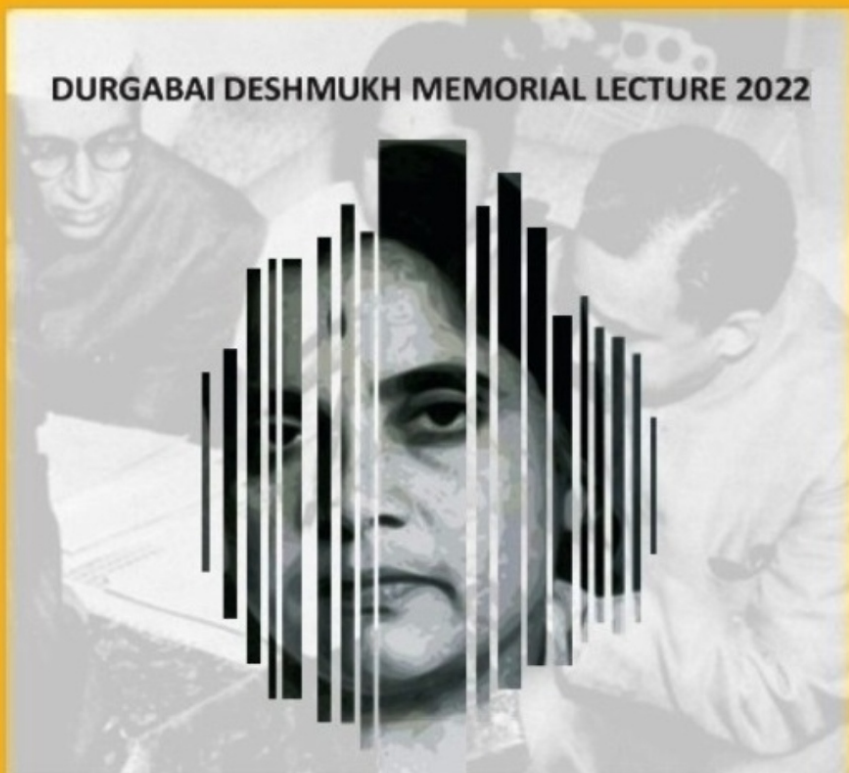


**DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE 2022**



**Migration, Informality and  
the Growing Precarity of Work**

**By**

**PROF. RAVI SRIVASTAVA**

**15<sup>th</sup> July 2022**



Council for Social Development



India International Centre

## ABOUT CSD

CSD began its journey as an informal study group at the India International Centre in 1962 by a few prominent social workers and social scientists, under the leadership of the legendary freedom fighter and social worker Durgabai Deshmukh. It was registered as a society in 1970, with C.D. Deshmukh as President and Durgabai Deshmukh as Executive Chairperson and Honorary Director. A Southern Regional Centre (SRC) of CSD was set up in Hyderabad in 1967 by Durgabai Deshmukh which is currently funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) and the government of Telengana. Eminent Educationists and representatives of public institutions constitute the CSD society which guides its programmes.

For over five decades, the Council for Social Development (CSD) has functioned as a non-profit, non-partisan, vibrant research and advocacy institution, engaged in the issues of social development, especially the welfare of the marginalised. Through its programmes of research, seminars, publications, capacity-building and other initiatives, CSD actively participates in policy discourses on social development in India. It pursues its vision by undertaking studies and advocacy activities in key areas such as development education, health, rural development, governance, human rights, and social justice. Its pioneering efforts have helped shape planning, policy and programme implementation and foster critical ideas approaches and strategies designed to bring about social change.

**DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE 2022**

**Migration, Informality, and the  
Growing Precarity of Work**

**Ravi Srivastava**



**Council for Social Development**

[www.csdindia.org](http://www.csdindia.org)

## Durgabai Deshmukh

Freedom fighter, social reformer, an indefatigable institution builder, member of the Constituent Assembly, the first woman-member of the Planning Commission, Durgabai Deshmukh's life was one of leadership and true empowerment. Born on July 15, 1909 in Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh, she was initiated into a life of politics and social reform early. At 12, she left school to protest against the imposition of English language education and later started the Balika Hindi Paathshala in Rajahmundry to promote Hindi education for girls. This was to be the nucleus of the future Andhra Mahila Sabha, the large social service organisation which laid the foundation of numerous educational institutions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. A follower of Mahatma Gandhi, she joined the khadi movement, and participated in the Salt Satyagraha as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement for which she was imprisoned. After her release, she went on to acquire a law degree and practiced at the Madras Bar for a few years. In 1952, she married C.D. Deshmukh who went on to become India's first finance minister and later Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

In 1958, she headed the National Committee on Women's Education, and formed the Andhra Women's Association. As member of the Planning Commission, she mustered support for a national policy on social welfare which resulted in the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board. As the Board's first chairperson, she mobilised a large number of voluntary organisations to carry out its programmes aimed at the education, training and rehabilitation of needy women, children and the handicapped. Alongside, she compiled the Encyclopedia of Social Work in India, still an indispensable reference tool for researchers.

Durgabai Deshmukh was instrumental in setting up the Council for Social Development, Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital, Sri Venkateswara College, among the other institutions. In recognition of her outstanding efforts to spread literacy and social change she was awarded the Paul G. Hoffman Award, the Nehru Literacy Award and the UNESCO Peace Award. Along with her husband, she received the Padma Vibhushan in 1975 for contribution to public affairs and social work. But beyond the accolades, Durgabai Deshmukh's true legacy lies in her spirit of sacrifice and unwavering commitment to social change.

# Migration, Informality, and the Growing Precarity of Work

Ravi Srivastava

## Abstract

We view the impact of three decades of rapid growth and structural change in India on the lives of the working poor in terms of the growing precarity of work. The Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown in 2020 and the ensuing crisis exposed the vulnerability of informal workers, particularly circular migrants, and resulted in the largest ever urban exodus of migrants. The crisis was a result of changes that had systematically increased the magnitude and scope of informal employment in the industrial and service sectors, creating a cheap, flexible, and pliable workforce. Circular migrants, a product of uneven regional development, form an ever-growing segment of this flexible, informal workforce. Largely excluded from urban citizenship and civic rights, they lead a precarious existence, oscillating between town and country, carrying out tasks that preserve gender and social hierarchies. Circular migrants, whose lives and identities are themselves an outcome of inequality, further reinforce inequality, with negative consequences for sustainable growth and equity.

---

I am indeed grateful to the Council for Social Development for inviting me to deliver the 2022 Memorial Lecture in honour of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh, freedom fighter, member of the Constituent Assembly, first woman member of the Planning Commission, institution builder, and relentless activist and advocate of women's education and empowerment.



