

## **INTERNAL MIGRATION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN ANALYSIS THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS**

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### **Abstract**

In March 2020, a large number of people moved from cities to their homes in rural areas, and a few months later, many returned to cities. These journeys were undertaken not only during the COVID-19 pandemic against the advisory of governments and public health experts, but the circumstances of travel were also under extreme hardship. How may we understand this intense response by people? By drawing on the migration theory and the roles of social ties or social organisation, we can better explain peoples' reactions during this pandemic. Notably, we find non-material values, such as the dignity of labour or responsibilities to family, are significant to decision-making, and there is a desire not to compromise on these values. Further, our analyses find that the distinction between pre-disaster and post-disaster situations may not be helpful.

**Keywords:** Migration, Social Organisation, COVID-19, Pandemic, India.

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## Introduction

Migration, or people's spatial movement of residence, has been ongoing for centuries. Yet, in March 2020, it was surprising to witness thousands of migrants leaving cities for their homes under unique hardship conditions, which struck a chord with citizens of the country. This turn of events occurred after the government declared a nationwide lockdown on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020. There was an apprehension among public health experts that a hitherto unknown virus and related health consequences are spreading quickly among people, both within the country and abroad. Consequently, the government stopped all economic activities (other than essential ones), curbed travel within and between places, closed educational institutions indefinitely, etc. These were difficult times, especially for migrants<sup>1</sup>, despite assurances by governmental authorities to provide all individuals and families with food, shelter, and medical assistance. Public health experts advised people to stay indoors and maintain a distance of about six feet from each other at all public places, wear masks and wash their hands with soap frequently. Governments introduced these unprecedented measures by activating provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and emergency provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

An assessment of internal migration in India based on the 2001 census shows an increase compared to the earlier decade and a higher inter-State or long-distance migration than intra-State or short-distance migration (Bhagat, 2009; Singh & Shandilya, 2012). Further, scholars of migration studies observe a coinciding rise in inter-State mobility with India's economic liberalisation programme initiated in 1991. Kundu and Mohanan (2017) estimate migrants' last residence at 314.5 million. There has been decadal growth of 35.5 per cent (1991-2001) and 44.2 per cent (2001-2011) (Kundu & Mohanan, 2017). While accurate numbers of migrants that left cities during the COVID-19 pandemic are unavailable, one can gauge the potential numbers based on estimates by scholars of migration studies.<sup>2</sup>

Why were large numbers of migrants leaving their abodes in extreme conditions of hardship to places called home? Perplexingly, a significant number of them returned to cities in months after that, again during a pandemic. In this paper, we address this seemingly puzzling behaviour of migrants.

Our research suggests that journeys from cities occur when there is a breach in social organisation and social ties threshold. Material conditions were precarious, and people no longer wanted to compromise on cherished values, such as the dignity of labour, self-esteem, and family responsibilities. This insight came about when a potential respondent shared social ties and social organisation information that facilitated initial migration from rural areas to the city. Further, the migrants returned to the city within a few weeks of returning home during the pandemic because the loss of 'moorings' triggered migration remains. These findings spotlight social factors and conditions that may have started the journeys undertaken during the pandemic.

## Review of Literature: The Need for Comprehensive Assessment

A vast scholarship shows that social contacts at the destination provide an opportunity to many for migration and assist in material terms to settle down at the new destination (Banerjee, 1983). Likewise, research evidence shows that at times of disasters, such as floods, social capital<sup>3</sup> is crucial to moderate vulnerability concerning disasters (Quarantelli & Dynes, 1977; Dynes, 2005). Further, there is such scholarship about other disasters as well during tsunamis (Racioppi & Rajagopalan, 2016), hurricanes (Kates, Colten, Laska & Leatherman, 2006), heatwaves (Klinenberg, 2002), and so on. We do not suggest that social organisations do not have the potential to constrain recovery from disasters, for example, by skewing the allocation of resources in favour of particular individuals and social groups. Either way, social organisations and networks significantly affect societies in shaping decisions during disasters.

There is, however, an asymmetry in research conducted concerning disasters. Most scholars have investigated dyadic ties such as kin-relations, despite Granovetter (1973) drawing attention to roles played by the strength of weak ties<sup>4</sup>, especially in contexts of disasters, where there may be a need to distinguish weak ties or negligible ties (see end note 4 in Granovetter, 1973). A recent study, however, has examined the role of strong and weak ties and their relationship to decisions on migration are being developed (Blumenstock et al., 2022) or the role of social networks in labour migration (Reja & Das, 2019), but such investigations are very few. In other words, social ties, whether strong or weak, are pertinent during disasters and are the crucial takeaway for our purposes.

