56.3%	8	10.0%	5	6.3%	5	6.3%	80	100.0%
East	1	1.1%	16	17.8%	41	45.6%	5	5.6%	16	17.8%	11	12.2%	90	100.0%
Nepal	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	46.2%	4	30.8%	1	7.7%	2	15.4%	13	100.0%
Total	3	1.0%	58	18.4%	136	43.2%	27	8.6%	49	15.6%	42	13.3%	315	100.0%

Source: Survey Data

2.5 Marital status of the migrant workers

We do not have information for nearly one fifth of the surveyed workers regarding their marital status. Majority of the remaining workers (account for 44 percent of the surveyed workers) are unmarried and about 37 percent are married. The proportion of unmarried is quite high among the manufacturing workers (about 84 percent of them) whereas it is the lowest among the construction workers. Given the young age of the workers in manufacturing sector, they remain unmarried whereas the average age of a migrant worker in the construction sector is 35 and hence could have married. In services, about 30 percent of the workers remain unmarried.

In terms of regional pattern, nearly 59 percent of migrant workers from North East surveyed in Chennai remained unmarried whereas only about one fifth of them from the South were unmarried.

Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Sample Surveyed Workers by their Marital Status across the Sectors and Regions of Origin, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Sector/Region	Marital Status				
		Unmarried	Married	Widowed	N.A	Total
1	Construction	18.6	53.9	0	27.5	100
2	Manufacturing	84.2	13.9	0	2.0	100
3	Services	29.5	42.0	0.9	27.7	100
	Region					
1	East	41.1	37.8	1.1	20.0	100
2	North	40.0	41.3	0	18.8	100
3	North East	58.6	24.2	0	17.2	100
4	South	21.2	51.5	0	27.3	100
5	Nepal	23.1	61.5	0	15.4	100

Source: Survey Data

2.6 Educational Attainment of the Migrant Workers:

Vast majority of the inter-state migrant workers who move seasonally in search of a livelihood are generally poorly educated. Much of the work available to them is manual in nature or they are engaged in jobs that require minimal skills. At best, they are engaged to assist a skilled person and learn their skills on the job eventually to handle a skilled job. Also the nature of production is such that with a few days of on the job training, these migrant workers are employed in production directly with the new kinds of machines permitting such handling. Let us now explore the educational background of the migrant workers. We have already noted that a substantial number of them belong to scheduled caste and OBCs. Given their poor access to education, one would expect low level of education among the migrant workers.

We find that 38 percent of the surveyed migrant workers are not educated. About a fifth of them have completed the primary school while another 22 percent have completed high school. Only about 5 percent are educated beyond the school level.

Most of the migrant workers in the construction sector (62 percent) are uneducated. Least number of uneducated (9 percent) is employed in manufacturing. The number of uneducated employed in service sector is significant at 38 percent (Table 7). The proportion of those who are educated and

employed in manufacturing is higher at all levels compared to the other two sectors.

Table 7: Percentage Distribution of Sample Surveyed Workers by their Education Level across Sectors and Regions of origin, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Sector	Educational Level						
		Not Educated	Primary	High School	HS C	Graduate	P G	Total
1	Construction	61.8	7.8	15.7	10.8	1.0	2.9	100
2	Manufacturing	8.9	36.6	29.7	17.8	6.9	0.0	100
3	Services	42.9	13.4	21.4	13.4	5.4	2.7	100
	Total	38.1	19.0	22.2	14.0	4.4	1.9	100
	Region							
1	East	43.3	17.8	16.7	16.7	4.4	0	100
2	North	40.0	17.5	21.3	8.8	3.6	6.3	100
3	North East	24.2	22.3	239.3	20.2	4.0	0	100
4	South	69.7	15.2	6.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	100
5	Nepal	15.4	23.1	53.8	7.7	0.0	0	100
6	Total	38.1	19.0	22.2	14.0	4.4	1.9	100

Source: Survey Data

Least number of migrant workers from N.East is uneducated whereas it is quite high among East, North and South. Level of education is high among the N.East migrants compared to all others in all levels of education. Surprisingly, the level of education is the poorest among the migrants from the South.

Among the Scheduled Caste migrants, who constitute about one third of the surveyed workers, about 35 percent of them are uneducated. Importantly, nearly another one third of them have completed high schooling (Table 8). Nearly 30 percent of the workers belonging to OBCs are not educated. However, 36 percent are educated only up to primary level and just 7 percent of them have gone beyond primary level and completed high schooling (Table 8).

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Sample Surveyed Migrant Workers by their educational Level and Caste, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Caste Group	Educational Level						
		Not Educated	Primary	High School	HSC	Graduate	PG	Total
1	OC	0	0	0	33.3	66.7	0	100
2	OBC	29.3	36.2	6.9	12.1	6.3	6.9	100
3	SC	35.3	12.5	31.6	16.2	4.4	0	100
4	ST	44.4	29.6	14.8	7.4	0	3.7	100
5	Others	49.0	10.2	26.5	12.2	2	0	100
6	N.A.	45.2	21.4	14.3	14.3	2.4	2.4	100

Source: Survey Data

Thus, what we find is that the educational level of the migrant workers is low and is particularly low among the SC and OBC workers and among the workers who are engaged in construction work.

2.7 Origin, Caste and Age selectivity of migrant workers in various sectors of Employment

As we have mentioned earlier, we have surveyed three important sectors that employ migrant workers in large numbers. The migrant workers reach certain destinations based on their information, networks, work conditions, skill levels and so on. Industry may require specific kind of workers and they prefer to get workers as per their specifications. Manufacturing, with its technology and machinery, may require young migrants with their ability to cope with the rigor of working along with semi-automated and automated machines. Construction sector, on the other hand may not require that kind of labour. Similarly, services are an amalgam of so many different kinds of activities and may require different kind of people. Though we may not be able to say exactly what each sub-occupation require, we may be able to profile broad contours of origin, caste and age selectivity of the sectors in employing the labour. While the age selectivity

could be due to the requirement of the industry, the other two factors may be conditioned by the supply side.

Let us first take up the origin selectivity. The construction sector attracts very few workers who originate from the North East, whereas most of the migrants from the South are into this sector. Workers from the Eastern region work predominantly in construction (40 percent of them). For the workers from the Northern region, construction is the second largest employment provider. None of the Nepali worker is in construction.

Half of the migrant workers in manufacturing sector are from the North East. Nearly 58 percent of the North East workers are employed in manufacturing. Very few from the Northern and Southern region are employed in manufacturing. It is the North and the North Eastern region that accounts for more than 82 percent of the migrant workers employed in manufacturing sector in Chennai.

Services sector is predominated by the North East, North and Eastern regions. Nearly half of the Northern region migrant workers are employed in the services sector. About one third of East and North Eastern workers are employed in this sector in Chennai.

Table 9: Percentage distribution of Migrant workers by their origin and sector of Employment, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Origin	Sector			
		Construction	Manufacturing	Services	Total
1	East	40	27.8	32.2	100
2	South	84.8	6.1	9.1	100
3	North	38.8	13.8	47.5	100
4	North East	7.1	57.6	35.4	100
5	Nepal	0	46.2	53.8	100
6	Total	32.4	32.1	35.6	100

Source: Survey Data

We find that for OBCs, service sector employs nearly 40 percent of them followed by manufacturing and construction. Proportionately fewer Scheduled Caste workers are found in construction sector (17 percent) whereas they are found in large numbers (42 percent and 40 percent respectively) in services and construction. For ‘others’, it is construction which employs 55 percent of them. Scheduled Tribe workers are hardly employed in manufacturing sector. Three fourths of those who are employed in manufacturing and services are from SCs and OBCs.

Table 10: Percentage Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Caste and across Sectors, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Caste	Sector			
		Construction	Manufacturing	Services	Total
1	OC	66.7	-	33.3	100
2	OBC	25.9	34.5	39.7	100
3	SC	17.6	40.4	41.9	100
4	ST	51.9	3.7	44.4	100
5	Others	55.1	20.4	24.5	100
6	N.A.	47.6	35.7	16.7	100
7	Total	32.4	32.1	35.6	100

Source: Survey Data

Thus, we find a pattern of caste selectivity in each sector. Do we find such selectivity among age groups?

Predominant number of migrants is very young below the age of 25 (61 percent of the sample migrants). About one fifth of them are in the age group of 26 - 35 and the remaining one fifth is in the higher age groups. This is the overall pattern.

Nearly 90 percent of those who are engaged by the manufacturing sector are youngsters. The remaining are from the next age group. Younger age workers

predominate the manufacturing sector as compared to the other two sectors. The higher aged workers (who are above 35) are predominantly found in construction, though they are fewer in number.

For the youngest age group, manufacturing employs the most (46 percent) followed by services (30 percent) and construction (23 percent). For the age group of 26-35, service sector employs 42 percent of them, followed by construction and manufacturing. For the higher age group, it is construction followed by services but nil employment in manufacturing.

Thus, we find a clear segmentation of labour market, across age, caste and region of origin. How this segmentation emerged and sustained is a question that needs to be researched on further.

Table 11: Percentage Distribution of Sample Migrant Workers by their Age across the Sector of Employment, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Age Group	Sectors			
		Construction	Manufacturing	Services	Total
1	Upto 25	25.4	46.4	30.2	100
2	26-35	37.3	20.3	42.4	100
3	36-50	54.9	-	45.1	100
4	Above 50	53.8	-	46.2	100
5	Total	32.4	32.1	35.6	100

Source: Survey Data

1.3 Land Ownership Pattern of the Migrant Workers

We have been analyzing the socio-economic status of the migrant workers whom we have surveyed in Chennai. So far we have looked into their origin, caste, age, educational and marital status and the sector of employment at the destination. Another important dimension which goes to condition their quest for a better livelihood as well as the future course of decision of these migrant workers is their access to land. Access to land usually gives a better access to education and

it is followed by migration of the long term kind in search of more stable livelihoods.

We find that nearly 65 percent of the surveyed migrant workers do not have agricultural land. About 9 percent of them have land between 1 and 3 acres. About 18 percent have land between 3 and 5 acres. Only 6 per cent of the migrant workers own land above 5 acres. Migrants who are landless are the highest among the OBCs at 76 per cent and are the lowest among STs at 56 percent. Another noticeable feature of the land owning pattern of migrant workers is that there is a small section (about one fifth) who own 3.5 acres of land among SCs, STs and Others (Table 9).

Thus, while landlessness is quite high among the migrants, there is a significant proportion which owns some land and they account for about 35 per cent of the sample migrants and they are spread across the vulnerable social groups of OBCs, STs and SCs.

Table 12: Percentage Distribution of Surveyed Workers across their landholding pattern, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Caste Group	Land Size Class					Total
		No land	Upto 1 acre	1-3 acres	3-5 acres	Above 5 acres	
1	OC	100	-	-	-	-	100
2	OBC	75.8	1.7	5.1	8.5	8.5	100
3	SC	63.9	1.4	11.7	19.1	3.6	100
4	ST	55.5	-	11.1	18.5	14.8	100
5	Others	67.3	2.0	4.0	20.0	8.0	100
6	N.A	57.1	-	10.0	23.8	10.0	100
7	Total	65.4	1.3	8.1	18.4	6.0	100

Source: Survey Data

2.8 Status of Housing at the Origin

We have discussed the land ownership pattern of the migrant workers in the previous section. We found a sizable section owning land. Does such a land ownership cohere with the ownership of other assets like housing and other amenities is what we will discuss in this section.

2.9 Ownership of Houses:

Ninety five percent of the surveyed migrant workers own a house in the native place. This pattern holds well irrespective of their caste. Only about 15 percent of 'others' live in rented accommodation in their origin.