# Introduction: Growth, structural change, and persistent precarity

Despite fairly rapid economic growth and structural change, the percentage of the Indian workforce living in precarious conditions has not changed over the years. In my lecture today, I examine this apparent paradox and try to understand the causes and ramifications of it for different segments of workers. I also refer, in passing, to the implications of this precarity for equitable and sustainable growth and development.

During the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown, we witnessed the dark underbelly of precarious work in India. The shutdown of the economy had a catastrophic effect on workers in the informal economy—casual and contract workers; workers on temporary contracts in the organised and unorganised sectors; and running or contributing to family enterprises and small businesses. By one estimate, 87 per cent of all households experienced a drastic loss in income. Among affected workers, *circular migrants, those who keep moving between home and host areas for employment*, were the hardest hit and felt the most insecure. In addition to the loss of current and past incomes, these migrant workers either lost access to their temporary shelters or were crowded into makeshift shelters without access to food and other basic services. They

were also gripped by a sense of fear and basic insecurity and longed to go their homes in the hinterland.

Even with continued restrictions on movement and on public transport, the pandemic-induced job-loss crisis triggered the largest ever urban exodus. This exodus—comprised of about 10.5 million individuals as per the government while actually being several times larger in its strength—led to the swelling of the rural population and labour force. Visuals of this dramatic exodus, and the personal stories of hardship and tragedy, may have begun to fade from our memories. But what we saw was the systemic precarity of a very large segment of the Indian workforce, both local and migrant. This systemic precarity preceded, and will almost certainly follow, the pandemic—unless significant changes take place in the development paradigm and policy regimes. My lecture today is dedicated to understanding why this is the case despite other momentous changes that have occurred in the economy over the last three decades.

Let me, therefore, begin by outlining some of the major changes, which should ordinarily have had a positive implication for the condition of workers, even those at the bottom layers of the work pyramid. First, the Indian economy has grown at a very impressive rate over the last three decades. This translates into rising per capita incomes and higher average worker productivity.

Second, this growth has been accompanied by a fairly significant structural change since 1991, which transferred a large chunk of the working population from low productivity

to high productivity sectors. Agriculture, which accounted for nearly 30 per cent of the total GDP in 1991, now accounts for 14.8 per cent of the economy. The services sector contributed nearly 55.6 per cent to domestic GDP in 2019-20 (from 39 per cent in 1991), while the industry sector's contribution to GDP has stood stable, at 29.6 per cent in 2019-20 against 30 per cent in 1991. In terms of employment, agriculture's contribution has fallen, but still remains high at 43.7 per cent in 2018-19 (from 56.4 per cent in 2004-05). Note that the average GVA (Gross Value Added) per worker in industry and services is 4.5 times the GVA per worker in agriculture.

Third, the relatively tiny formal sector of the economy, has, unlike what is commonly believed, grown quite rapidly. Since 2004-05, over a fifteen-year period, the formal sector grew by over 56 per cent! In addition to its higher productivity, the formal sector is also better regulated, which should provide workers with improved working conditions.

Finally, the shift from agriculture to services and the growth of the formal sector has also meant a change in the activity structure of the workforce and a significant increase in workers drawing regular wages/salaries. Between 2004-05 and 2018-19, the share of regular waged/salaried workers increased from 15.3 per cent to 24 per cent. Regular work has always been regarded as a good proxy for decent work, with higher prospects for employment stability, better earnings, access to social security and social dialogue. Yet, despite all of this, India retained a large and virtually unchanged proportion of

precarious workforce, with a growing share of such workers outside agriculture.

## **Greater labour flexibility: Global Head-winds**

With the rise to dominance of supply-side economics and neoliberalism, greater flexibility in labour markets became an important precept guiding changes in labour markets worldwide. Labour flexibility picked up speed with globalisation and changes in the global organisation of production, and became a key dogma for promoting global competitiveness, overcoming resistance from workers and their organisations.

Guy Standing (1999) has identified six routes through which labour flexibility can be increased. These are organisational flexibility, numerical or employment flexibility, work-time flexibility, wage flexibility, functional or job flexibility, and external flexibility. Undoubtedly, there can be certain situations and certain forms of flexibility that are preferred by workers. However, in a broader sense, labour flexibility provides limited choice and options to workers, arises out of employer preferences and requirements to use the low labour cost route to meet growing competition; rapid fluctuations and changes in demand; short lead times; the need for a multi-tasking etc.

Global trends and comparisons, using different indicators, show that labour flexibility has increased in almost all

countries in different forms and at different rates. The number of persons employed by temporary work agencies doubled both in Europe and in non-European countries, according to the International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies (Brimon, 2010). The ILO (2015) cites evidence from both developed and developing countries to show how non-standard forms of work—temporary and casual work, dispatch (contract) labour, fixed term and part-time employment—have been increasing. Within the more standard work contracts as well, employment security has been declining and employers have greater flexibility to assign jobs and fix wage and non-wage benefits.

While labour market flexibility and deregulation have been cited as a means for reducing unemployment and promoting competitiveness, the empirical evidence for this is weak or unclear (Srivastava 2016b). Aggregate demand conditions are more powerful predictors of employment outcomes than labour deregulation (Rodgers, 2007; Jha and Goldar, 2008). It has also been suggested that promoting higher levels of flexibility or lowering labour standards will help to increase formal employment. The evidence for this too is weak and, if anything, it is the contrary evidence that is stronger (Rodgers, 2007; Galli and Kucera 2004).

Apart from the unclear evidence on aggregate employment, it must be said that the general evidence indicates that from labour's point of view, the consequences of labour flexibility appear to be decisively less positive and result in greater social and economic insecurity, and exploitation in conditions of

poor regulation (Van Eyck, 2003; Standing 1986, 1999). Standing (1986) identifies several forms of insecurity – labour market insecurity; employment insecurity; job insecurity; income insecurity; and work insecurity with labour flexibility. Increasing flexibility is associated with labour market duality and segmentation, declining levels of social security across the board, lower wages for the more unprotected segments of labour, declining voice and representation of labour (which is also evidenced by declining union representation), and declining share of labour in national income (Freeman, 2005; Van Eyck, *ibid.*; ILO, 2015). Wage ‘penalties’ for non-regular workers can be between 30 and 60 per cent of wages of regular workers in developing countries, and between 1 and 34 per cent in developed countries (ILO, 2015). This growing social and income polarization brings with it a high social, political, and economic cost (Standing, 1999; Van Eyck, 2003).

