

Migration in India: Spurt in Reverse Migration amid Economic Slowdown Due to Lockdown

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Received
15 Jun 2020

Reviewed
21 Jun 2020

Accepted
25 Jun 2020

Migration is a major Political and Economical issue related to human rights and development at regional, national and international levels. In a large country like India, the study of migration in different parts of the country helps in understanding the complexities of the society better. The global spread of novel corona virus (COVID-19) has been recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). Government of India announced a nationwide lockdown with a complete restriction on passenger travel by all transportation means was implemented since March 24, 2020. During this lockdown the country witnessed economic slowdown, which forced reverse migration. In this paper we analyze the effect of lockdown on economic growth of India.

Key Words: Migration, Reverse Migration, Lockdown, Economic Slowdown

1. Introduction: Migration is a major Social, Political and Economical issue related to human rights and development at regional, national and international levels. The studies on migration show that migration is in large part related to the broader economic, social, political and technological transformations. In a large country like India, the study of migration in different parts of the country helps in understanding the complexities of the society better. To assess the effect of Economic development in the country, especially when many states are developing fast, especially in areas, such as, agriculture, service, manufacturing sectors, information technology migration profile of population has become more significant.

The global spread of novel corona virus (COVID-19) has been recognized as a pandemic

by the World Health Organization (WHO). The pandemic has already affected 340 million people across the world. There have been 10,15,998 deaths worldwide and 253 million people recovered till 30th September 2020. In India, total 62,98,124 confirmed cases, 52,60,641 recovered cases and 98,578 deaths were reported till September 30, 2020¹. Government of India adopted strategy of social distancing like many other countries as a infection prevention and control intervention. Under this strategy, a nationwide lockdown with a complete restriction on passenger travel by all transportation means was implemented since March 24, 2020. During this lockdown the country witnessed economic slowdown, which forced reverse migration.

2. Research Methodology: This research paper is based on secondary data provided by

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Central Government, State Government, Academicians, Journals and Books. We have analyzed data of Migration for rural and urban India over the period 1991 to 2011 and sudden reverse migration in 2020 COVID -19 pandemic.

3. Indian Scenario: According to the State of World Population report, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and the number is gradually increasing every year. India is no exception to this trend. As per the census, the level of urbanization in India has increased from 27.81% in 2001 to 31.16% in 2011. Urbanization in India is an outcome of demographic explosion and poverty led rural-urban migration. The proportion of migrants in urban population is 47%.² When a person is enumerated in census at a different place than his / her place of birth, she / he is considered a migrant. Marriage is the most common cause of migration among females while work is the reason generally among males, etc.. Census collect information on migration which helps in understanding the current migration scenario better.

According to the 2011 Census of India 69 percent of India's population live in rural areas, but the country is urbanizing rapidly. The cities of Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata are among the world's top ten most populous cities, and India has 25 out of 100 fastest-growing cities worldwide. A significant source of this increase is rural to urban migration, as a growing number of people do not find adequate economic opportunities in rural areas and move to towns and cities. Census 2011 reveals that India's urban population has increased faster than its rural population since census 2001. Now 31.16 percent of India's population is urban up from about 27.81 percent in 2001³.

According to World Bank data, in 2010, 29.8 percent Indians lived below the poverty line, while 33.8 percent of rural Indians lived below the national rural poverty line. Rural India is still

characterized by agrarian distress, a lack of employment and educational opportunities and farmer suicides. Thus, the rural-urban partition has been one of the primary causes for India's labor mobility⁴. The *India Wage Report* exhibits that low wages and wage inequality is a serious threat to India in achieving respectable working conditions and inclusive growth. Out of total employed persons in 2011-12, 51.4 per cent, or 206 million people were self-employed, and out of 195 million wage earners, 62 per cent or 121 million persons were employed as casual workers⁵. In addition to low wages for casual workers, there is also gender bias in wage payments. The gender bias in casual wage payment is low in rural areas (0.63) than in urban areas (0.58). However, the reason for low gender bias in wage payments in rural areas is very low wages both for male and female rural workers⁶. As high as 70 percent of its rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 percent of farmers being small and marginal⁷.

