

REVERSE MIGRATION IN INDIA DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Rajwinder Kaur

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics

Guru Nanak Bhai Lalo Ramgarhia College for Women, Phagwara (Punjab)-India,

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic is the most threatened disease of the recent era. The very visible economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic is the reverse migration. Reverse migration is the major and serious problem of the Indian economy. As second phase of COVID-19 lockdown in India extended, that situation make labourers restless due to no guarantee of work. Labourers assert that reverse migration is most accurate decision to save their own lives in a terrible situation involving dislocation of home and family life, loss of livelihood due to closure of industrial units as well as non-industrial units. They decide to return back to their native places. The heart touching images of the migrant labourers walking on road is only due to COVID-19 pandemic. Now a day they are facing basically two types of problems. Firstly daily wage earner labourers become jobless. Secondly at their native places they are facing discrimination in the form of corona virus carriers. Under lockdown, well settle Indians do work from home and get groceries via online delivery orders. But on the other side poor labourers' story is different; they have no food, no shelter and even no job to survive. The Government of India takes major initiatives for migrant labourers so that they become self-reliant.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, Discrimination, Inequality, Jobless, Poverty, Recession.

INTRODUCTION

Reverse migration of labourers are not good for Indian economy's health. The major root of this problem is COVID-19 pandemic. Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome corona virus disease 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Reverse migration means when labourers start migrating back to their native place due to non-availability of basic needs of life and employment opportunities. Santosh K. Mehrotra Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, in his newly launched book 'Reviving Jobs: An Agenda for Growth' said that current reverse migration due to COVID-19 pandemic has set the country back by 15 years and which hamper the economy in the long run. He shows that the journey of the revival of the economy from COVID-19 pandemic takes too much time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ajay Dandekar and Rahul Ghai (2020) concluded that the Corona virus pandemic leads to a

massive reverse migration from the destination to source in the large parts of the Indian country. The migration is responsible for unprecedented crisis in the arena of agriculture which is not going to soon recover. So the basic need is to a complete transformation of economic and administrative processes to revive the economy.

Suchita Krishnaprasad (2020) made a study and described that maintaining social distancing become an urgent need during COVID-19 pandemic. Some state governments take major steps for migrant workers. Uttar Pradesh has become one of the first states to undertake skill mapping of migrant workers who returned to the State during the lockdown. So the Uttar Pradesh government has formed a Migrant Commission to identify the skills of returning migrants and provide employment to them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the status of reverse migration due to COVID-19.
2. To show realistic picture of the reverse migrant labourers.
3. To evaluate the condition of daily wage earners.
4. To study the impact of reverse migration on Indian economy.
5. To aware the society about the current scenario of Indian economy due to COVID-19.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study is based on secondary data obtained from magazines, reports, newspapers, books and the like.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

‘Social distancing’ and ‘Stay Home - Stay Safe’ are basic two mantras of the recent time. The first COVID-19 pandemic case was discovered in late 2019 from Wuhan, China. But in India, the first case of the COVID-19 pandemic was confirmed in Kerala on 30 January 2020. As of July 15, 2020, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has confirmed 319840 active cases, 592031 cured/discharged and 24309 deaths due to COVID-19 in India. Now at this time situation of COVID-19 pandemic becomes terrible. During announcement of nationwide lockdown in India, almost all the economic activities are stopped and labourers have no source to earn money which is responsible for reverse migration. The lockdown in India announces in the following different phases:

TABLE 1

LOCKDOWN PHASES IN INDIA

S. No.	Lockdown Phase	Time Period	No. of days
1	Lockdown 1.0	25 March 2020 - 14 April	21 days

.		2020	
2	Lockdown 2.0	15 April 2020 - 3 May 2020	19 days
3	Lockdown 3.0	4 May 2020 - 17 May 2020	14 days
4	Lockdown 4.0	18 May 2020 - 31 May 2020	14 days
5	Lockdown 5.0 / Unlock 1.0	1 June 2020 - 30 June 2020	30 days
6	Lockdown 6.0 / Unlock 2.0	1 July 2020 - 31 July 2020	31 days