It must be said that a large number of countries have been trying to deal with these negative consequences and to correct some of the major distortions in the labour market that have emerged due to increased duality in labour markets and lowering of labour standards, by putting in place policies to address issues of wage gaps, social security, and labour market security for workers in general, and for the more flexible forms of labour in particular. Countries are also reinstating social dialogue and collective bargaining.

# Informality and precarity: The conceptual framework

At this stage, it may be relevant to delve into the formal/informal dichotomy and into the meaning and implications of precarity—the core issues that I deal with today. These terms, along with migration—which we shall consider in greater detail later—have multiple meanings attached to them by economists, sociologists, legalists etc. But for the purposes of this lecture, we will narrow down their operational meanings.

The term informal sector came into vogue in the early 1970s when a number of studies focused on subsistence oriented, but often dynamic, small-scale and family labour oriented units in urban areas. The study of these units did not mount an immediate challenge to the dominant paradigms of structural change from traditional to modern sectors, as it was thought that they would eventually be a part of the modern industrial economy. This expected transformation did not take place either globally or in India. In fact, structural adjustment in developing countries, privatisation, and development of global value chains—these processes have changed the usually understood trajectory of structural change, making the informal sector a growing, and a more or less, permanent feature of many economies.

This has resulted in a growing body of literature, since the 1990s, on conceptual and definitional issues underlying the informal sector, with the ILO providing a formal definition of

the sector (ILO, 1992) and benchmarking ways of measuring it across economies (ILO, 2002). The informal sector is broadly understood as consisting of units that are unincorporated (i.e., not constituted as separate legal entities of their owners), produce goods or services for sale or barter, and satisfy a number of other criteria—for example, that they are unregistered, small, have unregistered employees, and/or do not maintain a complete set of accounts. In the Indian context, the NCEUS (National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector) defined the informal sector as unincorporated enterprises, owned individually or in partnership, with less than ten workers. In agriculture, it included private holding agriculture, excluding large-scale plantations.

In contrast, the formal sector has the characteristics of registration and scale/size and is better regulated. But there are significant grey areas. First, the formal and the informal sectors share myriads of connections; these include the supply chains and networks through which the formal incorporates the informal. Second, the informal sector may include units which have formal characteristics but which choose to remain in the informal sector for legal or voluntarist considerations.

Since the 1990s, focus has shifted from informal production units to the nature of employment, both inside and outside the informal sector. In 1997, the ILO elaborated on the identifying criteria of what it termed informal employment.

A job is considered informal when it lacks basic social or legal protections or employment benefits. Such jobs may be found

in the formal sector, informal sector, and households. Informal employment refers to the total number of persons whose main job was informal. The term 'persons in informal employment' encompasses all persons employed in the informal sector except those who have a formal job. In addition, they include employees holding an informal job in formal sector enterprises (FSE); contributing family workers working in FSE; paid domestic workers employed by households in informal jobs; and own-account workers engaged in production of goods.<sup>1</sup>

Employees in the formal sector are considered to have informal jobs if their employment relationship is not subject to national labour legislation (not only de jure but also de facto); income taxation; and social protection or entitlement to employment benefits such as advance notice of dismissal, severance pay, and paid annual or sick leave. In practice, countries have been using either the availability of employment protection or employer-provided social security as the main criterion for categorising informal employment in the formal sector (ILO, 2013). More recently, however, the ILO (2018) has used the availability of social security as the primary criterion for determining informality, while using the availability of sick leave or paid leave as an alternative criterion.

Thus, informal employment undoubtedly implies job insecurity and lack of employment benefits, along with lack of social security, leading to income and employment insecurity. Within informal employment, Chen (2012) suggests a segmentation/hierarchy linked to earnings and poverty risk,

with women predominating in the lower rungs and male workers in the higher rungs. This hierarchy moves upwards from unpaid family workers → homeworkers → informal casual wage workers → own account operators → informal wage workers in the formal sector → employers. While differentiated, our own findings suggest a levelling down of some of the categories of informal work.

Precarity has a wider connotation and goes much further in recognizing other types of resultant insecurities and consequences among them, including absence of the right to citizenship. To paraphrase Guy Standing (2011):

Precariousness is not just a matter of having insecure employment, of being in jobs of limited duration and with minimal labour protection, although all this is widespread. It is being in a status that offers no sense of a career, no sense of secure occupational identity and few, if any, entitlements to the state and enterprise benefits and citizenship rights. It encompasses migrants as well as locals.

## **The informal employment route in Indian labour markets and its implications**

There is clearly a major distinction between labour markets in developed capitalist countries and in developing countries. In the former countries, industry and services have dominated

for a long time, and a more or less standardised employment relation has been the principal form of employment for several decades. In developing countries, agriculture and self-employment outside agriculture are still very significant. The wage relation is more varied, with only a small part of it resembling the standard employment relation prevailing in developed capitalist countries. Thus, informal employment, which is already compatible with different kinds of labour flexibility, is of a much higher order in developing countries and the increase in labour flexibility need not here take the form that it does in developed countries.

In India, the informal–formal sector/employment dichotomy was represented, till two decades ago, by the data on organised sector employment reported by the Director General of Employment and Training (DGET). Unorganised sector employment was simply the residual between estimated total employment and reported organised sector employment and largely seen as a more or less unchanging at 90:10 ratio. If these figures are taken at face value, one can debate whether inflexibility in labour markets is one of the biggest impediments to achieving greater global competitiveness, slower growth in employment, and of good quality in that; and slower manufacturing growth as is often argued? Or should policy and labour markets aim at generating productive employment as well as decent work?

This brings us to the changes that are taking place in Indian labour markets, particularly at the core of the economy. Since 1999-2000, and particularly since 2004-05, we have a series of

employment surveys that give us some direct indication of the formal-informal dichotomy and help us answer some of the paradoxes discussed earlier in the lecture. We note—based on the availability of social security in 1999-2000 and 2005-05—that the NCEUS had already come to the startling conclusion that the entire incremental employment generated between these years was of an informal kind (NCEUS, 2007). But the frame of enquiry was expanded since 2004-05, and the results are reported here. There are two deviations from the methodology that was adopted by the NCEUS. First, unless mentioned otherwise, we consider lack of job security and legal protection as the primary criterion for informal employment. Second, while the NCEUS used a poverty level below which a worker was characterised as a vulnerable worker, we consider workers' jobs as being vulnerable or precarious if they fall in the bottom five occupational categories.<sup>ii</sup>

Surveys since 2004-05 show that despite the structural changes in employment mentioned earlier, informal and precarious employment has been highly resilient in the economy. Across all work categories, 94 per cent of all workers were informally employed in 2004-05, compared to 92.5 per cent in 2018-19. Precarious work categories comprised 83 to 85 per cent of all workers. Among such workers, 97.2 per cent were informal in 2004-05, while 96.5 per cent workers were still informal in 2018-19. Excluding the self-employed, among precariously placed wage workers, informal employment has increased—from 86.4 per cent in 2004-05 to 90.1 per cent in 2018-19.

