

Emerging Trends of Reverse Migration due to Covid-19 Pandemic in India

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Abstract-Reverse Migration is situation in which migrant person wants move back to his own city or village from where he belong. In the outbreak of Covid-19 Migrant workers are all set to return Home Town because there with no Work to do in Lockdown. The enormity and suddenness, along with the miseries in the rush of the hapless people trying to leave the urban centres for bare survival, opens up several issues relating to the current situation. On the other hand, for reinstating them in the labor market, the state governments at the origin, as well as the destinations, should develop a suitable mechanism to ensure social security schemes to protect them under any socio-economic or health emergency. The government of India, as well as state governments, should do their best to ensure that the recent surge in unemployment is not converted into hunger, and the lack of working capital to MSMEs should not lead to bankruptcy. This will require the strengthening of the labor market with ample job opportunities by implementing swift laborer-centered structural reforms by focusing on the formalization of entrepreneurship and planned urbanization.

Keyword:- Covid-19, Pandemic, Reverse Migration, Labour

Introduction-There are various dimensions of vulnerability for the return migrants at their place of origin that are predominantly rural and have inadequate health infrastructure to deal with the unprecedented crisis at hand. The increasing number of COVID-19 cases, which has increased over 14 times within a short span of 8 weeks, and enormous problems of household crowding, especially in the households of migrant laborers belonging to socially deprived and economically marginalized groups, lack of hand hygiene provisions, and loss of jobs and wages, demand a focused intervention addressing their health as well as economic well-being. The relief package by the Government of India for the wellbeing of labor migrants may be beneficial for their social and economic wellbeing in the long run. But, a better initiative would have been instant

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financial support via a conditional cash transfer scheme. The public health system needs to establish and strengthen their COVID care centers in each of about 700 district hospitals in the country to ensure tracking, testing, and treatment of COVID cases at district levels.

An unprecedented large scale reverse migration of labour triggered by the nationwide lockdown that saw millions of workers travel across state borders has put some of the Indian economy's biggest sector at risk. Inflows of migrants to urban areas provided cheap labour having no legal compulsion for employers. Looking at the build-up of the migrant flows from the rural areas to the urban centres, it will be an understatement to conclude that the flow of migrants had no impact on the functioning of the urban work places. The drive provided a reserve army of cheap labour waiting to be hired at wages which could dip lower than the statutory minimum, especially after meeting the commissions due to the contractor. Nor were there any further obligation on part of the employers, given that the 'footloose' migrants never had any legal status as working population.

With the formal organised sector units of industry and services using as much as one half or more of those employed with an informal status, it became rather opportune for the enterprises in factories, construction sites and other labour-intensive activities to make use of the migrants in their cost-cutting exercises. The remaining migrants who were not absorbed in the formal or informal work-places, continued as self-employed in various capacities ranging from vendors to shop-keepers at low levels of remunerations. On the whole the presence of the rural migrants benefitted the urban economy as a whole, providing cheap labour to factories, cheap services to households and in various other forms.

Migrant workers returning to native places in COVID-19 times were the host for urban to rural transmission of cases as the migrant-receiving states witnessed over five times increase in the number of districts having a more significant concentration of COVID-19 cases from 1 May to 31 May 2020. There is an urgent need for the skill mapping of the migrant workforce and creating social security schemes to protect them under any socio-economic or health emergency. The highly contagious severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has overnight created a nightmare worldwide, leading to lockdowns in many countries, which have victimised the informal sector migrant labourers in most of the developing countries like India.

With increasing reverse migration of the workers, there was a common perception among various state governments that the migrant labourers are carrying COVID-19 from high contagion zones in metropolitan or million-plus cities to low-risk rural areas in the process of reverse migration amidst COVID-19. Given the inherent heterogeneity in employment opportunities and wage differentials in rural and urban -areas, metropolitan cities and larger -urban agglomerations have historically emerged as the hub for job opportunities for daily earners.

Post COVID19 lockdowns in India, thousands of daily wage labourers belonging to the informal sector have been leaving big cities in droves. They have no other alternative but to return to their villages though their future there is also bleak. Having no public means of transport, many have left on foot to remote places like Bihar from the national capital of Delhi. Some have taken rickshaws to reach their destinations. They had taken a long time to reach their villages. And, their plight is beyond imagination.

Back in the villages, they may even infect some people having caught the virus in the cities. COVID19 has a 14-day incubation period. Hence the spread of the virus in the villages may take place easily. To make the situation worse, our villages have only rudimentary health infrastructure and lack proper hospitals with ventilators which are needed to fight the virus. There is less than one doctor per 1,000 populations. In such a situation, it would be very difficult for rural India to fight COVID19 virus. With a high density population of 450 persons per square mile, the government has done the right thing in calling for a lockdown across the country. In cities, it would be hard to maintain hygiene and even washing hands with soap can be a problem in slums as it requires running water. Social distancing is a problem too when a room of 10 by 10 feet houses four people. In cities, it would be hard to maintain hygiene and even washing hands with soap can be a problem in slums as it requires running water.

Migrants who return home have few alternatives of earning cash. Their small pieces of land if they have any, cannot sustain them and daily wage labour and artisanal work is not possible in an economy which is under great stress. In fact, rural demand has been declining as a result because of the increase in joblessness. There are no light industries except in some villages and the nearest town is the only place they can find work. From small towns, they often migrate to cities in search of work. Most of the migration that has taken place in recent years has been from small towns to cities.

We can also have light industries in villages, especially in food processing. India is the second biggest producer of fruits and vegetables. Most of it goes waste. Some startups are trying to develop cold chain logistics, but more are needed except that it is difficult to attract new talent. There has to be a proper startup ecosystem. Most importantly, the infrastructure in villages is creaky and insufficient. Such conditions leave the rural economy weak and investors both domestic and foreign are unhappy going there to establish factories. Regular supply of power, water, proper roads and connectivity are most needed. Even the remote parts should have pucca roads. Otherwise, there will always be poverty in the deep interiors and people would migrate in large numbers.

Conclusion-Present paper concluded that the government of India, as well as the state governments should do their best to ensure that the recent surge in unemployment is not converted into hunger, and the lack of working capital to MSMEs should not lead to bankruptcy. This will require the strengthening of the labor market with ample job opportunities by implementing swift laborer-centered structural reforms by focusing on the formalization of entrepreneurship and planned urbanization. This lockdown crisis has been an unforeseen calamity, but it can happen again. It is better to decongest cities and let the migrant labour have the option of remaining in the villages or move to the cities.

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