Table 13: Percentage Distribution of Surveyed Migrant Workers by their caste and across ownership status of their housing, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Caste	House Ownership			
		Own	Rented	Others	Total
1	OC	100	-	0	100
2	OBC	98.2	1.7	0	100
3	SC	95.6	4.4	0	100
4	ST	92.3	3.7	4.7	100
5	Others	85.7	14.2	0	100
6	NA	100	-	0	100
7	Total	94.9	4.7	0.3	100

Source: Surveyed Data

Table 14: Percentage Distribution of Surveyed Migrant Workers by their caste across House Type, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Caste	House Type			
		Kutchha	Semi-Pucca	Pucca	Total
1	OC	0.3	0.3	0.3	100
2	OBC	31.0	51.7	17.2	100
3	SC	27.9	66.2	5.8	100
4	ST	11.1	77.7	11.1	100
5	Others	34.7	57.1	8.1	100
6	NA	26.1	64.2	9.5	100
7	Total	27.9	62.5	9.5	100

Source: Survey Data

When we look into the type of houses they own in their origin, we find that nearly two thirds are semi-pucca houses. Importantly, proportion of workers who have kutchha houses is the highest among ‘other’ caste followed by OBCs. Among STs, only 11 percent have kutchha houses. While a majority live in semi-pucca houses, less than ten percent live in pucca houses. OBCs (17 percent) lead the pattern whereas it is the lowest among SCs (5.8 percent) (Table 11).

The housing scenario indicates that while, the economic conditions are not abysmally low, (with 63 percent living in semi pucca houses) there is not much prosperity either (with only 10 percent living in pucca houses). Though, a majority of the workers were found to be landless, they are not living in kutchha houses which would indicate their very poor resources base. This inference gets some additional reinforcing where we find that 91 percent of the houses have electricity and 82 percent have toilet facilities. Numbers for electricity and particularly for toilets are somewhat farfetched. We need to be cautious in taking these numbers for our consideration.

Table 15: Distribution of Surveyed Workers across their Caste and access to Electricity and Toilet in their native place, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Caste	No. of Houses Electrified		No. of Houses with Toilets		Total No. of Houses	
		No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
1	OC	2	66.6	2	66.6	3	100
2	OBC	57	98.2	51	87.9	58	100
3	SC	131	96.3	118	86.7	136	100
4	ST	23	85.1	24	88.8	27	100
5	Others	38	77.5	33	67.0	49	100
6	NA	37	88.0	32	76.1	42	100
7	Total	288	91.4	260	82.5	315	100

Source: Survey data

2.10 Access to Public Distribution System at Origin

We have looked into the housing and other amenities of the migrant workers at their origin. The quality of life at the origin can be further assessed by their access to public distribution system. The quality of the public distribution system could vary enormously across States. All the states, except Tamil Nadu, have targeted public distribution system. Under the targeted public distribution system, a major problem at the implementation level is the problem of exclusion. Deserving households will be left out of the system. Undeserving households will be benefiting as well. What one may get from PDS is each State depends on the specific policy of each State. The basic and essential condition to access PDS is to have the family cards. Most of our respondents (about 88 percent) have family cards at home. More than 91 percent of those who have family cards have BPL cards and hence are part of the targeted public distribution system. Very few have AAY cards. There are marginal variations across the States from where the migrants originate.

Table 16: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Origin and their access to PDS, Chennai, 2013.

State	Do you have Public Distribution System card at home?				Type of PDS card											
	Yes		No		Total	Above Poverty Line		Below Poverty Line		Antoaya Anna Yojana		No Details		Total		
	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%			
AP	28	93.3	2	6.7	30	0	0.0	7	23.3	2	96.7	0	0.0	1	3.3	28
Arunachal Pradesh	1	50.0	1	50.0	2	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Assam	60	84.5	11	15.5	71	4	6.7	5	91.7	0	0.0	1	7.0	1	7.0	60
Bihar	42	97.2	1	2.3	43	4	9.5	8	90.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	42
Haryana	1	50.0	1	50.0	2	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
Jharkhand	27	96.4	1	3.6	28	0	0.0	4	88.9	1	3.7	2	7.4	2	7.4	27
Kerala	3	100.0	0	0.0	3	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3
MP	2	100.0	0	0.0	2	0	0.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Nepal	11	84.6	2	15.4	13	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	11
Orissa	34	73.4	12	26.6	46	5	14.7	2	85.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	34
Tiripura	26	100.0	0	0.0	26	1	3.8	2	92.4	0	0.0	1	3.8	1	3.8	26
UP	4	80.0	1	20.0	5	0	0.0	4	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4
WB	38	86.4	6	13.6	44	0	0.0	3	97.7	0	0.0	1	6.4	1	6.4	38
Total	277	87.9	38	12.1	315	16	5.8	23	91.3	2	0.7	6	2.2	2	0.7	277

Source: Survey Data

These migrants do not have access to PDS at the destination. They need to buy their grains from the open market and whatever fragile food security they might have had at the origin is lost when they migrate.

2.10 Access to Health at the Origin

Another important marker of quality of life is access to health care systems. When the migrants move away from the native, they may not have access to the health care system that they were using at their origin. We find that nearly 62 percent were accessing government hospitals for their health ailments. Only about 8 percent were going to the private medical practitioners. A combination of government and private hospital was accessed by 27 percent of the respondents in their place of origin (Table 14).

Government hospitals were the important service providers for the migrants from Assam, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal. More than 70 percent of migrants originating from these States were going to the Government hospitals except in West Bengal where only 50 percent went to such hospitals.

Medical Insurance coverage is very poor as only 6 percent of the respondents have reported positively.

Table 17: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their kind of Access to Health at their Place of Origin, Chennai, 2013

State	Source of Health Care at Origin														Total
	Govt Hospital		Private Hospital		Native Medical Practitioner		Others		Govt and Private Hospital		Govt and Native Medical Practitioner		Govt, Private and Native medical Practitioner		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
AP	22	73.3	7	23.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	30
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Assam	52	73.2	4	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	21.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	71
Bihar	34	79.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	16.3	2	4.7	0	0.0	43
Haryana	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Jharkhand	9	32.1	1	3.6	1	3.6	0	0.0	15	53.6	0	0.0	2	7.1	28
Kerala	1	33.3	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	3
MP	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	2
Nepal	7	53.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	46.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	13
Orissa	32	69.6	4	8.7	0	0.0	1	2.2	9	19.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	46
Tripura	13	50.0	2	7.7	0	0.0	1	3.8	9	34.6	0	0.0	1	3.8	26
UP	1	20.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	80.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	5
WB	22	50.0	5	11.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	15	34.1	2	4.5	0	0.0	44
Total	194	61.6	25	7.9	1	0.3	2	0.6	85	27.0	4	1.3	4	1.3	315

Source: Survey Data

3. Process of Migration

So far, we have discussed the socio-economic background of the surveyed migrant workers in Chennai. We found that they predominantly originate from East, North East and Northern regions of India. They are young (below 25 years of age) and belong largely to SC and OBC castes. Though a majority of them do not have land, a sizeable number own land. Young workers employed in the manufacturing sector are large numbers whereas the construction sector employed the older ones as well. The services sector employed both the young and the older ones. The access to housing and other amenities like electricity and toilets is on the higher side. Most of them have reported that they live in semi-pucca own houses with electricity and toilets at their origin.

Let us now focus our attention on the process of migration. We will explore the reasons, information, finances, contractual arrangements, etc., in the migration process.

3.1 Reasons for Migration

Seasonal migration to Chennai is not due to distress is clearly evident from the survey data. It is not the debt which has driven them to migration. Nor is it due to any oppression. Augmenting the earnings is evidently the most widespread reason for migration. Only 4 percent of the respondents have reported that they migrated due to indebtedness. Less than 1 percent has responded that oppression drove them to migrate.

Lump sum money requirement is stated to be the reason for migration by nearly 60 percent of the respondents. Better opportunities and money requirements is stated to be the reason for migration by 23 percent of the workers (Table 15).

Table 18: Distribution of Migrant Workers by the Reasons for Migration, Chennai, 2013.

Reason for migration	No. of Workers	Percent
Indebtedness	14	4.44
Cultural Oppression	3	0.95
Better Opportunity	15	4.76
Lump sum money requirements	188	59.68
No Other Opportunities	24	7.62
Better Opportunities and Lump sum money requirements	71	22.54
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 19: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Caste and across the reasons for Migration, Chennai, 2013.

Caste	Reason for migration												Total
	Indebtedness		Cultural Oppression		Better Opportunity		Lump sum money requirements		No Other Opportunities		Better Opportunities and Lump sum money requirements		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
OC	1	33.33	0	0.00	1	33.33	1	33.33	0	0.00	0	0.00	3
OBC	7	12.07	3	5.17	0	0.00	23	39.66	6	10.34	19	32.76	58
SC	4	2.94	0	0.00	11	8.09	90	66.18	3	2.21	28	20.59	136
ST	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	7.41	7	25.93	5	18.52	13	48.15	27
Others	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	40	81.63	4	8.16	5	10.20	49
NA	2	4.76	0	0.00	1	2.38	27	64.29	6	14.29	6	14.29	42
Total	14	4.44	3	0.95	15	4.76	188	59.68	24	7.62	71	22.54	315

Source: Survey Data

We do not find any significant difference in the stated reason by workers belonging to various caste groups (Table 16).

Perhaps, this kind of non-distress migration may indicate the positive frame within which the migration process takes place. This positive frame does not in any way absolve the exploitative labour market that cares the least for the welfare of the workers.

3.2 Source of Information for Migration

Access to information is a very important factor that influences the decision, process and destination of migration. These kinds of seasonal migrations predominantly work in the realm of informality. Even the information is through the informal channels like the relatives and friends who would have migrated earlier and returned to the base for their annual visit lasting for a month or two. Potential migrants get the required information from them and often accompany to their migratory destination. They may stay with them at the initial stages. They may be introduced to the potential employer by the senior migrant. Our survey results indicate that two thirds of the migrants have received information about the destination from the friends and fellow workers. Relatives were helpful with information for 13 percent of the migrant workers. Just about 10 percent of them have come to know about the destination through the formal systems like advertisements, agents and contractors (Table 17).

Friends and fellow workers are the most important sources of information for all caste groups of workers. The proportion of workers who got the information from the relatives varies across caste groups. Relatives as a source of information are relatively strong among the STs whereas it is lowest among SCs (Table 18).

The potential employers as well as the contractors incentivize the existing workers to recruit new hands for them. The monetary incentive for each new recruit may ensure the efficiency of this system of recruitment as compared to other formal systems. For the potential migrant, the fear of the unknown is minimized if one could go with a neighbor or a friend to a far off place than in the case of reaching the destination through an agent. The reliability of the information is also higher if it comes through the know persons. But why information through friends and fellow workers had prompted so many to migrate whereas information through relatives has prompted fewer migrants is beyond our understanding and comprehension.

Table 20: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Source of Information for Migration, Chennai, 2013.

Source of Information for Migration	No. of Workers	Percent
Relatives	41	13.0
Friends / Fellow Workers	209	66.3
Media/Advertisements/Pres/TV	4	1.3
Agents/Sardars/Contractors	27	8.6
Others	9	2.9
Relatives Friends and Fellow Workers	25	7.9
Total	315	100.0

Source: Survey Data

Table 21: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Caste and Source of Information, Chennai, 2013.