Migrant labourers constitute the backbone of informal unorganized work in urban areas. Most of the labourers are engaged in industries, agriculture, construction, mining, seafood processing etc. Due to lack of formal contracts between labourer and employer, labourers are unable to get any gain. The COVID-19 crisis has left these workers jobless, moneyless and homeless. With no transportation option, many labourers started an endless walk back under the scorching sun heat. Many state governments like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Assam and Madhya Pradesh etc. proactively made efforts to bring back migrant workers by arranging inter-state buses. The Indian Railways began nationwide ‘Shramik Special’ trains on 1 May 2020 only for migrant labourers to bring back them to native places.

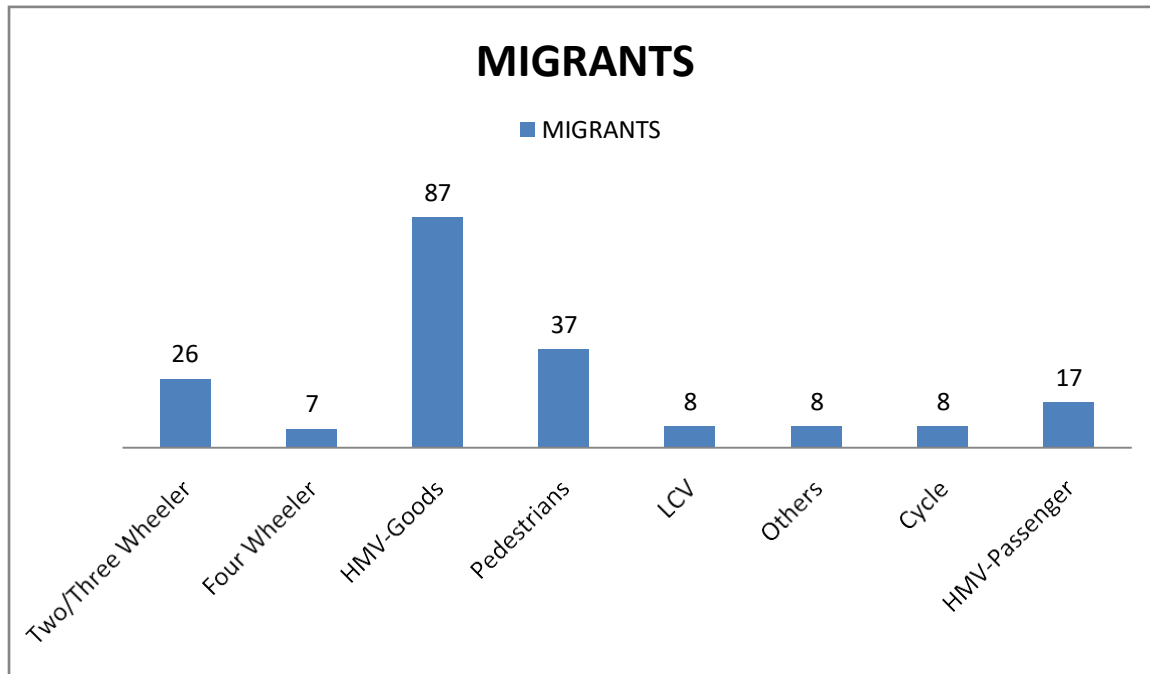
PAINFUL DEATHS OF THE MIGRANT LABOURERS

Many people are died due to corona virus. But some labourers are died due to road accidents when they were going back to home only for save their life. According to SaveLife Foundation, Total road crash deaths in India during lockdown are 750 in which 198 persons are migrants.

TABLE 2
ROAD CRASH DEATHS DURING LOCKDOWN

Total	Migrants	General Road Users	Essential Workers
750 (100%)	198 (26.4%)	512 (68.3%)	40 (5.3%)

FIGURE 1
MODAL SPLIT OF ROAD CRASH DEATHS



The table no. 2 shows that 26.4% migrant workers are died during lockdown when they made so many efforts to go back to home. The figure no. 1 shows the detail summary of modal split of road crash deaths.

