



# MIGRATION OF YOUTH FROM PUNJAB TO DEVELOPED COUNTRIES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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## Abstract

Migration across international borders is a historical process. In recent years it has picked up varying magnitude and direction. In Punjab, the Doaba region, a veteran of migratory trends, has witnessed changed patterns. Currently the focus is on sending students overseas. International migration has been associated with acute events manifested in long term patterns, making it difficult to predict the trends and patterns pertaining to a particular geographical region with any precision. Young people migrate for a plethora of reasons. The decision to migrate is often related to important life transitions, such as obtaining higher education, finding and starting work, or getting married. Many youths also choose or are forced to migrate to escape poverty, violence, conflict, or are displaced due the effects of war or climate change. As such, youth are heavily represented in migration for humanitarian reasons, including as refugees, asylum-seekers and as unaccompanied minors.

**KEYWORDS:** Migration, Youth, Brain Drain, Foreign countries, Employment, Education.

## INTRODUCTION

Migration of professionals, skilled, non-skilled personnels from Punjab to other developed countries is rising day by day. Migration of people from Punjab to various developed countries has been identified into following patterns such as: (1) skilled labor (2) unskilled labor (3) contract based labour. The wave of international migration of people of Punjab to certain developed countries like: US, UK Canada, Europe, UAE, etc is giving high tides to rural population to move to other countries for living. During 1960's, youth of Punjab moved to these western countries for earning more money & greener pastures. Later on, the oil boom in gulf countries was another attraction for the Punjabi youth to migrate to fulfill their dreams by earning more money. It acted both push and pull for the rural laborers to migrate to these gulf countries for a better living (Dhindsa, 1998). Later on in 1980's, the concept of emigration originated among the rich class of farmers, who started sending their sons to developed countries to marry the girls of the families already settled in developed countries just to get immigration. It was further estimated that among 20 million Indian people settling abroad, 10%-15% of people were Punjabis. The

emigrants who fled from Punjab to other countries like: US, UK, Europe, Canada mainly constituted people of doaba origin. This expanding trend of Punjabis settling abroad gave a boom to the development process. With the money transferred from these developed countries to their families residing in punjab gave a pace of facilities & a technological upgradation also. Punjab was on the path of becoming the healthiest state of the country. Many wealthy Punjabis have contributed a lot to the infrastructure of the Punjab by opening charitable schools, hospitals, shelter homes & other social facilities. Furthermore, remittances of these Punjabis were estimated at \$ 2-3 million per year contributing to the enrichment and development of the state.<sup>i</sup>

Punjab, more explicitly the Doaba region, has been observed to be a hotspot for waves of migration since the pre-Independence days of India. In earlier times, students would go abroad to pursue Masters qualification in their subject. Overtime, however, the trend to study overseas expanded rapidly and in the recent couple of decades students are going abroad for under graduates' studies. Students migrate from the Doaba region to the world and this trend has grown significantly because of numerous reasons. The pull factor for attracting migrants from Punjab to other countries has largely been the opportunity to work in foreign countries at higher emoluments. Potential students are fascinated by the high standards of living attained by the people of developed countries. Lack of opportunities for employment in India and the comparatively less appreciation of work in terms of remuneration has been the major reason for this brain drain.<sup>ii</sup>

#### FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUTH MIGRATION

There are various factors that are responsible for the migration of youth to developed countries. Among these factors, those factors that are responsible from migration from Punjab can be listed as push and pull factors. Both of these factors are equally responsible for migration. These factors are:

- PUSH FACTORS

- **High Unemployment:** Lack of employment opportunities not only in the region of Punjab but in India as a whole is the major push factor that encourages migration of youth to developed countries.
- **Increasing Population:** Increase of Population and less increase in facilities as compared to increase in population is also a major factor that causes migration. Population of Punjab is increasing day by day due to which people are forced to work at low wages in order to at least earn something.
- **Strong tradition of emigration:** Nobody will disagree that in recent few years there is a trend especially in Punjab to migrate abroad. The lifestyle in foreign countries is much better than the lifestyle of people in Punjab. This better lifestyle and currency difference attracts people to migrate to foreign countries and lead a lavish life with wholesome of facilities.
- **Lack of MNC's in Punjab:** Thousands of students in Punjab complete their degrees in business administration every year but due to lack of Multi National Companies & corporate houses in Punjab, they find foreign job opportunities more attractive.

- **Better Education facilities:** Education facilities are better in developed countries as compared to India. By studying abroad, students have the opportunity to study in a foreign nation and take in the allure and culture of a new land. Students usually migrate for attaining the chance to experience different styles of education.<sup>iii</sup>
- **State government policies:** State government policies are very inappropriate and pose a great burden on the people especially business class. If you are an entrepreneur or a businessman, then most of the profit is paid to the government in the form of wealth tax. If you are earning Rs 100/- , then Rs 98/- of your earning is paid to government in form of tax and you are only left with Rs 2/- as profit. This leftover profit is insufficient for future growth and development which in turn forces entrepreneurs to shift to other countries.<sup>iv</sup>
- **Less industrial development:** Jobs in the government sector are not easily available and Punjab has not seen any major industrial development as well. Whatever industry had been there in cities like Amritsar, Batala, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Mandi Gobindgarh were also lost during militancy years when established industrialists moved out of the state. On both the agriculture and industrial fronts, there have been no major visible efforts by any successive governments in Punjab which could usher in major development. As a result of the decline in employment opportunities and the reluctance of the youth to engage in agricultural activities, the efforts by the youth to go out increased.<sup>v</sup>