Caste	Source of Information for Migration												Total
	Relatives		Friends / Fellow Workers		Media/ Advertisements/ Pres/TV		Agents/ Sardars/ Contractors		Others		Relatives Friends and Fellow Workers		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
OC	0	0.0	2	66.7	1	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3
OBC	8	13.8	36	62.1	2	3.4	9	15.5	1	1.7	2	3.4	58
SC	7	5.1	10	78.7	1	0.7	8	5.9	5	3.7	8	5.9	136
ST	9	33.3	14	51.9	0	0.0	3	11.1	1	3.7	0	0.0	27
Others	5	10.2	29	59.2	0	0.0	2	4.1	1	2.0	1	2.4	49
NA	1	28.6	21	50.0	0	0.0	5	11.9	1	2.4	3	7.1	42
Total	41	13.0	209	66.3	4	1.3	27	8.6	9	2.9	25	7.9	315

Source: Survey Data

3.3 Source of Assistance and Quantum of Assistance

Once the information about the probable destination is gathered and the decision is made to move, the next step in the logistics is to look for resources, mainly finances, to travel and to spend in the destination until get employed. Resource poor households may sell whatever little assets they may have so as to mobilize the resources. Credit worthy households may borrow from some sources to pay for the migration. Sometimes the contractor may advance a sum to meet the cost. When we look into the sources of assistance for migration, we find that nearly half of them have reported that they had their own savings to meet the cost. Another 32 percent had reported that someone in the family had provided the assistance. Sale of assets was a source of funding for just once percent of the migrants and only an equal number had reported that advance from employer as a source of finance for migration. Around 11 percent of the migrants had borrowed to finance the migration (Table 19). Thus, nearly 80 percent of the migrants had their own resources (either their own or the family members) to migrate. This finding suggests that the unfair and extra-economics coercions that emanate from advances from employers and contractors have a limited and minimal scope. Insignificant levels of asset sales to finance migration also go to indicate that the migrants are not so distressed. We do not know from where they could earn some money as well as save to finance their migration. It could be due to step migration whereby they could have earned and saved in a closer destination to their home and then embarked on the long distance migration. We find that kind of step migration in international labour migration when the first step of migration is to a destination within the country and once enough resources are accumulated, they find their migration to another country in search of employment.

Table 22: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Source of Assistance for migration, Chennai, 2013.

Source of Assistance for Migration	No. of Workers	Percent
Sale of Assets	4	1.27
Own Savings	150	47.62
Family	102	32.38
Advance from Employer	4	1.27
Borrowed	34	10.79
NA	21	6.67
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 23: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their Caste and Source of Assistance for migration, Chennai, 2013.

Caste	Source of Assistance for Migration												
	Sale of Assets		Own Savings		Family		Advance from Employer		Borrowed		NA		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
OC	0	0.0	2	66.7	1	33.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3
OBC	0	0.0	19	32.8	25	43.1	1	1.7	4	6.9	9	15.5	58
SC	2	1.5	70	51.7	47	34.6	0	0.0	10	7.4	7	5.1	136
ST	0	0.0	6	22.2	5	18.5	3	11.1	12	44.4	1	3.7	27
Others	0	0.0	32	65.3	14	28.7	0	0.0	2	4.1	1	2.0	49
NA	2	4.8	21	50.0	10	23.8	0	0.0	6	14.3	3	7.1	42
Total	4	1.3	150	47.6	102	32.4	4	1.3	34	10.8	21	6.7	315

Source: Survey Data

The sources of assistance vary across the social groups. While ‘family’ is the dominant source of finance for the OBCs (at 43 percent), it is the ‘own savings’ (at 52 percent) for the SCs. Importantly, more than 44 percent of the STs have borrowed to fund their migration (Table 20). Thus, one can discern subtle differences in the funding patterns of various social groups. Access to land and other resources which vary across social groups may have an influence in the source of assistance that we have observed here. Along with the resource position, it could also be due to the social systems in place among various social groups that may influence the source of finance for migration. We are in no position to explore this phenomenon any further.

How much do they spend to migrate or how much have they mobilized to migrate? On an average a migrant worker had mobilized Rs. 2230 to migrate to Chennai. The average sum in the case of those who were supported by their family was the highest of Rs. 2602 whereas the average sum mobilized for

migration from own savings stood at Rs. 2169. The figure reported as borrowed from employer is unrealistic and hence needs to be ignored. There are minor variations in the sum mobilized by various social groups from different sources (Tables 21 and 22).

Table 24: Average Quantum of Money Mobilized from various sources by the Migrant Workers, Chennai, 2013.

Source of Financing	Sum (Rs)	Average (Rs)	Number of Workers
Sales of Assets	8000	2000	4
Own Savings	325300	2169	150
Family	265400	2602	102
Advance from employer	1300	325	4
Borrowed from	70300	2068	34
Total	670300	2280	294

Source: Survey Data

Table 25: Average Quantum of Money Mobilised by Migrant Workers of various Social Groups from different sources, Chennai, 2013.

Caste	Sales of Assets			Own Savings			Family			Advance from employer			Borrow	
	Sum	Mean	N	Sum	Mean	N	Sum	Mean	N	Sum	Mean	N	Sum	Mean
OC	.	.	0	8000	4000	2	1500	1500	1	.	.	0	.	.
OBC	.	.	0	45200	2379	19	60000	2400	25	200	200	1	4500	112
SC	4000	2000	2	129800	1854	70	123500	2628	47	.	.	0	20400	204
ST	.	.	0	20500	3417	6	18000	3600	5	1100	367	3	28700	239
Others	.	.	0	72300	2259	32	44500	3179	14	.	.	0	3000	150
NA	4000	2000	2	49500	2357	21	17900	1790	10	.	.	0	13700	228
Total	8000	2000	4	325300	2169	150	265400	2602	102	1300	325	4	70300	206

Source: Survey Data

3.4 Type of Migration Single or Family?

A part of the decision to migrate is to decide whether it is going to be a single migration or a family migration. Migration is search of work in certain occupations require family migration as the unit of labour will be the family. Migration for earth works, brick kilns, sugarcane harvesting are some of the well known cases that prompts a family migration. There are many other occupations that do not necessitate a family migration. There could be several other forces at play that would determine the type of migration. Our survey among the migrant workers in Chennai indicates that nearly 94 percent of the surveyed have migrated alone. Thus, most of the seasonal migrants have stretched out life worlds with families often left behind in the place of usual residence in villages. Given the predominant pattern of single migration, we do not expect any variation across the sectors, caste or origin (Tables 23, 24 and 25).

Table 26: Distribution of Migrant Workers by the type of Migration, Chennai, 2013.

Type of Migrant	Number of Workers	Percent
Single Migrant	295	93.65
Family Migrant	20	6.35
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 27: Distribution of Migrant Workers by the type of Migration across Sectors, Chennai, 2013.

Industry	Type of Migrant					
	Single Migrant		Family Migrant		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Construction	92	29.2	10	3.2	102	32.4
Manufacturing	97	30.8	4	1.3	101	32.1
Service	106	33.7	6	1.9	112	35.6
Total	295	93.7	20	6.3	315	100.0

Source: Survey Data

Table 28: Distribution of Migrant Workers by the type of Migration across Caste, Chennai, 2013.

Industry	Type of Migrant				Total
	Single Migrant		Family Migrant		
	N	%	N	%	
OC	3	100.0	0	0.0	3
OBC	56	96.6	2	3.4	58
SC	130	95.6	6	4.4	136
ST	26	96.3	1	3.7	27
Others	44	89.8	5	10.2	49
NA	36	85.7	6	14.3	42
Total	295	93.7	20	6.3	315

Source: Survey Data

3.5 Previous Employment of Migrant Workers

We were discussing about possible step migration among our surveyed workers as most of them have had their own savings. They might have worked in their native to earn some wages and save to come to Chennai. However, the survey data indicates no such history of previous employment among most of the workers. Nearly 93 percent of our respondents have reported that they have not worked earlier (Table 26).

Table 29: Percentage Distribution of Surveyed Workers by their previous employment and present sector, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Present Sector	Previous						
		Not employed	Security	Hotel	Construction	Company	Other	Total
1	Construction	88.2	1.0	2.9	4.9	0	2.9	100
2	Manufacturing	100	-	-	-	-	-	100
3	Services	91.1	0.9	-	-	0.9	7.1	100

Source: Survey Data

Thus, we find that augmenting the income as the most prominent reason for migration among the migrant workers. Friends and relatives are the source of information and use their own resources or the family resources to migrate. But they migrate as singles leaving behind their family. Very few of them have worked before they came to Chennai. Having looked into the process of migration, let us now discuss the employment and earning aspects of the lives of the migrants.

4 Employment and Earnings

4.1 Nature of Contractual Arrangement

Several types of contractual arrangements are possible between the employers and the workers. Employing the workers indirectly through the contractors is the present trend. Even organized modern manufacturing units employ substantial number of their workers through contractors. A set of contractors supply the required number of workers to such employers. There is no direct link between the actual worker and the employer. The wages are paid to the contractors and contractors in turn pay the workers or through lower level intermediaries. In the process, a contract is in place only between the contractor and the employer. There is no written contract between the contractor and the worker. The workers are part of a group and the leader of the group attaches himself and his group to a larger group and eventually to a contractor. When he moves, the group members also move. Individual workers, who are employed directly by the employers in smaller units and by small employers are paid directly but they also do not have any signed contract. This is the common pattern that we found among the migrant workers. The survey data shows that 99 percent of the respondents have reported that they do not have any written contract.

4.2 Skill Acquisition of the Migrant Workers:

Our interactions with many employers suggested that the migrant workers are mostly unskilled when they land in the work place. They begin as helpers to the skilled workers and over a period of time get trained on the job and become a full fledged worker. The duration of training vary from job to job. Very few get their skills through formal training. Over survey data reinforces this information. Nearly 84 percent of our respondents have learnt their skills through work. Only about 3 percent have been formally skilled. About 13 percent are not skilled and perhaps they are new hands who are in the process of acquiring skills at the time of our survey (Table 27).

Table 30: Distribution of Surveyed Workers by their Methods of Skill Acquisition, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Method of Skill Acquisition	Number of Workers	Percent
1	Learning through work	264	83.3
2	Formal skill training	9	2.9
3	No skill acquired	42	13.3
	Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

When we look into the process of skill acquisition by the migrant worker across sectors, we find that there is hardly anyone who has not acquired skill through work in manufacturing whereas about one fifth in the construction sector and seventeen percent in the service sector have not acquired any skill (Table 28). Those sectors may employ unskilled workers along with skilled workers and hence many have reported that they have not acquired any skills.

Table 31: Percentage Distribution of workers by Skill Acquisition methods across Sectors, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Industry	Method of Skill Acquisition			
		Learning through work	Formal skill training	No skill Acquired	Total
1	Construction	78.4	0	21.6	100
2	Manufacturing	93.1	5.9	1.0	100
3	Services	80.4	2.7	17.0	100
	Total	83.8	2.9	13.3	100

Source: Survey Data

There is an incentive for the workers to acquire the skill as the wage levels are higher for skilled workers and also mobility across employers is easier. Most of the skills are of the nature that they do not require technical education. Thus, acquiring some skill on the job is easier and there is scope as many employers constantly look for skilled workers. The interactions with workers indicated that the easiness with which one could learn the skill is also part of the information that they get from their sources at the origin. We found that the migrant workers are trained within a week to operate semi-automated lathes in manufacturing units. In the service sector, migrant workers are employed initially in the back room operations while the front desk is handled by the local hands. But once they acquire some local language, they are also deployed in the front-office. In construction, the migrant workers are given jobs which are risky in nature and which are not taken up by the local labour.

Thus, one finds that the nature of the labour market, technology and level of skill required all combine to enable the migrant worker to acquire some skill rather quickly and get deployed in any sector as a full fledged worker and earn the market wages.

4.3 Working Hours per day for the Migrant Workers

Migrant workers are more vulnerable than the local workers on several counts. One 'positive' opinion about the migrant workers as compared to, the local worker among all the employers is that they are 'hard working'. Once the food and shelter is taken care of, the migrant worker puts in more than 10 hours of work whereas the local labour will not work more than 8 hours unless paid overtime. This is another reason why the employers would like to employ the migrant workers.

Let us now analyze the number of hours that the surveyed migrant workers have worked. We find that only 22 percent of the workers had worked for 8 hours per day. All others had put in more hours of work per day. Largest number of workers (28.2 percent) had put in 12 hours of work which is equivalent to 1.5 shifts per day. About 9 percent put in 13 hours of work in a day (Table 29).