With these insights from literature, we tackle this research endeavour through sub-questions. We infer from the literature that the role of social organisation will assist in understanding the exodus of migrants from cities to homes. However, the decision of many people to return to cities, especially during an ongoing pandemic, prompted us to ask why people migrate. Consequently, a review of the broader literature on migration ensued. To begin with, we draw strength from the notion that migration decisions are personal, but they occur within a larger political-economic framework.<sup>5</sup> Notably, the idea of 'moorings', as advanced by Bruce Moon (1995), explains why people are motivated to migrate.<sup>6</sup> According to Bruce Moon, moorings are issues that give meaning to the lives of individuals. Identified under different categories, typical moorings (noted within parentheses) include Life course issues (household income, career opportunities, caregiving responsibilities), Cultural issues (employment structure, social networks, class structure, cultural affiliations), and Spatial issues (climate features, access to social contacts) (Moon 1995). The meaning of moorings changes for individuals as they revise the value placed on them, and consequently, individuals may decide to migrate. In this theorisation, an individual draws on personal and cultural aspects in deciding to relocate, and the

micro-level and macro-level considerations coalesce.

We observe that while changing perceptions of moorings gave reasons for migration, social organisations assist in actualising the intent to migrate and succeeding after that at the place of migration. The scope of our work expanded as we foresee addressing roles played by a social organisation and changing the meaning of moorings in our research endeavour as they seem interrelated. The need for additional research, especially in light of the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic, is noted by scholars of migration studies (Rajan, 2020).

A similar conclusion is arrived at by tapping alternative data sources and using new analytical techniques; for instance, Bhagat and Keshri (2020) conclude that the nature of migration in India is unlike that of other countries. This conclusion is premised on the finding that the length of abandonment of home by migrants or the ability to bud off from their social group in India is not the same as reported by Western and other Asian countries (Bhagat & Keshri, 2020). One potential hypothesis for such divergence may be a combination of moorings and the social organisation of migrants.

### Methodology for Gathering Data

The methodological challenge awaiting us in this research was apparent- that potential respondent has to gain confidence in our interactions so that time is set aside for sharing information in detail. We deemed it best to identify each respondent as a case study<sup>7</sup> with whom we interact over an extended period and flesh out details provided during the open-ended interview. Further, rather than being dependent on a single data source, we sought the same data from other sources to uphold what our respondent was sharing. We, therefore, draw on English-language newspaper reports on stories on migrants. Additionally, we source an anecdote from social media.<sup>8</sup> By weaving evidence gathered from three

specific cases, we develop our position on how we may view the exodus of numerous people. This research is exploratory - to identify better explanations rooted in social factors and conditions for understanding why people in large numbers travelled twice during the pandemic.

We identified a few likely respondents through personal contacts, but most were reluctant to give information beyond sketchy outlines, and other potential respondents found it difficult to spare time for sharing information. Therefore, we draw on detailed insights from a migrant to Mumbai from rural Bihar.<sup>9</sup> The selection of respondents in our case is unlike other research methodologies, wherein purposive sampling predominates research studies. For example, a research study discusses the experiences of men migrating from Chakai block, Jamui district, Bihar, to four Indian States, namely Kerala, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra (Rao et al., 2020). In purposive sampling, there is a selection bias. For instance, people leaving cities for other destinations (not necessarily migrants) during the pandemic are excluded from the sample selected for research purposes. Our open-ended search was for potential respondents that departed the city to 'home.' The cohort of migrants leaving the city has dominated media reports. We conducted an open-ended interview with our respondent in the first and second weeks of November 2020, and the respondent commented on a specific event - return to the village in Bihar from Mumbai City. The journey of the villager from rural Bihar to Maximum City, who had arrived only weeks before the announcement of a nationwide lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic, was shared over two interactions that lasted close to three hours.<sup>10</sup>

Our discussion in the sections below is chronological; we initially address why initial migration occurred, followed by subsequent journeys from cities to home and back. This comprehensive portrayal of migration and journeys during a pandemic is logical, and a testimony to the robustness of earlier discussed theoretical positions. We discuss why and how the initial migration to Mumbai from rural Bihar came about.