The persistence of informality across the economy was due to the fact that as employment grew in industry and services, the share of informal employment went up, across the board, and even more significantly in the formal sector. Overall, informal employment went up by 11 per cent in the formal industry and services sector and by 1.7 per cent overall.

**Table 1: Informal Employment in Industry and Services**

	Informal Workers (%)		Informal Workers in the Formal Sector (%)	
	2004-05	2017-18	2004-05	2017-18
Industry	92.1	93.2	74.9	79.5
Services	81.9	83.9	36.5	53.7
Industry + Services	86.3	88.0	53.5	64.5

Mapping the status of only employees (wage workers) in the non-farm sector<sup>iii</sup>, and using proxy variables for all the three dimensions of informality adopted by the ILO (viz. job security, social security, paid leave), the share of informal employment increased in all three dimensions between 2004-05 and 2018-19.

**Table 2: Informal Workers in the Formal and Informal Non-Farm Sector**

Year	Wage Workers in NFEs with (%)		
	No written Contract	No social Security	No paid leave
2004-05	75.0	72.1	67.1
2018-19	80.5	73.5	70.4

Coming now to the better regulated formal sector of the economy, even as this sector has expanded, wage employment, including regular wage/salaried work, has become rapidly informalised by all major indicators.

**Table 3: Informal Wage Workers and Regular Wage Workers in the Formal Non-Farm Sector**

	<b>All Wage Workers in Formal Sector Non-Farm Enterprises with (%)</b>		
	<b>No written Contract</b>	<b>No social Security</b>	<b>No paid leave</b>
2004-05	51.5	44.4	40.3
2018-19	62.2	47.3	46.9
	<b>Regular Workers in the Formal Sector with (%)</b>		
	<b>No written Contract</b>	<b>No social Security</b>	<b>No paid leave</b>
2004-05	40.1	31.3	25.9
2018-19	56.7	38.9	38.4

While 40.1 per cent of all regular waged/salaried workers were informal in 2004-05, in that they did not enjoy even minimum levels of job security, by 2018-19, their proportion had swelled to 56.7 per cent. The numbers of workers not enjoying any paid leave increased from 25.9 to 38.4 per cent

while those without any employer-paid social security increased from 31.3 to 38.9 per cent. With rapidly rising informalisation, regular work status has ceased to be an adequate proxy for good quality work.

Informality moved in the same direction when all types of wage workers in the formal sector are considered. By 2018-19, 62.2 per cent of all such wage workers did not have a written contract with their employers, 47.4 per cent did not avail of any form of social security, and 46.9 per cent did not enjoy any paid leave. In short, the impact of a growing formal sector on the conditions of work was largely nullified as a much greater proportion of workers were recruited as informal workers.

Most such hiring by formal sector employers has occurred through sub-contracting and through the use of registered or unregistered labour intermediaries, who are not fully compliant with labour regulations. In formal manufacturing, the percentage of contract labour through registered contractors was negligible in the 1970s. By 1991-92, 13.5 per cent in organized manufacturing were contract workers. This percentage has risen sharply since 1999-2000. By 2011-12, the percentage of contract workers had risen to 34.7. Between 1996-97 and 2011-12, the contract workforce grew by 9.4 per cent annually, while directly recruited workers grew only by 1 per cent annually, with the total annual growth in workforce being 2.8 per cent (Srivastava, 2016).

Before I conclude this discussion on informality, let me point out some of the implications of informality for wages and conditions of work. Since informality is in any case rife in the

informal sector, I will make some observations based on my earlier work (Srivastava, 2016a; 2016b; 2019).

- The weekly earnings of informal regular workers were just over half the earnings of regular workers with contracts.
- Only 41.8 per cent regular workers with no contracts in establishments employing 20 or more workers had any form of social security, compared to 84.8 per cent regular workers with any form of contract.
- Informal workers in formal establishments were much less likely to have any form of representational security. Among all workers in such establishments, only 5 per cent casual workers and 16.5 per cent regular workers with no contracts were members of any workers' organisation, compared to 63 per cent regular workers with contracts of over one year.
- When formal and informal workers in the formal sector are grouped by occupational categories, their characteristics in terms of education and social background appear to be strikingly similar, but a significantly higher proportion of informal workers from socially deprived groups and women are allocated to low order occupational groups.
- Even after accounting for age, experience, and other social attributes, there is some wage penalty on average for informal workers vis-a-vis formal workers in the formal sector.

# **Migration, informality and precarity: The intricate links**

## **Understanding migration**

If informality and precarity of work is the beast that we seek to understand, migration is the belly of this beast. Migration, however, has different connotations for economists, sociologists, and political scientists, and in administrative data and in popular perception. All migration rests on three common precepts. The first is a change in the administrative jurisdiction where a person resides. The second is that this change in residence must hold for a minimum period in order for it to be considered as migration. Third, there could be an additional upper bound to the time period, over which this change in jurisdiction occurs. Administrative data confines this upper bound to a lifetime. Anyone residing in a place different from her/his place of birth, or having moved from one's usual place of residence to reside in another for a minimum six months is categorised as a migrant, the reasons for this movement notwithstanding. But in popular perception and for sociological or political purposes, a person could be considered a migrant even if the change in jurisdiction occurred several generations ago or is confined to a much shorter period than six months. The Census and the statistical surveys are further concerned with the stock of migrants at any point of time; in India, such stocks are dominated by

marriage-related migration of women and other associational migration. This is not good enough to understand the (changing nature) of economic migration.

The development literature has focused on rural-urban economic migration, which, in the first instance, is considered to result from rural-urban differentials in growth processes and higher productivity and incomes in the urban/industrial sector. But the vast movement of people from rural areas, within and across countries, has been structured by several factors other than the voluntary forces at the household or individual level as envisaged in mainstream migration literature.

During the colonial era in India, the large-scale movements of people were structured by the pattern of colonial demand for labour in agriculture, mines, industry, armed forces, and infrastructure development. In the post-colonial period, the pattern of rural-urban migration has been structured by the nature of unequal development promoted by the pattern of skewed development in India which became significantly more pronounced in the post-liberalisation phase, exacerbating the gap between rural and urban areas, and between laggard and rapidly growing regions, with the most pronounced growth occurring in economic agglomerations, in and around large urban centres, mostly located in the North, West, and Southern regions of the country. It is these growth centres around urban centres, along with the persistent lack of livelihood growth in hinterlands, that are the major drivers of labour migration today (Srivastava, 2011b; 2020b).