Table 32: Percentage Distribution of Sample Workers by their hours of Work per day and the Sector, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Sector	Hours of Work per Day						
		8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
1	Construction	3.1	48.0	6.1	8.2	9.2	25.5	100
2	Manufacturing	34.3	23.2	9.1	2.0	31.3	0.0	100
3	Services	28.7	13.0	9.3	3.7	42.6	2.8	100
	Total	22.3	27.5	8.2	4.6	28.2	9.2	100

Source: Survey Data

We also find that 13 hours of work is the highest in construction sector where more than one fourth of the surveyed workers put in that many hours of work. Eight hours of work is available only for 3 percent of the workers in the construction sector. No other sector had recorded such a low proportion of workers working for 8 hours. Nearly half of the workers work for 9 hours in construction sector. There may be a part compensation for those who work for 13 hours whereas for putting in one hour of additional work will not fetch them any additional gain if they are paid on a daily basis.

We also find that 43 percent of the workers in the service sector work for 12 hours a day, the highest among all the sectors and about 31 percent of the workers in the manufacturing sector also work for 12 hours a day.

When we look into the working hours put in by the workers of various social groups, we find that largest number (31.5 percent) of OBCs put in 8 hours of work whereas largest number of SC migrant workers (36.6 percent) put in 12 hours of work. 'Others' predominantly work for 9 hours per day. Largest number of STworkers also work for 12 hours a day (Table 30).

The variations in the working hours of the caste groups may be due to the specific sectors in which they are predominantly employed.

Table 33: Percentage Distribution of Migrant Workers by Number of Hours of Work and Caste, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Sector	Number of Hours of Work						
		8 hrs	9 hrs	10 hrs	11 hrs	12 hrs	13 hrs	Total
1	OC	0	33.3	0	0	33.3	33.3	100
2	OBC	31.5	13.0	5.6	7.4	27.8	14.8	100
3	SC	20.9	25.4	7.5	2.2	36.6	7.5	100
4	ST	7.7	15.4	19.2	19.2	23.1	15.4	100
5	Others	27.1	54.2	10.4	0	8.3	0.0	100
6	NA	20	30	5	5	27.5	12.5	100
	Total	22.3	27.5	8.2	4.6	28.2	9.2	100

Source: Survey Data

4.4 Days of Work in a week

Since all the migrant workers are employed without any written contract and employed on a casual basis, the number of working hours was more than the mandatory 8 hours per day and our interactions with the workers as well as the employers indicated that the payment for overtime wages was on the same rate for the first eight hours of work. If the worker puts in additional work of 4 hours, then half a day wage is added to the daily wage and no other additional payments are made. Even in factories that were to work for three shifts managed with one and a half shift at the time of slow down with one batch of workers rather than to have two batches of workers. They also saved on the additional payments like PF, ESI etc. (if at all they do it). Similarly, workers worked for 6 days in a week and Sunday was a holiday. But in some cases, workers could take time off only during the afternoon on Sundays. This is true among construction workers. We found that nearly 94 percent of the surveyed workers had reported that they have worked for 6 days a week. This however does not mean that the worker will be paid for the seventh day of the week. All the workers are paid at the end of the

month but only for the number of days that they have worked in that month and there is no paid holiday for them.

4.5 Periodicity of Wage Payment

Wage payment to the migrant workers are generally during the end of the month. Wages are calculated based on the number of days of work during that month. Some firms pay on a daily basis or on a weekly basis. It is predominantly a monthly payment for the migrant workers (Table 31).

Table 34: Distribution of Workers by their Periodicity of Wage Payment, Chennai, 2013.

Sl. No	Periodicity of Payment	No. of Workers	Percentage
1	Daily rate	7	2.2
2	Weekly rate	27	8.6
3	Monthly rate	258	81.9
4	Piece rate	1	0.3
5	NA	22	7.0
	Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

4.6 Average Wages Earned by Migrant Workers

On an average, a migrant worker of our survey earned Rs. 6907 per month. Lowest wage income was earned by the workers in the construction sector (Rs. 6333 per month). Highest wage income was earned by the workers in the service sector at Rs. 7767 per month. Workers in the manufacturing sector earned a monthly wage income of Rs. 6768 per month (Table 32).

Table 35: Average Month Income of the Migrant Workers across Sectors, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Sector	Average Monthly Wage Income (Rs)
1	Construction	6333
2	Manufacturing	6768
3	Services	7767
	All	69.7

Source: Survey Data

One can discern marginal variations in the average monthly earnings of the migrant workers across their caste. Interestingly, workers of ST community had reported the highest average monthly income of Rs. 8000. Workers belonging to OCs, though very few in number, had reported an average monthly income of Rs. 7000. ‘Other’ earned a little less at Rs. 7182. OBC migrant workers earned the least at Rs. 6763 on an average and SC workers earned a slightly higher wage of Rs.6800 per month (Table 33).

Table 36: Distribution of Sample Workers across their Caste and Average Monthly Income, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Caste	Average Monthly Income (in Rs)
1	OC	7500
2	OBC	6793
3	SC	6800
4	ST	8000
5	Others	7182
6	NA	6813
	Total	6907

Source: Survey Data

4.7 Duration of Employment and Increments in Wages

Migrant workers also experience wage increases if they continue to work with the same employer for a long duration. Wage increments are given on an annual basis. We found many migrant workers being employed with the same employer for more than one year and many have indicated that their wages have gone up since joining the present employer. In this context, we have explored both the duration of work and the annual increments of the workers. The average duration of employment of the surveyed migrant workers was 1.9 years during our survey period. The longest duration of 2.3 years of stay of workers is in the services sector. Workers seem to stay with the employer on an average of 1.4 years in manufacturing sector during our time of survey. Workers in construction sector stayed with the employer for 2.1 years on an average at the time of survey.

Nearly 28 percent of the surveyed workers are employed with the 'current' employment less than six months. Another one fourth had been with that employment for less than 1 year. Half of them were with the same employer for more than one year. Continuous employment with the same job seem to be high in the services sector where 62 percent of the surveyed workers have reported that they are with the same employment for more than one year. How does this duration of employment influence the wage increments of the workers?

Table 37: Percentage Distribution of Migrant Workers by their duration of Employment, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Sector	Average Duration of Employment	Duration of Present Employment			
			Upto 6 months	6-12 Months	Above 1 year	Total
1	Construction	2.1	26.5	26.5	47.1	100
2	Manufacturing	1.4	28.7	33.7	37.6	100
3	Services	2.3	27.7	10.7	61.6	100
	All	1.9	27.6	23.2	49.2	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 38: Percentage Distribution of Migrant Workers by Number of Increments, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Sector	No Increment	Number of Increments				
			One	Two	Three	Four	Total
1	Construction	10.8	84.3	2.9	2.0	-	100
2	Manufacturing	65.3	33.7	0	1.0	0	100
3	Services	18.8	75.9	1.8	1.8	1.8	100
	All	31.1	65.1	1.6	1.6	0.6	100

Source: Survey Data

About one third of the workers have not experienced any wage increment. But nearly half of the workers have worked for just one year. About 65 percent of the migrant workers have got one increment. Large number of construction sector workers have experienced increment in wage income (84 percent) followed by services sector (76 percent). Only one third of the workers in the manufacturing sector have got one increment. Very few of the workers across the sectors have got more than one increment.

4.8 Non-wage Payment to the Migrant Workers

We found that all the migrant workers are casual workers and work without any contract. This is true irrespective of the sector of employment. Though they were paid a monthly wage to a large extent, other benefits like food allowance, bonus etc., may not be given to them. What we find when we look into the data is just about 5 percent of the workers receive bonus and food allowance. The rest are not given any of the non-wage payments. Service sector provides such benefits in few cases (5 percent of the workers receive them) whereas the other two sectors do not pay such benefits to its migrant workers (Table 36).

Table 39: Percentage Distribution of Migrant Workers across Sectors and Non-wage Payments, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Sector	Food Allowance	Bonus	Nil	Total
1	Construction	0	0	100	100
2	Manufacturing	0	1	99	100
3	Services	7	8	84	100
	All	2.5	3.2	94.3	100

Source: Survey Data

Though most of the workers do not get any food allowance from their employers, access to cheap food is a great attraction for the migrant workers in Chennai. All the migrant workers with whom we have interacted as well as the employers emphasized the easy access to PDS rice in Chennai. Tamil Nadu has universal PDS. Every card holder is entitled for 20 kg of rice every month free of cost. This rice is available in the market for Rs. 3-4 per kilogram and sometimes the staff of the fair price shop sell the surplus rice at this rate. Migrant workers get this rice and cook their food. Consequently, the overall food expenditure for the migrant workers is a fraction as compared to migrant workers in other States. In addition to this access to cheap rice, the State runs subsidized restaurants where food is supplied to anybody at a heavily subsidized rate (Rs. 5 per plate of sambar/curd/mixed rice and Rs. 2 for a plate of idly, pongal and Rs. 5 per plate of 3 chappathis and dhall during the night) in several places in Chennai. Most of the migrant workers access either of these channels or both and say that they could save substantial wages to be sent home. In a sense the State indirectly subsidises the employers of migrant workers through PDS and directly subsidises through the subsidized 'Ammu Unavagams' (the subsidized canteens). Migrant workers from the eastern and north-eastern India find such cheap rice a great opportunity to eat well as well as save quite a bit.

4.9 Migrant Workers and Social Security Benefits

Apart from the wages paid to the workers, some employers provide some of the social security benefits even if they are not formally employed through a written contract. The employers are to provide such benefits to all these migrant workers

as per law as they are employed throughout the year without any break. However, only very few workers receive such benefits.

EPF was available only for about one fifth of the workers and ESI was available for just about 15 percent of the workers. Less than 1 percent of the migrant workers get paid medical leave and canteen facility in the work place food subsidy is available for about 9 percent of the workers. About half of the workers get at least one of these social security benefits and the other half does not have even one of these benefits.

Construction is the worst sector which provides no social security benefit to any of the migrant workers that it employs. Manufacturing sector is not as bad as construction but it does not provide EPF to two thirds of the migrant workers and fails to provide ESI to 90 percent of the migrant workers. Nearly half of the workers in manufacturing does not get even one of these social security benefits. Service sector fares much better than the other two sectors. More than three fourths of the migrant workers in that sector get at least one of these benefits. About 29 percent get EPF and 27 percent ESI and 1.2 percent get food subsidy in the canteen (Table 37).

Table 40: Percentage Distribution of Workers across Sectors and the Social Security Benefits available to them, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Sector	Benefits							
		EPF	ESI	Paid Medical Leave	Canteen	Food Subsidy Canteen	Festival Allowances	Nil	Total
1	Construction	1.0	1.0	-	-	1.0	-	97.1	100
2	Manufacturing	23.4	10.8	-	-	12.6	0.9	52.3	100
3	Services	29.3	27.4	0.6	3.2	12.1	5.1	21.7	100
	All	19.7	15.1	0.3	1.3	9.2	2.4	51.8	100

Source: Survey Data

4.10 Hazards in Work for the Migrant Workers

Frequent media reports about accidents in construction sites invariably recount the severe injuries and sometimes loss of life of migrant workers. Our interviews with the employers also indicated that the migrant workers are deployed in hazardous tasks which the local labour refused to undertake. For instance, the plastering and plumbing in the high rise buildings are taken up by the migrant workers and not by the local workers. In fact most of the workers in such construction activity employ only migrant workers in large numbers. Similarly, most of the industrial units in and around Chennai employ predominantly migrant workers. When we explored the work related hazardous among the migrant workers, the response was much muted. Few of them responded to our queries. Only 5 percent of the workers reported that there is a hazard in their work. About 86 percent responded that there was no hazard in their work.

About 5 percent of the workers responded that they use safety gadgets against possible hazards. 35 percent did not have access to it and sixty percent workers did not respond to this question.