### **Understanding Disaster Management through Social Organisation: Triggers to Mobility**

Early in 2020, news of a potential employment opportunity in Mumbai arose for a villager in rural Bihar through a close relative (family member, hereafter). To realise this job opportunity, the villager moved to Mumbai and, in the parlance of academics and policymakers, became a migrant. However, the circumstances leading up to becoming a migrant are noteworthy. The migrant opined that he moved to Mumbai because of the prevailing political economic conditions in rural Bihar.

#### ***Political Economic Conditions Trigger***

**Migration:** Before shifting to Mumbai, the migrant (a male) was working as a temporary (casual) employee in the 'Bihar State Electricity Department (BSED).' His primary task involved driving a vehicle to lay electricity wires on the pole. Despite working for about 10 years as a temporary worker, the migrant finds that a secure employment with full benefits in the BSED is not being extended and that the chances of obtaining them are remote. Consequently, the migrant joined his colleagues as part of the employee's membership in a workers' union, demanding regularisation of the job. The management, however, did not view the demand by temporary employees favourably. In an extraordinary move, the service of over 7000 casual employees was terminated, who had stopped working to pressurise management in accepting their demand for regularisation of work. The casual employees were unsuccessful in achieving their goals. The result was unemployment, and the earnings of the migrant became irregular.

For the next 15-17 months, the migrant earned income by occasionally driving a 4-wheeler vehicle, performing odd jobs, and assisting extended family members as agricultural labour (his father owns and actively tills on 2-bigha or 1.23 acre-land). But these jobs did not support securing the livelihood for his entire nuclear family of four (spouse plus two children). There were negligible job opportunities in towns and cities closer to home. Under these

circumstances, the migrant came to Mumbai with family members staying in the village.

**Changing Personal Preferences:** The decision to migrate came with relative ease because an estimated 500 persons had migrated from the village to Mumbai. Such a large number of people migrated because an industrialist wanted to employ them in his enterprise. Our respondent stated that the industrialist relocated to Mumbai about 20 years ago and prospered financially, although the initial circumstances of migration were similar to theirs. The village is relatively large-sized, with a human population of around 30,000. This phenomenon of migrating from the town is present in the consciousness of the populace and has a demonstrable effect when undertaking significant decisions regarding migration.<sup>11</sup> The migrant (the respondent) was not deterred or alien to the thought of migration, although the spatial proximity of the destination city seems to matter.<sup>12</sup> Our respondent noted that Kolkata, a large metropolis and relatively closer to the village, is a preferred destination to migrate to for employment opportunities. One witness an exception to spatial proximity for migration when family members or known persons offer employment opportunities at other towns, cities, and destinations. Under these circumstances, the respondent notes that he decided to migrate.

**Social Ties Tilt Decisions on Migration:** The promise of a job in Mumbai materialised upon arrival on the assurance of a family member. The family member, a carpenter by occupation, lived with his family in Mumbai for over a decade and was employed at a well-known 'urban services' company with offices located in major cities throughout the country. The migrant accepted the job of cleaning household kitchens and appliances, bathrooms and toilets, windows, floors, and the like at this company. The relatives who assisted him in securing a job also helped him find a residence and settle down. The respondent notes that settling down also poses challenges of its own. For instance, to find a decent place, especially with an attached toilet at a reasonable rental charge, and withstand the indignities migrants encounter at

unfamiliar places. After surmounting initial hiccups, the migrant soon realised that it was insufficient to get a toe-hold in the city with a job. Still, service conditions of the employment matter to assure a steady income. Here again, the social organisation of family members is paramount in obtaining knowledge on securing a constant source of income.

The urban services company provides addresses within an area of the city where the migrant is to proceed and undertake the task. At the beginning and end of the assigned task, the migrant employee is to inform and move to the next address to continue. He quickly learned that securing a job is not the same as obtaining regular tasks or employment. The company supervisor assigns calls to homes, and the supervisor at the company also determines the number of homes to report. The workload for the migrant employee is not only contingent on the number of customers demanding services from the company but also on the distribution of workload by supervisor. At no time will the migrant employee be overloaded with work, and at the same time, there will be direct control over the migrant employee. Securing the number of households for work is also contingent on relations with the supervisor. All of this directly bears earnings because migrant employee is paid based on the number of calls to homes made in a month. The situation is better for the migrant employee in terms of monthly earnings, though the job continues to be temporary. Hours of work remain unscheduled, and more often, the workday is an extended one. There is enormous fluctuation in the duration and timing of work hours. Pressures to earn as much as possible are significant because family members constantly want to be in Mumbai.