Along with the pattern of development across regions, demographic regimes in different parts of the country are also reinforcing migration. The other fact, missed by mainstream development theory, is that most rural populations are differentiated in class and social terms. This differentiation is closely associated with the distribution of land and physical assets, on the one hand, and human capital, on the other. Not only does outmigration from rural areas take a U shape in relation to these factors (Connell et al., 1976), migrants are also stratified in terms of types of migration and job status in destination areas, depending upon their initial physical, educational, and social attributes (Srivastava, 2011a). The socio-economic groups at the bottom of the rural pyramid face discrimination and continue to retain the most precarious jobs in segmented labour markets when they migrate (Srivastava, 2019).

Further, the precarity of labour at the bottom is not simply a function of the lack of endowments or specific attributes. It follows from the way labour markets function. Segmentation and fragmentation is one key aspect of the functioning of labour markets. In wage labour markets, control over the labour process is another key dimension. Both also lead to lower wage and transaction costs. Contrary to what is normally believed, the same areas and sectors often expel and receive labour at the same time; this enables more effective control of labour costs and the labour process.

We also recognize now that rural-urban economic migration is neither a one-way street, nor is it the only migration stream.

We have known for several decades that seasonal and circular migration brings back migrants to their areas of origin in rural areas after they have expended labour in destination areas. The National Commission of Rural Labour estimated that by 1990, there were already more than 10 million seasonal/circular migrants working in construction, brick-kilns, quarries and mines, spinning and rice mills and so on, principally in rural destinations (NCRL, 1991). Initially, most circular migration was associated with seasonal activities. But Breman's extensive work on the issue has documented how the circular migrant can move from destination to destination for irregular periods, before returning to her/his area of origin (Breman, 1985; 2013).

Further, I and many others have pointed out that such migration is measured very poorly by the Census and the official surveys. The Census and the NSO are likely to provide an accurate enumeration of stable populations, missing out on those who live on the fringes or those who migrate temporarily. In earlier work, we have made a distinction between permanent migration, long-term circular or semi-permanent migration, and short-term seasonal or circular migration (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2005; Srivastava, 2011a; 2012a). Permanent migrants are those who no longer have a strong link with the areas from which they migrated. Long-term circular migrants are those who still have strong links with their areas of origin, draw part-subsistence from rural areas, and may revert back to home locations after a long migration cycle. Seasonal or short-term circular migrants differ from the first two categories in having no foothold in the

destinations where they work. Most reside at work-sites or in the open, while a small percentage live in crowded, tenanted places. Some may eventually join the ranks of long-term circular migrants. These migrants are a part of the informal economy and form the underbelly of the labour market, mostly as casual or contract workers. Long-term and short-term circular migrants from the main rump of the informal economy outside of agriculture.

The short-term circular migrants are no doubt also heterogeneous in terms of their characteristics, with a stratum of semi-skilled and self-employed workers. But Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes are over-represented among them (Srivastava, 2012a). In contradistinction to long-term migrants, they are from poorer and landless groups (Srivastava, 2012a). Female circular migrants are much more likely to be from SC or ST backgrounds and working in poorer quality jobs. Other than those in services or the self-employed, a large majority of the wage-employed among them are recruited through a chain of intermediaries (*ibid.*).

The India Human Development Survey shows that nearly half of all short duration circular migrants are recruited through contractors. The starting point of their recruitment is an advance, which immobilises them for the duration of employment and sometimes well beyond the current spell of employment (Srivastava, 2009). We have described this as neobondage. In a number of sectors such as construction, brick-kilns, and quarries, contractors give them a subsistence

allowance; full wages are only adjusted against advances at the end of their employment period. These short-term migrants enjoy a tenuous relation with the villages from where they come and have no civic rights or entitlements in the areas where they work. This includes lack of access to the PDS and, in many cases, even to the banking system (Srivastava, 2012a; 2012b).

The long-term circular migrants to cities negotiate their spaces with urban interlocutors over a protracted period, over the space of several years, and acquire some civic entitlements. But for most, even among this category, access to entitlements remains limited. The overwhelming majority of these migrants also work in the informal economy as informal wage workers or self-employed, with women workers tending to be concentrated in domestic household work, home-based manufacturing, and contributory workers in family enterprises and other low paid services (Srivastava, 2012a). Compared to the short-term circular migrants, they may have stronger social networks and are less likely to be in adverse inter-locked employment relationships. Yet, whether in wage employment or self-employed, most long-term circular migrants in the informal economy are also precariously placed. Like the short-term circular migrants, they retain a foothold in the rural areas of their origin, remitting income to their families in rural areas for consumption, working capital, or investment (ibid.).<sup>iv</sup> These migrants periodically or cyclically revert to their areas of origin, particularly in times of distress, and send regular remittances to their families in

villages, although many could eventually be absorbed in the urban landscape.

## **Circular migration, informality, and precarious work**

As discussed so far, Indian workers are submerged in an ocean of informality. Labour circulation plays an important part in the arrested transition of the workforce to decent work. Employers' use of flexible, informalised labour takes advantage of existing inequalities and has fostered and encouraged the use of circular migrant labour. These migrants and their families draw part-subsistence from the rural areas so that the users of labour do not have to provide them with the full cost of subsistence. The increasing cost of urban space and housing helps to create a model of exclusionary urbanization (Kundu, 2009; Kundu and Saraswati, 2016). Apart from resident labour, which comprises both long-term permanent migrants and long-term circular migrants, growth centres have been able to utilize a pool of commuting and short-term circular migrants who originate in rural areas but work, as and when required, in urban areas. One implication of this is that the share of the urban and peri-urban workforce is much higher than what is conveyed by the distribution of the rural-urban population.<sup>v</sup> The precarious and vulnerable part of this workforce comprises the short-term circular migrants, the vast majority of the long-term circular migrants, and a section of commuting labour and permanent migrants.

## **Estimates of vulnerable circular migrants**

When the migrant crisis erupted at the end of March 2020, no official estimates were available to gauge the numbers of migrant workers affected by the lockdown. But it soon became clear that migrant informal workers were virtually the mainstay of the urban/industrial economy. Large-scale distress and exodus after the lockdown has been experienced by short-term and long-term circular migrants, that is, by those who still consider their areas of origin as their primary or secondary homes.

In attempting to bring together broad estimates of circular migrants impacted, we realised that unlike short-term circular migrants, other categories of migrants, even long-term circular migration are not homogeneous, and that those more vulnerable to negative impact need to be identified on the basis of their income/consumption or employment status. While in earlier studies, we used the consumption status of long-term migrants to identify vulnerable migrants, we here use their occupational status as described earlier and consider those in the lower occupation categories (codes 5-9) as being in precarious jobs (see Srivastava, 2020b).