IMPACT OF REVERSE MIGRATION ON INDIAN ECONOMY

If the situation of reverse migration persists, it can negatively impact the Indian economy and make recovery difficult. There are some following impacts of reverse migration on Indian economy:

- **RETARD THE GROWTH OF LABOUR-INTENSIVE SECTOR:** Reverse migration is the serious issue of the labour-intensive sector. Most of the Indian states depend on migrant labourers for agriculture as well as industrial sector's production. To maintain the production level, more labour is needed. The growth of the labour-intensive sector retards due to non-availability of labour only due to reverse migration.
- **INSTABILITY:** The stability of the economy is based on their labourers. Most of the Indian States are used interstate migrant workers in agriculture and industrial sector to uplift the production level of the respective states. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, millions of migrant workers return back to their native states to secure their lives. This situation makes the country instable.
- **LABOUR SHORTAGE:** The fundamental impact of reverse migration is the

shortage of labourers. The lockdown phase 5.0 is treated as 'Unlock 1.0'. The various economic activities resumes in this phase. Due to labour shortage, it is impossible to recover economy to progressive path. This cause the lower production level.

- **INCREASE POVERTY:** Reverse migration is responsible for poverty because of agricultural and industrial production goes down. Agriculture and industrial sectors yet has not enough labour. So automatically that affects production level and also income goes down.
- **DIFFICULT TO RECOVERY OF THE ECONOMY:** As India reopens the economy after the lockdown, labour shortage in urban areas leads to delay in economic recovery that affects social stability. It also leads to recession in the economy.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF REVERSE MIGRATION

The Government of India has announced economic relief measures for migrant labourers. Government of India implements many targeted programmes to ensure welfare and jobs for millions of migrants who have returned back to their hometowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these measures are as:

- **MGNREGA:** The Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman increases the average daily wages under MGNREGA from Rs. 182 to Rs. 202 w.e.f. 1st April 2020 under economic relief package. It shows:

No. of work days under MGNREGA = 100 days

Per day income increase (Rs. 202 - Rs.182) = Rs. 20

Total increase in income of one labourer= 100*20= Rs. 2000

On 17th May 2020 under the announcement of final tranche of Rs. 20 lakh crore economic COVID-19 relief package 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', Finance Minister allocate additional Rs. 40,000 crores for MGNREGA to provide employment boost. This initiative will help to generate nearly 300 crore person-days in total. She also addressed that the Centre Government of India is committed to generating more employment opportunities for returning migrant workers in the monsoon season as well.

- **GARIB KALYAN ROJGAR ABHIYAAN:** The Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan is a 125-days abhiyaan launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 20th June 2020 to boost employment and livelihood opportunities for migrant workers returning to villages, in the wake of COVID-19 outbreaks. He also announces that an amount of Rs. 50,000 crores will be spent for building durable rural infrastructure. The Abhiyaan is extended to cover 116 districts (including 27 Aspirational Districts) across 6 States, namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya

Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha and Jharkhand where maximum migrant workers have returned. Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan will be operational for a period of 125 days, commencing from 20th June 2020.

TABLE NO. 3

LIST OF STATES

Sr. No.	State	No. of Districts	No. of Aspirational Districts
1.	Bihar	32	12
2.	Uttar Pradesh	31	5
3.	Madhya Pradesh	24	4
4.	Rajasthan	22	2
5.	Odisha	4	1
6.	Jharkhand	3	3
Total	6	116	27

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan involves intensified and focused implementation of 25 different types of works to provide firstly employment to the migrant workers and secondly create infrastructure in the rural areas of the country.