- PULL FACTORS

- **Availability of jobs (skilled and unskilled):** most of the youth is migrating from Punjab for better job prospects. Jobs whether skilled or unskilled are available easily in the developed countries as compared to India. Even the salary/ wages that are paid there are at a much high rate as compared to India.
- **Family and kinship network:** At least 40% of the population of Punjab is settled abroad in developed countries. To join the family and kinship network in these countries is also a major reason for the migration of youth from Punjab.
- **High standard of living and educational opportunities:** Better Education facilities and high standard of living is also a major reason for migration abroad. Education at international level is widely considered to add a greater value to one's life. Post pandemic, this trend seems to have gained traction. Independence, a high standard of living, new cultures, and customs usually attract students to pursue studies abroad.<sup>vi</sup>
- **Demographic Factor:** The differences in the population growth rates of the different regions of a nation have been found to be a determinant in the internal migration. Fertility and the natural increase in population are generally higher in rural areas which drift the population towards the city. Other important demographic factor in internal migration is marriage because females are used to follow their spouses.<sup>vii</sup>

- **Better Public Service and Political environment**: Better public service and political environment is also an important factor that explains migration to developed countries. It can be seen that people left their previous places because they were dissatisfied with level of municipal service, public transportation and felt no safety.

## IMPACTS OF YOUTH MIGRATION

Internal or international migration can have a positive impact on young people by opening up new opportunities, a path to participate in higher education, a better and decent job, a chance to gain professional experience or to pursue personal development, by building self-confidence, and allowing them to acquire skills and competencies beneficial to themselves and their countries and communities of origin as well as destination. However, for some young people, especially young women and those in irregular situations, the migration process confronts them with particular challenges and confers to them certain vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities include discrimination based on gender, migration status, ethnicity or religion; poor working conditions (often exacerbated by the relatively low levels of bargaining power and trade union membership among young migrant workers compared to their adult counterparts); lack of access to basic social services such as health; risks associated with sexual and reproductive health; and lack of social protection or loss of social protection entirely once the migration status of the young migrant changes (from student to graduate, for example). Therefore, the migration experience can end up representing either an opportunity or a risk for young people and can either lead to their development or the very opposite, depending on policies and measures supporting them.<sup>viii</sup>

## STEPS GOVERNMENT CAN TAKE TO STOP IRRELEVANT MIGRATION

- Government should promote stability, education and employment opportunities.
- Government must take effective steps to promote small scale industries.
- Government should frame laws that promote agricultural activities.
- The collection, analysis and use of credible data and information on, among other things, demographics, cross-border movements, internal displacement, diasporas, labor markets, seasonal trends, education and health is essential to create policies based on facts, that weighs the benefits and risks of migration.
- Regional cooperation, can help minimize the negative consequences of migration and preserve its integrity. It can also contribute to regional and global development goals by improving human capital through sustainable development and ensuring longer-term economic growth.<sup>ix</sup>

Migration of youth from Punjab to other developed countries increased dramatically due to globalization & the market driven activity. The internationalization of higher education at a cheaper rate & more income, modern life style, etc act as motivator for the students to study abroad. The craze to settle abroad permanently among students has grown tremendously. Earlier students used to go abroad for post-graduation or even 12th pass outs prefer to study abroad. But now studying abroad is just one step to settle abroad permanently. Moreover, students are attracted towards modern lifestyle which is not present here in Punjab. In some places like rural Punjab migration to foreign countries has become the status symbol. Punjab ranks first in India in remittances from abroad and these rich Punjabis collaborate with the government to transform rural Punjab and develop its infrastructure. The

migration of students for studies is a tedious one and students have to clear certain exams to qualify for visa application like: IELTS, TOFEL, GMAT, etc. Countries like Canada, Australia, New Zealand prefer students with IELTS. Youth shows much interest in these countries as they get multiple times more than what they are earning here and can have easy access to PR (permanent resident) except UK. UK is the only one country where PR is not easily available. IELTS hoarding can be found at every corner of streets of Punjab and even highway advertisements. These hoardings attract more and more young students who dream of settling abroad, earn greener pastures, luxurious life, etc. The increasing rush to these IELTS institutions is enough to showcase the inclination of youth towards migration to foreign countries for settling permanently. The main reason for this brain drain is the result of high rates of unemployment and underemployment, low wages, bureaucracy, corruption, quota system, increased population, lack of awareness of government policies, dreams of luxurious lives, peer pressure, competition, etc.<sup>x</sup>

## CONCLUSION

It is a very sorrowful affair that successive governments, over a period of time, have not formulated any policies and programmes vis-a-vis the rural and urban youth of Punjab. The failure of the state governments to make Punjab a magnet of attraction for its youth gives no hope of any reversal in the exodus of the youth. This is specially so in the case of rural areas where farming is being given up; and youth is migrating which leads the villages give a deserted look. Today, almost the entire rural youth is ready to pay huge amounts of money to travel agents to obtain a visa to migrate to European countries. It is clear that Punjab is fast losing its youth to this lure of migration. While earlier, the youth used to go abroad for higher education after graduation, today, the children are leaving on a large scale after class XII, and they have no intention of coming back. There has been a steep decline in boys joining colleges—the girls outnumber them. As a result of this, the number of Punjabi youths, especially from the rural areas, entering the services, has gone down drastically. It is high time that the government should look into the matter and take effective measures to retain the youth and prevent irrelevant migration.

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