4. Data Analysis: According to the Census, India has 456 million migrants in 2011 (38% of the population) in comparison to 315 million migrants in 2001 (31% of the population).

Between 2001 and 2011, while population increased by 18%, the number of migrants increased by 45%. In 2011, 99% of total migration has been interstate and international migrants comprise 1%⁸. In India, as per census 2001, about 307 million persons have been reported as migrant by place of birth. Out of them about 259 million (84.2%), migrated from one part of the state to another, i.e., from one village or town to another village or town. 42 million (2%) out of the country. The data on migration by last residence in India as per Census 2001 shows that the total number of migrants has been 314 million. Out of these migrants by last residence, 268 million (85.4%) has been intra-state migrants, those who migrated from

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one are of the state to another. 41 million (13%) were interstate migrants and 5.1 million (1.6%) migrated out of the country.

4.1. Migration inter and intra State: The Economic Survey of India 2017 estimates that the magnitude of inter-state migration in India was close to 9 million⁹ annually between 2011 and 2016, while Census 2011 reveals the total number of internal migrants in the country a staggering 139 million. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the major source states 37% (20.9 million), followed by Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal. The major destination states are Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Delhi and Mumbai are considered migrant attracters and the 2011 Census reveals that out. According to it migrants from other states in Delhi and Mumbai numbered 9.9 million.

Table 1
Migration Data (Number in Millions)

S. No.	Year	Migration within State	Migration Inter State
1	1991	59.1	27.3
2	2001	76.8	42.3
3	2011	121.2	56.3

Source: Census of India, 2011

The number of inter-state migrants grew at 54.94% between the 1991 and the 2001 Census. This decreased to 33.09% between the 2001 and 2011 Census. In contrast, the rate of growth in inter-district migrants (within state) increased from 29.94% between the 1991 and 2001 census to 57.81% between 2001 and 2011. Not only are people migrating within states, they are migrating within districts. The growth in intra-district migration (movement within the same

district) increased from 33% to 45% between 1991-2001 and 2001-11. Obviously, people are finding better opportunities near home than they were getting earlier.

4.2 Reasons for internal migration: As of 2011, majority (70%) of intra-state migration was due to reasons of marriage and family with dissimilarity between male and female migrants. While 83% of females moved for marriage and family, the corresponding data for males was 39%. On the whole, 8% of people migrated within state for work (21% of male migrants and 2% of female migrants).

Table 2
Reason of Migration (Percent Share of migrants)

S.- N- o.	Reason of Migration	Within District	Within State	Inter State
1	Work/Business	35.1	34.6	30.3
2	Education	53.8	32.4	13.8
3	Marriage	65.4	26.5	8.1
4	After Birth/With Household	54.8	29.3	15.9
5	Others	73.7	18.0	8.3

Source: Census of India, 2011

Migration for work was higher among interstate migrants- 50% of male and 5% of female. According to Census, there were 45 million migrant workers in 2011. However, according to the Working Group Report on Migration, the Census undercounts the migrant workers.

Many women take up employment after migrating which is not shown in the number of women moving for work related reasons¹⁰. The gender gap in migration for economic purposes (work, business and education) increases with the distance of migration. The number of men who migrated within district was 3.2, across districts but within states 4.3 and across states was 7.4, for every woman who migrated for work, business or education,.

5. Reverse Migration Due to Lockdown: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian economy was showing a sign of slower growth. According to the International Monetary Fund, between the period 2015-2019 growth diminished from 8.0 to 4.0 per cent¹¹. In 2018, the unemployment rate was more than 6 per cent. The youth unemployment rate increased from 10 to 23 per cent during 2012 to 2018, 12.

More than 90% of working people in India are in the informal sector. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have more than 80% of workers in this sector. A recent primary labour force survey (PLFS-2017-18) has estimated that more than 71% people with a regular salary working in industries have no written job agreement. Nearly half of workers are not eligible for social security benefits¹³.