Table 41: Distribution of Workers by Their Perception about Work Hazards, Chennai, 2013.

Industry	What are the hazards in your work?						What are the safety measures available for you?						History, if any, of injuries			
	Yes		No		NA		Available (Helmet, Safety Belt & Hand Gloves)		Not Available		NA		Injured		Not Injured	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Construction	5	4.9	93	91.2	4	3.9	3	2.9	18	17.6	81	79.4	1	1.0	99	97.1
Manufacturing	9	8.9	72	71.3	20	19.8	12	11.9	55	54.5	34	33.7	5	5.0	67	66.3
Service	2	1.8	106	94.6	4	3.6	0	0.0	37	33.0	75	67.0	3	2.7	102	91.1
Total	16	5.1	271	86.0	28	8.9	15	4.8	110	34.9	190	60.3	9	2.9	268	85.1

Source: Survey Data

Another related question is regarding discrimination in work. We tried to explore possible discrimination between young and old, men and women, and natives and migrants. The migrant workers have reported that no discrimination based on gender or age. Less than five percent of them felt that they are discriminated against the local labour.

Table 42: Perceptions about Discrimination in Employment, Chennai, 2013

Industry	Young and the Old						Male and Female						Native and Migrant					
	Yes		No		NA		Yes		No		NA		Yes		No			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Construction	0	0.0	102	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	102	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	102	100.0	0	0.0
Manufacturing	0	0.0	100	99.0	1	1.0	0	0.0	100	99.0	1	1.0	11	10.9	90	89.1	0	0.0
Service	2	1.8	105	93.8	5	4.5	0	0.0	106	94.6	6	5.4	3	2.7	104	92.9	5	4.5
Total	2	0.6	307	97.5	6	1.9	0	0.0	308	97.8	7	2.2	14	4.4	296	94.0	5	1.5

Source: Survey Data

5 Life in Destination

So far we have discussed the process of migration, the socio-economic profile of the migrants and their employment and wages in the destination. Let us now discuss about some aspects of their life in destination. Let us start with the living conditions of the migrants.

5.1 Living Conditions of Migrants

Living conditions of migrants varied enormously. We have visited many locations where the migrant workers were living in and around Chennai. Living condition of the migrant workers in the construction sector was the poorest. If they worked with major construction companies, their accommodation was provided in labour camps in the work site or in some other location. Temporary sheds are erected with tin sheets on all sides with no flooring. These sheds are partitioned as cubicles and each cubicle accommodates 8-10 workers. No toilet is provided and there are floor level tanks fed with water that has to be used for open bathing and cooking. One of them from the room would cook in the open with available fuel and they slept in the cubicle or in the open infested with mosquitoes. Compared to the living conditions of the construction workers, the living conditions of industrial and service sector workers are better but only marginally. Cramped room is the norm there as well. But all other conditions are more or less the same with an addition of a TV or a kerosene stove as they are relatively more settled in one place than the others.

We find from the survey data that about one third of the migrant workers stay in the work site and the remaining stay outside. The average distance between the place of residence and place of work for those who stay away from work site is 4.64 kilo meters. The poor housing condition of the migrant worker is indicated by the fact that about 59 per cent of the migrant workers stay in kutcha houses and another 39 per cent stays in semi-pucca houses. Only less than 1 per cent of them stay in pucca houses. Our observations during our field visits that the rooms/house where the migrant workers stayed were cramped proves to be a common phenomenon as the average number of persons staying in the

Table 43: Access to Amenities for the Migrants in Chennai, 2013.

Amenities		Number of Workers	(%)
Location of living arrangement: at the work site/ Outside	Work Site	90	30.51
	Outside	191	64.75
Average distance to work place from home		4.64	
Type of dwelling	Kutchra	173	58.64
	Semi Pucca	115	38.98
	Pucca	2	0.68
Average No of persons sharing the space		8.88	
Average Rent paid		2927	
Average rental advance paid		9536	
Has the rent increased since you came here?	Yes	104	35.25
	No	24	8.14
Electricity availability		289	97.97
Source of Water	Corporation Water	251	85.08
	Pipe Water	15	5.08
	Hand Pump	10	3.39
	Other Sources	6	2.03
Toilet Facility Used	Common Toilet	225	76.27
	Available	41	13.90
	Individual Toilet	13	4.41
Drinking Water Source	Can Water	21	7.12
	Corporation Water	229	77.63
	Others	15	5.08
	No	256	86.78
Type of Fuel for cooking	Kerosene	130	44.07
	Wood	39	13.22
	Kerosene and Wood	23	7.80
	Gas	4	1.36
	Purchase from Market	6	2.03
Other common infra like TV and Cable available		77	26.10

accommodation stands at 9. The average rent paid for this accommodation is Rs.2927 per month and they have paid an average advance of Rs.9536 for the house. Majority of the workers have experienced a hike in the rent for their accommodation since they have moved into that place. For the kind of rent that they could pay, the accommodation is

available only in tenements built on encroached land on *puramboke* or on the banks of water ways. The beautification drive by the civic authorities of Chennai and the consequent eviction of encroachments have led to a decline in the availability of housing for migrant workers and the rental levels have gone up. Migrant workers along with the urban poor are pushed out of the city to the peripheries and they commute to their work place. We observe the average distance between their place of stay and the work place is about 5 kilo meters and also the house is predominantly kutcha. A redeeming feature of their life in Chennai is that nearly 98 per cent of workers have access to electricity. However, they are forced to pay a higher charge for the electricity like other tenants in their neighborhood. The rented room has a separate sub-meter to calculate the usage of electricity. But the house owner collects much electricity charges at a much higher rate than that is charged by the electricity board. This is a widespread practice in Chennai slums and in locations where the poor live. Rents are hiked every year and the rent hike is abnormal.

As far as water supply is concerned, 85 per cent of our surveyed migrant workers used corporation / municipal water. Other sources account for the rest. Access to toilet is a major problem as compared to water. Three fourths of them do not have access to toilet in the place of residence. They all share a toilet with the house owners and other tenants. On an average, we found that about 9 people stayed in one room. There could be a couple of such rooms and along with the members in the landlord's house; the access to toilet could be severely restricted. Municipal water is the main source of drinking water. Common cooking is

widely prevalent among the migrant workers and they use kerosene stoves. Kerosene is bought in the open market as they do not have access to PDS to source the subsidized fuel. Only about one fourth have reported that they have access to television and cable.

Apart from the poor quality of housing available to the migrant workers along with the urban poor in Chennai, the inter-State migrant workers are extremely vulnerable due to the discriminatory attitude of the State, particularly the Police. The city police suspect the migrants more frequently and are harassed for any crime in the locality. They insist on some identity for the migrants. The treatment is also harsher. Five youths from North India, suspects in a bank robbery case in Chennai, were shot dead in an 'encounter'. 'Encounters' of this kind are stage-managed to eliminate notorious criminals and gangsters at regular intervals. Such 'encounter' for the suspects of a bank robbery was a clear indication of harsher treatment by the police in Chennai. Recently, the city police Commissioner ordered the residents to collect the identity particulars of all the tenants and submit it to the local police station. This was more to collect information on the migrants than on the local population as the police were not ordering for such information earlier. Since the onus of providing the information is on the house owners who rent out their houses, the rental market for houses may tighten up further. During another occasion, the police ordered that the details of workers camping in labour camps are to be regularly submitted to the local Police station for their verification. Suspecting the migrants for the crimes in the State has become the normal course for the police. The police have defended its order in the court by listing various crimes supposed to be committed by the migrants.

This kind of policing restricts the free movement of the migrant workers. They live in constant fear. Sometimes, the police put up a story that due to slow down in the economy, many migrant workers are temporarily unemployed. Since, they do not have any system to call back, they take to crime. To prevent such crimes, the police need to know them and hence the order to provide information. The

impact of such stereotyping by the police will make the lives of the migrants difficult as many prospective leasers of houses may discriminate against them.

Sometimes the employers find the accommodation for their workers. The network of workers is also of help to find a place of stay for a worker when he reaches the city.

Thus, housing has several layers of constraints for the migrant workers. More regular work and income may outweigh these negativities of their lives but with suitable policies, the state should avoid treating the migrant workers as criminal suspects.

However, nearly eighty eight percent of the surveyed migrant workers have responded that they do not feel harassed or threatened in Chennai. They may not feel confident with a stranger who goes with the questionnaire to share their inner fears and threats and the above result or data need to be taken with this caution.

Table 44 Distribution of Migrant workers by their Threat Perception, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Category	Number of Workers	Percentage
1	Feeling threatened or harassed	5	1.59
2	Not feeling threatened or harassed	277	84.94
3	No response	33	10.48
	Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

5.2 Accessing Medical Facilities in Chennai:

So far we have discussed their living conditions in the destination. Another important aspect of their living condition in the destination is their access to medical facilities. Since they live in a metropolitan city with numerous hospitals

run by the State and the local municipal bodies, along with various levels of private health services, availability should not be a problem. It is the question of access.

We find that nearly half of them access the private medical practitioners for their ailments. There are many medical practitioners (formally trained and educated) who run clinics in the poorer neighborhood and charge a nominal consulting fee for the consultation.

Such doctors do not embark on a series of tests and a process of several rounds of consultations for an ailment as we find among the doctors in the middle class neighborhoods and in private nursing homes and polyclinics. They prescribe cheap medicines (compared to the other doctors) and treat the patient in one consultation as they know that the patient may not return in most of the cases. Urban poor access such doctors and the migrant workers may be accessing such doctors for their ailments. They may not consult doctors for all ailments. Sometimes they may go to the local medical shop and narrate the ailment to the person in the shop. Medicine is sold across the counter and there is no fee for that consultation. We find that nearly 41 percent of the migrant workers get treated through the medicines prescribed and sold by the medical shops. Very few access the government and corporation hospitals (about 3.5 percent). The choice of medical shops and private doctors over the government hospitals could be due to convenience in terms of time and space. One has to travel a long distance to access the government hospitals and also during the day time and in the process lose a day's wage. On the other hand the private doctor is available in the evening and often late into the night and the medical shops are ubiquitous and all around the neighborhood.

Seeking the help of a private doctor and getting medicine across the counter in medical shops need not exclude one another. Treatment for any ailment may start with the medical shop and if the ailment continues, the private doctor may be consulted.

Table 45: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their source of Medical Facilities, Chennai, 2013

Sl. No	Source of Medical Facilities	Number of Workers	Percentage
1	Private Doctor	293	50.8
2	Govt/Corporation Hospital	20	3.5
3	Company	16	2.8
4	E.S.I	8	1.4
5	Medical Shop	239	41.4
6	Others	1	0.2
	Total	577	100

Source: Survey Data

Note: Since a single worker may access more than one source, the total number exceeds the number of surveyed workers

5.3 Accessing Other Benefits

Apart from these channels of medical help, which often involve out of pocket expenses, there are other avenues like payment through insurance. Formal sector workers in organized industries get their insurance cover paid by their employers. However, we have not found any one worker with insurance cover. Tamil Nadu also has about two dozen welfare boards for various workers in the unorganized sector. But none of them function satisfactorily despite the fact that they are sitting over several hundred crores of rupees. While they keep collecting various types of cess, they have erected very tall entry barriers. One major issue is to identify the claimant. Authentication power is endowed to the State revenue department. The existing system put in place by the revenue department to authenticate a claimant can at best vouch a worker's identity if he happens to be from the same district. Identity of claimants from other districts cannot be

authenticated and in this process the eligibility to benefit from the welfare boards is severely restricted. If the inter-district migrant workers are unable to access the welfare board funds, how can the inter-state migrant workers access it? The Government, even after repeated representations, has not altered the procedure of authentication and thereby seriously impairs the just claims of the unorganized sector workers. Trade Unions, which safeguard the rights of workers, are virtually unknown to the migrant workers.