### **Short-term circular migrant workers**

We first turn to re-estimating the size of the short-term circular migrant workforce. Recently, we have estimated the size of the circular migrant workforce in the construction industry, which has the largest segment of such migrants (Srivastava, 2018). We concluded that survey data grossly underestimated the

numbers of circular migrants in the construction industry. In our estimates, about a quarter of all construction workers were short-term inter-state circular workers, while 50 to 60 per cent were short-term circular migrants including within-state migrants while about 10 per cent were long-term migrants (ibid.). Based on our estimates of workers in the construction industry, this would imply a circular migrant workforce of at least 24.9 million in 2011 and 26.4 million in 2017-18 in the construction industry alone.

Using the NSS 2007-08 estimates of the composition of other short-duration migrants by industry, and assuming a similar underestimation in all sectors—except in agriculture, where most circular migrants are short-term—we estimate that there were about 51 million short-term circular migrants in 2017-18. Of these, 44 million were in urban areas and 28 million were in other states. Based on trends in seasonal migration of agricultural labourers, we estimate their numbers to have been about 7.5 million in 2017-18.

## **Estimates of vulnerable long-term circular migrants**

We then turned to estimating the long-term (semi-permanent) circular migrant workforce. The migration numbers/estimates provided by the Census and the NSS include both permanent and semi-permanent (long-term circular) migrants. Obtaining estimates only of the latter is even more complicated. For this, we have used the information provided by the NSS migration survey on long-term outmigrants, for whom information is

available on economic activity, occupational category, and remittance status.

These detailed estimates and characteristics of out-migration and in-migration obtained from the NSS for 2007-08 have been combined with Census migration figures of 2001 and 2011, and projected for recent years to obtain updated figures for long-term migration in 2017-18. According to our estimates, just over one-third of all migrant workers enumerated in the NSS and the Census were long-term circular migrants in precarious work. Their numbers were estimated at about 66 million in 2011 and 81 million in 2018. Out of these workers, 56 million workers in 2011 and 69 million in 2018 were estimated as being vulnerable long-term circular migrant workers. Below, we provide estimates of urban migrants and inter-state migrants among the vulnerable long-term circular migrant workers.

The extended workforce in the urban areas is taken to be the long-term circular migrants estimated and the short term circular migrants in urban areas. As a percentage of all workers in precarious work categories in urban areas, the circular migrants comprised 49 and 65 per cent of the total in 2011-12 and 2017-18 respectively. These figures highlight the significant presence of circular migrants in the urban economy and among its vulnerable workforce.

### **Vulnerable inter-state circular migrants**

As far as inter-state migrant workers (both urban and rural) are concerned, we estimate 20 million long-term migrant

workers in precarious occupations and 25 million short-term vulnerable migrant workers in 2011. These figures have been projected to grow to 24 and 28 million respectively (52 million in all) in 2018.

Among inter-state urban migrant workers, there were an estimated 15 million long-term circular migrants in precarious occupations and 22 million short-term circular migrant workers in 2011. These figures were projected to increase to 19 million and 24 million respectively in 2018 (total 43 million).

The pandemic impacted most on vulnerable informal workers. Our estimates show that circular migrants are a very large component of the vulnerable workforce outside agriculture, more so in urban areas. The proportion of such workers can be expected to be higher for large urban agglomerations and growth centres where inter-state migrant workers are concentrated. These circular migrants are spread across construction, agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and the services sector. The above figures convey that they form the mainstay of the urban and peri-urban workforce and the informal non-agricultural workforce as a whole—something that became all too obvious after the exodus. There is a large and growing concentration of such migrant workers in precarious occupations in the informal economy. These workers, along with accompanying family members, were impelled to return to their villages, because of lack of food and wages, absence of accommodation and/or cramped living conditions, or simply insecurity and the desire to reunite with their families.<sup>vi</sup>

The magnitude of labour migration, and its centrality in the labour process in growth centres, was simply not recognized before the lockdown. Had the magnitude and the nature of vulnerabilities that circular migrants face been recognized at the outset, as they were subsequently recognised, it is still a moot point whether greater attention would have been paid to strategies promoting decent work among them.

## Conclusion

Policy makers and several analysts from my profession make regular references to rigidity in Indian labour markets and the need for ‘reforming’ them. A large volume of literature deals with the consequences of supposed labour market rigidity for overall levels of employment and industrial performance. Very little attention has been paid to the *systematic* features in the changes in labour markets—in terms of both de jure and de facto changes, which have expanded the realm of informal employment in the growing formal sector. Circular migrants, who populate the lower rungs of the informal workforce outside agriculture, especially in urban areas, and in both the formal and informal sectors, make a growing contribution to the informal workforce. They comprise the most flexible part of the informal workforce and a large chunk of its most precarious segments, are often relegated to carrying out the most difficult, dangerous, dirty, and least remunerative tasks.

Informal and precarious employment has expanded at most levels of the workforce in the formal sector. Here, we have focused more on the precarity of the workforce at the lower

levels of the occupational ladder, where workers are more vulnerable to adverse changes. It needs to be emphasised that the precarious workforce is itself hierarchically segmented along gender and social hierarchies even in the formal sector and in the large value chains. The growing informality, with the use of migrant labour in circulation, lowers the social reproduction costs of labour for the state and for employers, including the middle class beneficiaries of informal labour. It is set in motion by processes of unequal development which make the social reproduction of labour virtually impossible in the poorer regions.

The informal workers at the bottom of the work pyramid, especially circular migrants, suffer from chronic insecurity and the lack of workers' and citizens' rights, with little access to state-provided entitlements, either at origin or at destination. The NCEUS (2009) showed that the precarity of the Indian workforce is the principal cause of growing economic inequality. Even during the pandemic years, while inequality increased with growing profits and wealth at the top, workers faced a severe crisis of employment and subsistence, posing a great danger to equitable and sustainable growth and development.

Social protection measures instituted by central and state governments are not available to workers as a right and are not portable (Srivastava 2020a). They provide an inadequate social safety net to the vulnerable workforce. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has led to some baby steps towards introducing social protection for informal workers and migrants. The need

for enlarging the scope of social protection benefits and making them portable is now being recognised. The PDS scheme, which is part of the statutory National Food Security Act (NFSA), is being made portable and steps have been taken to register informal and migrant workers. Civil society organisations and a few progressive employers have been working towards a social compact which can improve the lot of workers within the latter's supply chains. But the overarching policy framework, exemplified by the labour codes, is still one which considers growth induced by a more business-friendly environment as congruent with greater labour flexibility, pushing Indian workers in the race to the bottom.