The above narration by the respondent confirms the findings of other research studies. For instance, Kuki migration to Delhi reveals that 'the social networks not only have helped migrants to deal with challenges and constraints in an alien environment but also instilled a sense of confidence in them to overcome psychological stress and cohesion' (Kipgen & Panda, 2019).

### Why the Migrant Returned Home?

Uncertainty crept back again for the migrant employee when lockdown was announced throughout the country. A wait and watch approach became the watchword in the initial days and weeks of announcing a complete lockdown. While earnings dipped, financial hardships began. However, support for the migrant employee was forthcoming. For instance, the landlord gave more time to pay the rent, and good Samaritans and employers supplied food at no charge.<sup>13</sup> However, as time passed by, things began to unravel. The respondent felt uncomfortable with the experience of staying at home for an extended period without work and away from family, especially given the remote chance of businesses restarting anytime soon. Increasingly, the assistance provided by the landlord, employers, and good Samaritans now seemed like a burden impinging on his pride and dignity. Equally, the benevolence of employers and good Samaritans began to display distinct signs of peaking and fatigue. A combination of the evolving situation and uncertain future ushered in a heightened sense of anxiety in the migrant employee. A yearning to return home began taking hold. The fear of contracting the virus by the migrant employee in Mumbai city, especially with all of the immediate members of the family staying in a distant village, stoked a sense of vulnerability. The migrant employee ultimately returned to Bihar by train services operated through the coordination of governments and railway authorities.

There are thresholds on the extent to which members can rely on their social networks and social organisations, not only material ones but a desire to uphold cherished values like dignity of labour, self-esteem, and responsibilities to family. Typically, a migrant is often portrayed as a combination of the following: skilled or unskilled, primarily illiterate, engaged in tasks that pay daily wage, remits part of the earnings to support family members in villages, lives in low-cost (even illegal) housing, which is confined and closed space lacking access to amenities such as water, electricity, private toilet; supplements income by undertaking multiple tasks and responsibilities or

works for long durations; has negligible access to medical insurance or social protection, medical services; identity card and so on (Rajak & Gupta, 2019). Undoubtedly, despite undesirable conditions and adversities encountered, migrants draw strength from kin relations and membership in social organisations to better their lives. But, equally, the respondent suggests that non-material values, such as responsibilities to family or dignity of labour, shape their decision-making and their thresholds to impinge upon decisions. Other studies have noted this aspect of migration (Rao et al., 2020). There seem to be thresholds on the extent to which resources of social organisation will be relied upon, mainly when non-material values too influence decisions to undertake journeys to home during the pandemic.

### Why did the Migrant Return to Mumbai from Home?

From the narration of the respondent, we surmise that moorings, in this case, have been household income, kin relations, and social networks. These multiple moorings combined to trigger the decision to migrate from rural Bihar to Mumbai. The migrant employee does not find any suitable avenue of work to stay back in the village. Further, the social capital in the social network has not irreversibly deteriorated. Therefore, in a few months, the migrant employee chose to return to life and livelihood in Mumbai city.

### Journeys during the Pandemic- A Discussion

The issues through which people give meaning to their lives seem to remain unchanged or absent. The narrative of migrant employee maps on to moorings that were advanced by Moon (1995) to explain not only initial migration to Mumbai but also the subsequent journey to Mumbai during the pandemic. Details provided by migrant employee gave insights into the migration processes. From the characterisation by migrant employee, one can also infer the fragility of social organisation. One does wonder about thresholds of social capital in

different forms of social organisation, such as occupational relations and family and kin relations, to withstand the pummelling of not receiving several months of wages, prolonged unemployment and so on. A robust cooperative action among members of social organisations prevailed during the heightened threat of the pandemic. Still, continued collective efforts are unclear, especially given that precious few resources are available to cope with the situation. Many permutations of the social organisation evolve.

A longer-term understanding of the social organisation in the context of disasters is crucial, given the massive jolt that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. Below we take two instances from mass media - a newspaper report and social media post - to illustrate our point. In one situation, strong social ties could have prevented the death of a migrant. And in contrast, in the second situation, we recount how communities through social ties adapt to hardships arising from the pandemic. We begin with reports of tragic outcomes in the absence of social ties.

#### **Understanding Disaster Management through Social Organisation: The Significance of Social Ties**

Let us recall that from the last week of March 2020, India started witnessing the gut-wrenching images of hundreds of families journeying far-away homes, despite extreme hardships, especially for women, children, and the elderly who bear the brunt of the burden. People seem to exhibit a primordial instinct to stay connected with home to secure safety during the pandemic. This response of people cut across classes and ethnicities was observed throughout the country and abroad. However, newspaper reports and anecdotal evidence suggest adverse effects on migrants to be disproportionately high during this pandemic.