Sometimes, the NGOs take up the role of trade unions. Unfortunately, our sample migrant workers remain outside the focus of several NGOs who may be functioning for their welfare.

Table 46: Distribution of Workers by their Access to Insurance, welfare Boards, Labour Laws and NGOs, Chennai. 2013

Sl. No	Category	Number of Workers	Percentage	Not Responded	Percentage
1	No access to Insurance	301	95.6	14	4.4
2	No benefit from Welfare Boards	298	94.6	17	5.4
3	No awareness about Labour Laws	254	80.63	61	19.3
4	No assistance from NGOs	258	81.9	57	18.1
5	No members in Union	266	84.4	48	15.2

Source: Survey Data

6. Remittances and their Impact

6.1 Average Remittance of the Migrant Worker

The migrant workers migrate to Chennai in search of a regular work and a regular wage income. Most of them receive their wages on a monthly basis despite the fact that all of them are employed on a casual basis not even with a formal agreement. They keep working for months with the same employer and work for more than 8 hours a day. They live in kutcha houses with several others, get rice in the market (PDS rice and kerosene) at a relatively cheaper rate and cook collectively. They work for 6 days in a week and get about Rs. 7000 per month as wage income in a month. How much money does a worker send back home, as almost all of them are single migrants, is the question that we explore now.

On an average, the migrant worker sends Rs. 4065 every month to his home. Though about 35 percent of the surveyed workers were not willing to answer this question, we worked out the average from the responses that we got from the rest of the surveyed workers. More than half of them remit Rs. 2001-5000 per month. Construction workers remit the lowest amount of Rs. 3759 per month whereas service sector workers remit Rs. 4177 per month. ST workers remit the highest of Rs. 4176 per month whereas SC workers remitted the lowest amount of Rs. 3974 per month.

Table 47: Average amount of remittances per month by Migrant Workers, Chennai, 2013

Average amount of remittances per month (in Rs)	Number of Workers	Percent	Average amount of remittance
< 1000	1	0.3	700
1000-2000	16	5.1	1931
2001-5000	165	52.4	3926
> 5000	23	7.3	6696
NA	110	34.9	--
Total	315	100	

Source: Survey Data

Table 48: Average amount of remittances per month by Migrant Workers across sectors, Chennai, 2013

Sector	Amount of remittances per month						Average amount of remittances per month
	< 1000	1000-2000	2001-5000	> 5000	NA	Total	
Construction	0	9	33	4	56	102	3759
Manufacturing	0	3	61	7	30	101	4125
Service	1	4	71	12	24	112	4177
Total	1	16	165	23	110	315	4065

Source: Survey Data

Table 49: Average amount of remittances per month by Migrant Workers of various castes, Chennai, 2013

Caste	Amount of remittance per month						Average amount of remittance per month
	< 1000	1000-2000	2001-5000	> 5000	NA	Total	
OC	0	0	2	0	1	3	4150
OBC	0	4	27	3	24	58	4056
SC	0	8	80	9	39	136	3974
ST	0	1	10	2	14	27	4385
Others	1	2	27	4	15	49	4176
NA	0	1	19	5	17	42	4108
Total	1	16	165	23	110	315	4065

Source: Survey Data

6.2 Frequency of Remittance:

Majority of workers remit the money every month. About 15 percent of the workers remit the amount once in two or three months. Another fifteen percent of the worker either take the money when they go home, or send it through persons who may go to his place or ask the contractor to give the money home when they go. About 17 percent of the workers did not respond to this question (Table 47). We do not find much of a difference in the frequency of remittance across sectors or caste groups.

Table 50: Frequency of Remittance by the Migrant Workers, Chennai, 2013.

Frequency of Remitting	Number of Workers	Percent
No Remittance	53	16.8
Monthly	168	53.3
Once in 2 to 3 months	46	14.6
Other Source	48	15.2
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

6.3 Mode of Remittance

Bank transaction is the most adopted mode of remittance as nearly 64 percent of the workers send money through this mode. 'Other' mode is the second prominent mode. Postal system carries the lowest number of remittances. Sending cash through friends and relatives is almost non-existent (Table 48).

Table 51: Mode of Remittance for the Migrant Workers, Chennai, 2013.

Mode of Remittance	Number of Workers	Percent
Money Order	5	1.6
Deposit in Bank Account of Self / Family Members	201	63.8
Deposit in Bank Account of Relatives / Friends	24	7.6
Cash through Friends	2	0.6
Cash through Relatives	2	0.6
Others	53	16.8
NA	28	8.9
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Thus, the workers have adopted the cheapest and safest method of cash transfer from the destination to the origin. This fact goes to suggest that if suitable institutions and structures are introduced, the workers are willing to use it.

Similarly, withdrawal at the origin is through the use of ATM cards in 59 percent of the cases. The remaining 15 percent who constitute the total respondents who had responded, there are disparate methods like operating the bank through cherubs, use friends and relatives to withdraw the money etc. (Table 49).

Table 52: Mode of Withdrawal of remittance at Origin

Mode of Withdrawal	Number of Workers	Percent
Withdraw from ATM	186	59.0
Withdraw from Bank through Cheque etc	15	4.8
Withdrawn by family members / friends	23	7.3
Withdraw by friends	5	1.6
Postman	5	1.6
NA	81	25.7
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

6.4 Purpose for which the remittances are used at origin

About 53 percent of the workers responded that their family members use the remitted money for food. About 13 percent have used for health care and seven percent of them for education. Repayment of debt and repairing the assets has happened in about 5 percent of the families of the surveyed respondents.

Thus, despite a remittance of Rs. 4000 every month, the basic necessity seem to be the only requirement met from this income while other expenses constitute a small proportion of the respondents.

Table 53: Purpose for which remittances are used at origin

Purpose of Expenditure	Number of Workers	Percent
Food	244	53.39
Education	33	7.22
Health Care	60	13.13
Repair of Assets	24	5.25
Purchase of assets and durables	4	0.88
Purchase of other assets	6	1.31
Payment of Debt	24	5.25
Others	2	0.44
NA	60	13.13
Total	456	100

Source: Survey Data

This dismal picture of most people spending their money on food is not the complete picture. While the families spend money on food, healthcare and education, you are many households who have saved money and have deposits in the bank. When we look into the impacts of migration, we find that about 30 percent of the workers have said that due to migration, they have benefitted by having savings in the bank. Nearly 15 percent of the workers have repaired their houses. Marriage is another major expenditure that was met from remittances. Nearly six percent of the workers have repaid earlier debts and about 5 percent have spent on education. Another 4 percent have purchased land (Table 51).

Table 54: Gains from Migration as perceived by the Migrant Workers, Chennai, 2013

Gains	Frequency	Percent
Debt repaid	25	5.9
Education	20	4.8
House repair	62	14.7
Built house	14	3.3
Savings in banks	126	29.9
Marriage	46	10.9
Treatment for ill health	7	1.7
Purchase of land	18	4.3
Others	3	0.7
No Gain	13	3.1
NA	87	20.7
Total	421	100

Source: Survey Data

Thus, remittances seem to have met more than the basic requirements and have enabled the families to save as well as invest in education and health.

This inference gets reinforced when we analyze the perceptions of the surveyed workers about the improvements in their life since their migration to Chennai. More than half of them have reported that they could extend increased support to their families. About 14 percent felt that their quantum of income has increased and it is more regular. Another 14 percent felt that they have adequate food since their migration. About 15 percent opined that their credit worthiness has increased. Only very few felt that there is no improvement in their life since migration to Chennai (Table 52).

Table 55: Perceptible improvements in the Lives of Migrants, Chennai, 2013

Nature of Improvement	Number of Workers	Percent
Quantum and Regularity of Income	62	14.83
Access to Adequate Food	59	14.11
Increased Support to Family etc	225	53.83
Improved Credit Worthiness	63	15.07
No Improvement	9	2.15
Total	418	100

Source: Survey Data**6.5 Links with the Origin**

Migrant workers keep their connections with their family as most of them are single migrants. Apart from monthly or periodic remittances, they communicate with the family and their associates in their origin through mobile phones. Almost all of them have a handset and get a local connection by providing a letter from the firm where they work. Many times, the contractor who brings them to Chennai get the mobile connection. Our survey data indicate that about 75 percent communicate with home through their mobile and another 10 percent through the mobiles of their friends. Other modes are not very popular among migrant workers. Migrant workers in construction sector seem to share the mobiles more than the workers in other sectors.

Table 56: Mode of communication / contact with home at origin by the Migrant Worker, Chennai, 2013.

Mode of communication	Number of Workers	Percent
Phone from Booth	21	6.7
Mobile	235	74.6
Others (Friends Mobile)	30	9.5
NA	13	4.1
Phone from Booth & Mobile	16	5.1
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Apart from communicating with home through mobiles, migrant workers visit their home. Half of them visit their home once in a year and one fourth of them visit their home twice a year.

Table 57: Frequency of visit to Home by the Migrant Workers, Chennai, 2013.

Frequency of visit to home	Number of Workers	Percent
Every Month	3	1.0
Every Three Months	29	9.2
Every Six Months	83	26.3
Every Year	154	48.9
Every Two Years	13	4.1
Others	5	1.6
NA	28	8.9
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

Nearly 36 percent of the migrant workers visit their homes when they get leave from the employers. Another one third visit during festival in their home base. Nearly about one fifth combines the festival time and leave from the employer to visit home.

Table 58: Distribution of Workers by Timing of Home Visit, Chennai, 2013.

Timing	Number of Workers	Percent
Agricultural Season / Farm Work in Native Village	11	3.8
Major Festival in the Village	97	33.7
Availability of Leave from Employer	103	35.8
School vacations of children	3	1.0
Others	1	0.3
Major Festival and Availability of Leave from Employer	63	21.9
Major Festival and School Vacations of children	4	1.4
Major Festival, Availability of Leave and School Vacation	6	2.1
Total	288	100

Source: Survey Data

6.6 Perception about the Destination:

So far we have discussed about the wage income, remittances, improvements in their size and their links with home. But migrant workers come and work in a far off place from their origin and how do they perceive their hardship in the destination. Nearly 44 percent felt that the work in Chennai is harder compared to work at home. Longer time of work in Chennai is perceived to be deterioration in their life since their migration to Chennai. Other negativities are marginal in the perception of the migrant workers

Table 59: Distribution of Migrant Workers by their perception of Deterioration in Life, Chennai, 2013

Perception	Number of Workers	Percent
Harder Work	260	43.5
Longer Work	186	31.1
Away from Home for Long	30	5.0
Feel out of place	23	3.8
Frustrating	18	3.0
Just Enough Money	50	8.4
Unable to Acquire New Skills	30	5.0
Humiliation / Ill treatment / Discrimination / Threat	1	0.2
Total	598	100

6.7 Future in Chennai

We have noted that the migrant workers have a more regular income and work and their support to their families have increased since their migration to Chennai. Simultaneously, they put in hard work and work for longer hours. Many of them have picked up some skill since migration. Some have said that they have savings in the bank. Given this overall scenario, how long the migrant intends to stay in Chennai? We have also discussed about the hostile attitude of the police towards migrants. Does this hostility hound them out? Half of our sample migrant workers are not certain about future plans. Some said that they do not have any idea as to how long they will continue to be migrating to Chennai. Some others said that they can not be certain about the future duration of stay. Another notable response has been that they would like to stay and earn as much as possible.

This uncertainty in a way reflects the uncertain conditions in the labour market as well as the overall policy of the State towards the poor and especially towards the urban poor. None of the migrant worker of our survey is employed on a permanent basis but is employed continuously on a casual basis. Nothing certain about non-wage benefits whereas social benefits are hardly extended to them. They are not extended ESI and PF which indicates that the market does not ensure any certainty. If the worker is able bodied in the morning, he can work for the day's wage. If his work is interrupted by accident in the work place, he is removed to the hospital with no further support. With this kind of uncertainty, half of them feeling uncertain are a reflection of the overall situation in the labour market.