## Notes

<sup>i</sup>Persons in informal employment include the following types: (i) own-account workers employed in their own informal sector enterprises; (ii) employers employed in their own informal sector enterprises; (iii) contributing family workers, irrespective of whether they work in formal or informal sector enterprises; (iv) members of informal producers' cooperatives; (v) employees holding informal jobs in formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises, or as paid domestic workers employed by households; (vi) own-account workers engaged in the production of goods exclusively for own final use by their household.

<sup>ii</sup> The National Classification of Occupation (NCO 2004) categorises the following groups of occupations in codes 5 to 9— service workers and shop and market sales workers (code 5); skilled agricultural and fishery workers

(code 6); craft and related trades workers (code 7); plant and machinery operators and assemblers (code 8); and elementary occupations (code 9). These occupation groups are categorised by us as being in precarious occupations, when compared to workers in the higher skilled occupation categories 1 to 4.

iii The NSS/NSO surveys on employment-unemployment collected information on employee contract and social security status from industry, services, and three sub-sectors of agriculture viz. animal production; support activities to agriculture and post-harvest crop activities; and hunting, trapping and related service activities.

iv Among inter-state long term circular migrants, 76.6 per cent continued to make remittances to their families in source states.

v The National Statistical Organisation surveys on employment provide estimates of the workforce resident in rural and urban areas. They also provide estimates of the workforce by place of work reported by workers (rural, urban, no fixed place). By place of enumeration, the Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18 data estimates indicate that 48.8 per cent of non-agricultural workers were resident in rural areas and 51.2 per cent in urban areas. When adjustment is made for place of work, then only 39.7 per cent workers report working in rural areas, and 51.4 per cent in urban areas, while 8.9 per cent workers report having no fixed place of work (rural or urban).

vi The proportion of accompanying members to worker migrants is approximately 2.1 among long-term circular migrants. It is likely to be lower among short-term circular migrants.

# References

- Breman, J. (1985). *Of Peasants, Migrants and Paupers: Rural Labour and Capitalist Production in West India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Breman, J. (2013). *At Work in the Informal Economy of India: A Perspective from the Bottom Up*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Chen, M. A. (2012). The Informal Economy: Definitions, Theories and Policies. *WIEGO Working Paper No. 1*, August.
- Connell, J., Dasgupta, B., Laishley, R., & Lipton, M. (1976). *Migration from Rural Areas: The evidence from Village Studies*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Freeman, R. B. (2005). Labour Market Institutions without Blinders: The Debate Over Flexibility and Labour Market Performance. *Working Paper No. 11286, National Bureau of Economic Research*, Cambridge, MA.
- Government of India. (2017). *Report of the Working Group on Migration*. Ministry of Housing and Poverty Alleviation. January. New Delhi.
- International Labour Office (ILO). 1993. *Resolution Concerning the Measurement of Employment in the Informal Sector*. Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva).
- International Labour Organization (ILO) (2002). *Report of Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians*. International Labour Organisation.
- International Labour Office (ILO). (2003). *Guidelines concerning a statistical definition of informal employment*. Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva).
- ILO Department of Statistics. (2012). *Statistical Update on Employment in the Informal Economy*. June. (available at [http://laborsta.ilo.org/informal\\_economy\\_E.html](http://laborsta.ilo.org/informal_economy_E.html))
- International Labour Organization. (2013). *Measuring Informality: A Statistical Manual on the Informal Sector and Informal Employment*. International

- Labour Office, Geneva.
- International Labour Organisation. (2016). *Non-standard employment around the world: Understanding challenges, shaping prospects*. International Labour Office, Geneva.
- International Labour Organisation. (2018). *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*. International Labour Office, Geneva.
- Jha, P., & Goldar, S. (2008). Labour Market Regulation and Economic Performance: A Critical Review of Arguments and Some Plausible Lessons for India. *Economic and Labour Market Papers, International Labour Office, Geneva, Issue 1* (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/download/elm/elm08-1.pdf>, accessed 22 September, 2015)
- Kalleberg, A. L., & Vallas, S. P. (2018) Precarious Work. *Research in the Sociology of Work*, 31: 1-30.
- Kundu, A. (2009). Exclusionary Urbanisation in Asia: A Macro Overview. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44(48):48-58.
- Kundu, A. and Saraswati, L. (2016). Changing Pattern of Migration in India: A Perspective on Urban Exclusion. In *International Handbook of Migration and Population Distribution*, pp. 311-332. Springer Netherlands.
- National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS). (2009). *The Challenge of Employment: An Informal Economy Perspective* (Vol. 1 & 2), Government of India and Academic Foundation, National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector, Government of India, New Delhi.
- National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS). (2007). *Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector*. National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, Government of India & Academic Foundation, August, New Delhi.
- National Commission on Rural Labour. (NCRL). (1991). *Report of the Study Group on Migrant Labour* Vol. II, Part II, Government of India: Ministry of Labour, New Delhi.

- National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). (2010). Migration in India, (July 2007-June 2008). Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi. June.
- Rodgers, G. (2007). Labour Market Flexibility and Decent Work. *DESA Working Paper No. 47*. New York: UN DESA
- Srivastava, R. (1998). Migration and the Labour Market in India. Invited Keynote paper, Conference issue, *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 41(4): 583-617.
- Srivastava, R. (2009). Conceptualising Continuity and Change in Emerging Forms of Labour Bondage in India. In J. Breman, I. Guerin & A. Prakash (Eds.) *India's Unfree Workforce: Of Bondage Old and New*, pp. 129-146. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Srivastava, R. S. (2011a). Internal Migration in India: An Overview of its Features, Trends, and Policy Challenges. *Workshop Compendium, Vol. II: Workshop Papers*, National Workshop on Internal Migration and Human Development in India organized by UNESCO and UNICEF, Dec 6-7, 2011, New Delhi, pp. 1-47.
- Srivastava, R. S. (2011b). Labour Migration in India: Recent Trends, Patterns and Policy Issues. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 54(3): 411-440.
- Srivastava, R. (2012a). Internal Migration in India: An Overview of its Features, trends, and Policy Challenges. National Workshop on Internal Migration and Human Development in India *Workshop Compendium Vol. II: Workshop Papers October 2012*. New Delhi: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, and UNICEF India Country Office. ISBN 978-81-89218-45-4. pp. 1-47.
- Srivastava, R. (2012b). Internal Migration in India: An Overview of its Features, Trends, and Policy Challenges. In *National Workshop on Internal Migration and Human Development in India: Workshop Compendium Vol. II: Workshop Papers October 2012*, UNESCO and UNICEF India, New Delhi, pp. 1-47.
- Srivastava, R. (2016a). Myth and Reality of Labour Flexibility in India and What is to be Done? *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 59(1): 1-38.
- Srivastava, R. (2016b). *Structural Change and Non-standard Forms of Employment in India*. Geneva: International Labour Office, Inclusive