**Absence of Social Ties Impinge People during the Pandemic:** The social organisation of migrants assists in mitigating losses at times of crisis. We illustrate this point by extracting excerpts from a

news report of 2nd May 2020, in The New Indian Express, a national daily (Express News Service@Hyderabad, 2020). This news report stated that authorities found the dead body of a 45-year migrant named Govind on the footpath of Hyderabad. Govind had only recently relocated with his wife and young child to Hyderabad from Bidar, Karnataka. According to the news report, Govind was 'coughing' and unwell, prompting his neighbours to fear that he may have contracted the SARS-CoV-2 virus. He reported to medical authorities by calling toll number 108. Govind was brought in an ambulance to King Koti hospital, treating exclusively 'COVID-19 patients.' The doctors at this hospital advised Govind to report to a government Chest hospital about 5 km away. As a recent migrant, Govind was unfamiliar with the city and could not determine the route. Due to the prevailing lockdown, there was hardly any passer-by to assist or provide directions to reach Chest hospital. Nor could Govind manage a medical or private transport to get to the hospital. The death of Govind is attributable to Tuberculosis. On Govind's body, the authorities found a doctor's medical slip dated six days before.

What this tragic episode illustrates, among other things, is the low social capital that Govind and his family possessed in the city. Govind was yet to develop strong ties with neighbours, family, or workplace, which may have succeeded in obtaining the required medical assistance. There is minimal reporting on the circumstances that led Govind and his family to relocate to Hyderabad. Nonetheless, this instance highlights the roles social ties and social networks may play during crises and pandemics. To signify the positive role of the social organisation during the pandemic, we draw an instance from social media reports.

**Social Organisation Strengthens Adaptation to Pandemic:** During this lockdown period, social media platforms note the roles played by social organisations in strengthening resilience (Maharashtra FRA Collective WhatsApp Group, 2020, is one such instance). A few villages in Maharashtra provide positive evidence of the workings of the social organisation during this

pandemic. For example, due to the lockdown, Bhimanpalli village of Jambhulkheda Gram Panchayat within Khurkheda tehsil, Gadchiroli district, agreed to utilise reserve funds available with them for the purchase and supply of dry food and essential items to all households for an entire two-month period. Quick administrative approvals for using the funds allowed the village to be self-reliant. Further, this decision eased the burden of timely governmental assistance, especially since they live in a remote and difficult to access location. Both collective decisions - the foresight of putting aside funds for use on a rainy day and arriving at a decision to use funds at this time of pandemic - are pointers to roles social organisations play in decisions. This example illustrates that measures instituted before the disaster can affect potential adverse consequences during times of pandemic. Aldrich (2012) has similarly shown that soon after the 2004 episode of the tsunami, the village councils made their presence felt by ascertaining the degree and nature of losses and by directing resources for post-disaster recovery. More evidence of migrant experiences during the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic is being reported in peer-reviewed journals in recent times (Mookerjee et al., 2021; Khan & Arokkiaraj, 2021).

The examples discussed thus far highlight the role played by membership in social organisation. By extension, one infers that by membership, one possesses the ability to secure wide-ranging resources or social capital.<sup>14</sup> Social capital facilitates the development and maintenance of other means, including securing loans, human labour, or resources from political representatives.<sup>15</sup>

### Concluding Thoughts

In sum, we find networks based on family, kin relations (and perhaps several other forms of social organisation, say of religion, occupation and so on) of migrants' matter at times of disaster or pandemic, just as they do the smooth running of everyday routines. Migrants responded positively to kinship networks that are part of their social fabric.

Further, we spotlight non-material values, such as responsibilities to family, dignity of labour and so on, that seem to influence migration decisions<sup>16</sup>; beyond material conditions that most explanations on migration seek to highlight. We also observe that the social capital of migrants in cities and at their homes, when taken together, provides an assessment of the 'threshold limit' of social capital for careful interpretation. In other words, the findings suggest the need to extend present explanations on the role of social networks, providing information about employment opportunities at the destination and/or providing cushioning effect to withstand hardships.

Since our research examined questions on how and why migration is taking place, we find that 'moorings' and social organisation of people, together, assist in better explanations of decisions to undertake journeys during this pandemic. This finding indicates that a framework to bring together various strands of literature and heterogeneous data sources can help develop fresh perspectives. We are cautiously optimistic about the potential usefulness of a broader framework through research because there is little evidence that migration theories inform studies on disasters and vice versa. Similarly, such a framework can assist in advancing richer explanations of migration in India.