Table 60: Perception of Migrant Workers on the future duration of stay in Chennai, 2013.

Years	Number of Workers	Percent
1 Year	11	3.5
2-4 Years	59	18.7
5 Years	57	18.1
6-10 Years	27	8.6
Above 10 Years	2	0.6
Others	159	50.5
Total	315	100

Source: Survey Data

The other half wants to stay for various durations of time. About 70 percent of the other half wants to stay between 2 and 5 years. The major problem for many migrant workers in returning to their native is that they do not know what to do if they return home. This dilemma is at work that discourages a return to their home and forces them to be a part of the labour market with a unique identity of being a migrant, a single migrant with strong connection to their roots.

7. Case Studies of Workers

7.1 Case study 1

Dhiran Mandal (24) hails from Sagaya village in Bankura district of W. Bengal and educated up to 10th standard. His family comprises of his parents and a younger brother. They own one acre of land and live in a semi-pucca house. He came to Chennai in 2008 along with a friend in his village while he was studying 11th standard. His father borrowed Rs. 2000 and gave it to him and he came by train to Chennai. Fifteen males from his village are in Chennai working in various factories. All of them are in the manufacturing sector. He is working in a factory that employs about 55 workers and manufacture pipe support systems. Nearly half of them are migrant workers from other states.

He joined as a helper and he did not know any work. Over time he has picked up the skill of a machine operator and because of his skill he has become a member of the testing group in the factory. Earlier, he worked in another factory for about two months and since then he continues to work in this factory. He was paid Rs. 125 when he joined and now he gets Rs. 230 per day. His working time is for 8 hours and 6 days a week. When the factory works for its full capacity, they get overtime every day for three hours. They are paid @ Rs. 40 for every additional hour of work. His wages are more than the minimum wages (Rs.202 per day). Provident fund and ESI benefits are provided and earned an annual bonus of 15% of the earned salary (Rs 6332). They also get subsidized food twice a day in the factory for RS 6 per day along with tea twice a day.

There is no written contract either with the factory or with the agency through which he is employed as shown in the records of the company. He has not even met the contractor and he is paid directly by the company although technically he is employed through the contract firm.

He lives in a rented room in the neighborhood along with 6 other bachelors from Bengal. The room has a toilet with running water. They pay a rent of Rs. 3650 per month. Electricity bills are paid separately. They have got hold of a gas cylinder in the black market and pay Rs 300 extra for the cylinders. They cook in turns and get the PDS rice in the market for Rs. 3 per kilogram. Sometimes they also get rice from the open market. They do not have a ration card here in Chennai. They

have got a TV with cable connection that brings Bengali channels. They have stored lot of songs in their mobile phones.

For health ailments, they consult a local doctor or get medicine from the pharmacy across the counter. He had treatment in the ESI hospital when he developed some complications in his stomach and was hospitalized for a week. ESI was a great help and he was advised to go there by his employer as he did not know that he could access the medical facility there.

He has a bank account in the SBI and sends Rs 3500 every month to his father and his father uses the ATM card to withdraw the money. His father is not well and needs to undergo a heart surgery which will cost Rs.2 lakhs. His father is unable to work and half the money he sends is spent on medicine for his father. His brother could continue his education because of this money. The family would be in great debt if he had not migrated to Chennai and in that sense his family is better as compared to earlier. The mobile phone enables him to keep in touch with his family and visits his native once in a year for about a month either during Puja or Diwalai.

Plans to stay in Chennai till he stabilizes the family and also save money for his father's surgery. He has saved nearly Rs. 75,000. Since there is slowdown, overtime work is not available in the factory and hence he is unable to save as much as he used to do. He has picked up quite a bit of Tamil and does not feel threatened in an alien city. He is not aware of any labour legislation. His major difficulty is getting train tickets to go home. Trains are full all the time and the unreserved compartments are overflowing. No hope of finding such work in Bengal and hence has not thought of quitting Chennai so far.

7.2 Case Study 2

Kali Pada Karak is from West Bengal and has left behind a family of five. The family owns less than an acre of land and lives in a thatched hut. The income from land was inadequate even to meet the basic needs of the family and hence as soon as he completed his 10th standard, he went to Mumbai and worked as a helper in a commercial establishment and earned Rs 5000 in two months and returned to his native in time to attend his 11th standard classes. But he could not continue beyond for lack of money. One person from his village who is working in Chennai was on his annual visit to the native place. Karak requested him to take him along to Chennai. That person bought him the ticket and took him to Chennai and got him employed in a tiny factory in Perungudy as a helper. In turn,

Karak had to pay Rs 100 every month as a commission for finding a job for him. The factory paid him a wage of Rs. 140 every day along with subsidized food twice daily. There was a room in the first floor of the factory where he could stay along with five other such migrant workers for free. The room had running water, a toilet, a kitchen and a TV. The factory owner would arrange for the PDS rice and the gas was sourced from the commercial outlets. The workers were to pay for the gas and they cooked in turns. The factory owner also gave them a cell phone and they had to recharge it. They were also given an introduction letter to the local bank for them to open an account. After 3 years, he is earning Rs. 220 per day. He works for 6 days a week and takes one month leave every year to go to his native. All his co workers in the tiny unit are migrants except the supervisor who is a Tamilian. Initially, he found it difficult to understand the language as well as the work. Over time he has learnt to operate the CNC machine but even now do not know how to set the machine which is done by the owner or the supervisor. He has learnt work on the job and trained formally. He is not protected by either PF or ESI. All his six fellow workers are migrants and are part of the team of the contractor.

The person who brought him to Chennai was also working in a factory. When there was a slump in the activity, he was laid off by his employer. That person went back to his district and returned with 20 workers who were employed in various factories in the industrial estate. His advantage was that he knew many factory owners as well as could speak Tamil fluently. Now he has become a small time labour contractor and gets Rs. 100 from each worker apart from his own earnings as a worker in another factory. If there is a complaint about any worker in a factory, the contractor shuffles the workers in his roles. One factory owner complained that the contractor does not allow one worker to stay in one factory for long as he may go out of his fold. This poses a great problem for the owners as they have to teach new workers about the labour process many times in a year. They are constantly supplied with unskilled workers. The contractor pays for the provisions, mediates between the workers and the employers, provides the cell phone and arranges for money at the times of contingency for the families of workers back at home. Sometimes, he cooks the food for the workers as well.

Karak has an account in the SBI and sends Rs. 4000 every month to the family to his uncle's account who in turn withdraws the money and gives it to his family. His family had a debt of Rs. 40000 when he came to Chennai and had repaid the debt over the past 4 years. Earlier, the family was in perpetual debt and it was very difficult even to borrow money and the wages in Calcutta for this kind of work was less than Rs. 100 per day. Rice is so cheap here and with

accommodation provided in the factory along with food twice in the factory, he is able to save much of his earnings and send it back home. But he is still paying the person who brought him to Chennai four years ago. He has no plans of returning to Bengal in the near future.

7.3 Case Study 3

Imran (26) is from Palia village in Varnasi, UP. Came to Chennai along with his uncle six years ago and joined in an engineering manufacturing unit as helper where his uncle was working. He learnt the skill of a welder in the factory over a period of two years and became a fulltime welder in the same unit. His wages rose from Rs 80 to Rs. 250 per day over the period of three years. His elder sister was to be married and the family had nothing except a thatched house and he had managed to save Rs. 50,000 at the end of three years. His employer was remitting his PF promptly. He wanted to withdraw the PF money from his account and that could be done only with the connivance of his employer. He tendered his resignation and the letter was forwarded to the PF office and it enabled him to cash his PF savings and it was spent for his sister's marriage. But he continued to work with the factory. After six months, there was a clash with his supervisor (a local man) and he was beaten up by the supervisor. He did not want to work in the same factory. One of his room mates was in the construction industry and he took him to the builder with whom he was working as a supervisor. He joined the team as a painter. After four months, the contractor bagged a big project and asked him to take up the painting work of the entire complex. Imran had assembled 30 painters from his state and took up the job. He had to race against the time to complete the work within the deadline. He brought his elder brother and his family from his native place and rented a house. He lives with them now. He is a very busy sub contractor with nearly 40 workers working with him. He has rented two places to accommodate them and they cook their food in turns. He has a credit facility with the local provision store that supplies provisions to the workers. He remits the money for his workers' family in their respective bank accounts. Workers are allowed to go to their native in batches. His monthly earning is more than Rs. 30,000. He has repaid the debts of his family and had built a house in his native place and had taken care of the medical expenses of his father. His younger brother will join him once he completes the school. While he provides accommodation, food and advances for the workers, he does not provide for their PF or ESI. He says that he has to do it to get larger orders. He speaks fluent Tamil and is quite well versed about the geography of the city and its suburbs. He is taking painting contracts of individual houses as well through word

of mouth contacts. He remits Rs. 5000 in his father's account for their monthly expenses and money is drawn from an ATM which is 15 KM away from home. He has a motor cycle and has gas cylinder at home for cooking. His sister in law cooks for the family. He has no plans of going back and in fact plans to bring his younger brother as well into the business as there is a huge and growing demand for his work in the city.

7.4 Case Study 4

Aslam, a native of Odissa came to Chennai three years ago along with a friend in his native place who was working as a construction worker. Since then he has been working in two construction sites. The contractor has about 1200 workers. They are from Jharkhand, Bihar, Odissa and W.Bengal. They have hired a vast empty plot in Tharamani and had constructed tin sheet covered tenements measuring 10X10 feet in which at least 20 workers are housed. The shelter does not have a door. Water is stored in a big floor level tank and no toilet facilities. His work spot is about 15KM away and at 7.30 a.m. the company bus picks them up. Before that they need to wash, eat and get ready. They carry their lunch which they cook from the provisions provided by the contractor. The floor is not covered in the tenement and they use firewood to cook. All their belongings are left unprotected. The work usually starts at 9 a.m. and goes on till 7 p.m. with a half an hour lunch break. They are made to work which the local labour will not venture into. The local labour will not take any risky jobs in high rise buildings whereas the migrant workers are given that job by the contractor. There are few local workers and the supervisors are from the local. They return to their camps at 9 P.M. and their dinner has to be cooked after that. The living space is damp and filthy with no toilet, drainage, protected drinking water. The place is infested with mosquitoes swarming even during the day time.

The contractor pays them a monthly remuneration of Rs. 3500 to Rs.4000. As soon as they get the money, they remit it to their family as there is no way of keeping it safe. They get an off only during the Sunday afternoons. They had to source their provisions for the next week during that time in the neighborhood markets that spring up on Sundays to cater to such workers. The contractor does not provide for PF or ESI or any other benefit. Only a few get cell phone connections as they need residence proof. They go to their native once in a year.

Aslam, while he was plastering the outside wall of the building at the second floor, fell down and broke his leg. His fellow workers informed the supervisor and he got the government ambulance and dispatched to him the general hospital

along with the worker. He was hospitalized for three weeks and after the removal of the caste, he returned to work. There was no compensation whatsoever and he lost wages for three weeks during the time of his recovery in the hospital. Since then, he walks with a limp and he is thankful that he is alive to take care of his wife and three children whom he had left behind. Though there is a Construction Workers' Welfare Board in Tamilnadu and a cess is collected from the contractors, a ludicrous requirement of verification by the revenue department for any claims makes it impossible for any inter state and inter district migrant workers to benefit out of the board and in the process the Board sits over crores of rupees in its kitty.

Aslam has managed to repay only half of his debts back at home. All the workers in the camp are single migrants and their only entertainment is music stored in their mobile phones. He had come through his friend and hence does not pay a commission to the subcontractors. But there are many who pay a cut every month to the subcontractors. The situation in Chennai is much better as there is no employment back at home. There were times when we could not find anything to eat at home. Despite all the struggles here, my family is fed three times a day and I need to stay here as long as possible to be free from hunger.