TABLE NO. 4

GARIB KALYAN ROJGAR ABHIYAAN

Sr. No.	Type of Work / Activity
1.	Community Sanitary Complex
2.	Gram Panchayat Bhawan
3.	Works under Finance Commission Funds
4.	National Highway Works
5.	Water Conservation & Harvesting Works
6.	Construction of Wells
7.	Plantation (including through CAMPA Funds)
8.	Horticulture
9.	Anganwadi Centers
10.	Rural Housing (PMAY-Gramin)
11.	Rural Connectivity (PMGSY) & Border Road Works
12.	Railway Works
13.	Shyama Prasad Mukherjee RURBAN Mission
14.	PM KUSUM Works
15.	Laying of Optical Fibre Cable Under Bharat Net
16.	Works under Jal Jeevan Mission
17.	Works under PM Urja Ganga Project
18.	Training through KVKs for Livelihoods
19.	Works through District Mineral Fund
20.	Solid and Liquid Waste Management Works
21.	Farm Ponds

22.	Cattle Sheds
23.	Goat Sheds
24.	Poultry Sheds
25.	Vermi-composting

- **STATE GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO U.P. GOVERNMENT:** The Uttar Pradesh becomes first State of the India that firstly start skill mapping of migrant workers who returned to the State during the lockdown. The Government provides jobs to the migrant labourers in the State as per their skills and experience and constitute a Migrant Commission for it. So far, around 23-24 lakh migrant labourers have returned to U.P. during the lockdown period. The largest set of these migrant labourers are related to the construction sector. The list also includes large number of carpenters, painters, drivers, electricians and persons associated with electronics, security guards, furniture and fitting workers and auto-repair mechanics.

SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME THE PROBLEM OF REVERSE MIGRATION

Reverse migration is not a good situation of the developed economy. It gives birth to various new problems that causes retard economy's growth and prosperity. Some suggestions are given as below:

- To provide free food to migrant workers for their livelihood
- To provide free home facility to stay until the problem will be solved
- To provide unemployment allowance till labourers get new job
- To increase employment opportunities in each and every sector of the economy
- To take the responsibility to give free education to the children of especially migrant labourers

Such initiative will helpful for the migrant labourers. Migrant labourers play a vital role to uplift the status of the Indian economy. So it is the basic duty and responsibility of each state of the India to provide all facilities to the migrant labourers because these workers are the precious asset for Indian economy's development.

CONCLUSION

The reverse migration is a temporary phenomenon. This situation will return to normal after the COVID-19 has subsided. The world is facing humanity's biggest and most serious crisis. Massive reverse migration will lead to increase in poverty, discrimination and inequality. The only solution of the COVID-19 pandemic is 'maintain social distancing' and wears 'masks'. If we all win war against invisible enemy 'Corona Virus' then all the problems will be finished to some extent. Now it is the time to work together with hope to find solutions against this problem for the upcoming bright future.

REFERENCES

- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Government of India. Retrieved July 15, 2020, from <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/>
- Parikh, H. Gupta, A. & Kumar, S. (2020, May 20). How India Can Mitigate The Risk Of Covid-19 Spread Due To The Largescale Reverse-Migration Of Labour. <https://swarajyamag.com/ideas/how-india-can-mitigate-the-risk-of-covid-19-spread-due-to-the-largescale-reverse-migration-of-labour>
- Mehta, J. (2020, June 09). Migrating out of the big cities may cause more pain. <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/migrating-out-of-the-big-cities-may-cause-more-pain-11591722980811.html>
- Save LIFE FOUNDATION. Road Crash Deaths During Lockdown. <https://savelifefoundation.org/covidtracker/>
- Team NEXT IAS. (2020, May 28). Impacts of Reverse Migration. <https://blog.nextias.com/impacts-of-reverse-migration>
- Building Atmanirbhar Bharat and Overcoming COVID-19. <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/building-atmanirbhar-bharat-overcoming-covid-19>
- About Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan. <http://gkra.nic.in>
- Dandekar, A. & Ghai, R. (2020). Migration and Reverse Migration in the Age of COVID-19. *Economic & Political Weekly, LV* (19), 28-31.
- Krishnaprasad, S. (2020). Migration & Economic Growth. *Yojana, 64*(6), 39-44.