There are practical uses for the findings from this research. We observe that social organisations can also be relevant to potential recovery post the disaster because they provide a cushion against hardships that disasters or pandemics bring about in societies. Similarly, during the pandemic of COVID-19, Amphan and Vardah cyclones visited coastal areas, resulting in the movement of a large number of persons. At these times, the National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) and other State organs have reached their capacities to govern to full. In such a situation, social organisations also can play a crucial role in disasters.

We conclude by noting that decision-making regarding migration, among other things, is based on the strength of social ties or the nature of membership in social organisations. This paper

seeks to provide an alternative insight into migrants' behaviour through a combination of moorings and social organisations. This research reinforces findings reported in the literature review that 'membership in social organisation' is common to explanations of both theorisations on migration and mitigating vulnerability to disasters. Additionally, migrants are uncompromising on their

cherished values - be it the dignity of labour or responsibility to families - that are significant to decision-making. This emphasis on non-material values, besides material ones, is primarily in the literature, with full knowledge that there may be a threshold to social capital that one can draw in social organisation.

### Author's Contribution:

Arvind S. Susarla: Conceptualisation, data collection, and preparing draft of the manuscript

S. Shaji: Conceptualization, preparing and reviewing draft of the manuscript.

### End Notes

1. Statistics from official sources on the number of people that left cities to villages are hard to come by. Peoples Archive of Rural India (PARI) circulated the 'Migrant Resistance Map' prepared by collating information about hundreds of thousands of migrants protesting at various locations of India. (PARI, 2020).
2. The need for developing robust database on migration is well-known. United Nations (1970), Tomas *et al.* (2009) and Rajan (2020) have all advocated measuring internal and international migration.
3. Social capital comes about with membership in social organisations and kin relations.
4. A tie should be satisfied by the following definition: the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterise the tie (Granovetter, 1973, pp.1361). Social capital binds ties either weakly or strongly and measures the strength of social relations.
5. It may not be possible to extend singular reasoning or explanation to understand numerous kinds of migration. For simplification, we omit the seasonal movement of people and such from consideration.
6. One of the earliest theorisations on migration is that push and pull factors, be it political, economic, or environmental, play a role in people's movement. However, critics point out that in emphasising macro-level factors, there is an assumption that all individuals respond identically. An alternative way of understanding migration instead calls for attention on people who are presumed to be affected by their decisions (for example, Wolport's (1965) and Leiber (1978) theorise on Place Utility; and Datta (2021) theorises on role of the Culture). However, the selected theorisation supersedes the divide between macro-level and micro-level explanations as alternatives to each other.
7. In this context, we recall Yin (1994), who pointed out that generalisation of results is made to the theory and not to populations. Hence, the criticism of case study methodology that dependence on a single case does not provide a generalising conclusion is invalid.
8. We are thankful to Dr Geetanjoy Sahu, Faculty at TISS, Mumbai, for sharing this example through WhatsApp.

9. It is through happenstance during a visit to Mumbai by one of the authors we met this migrant from Bihar and our intent was not to select migrant from a particular State.
10. Our conversation ended abruptly when the migrant had a severe injury to his hand at a workplace.
11. In a recent study the authors have classified Kuki-migrants to Delhi into two categories, namely, 'pioneer' and 'follower.' The pioneer migrants migrated without strong ties, whereas the follower migrants availed connections of social network to decide on migration (Kipgen & Panda 2019).
12. Several research studies show that most migration in India is intra-state rather than inter-state.
13. Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN) notes several instances at numerous places of India wherein individuals and Civil Society Organisations contribute by way of cooked food, rations, funds and so on (SWAN 2020).
14. For instance, Peacock (2010), in a study of four stages of hazard in coastal areas, namely, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery, emphasises that capital, be it social, physical, economic, and human, are reflected as a resilience indicator.
15. We note that research has shown that social capital is gendered (see, for example, Pincha, 2016; Parida, 2018); that is, women and men possess different social capitals. Further, social cohesion during disasters is strained and may even break. Societies can counteract any such potential eventualities by understanding the threshold limit of social capital, as evidenced by the migrant losing his life in the City of Hyderabad.
16. A recent documentary book highlights these concerns of migrants that returned home in Bihar from Loni, Ghaziabad, during the March 2020 lockdown (see Kapri, 2021)

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