- Labour Markets, Labour Relations and Working Conditions Branch,  
ILO, Geneva.
- Srivastava, R. (2018). Building India Brick by Brick: Labourers in the Construction Industry. *Indian Exclusion Report 2017-18*. New Delhi: Yoda Press.
- Srivastava, R. (2019). Emerging Dynamics of Labour Market Inequality in India: Migration, Informality, Segmentation and Social Discrimination. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*. DOI: 10.1007/s41027-019-00178-5.
- Srivastava, R. (2020a). Vulnerable Internal Migrants in India and Portability of Social Security and Entitlements. *Centre for Employment Studies Working Paper Series. WP02/2020*. New Delhi: Institute for Human Development.
- Srivastava, R. (2020b). Understanding Circular Migration in India: Its Nature and Dimensions, the Crisis under Lockdown and the Response of the State. *Centre for Employment Studies Working Paper Series. WP04/2020*. New Delhi: Institute for Human Development.
- Srivastava, R. & Sasikumar S. K. (2005), "An Overview of migration in India, its impacts and key issues", in T. Siddiqui (Ed.) *Migration and Development: Pro-poor Policy Choices*. Dhaka: The University Press, pp. 157-216.
- Standing, G. (1985). Circulation and the Labor Process. In G. Standing (Ed.) *Labor Circulation and the Labor Process*. London: Croom Helm.
- Standing, G. (1986). Aspects of Labour Market Analysis. Labour Flexibility: Towards a Research Agenda. *World Employment Programme Research Working Paper. WEP 2-43/WP.3. April*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Standing, G. (1999). *Global Labour Flexibility: Seeking Distributive Justice*. London: MacMillan Press.
- Standing, G. (2011). *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London & New York: Bloomsbury.
- Van Eyck, K. (2003). Flexibilizing Employment: An Overview. In *Focus Programme on Boosting Employment through Small Enterprise Development, SEED WORKING PAPER No. 41*. Geneva: Job Creation and Enterprise Department. International Labour Office.

## DURGABAI DESHMUKH MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

Year	Speaker	Topic
2021	Yoginder K. Alagh	The Janus Face of Agricultural Policies- Kisan and Sethias: Local and Global
2020	Ashok Khosla	Are Today's Crises Catastrophic Enough for Neoclassical Economists and Neoliberal Politicians to Change Their Minesets?
2019	Hiren Gohain	The Heritage & Prospects of Democracy
2018	Rehman Sobhan	Human Insecurity in South Asia: Challenging Market Injustice
2017	P. Sainath	The Moral Economy of the Elite and Why They can't Confront the Inequality That is Our Greatest Crisis
2016	Flavia Agnes	Has Codified Hindu Law Changed Gender Relationships?
2015	Abhijit Sen	Demographic Drivers of Economic Growth - Role of Human Capital
2014	N.C. Saxena	Challenges of Good Governance
2013	S. K. Thorat	Growth and its Pro-Poor Character in India 1993-2010
2012	Narendra Jadhav	Reforms in the Higher Education System and 12 <sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan
2011	Devaki Jain	What is Wrong with Economics? Can the Aam Aurat Redefine Economic Reasoning?
2010	Gail Omvedt	Caste in the Census
2009	Shanta Sinha	Deficit Childhood: Implications for India's Democracy
2008	Randhir Singh	Indian Politics in the Age of Globalisation
2007	Mahashweta Devi	Fundamental Human Rights for the Nautch Girls of Purulia
2006	Aruna Roy	Democracy Work
2005	Munda Ram Dayal	Globalisation and the Challenges of Tribal Development
2004	Anil Sadgopal	Globalisation: Demystifying its Knowledge Agenda for Education Policy
2003	Pushpa Bhargava	The Promise and Problems of Today's Biology and Biotechnology and Their Applications
2002	Mashirul Hasan	Islam, Culture & Politics: Awadh Society in 20 <sup>th</sup> Century
2001	N.H. Anita	Women and Health
2000	Leela Dubey	Social Development and Social Research
1999	M.N. Venkatachaliah	Human Rights and Women in India
1998	Swami Agnivesh	Towards a Spiritual Society
1997	Leila Seth	The Girl Child and Social Development
1996	Vandana Shiva	Trading Our Lives Away: Free Trade, Women and Ecology
1995	Kiran Bedi	Concept of Management in Government
1994	Karan Singh	Population and Social Development in India
1993	Vina Majumdar	Women and the Political Process
1992	Suma Chitnis	The Institutionalisation of Social Purpose



**Professor Ravi Srivastava** is currently Director, Centre for Employment Studies, Institute for Human Development, Delhi. He was earlier Professor of Economics and Chairperson, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and full-time Member (2006-09) of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS), in the rank of Secretary, Government of India.

He received his education in the University of Allahabad, the Delhi School of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and University of Cambridge, UK.

His main areas of research and publication include labour and employment, migration, social protection, agriculture, rural development and rural poverty, the informal sector, regional development, decentralization, human development, and land reforms. He has published six books, five monographs, more than one hundred and ten papers, and has carried out more than thirty-five major research projects sponsored by agencies such as UNICEF, ILO, The World Bank, ESRC (UK), UNFPA, University Grants Commission, Indian Council for Social Science Research, Shastri Indo-Canadian Foundation and others.

He is a recipient of numerous awards and scholarships including the Commonwealth and the Fulbright Fellowship; the University Grant Commission's award in economics (2001) for innovative research on poverty, and the V. V. Giri Memorial Award (2009) for research on labour migration.

He has performed consultancy and advisory roles for the Planning Commission, Indian Ministries, State governments; International Agencies such as the World Bank, ILO, ADB, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, IFAD, FAO, JBIC, DFID and SIDA; and numerous other governmental and non-governmental agencies.

He is past President of the Indian Society of Labour Economics and current President of the UP and Uttarakhand Economics Association.



## **Council for Social Development**

Sangha Rachna

53, Lodi Estate, New Delhi - 1100 03

Phones: 91-11-24615383, 24611700, 24616061

Email: [csdnd@csdindia.org](mailto:csdnd@csdindia.org), [director@csdindia.org](mailto:director@csdindia.org); [www.csdindia.org](http://www.csdindia.org)