7.5 Case study 5

Subash Thakur hails from a barber household in Rosarpur, Bihar. He has left a family of 6 members behind. He hardly attended school as his father passed away when he was very young and his mother cut nails to earn the living of their family. They do not own any land and has a pucca house built under a government scheme. He went to Patna and worked in a haircutting saloon and was paid Rs. 50 per day. Then he migrated to Delhi to work in a saloon and was paid Rs. 100 per day. He was in Delhi for six months. His uncle had to Chennai by that time and invited him here. He had saved Rs. 600 by then and he came to Chennai with that money. His uncle took him to a contractor from his place and he became a member of the group. This group moves as per the directions of a larger contractor who again is controlled by another contractor. There are several levels of contractors particularly in big factories. At the top, there will be one top contractor through whom the companies may employ thousands of workers. Most of the new industrial units in Sriperumpudur belt engage such contractors. The company pays the main contractor and the payment spirals down to the last link in the supply chain after appropriate cuts which are agreed upon earlier. In a sense, migrant workers do not stay in one establishment for long. Lakhs of such migrant workers form part of this network. The top contractors are local

politicians with enormous clout in the area. Labour contract is much more lucrative than real estate or material supplies contract in the industrial belt.

Thakur gets Rs. 220 every day. In his circular movement in the Sriperumbudur industrial belt he had worked in several large industrial companies including multinationals. The contractor provides the transport service and canteen within the factory. They are separate from the transport and canteen for the regular staff. In most of the companies, the contract workers far outnumber the regular staff. But in terms of work, there is hardly any difference between what a contract worker does and a regular worker. There are factories where contract and regular staff work in tandem in the assembly line. The payment to Thakur is bereft of any other payment. The principal employer may be legally responsible for ESI and PF of the migrant workers. The principal employers get an undertaking from the contract that PF and ESI is paid for these many contract workers. But the payment id for whom is not known and none of the migrant workers in such contract groups is aware of any such payments in their name.

Thakur shares a room with four others in village adjacent to Sriperumpudur. They get the groceries from the local grocer and the rent is paid by the contractor. The company bus provides their transportation. He has a bank green card by which he can only deposit money in his mothers' account. His mother can withdraw money in Rosepur either with an ATM card or by using a cheque. He sends about Rs 4500 every month and keeps very little here. His contractor had sent Rs. 1500 home when his brother fell ill and he went and stayed for three months with the family till he recovered. There was no one to give credit to his family in his native place earlier but now his mother could borrow thousands of rupees. He has two sisters who are to be married and a brother who is working in a saloon in Patna. Thakur wants to set up a saloon along with his brother in his native place with the savings and his sisters are to be married. Till then he will work through the contractor in Chennai. He is not looking for a permanent work here.

7.6 Case Study 6

P.K.Pradan is from Hariguda in Orissa and has a family of 5 with a semi-pucca house and 2 acres of land. After his 10th standard, he went to Bangalore and joined in a medium sized hotel as a helper. After two years he became a waiter in the same hotel. One of his classmates took him there and he has learnt the skill on the job. Three years ago he came to Chennai to work in a larger hotel and the information came to him through another friend and the higher level of wages was the reason for him to migrate to Chennai. The hotel has fifty rooms and two restaurants. He works in one of the restaurants as he had picked up reasonable

level of English while working in Bangalore. More than half of the workers in the hotel in Chennai are migrant workers and it is steadily increasing over time. The hotel provides him with an accommodation at the top floor. The accommodation is very cramped with 20 of them sharing one room with a toilet and a bathroom. Food is provided by the hotel. They also get two pairs of uniform. He is paid Rs 6000 every month but no PF or ESI. He has joined directly without any contractor but his friend got a commission of Rs 2000 from the hotel for bringing him here. His salary in Bangalore was Rs 4000 every month. He gets about Rs 100 on an average as tips from the customers everyday and that is enough to take care of everyday expenses. He has opened a bank account and remits about Rs 5000 every month to his father. He works for 10 hours a day and all through those 10 hours he has to stand. Earlier, in Bangalore, he found it difficult but now he is used to it. Both his younger brother and sister are in school and he wants to educate them. He plans to rebuild the house and he has paid off a debt that the family had. He visits the family once in a year for one month. He has many people from his state working in the same hotel. He will continue to be in the same occupation as food and accommodation is ensured. The work conditions are relatively better compared to construction and industry. He does not know how long he would be in the city and also not sure whether he could find a place in larger hotels where they need formal training and certification.

8. Case Studies of Employers

8.1 Case study 1: Ilango:

Ilango is a small scale entrepreneur owning a small engineering unit with three semi automated lathes. He is a trained machinist and had worked in many firms including firms in Malaysia and Singapore before setting up this unit on his own. He is located in tier 2 and tier 3 in the supply chain of the auto ancillary industry. The unit has been in operation for more than 12 years now. He employs 6 workers to man three lathes. All the six are migrant workers from North (Bihar) and East (Orissa). According to him the scarcity for labour started six years ago when the local labour preferred to work for larger companies when the auto corridor started booming in Chennai. Simultaneously, commuting workers from a radius of about 60-70 kms of Chennai found employment near their places when large number of industrial units came up around Chennai. Migration from the villages in southern and western parts of the state came down drastically. Getting workers was the greatest task at one point. Several small units were facing closure due to lack of labour. Migrant labour from other states came to their rescue and with out them the entire small scale sector would have been wiped out. They came in small numbers to begin with but employers like him persuaded the migrant workers to bring in more workers and incentivised them by offering a 'commission' for each new hand brought in by the existing worker. Some workers who had by then put in some years in Chennai found it profitable to act as intermediaries rather than being a worker. In this process labour networks emerged. They immediately contact such intermediaries for their labour requirements. Ilango pays a fixed commission of Rs 100 every month to the intermediary for each worker employed through him.

Accommodation is provided in the first floor of the rented building. It is a room with a small kitchen. PDS rice has been arranged to be supplied to the migrant workers by their employer. They pay Rs. 3 per kg of rice. They have a gas stove but get the cylinder from the agents at the commercial rate. The workers take turns to cook three times a day. Tea and snacks are served in the shop floor. There is piped water from the municipal lines for cooking, drinking as well as for other requirements.

Ilango is facing the slow down in the industry for the past one year. Three shifts a day and six days in week is not the current norm. He hardly finds work for a single shift. Already three of his migrant workers have left to work for others. Tier2 and Tier1 firms as well as the OEMs are holding on to the payments and

hence paying the worker at the first week of every month is turning out to a herculean task for him. Banks are not willing to extend credit any further. Raw material suppliers also insist on cash and carry and hence there is a squeeze in the market which ultimately affects him and the workers.

Migrant workers are not at all skilled and they are raw hands when they come to work with Ilango. Ilango can not communicate with them as there is no common language. He engages them with trained workers and the skill required to operate a semi-automatic lathe is learnt in a week by the fresh migrant worker. He then handles the machine on his own. But the migrant worker cannot set the machine nor trouble shoot. Ilango has to do it himself or his supervisor has to do it. The industry has developed many simple tools and operating the machine is so simplified that these migrant workers could be engaged for operating the machine. These machines are also safe and the scope for injuries is minimal. However, when a worker is trained to handle the machine, there are some inevitable losses for Ilango in the form of breaking of expensive tools that are used in the lathes. Also there may be a loss of raw material due to inappropriate handling and the consequent rejection at the quality control stage. Despite these problems, Ilango has no other option except to employ the migrant workers.

Ilango pays the workers every month but on the basis of the number of days of work put in by each one of them. He has not subscribed to their PF or ESI. He pays some bonus when his fiancés are better but has not paid any bonus for the past two years. He has already pledged all the jewellery of his wife to pay the workers. He has to find a way to pay them next month. Otherwise, they will quit and he has to shut shop unless the OEM releases his money.

8.2 Case Study 2: RTV

RTV owns an engineering firm that manufactures pipe support systems and there are two units, one in Chennai and another in Thanjavur. He employs about 100 workers in Chennai and 300 workers in Thanjavur. There are about 30 migrant workers in Chennai unit. All of them are employed through the contractors but they are paid directly by him. They were all unskilled when they arrived but picked up various skills over time. To begin he employed two migrant workers and their numbers have grown steadily and he foresees a future where almost the entire work force would comprise of only the migrants. He is very happy with their work culture and non-complaining attitude. Wages for the workers are above the minimum wages and all of them are provided with ESI and PF benefits. Annual bonus on the basis of the gross salary earned during the previous year is a

regular feature in his factory. The factory has a canteen and the workers are given free food. Migrant workers take food twice in the canteen every day. There is no particular preference for workers from any state but he insists that the contractors should not shuffle the workers. He trains with the help of skilled technicians brought from outside apart from their informal learning during the work. He also gives them a travelling allowance to enable them to come to the factory. Accommodation is not provided by him. He can communicate with all of them as he had served in North India for more than three decades. According to him, one crucial advantage with the entry of migrant workers into the Chennai labour market is that the bargaining power of the local labour was greatly diluted and as of now they do not have any power to negotiate. He also complains about the government programmes like free rice and MGNREGA. Only after these two schemes, the wages had gone up even in the manufacturing sector. Migration from the villages seeking work has completely dried up. Whoever comes in search of work to the city prefer to work in the service sector rather than in the manufacturing which is very demanding. The growth of service sector also had competed with them and led to the wage rise.

9. Conclusion

Inter state migrant workers seem to travel in an invisible carriage way to Chennai. The carriage way has been built over time by the friends and relatives of the migrant workers that carry more and more streams of migrant workers to Chennai. The most prominent carriage way evident from our survey is the one that originates in North East and runs through the Eastern states to reach Chennai. This invisible is travelled predominantly by the OBCs and SCs. Majority of them is landless. However, a sizable section hail from marginal small farmer households and could mobilize the required financial resources to migrate. Almost all of them are young and a large number of them are not married. They are not educated much nor or they skilled to readily fit into the requirements in the destination. They leave behind their families and keep remitting most of their wage earnings and visit them at least once in a year. Since the carriage way is built by the fairly and friends network, the eventual contractual arrangement is unencumbered. Thus one can conclude that these migrations are not driven by distress and despair.

However, once they are in the destination, their life remains 'temporary' forever. With their frugal belongings, they stay in temporary accommodations sharing it with many such fellow migrant workers. Everything regarding their housing looks short term. The nature of work contract is entirely temporary though with a pretension of permanency by paying the wages once in a month. However, wages are calculated on a daily basis. Very few get an annual bonus and long term benefits like PF and ESI. Continuous work with the same employer for years does not endow any permanency in their life. They have to find their permanency in their origin in terms of their family, house and life. They live in a dual world. The world in the destination is temporary but vast in time whereas the world in the origin is permanent only to be retained by visiting it for a short time. Thus, they have a stretched out life worlds. Their stretched out life is not just the family world but a larger universe.

The temporary life in the destination endows an inferiorised identity on the migrant. They are suspected and discriminated in the destination. As they enter

the destination, they fall in the trappings of the urban poor but with an inferior identity. In that sense, it is double burden. Apart from enduring the temporary life, the migrant survives through this double discrimination. They are forced to live without basic amenities and in the poorest living environment. They also have an incomplete citizenship. They are out of the social welfare net provided to the urban poor in the destination. The 'universal' PDS is out of bounds for them. They can benefit only indirectly through the grey market.

Thus there is a moral obligation for the state to bestow the complete citizenship to the migrants by instituting appropriate policies. As of now, it remains a silent spectator leaving the migrants at the mercy of the employers. It can easily ensure decent living conditions for the migrant workers, a minimum wage for them, non-wage benefits, and health care and extend all the welfare measures to them as well. It can constitute a separate welfare board for the migrant workers and collect a special cess from all the employers. The state should realize that the migrant workers the backbones of the booming economy of the state. Instead of only policing them, the state should integrate them into their governance by evolving appropriate inclusive policies.

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