COVID-19 has greatly affected migrant workers. The population of 100 million (20 per cent of workforce) internal migrant workers have been the worst sufferers in the unplanned lockdown that began on March 25. They have been stranded in the cities and other places of work, without wages, money and food. The migrant workers walked hundreds of kilometers to reach their villages¹⁴.

Steps taken by the government with regard to migrant labour during the lockdown

Measures taken by the government to aid migrants include- On March 28, the central government authorized states to use the State Dis-

aster Response Fund to provide accommodation to traveling migrants. States were advised to set up relief camps along highways with medical facilities to ensure people stay in these camps while the lockdown is in place.

5.1 .Transport: Between May 1 and June 3, Indian Railways operated 4,197 Shramik trains, more than 5.8 million migrants were transported through specially operated trains and 4.1 million were transported by road¹⁵.

The preliminary data released by the CLC following a rap from the Central Information Commission accounts for 26,17,218 migrant workers spread across the country. Chhattisgarh has the maximum number of workers at 10.85 lakh, followed by Kerala at 2.86 lakh, Maharashtra at 2.01 lakh, Tamil Nadu at 1.93 lakh and Andhra Pradesh at one lakh¹⁶.

5.2.Food Distribution: The Indian government announced the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKB), a \$22.6 billion relief package in March 2020 to give some relief to people¹⁷. On April 1, the Ministry of Health and Family Affairs directed state governments to establish relief camps for migrant workers with arrangements for food, sanitation and medical services. On May 14, under the second tranche of the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, the Finance Minister announced that free food grains would be provided to migrant workers who do not have a ration card for two months¹⁸. The measure is expected to benefit 80 million migrant workers and their families. The Finance Minister also declared that One Nation One Ration card will be implemented by March 2021, to provide portable benefits under the PDS. This will allow access to ration from any Fair Price Shop in India to migrants. The World Bank announced \$1 billion funding to speed up social protection support, in part through the PMGKB. This support would work alongside pre-existing measures such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), which covers 800 million people,

and Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT). This cash injection could help address one of the key challenges facing India's piecemeal and uneven social protection programmes – inadequate funding. India's spending on public social protection excluding health is just 1.3% of the GDP 19. Government announced an additional 5kg of wheat or rice per person on the Public Distribution System list, and 1kg of pulses per PDS household, for 3 months and Free Liquefied Petroleum Gas cylinders for 86 million Ujjwala scheme beneficiaries (who are all Below Poverty Line families) for 3 months.

5.3. Housing: The Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan also launched a scheme for Affordable Rental Housing Complexes for Migrant Workers and Urban Poor to provide affordable rental housing units under PMAY. The scheme aims to use existing housing stock under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Housing Mission (JnNURM) as well as to motivate public and private agencies to build new affordable houses for rent. Moreover, extra funds have been allocated for the credit connected subsidy scheme under PMAY for middle income groups²⁰. Since housing is a state subject, there is variation in approach of States towards affordable housing.²¹

5.4. Financial aid: Some state governments (like Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) announced onetime cash transfers for returning migrant workers. UP government declared maintenance allowance of Rs 1,000 for returning migrants who were required to quarantine. Government of India announced Rs.500 per month, for 3 months, to an estimated 200 million Jan Dhan Yojana (JDY) female account holders (50% of them are held by women) and cash transfer of Rs.2000 to 87 million farmers under the PM Kisan scheme. An exgratia payment of Rs.1000 to poor senior citizens, widows and disabled persons. Collateral-free loan of up to Rs. 2 million for female

self-help groups

5.5. Role of MNREGA : In this period of the pandemic crisis, role of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS) would be crucial to generate employment and demand in rural India, where all other nonfarm activities were stalled and movements restricted during lockdown.

6.Result and Discussion: According to Action Network 50% of workers had rations left for less than one day whereas 74% had less than half their daily wages remaining to survive for the rest of the lockdown period and 89% had been paid no wages by their employers during the lockdown²².

According to Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) the third advance estimate of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2019-2020 stood at Rs 47 lakh crore of which 17 per cent is earned by casual labour, 21 per cent by regular wage employees and 62 per cent by self-employed workers. The lockdown will affect all these workers differently. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data for 2017, 25 per cent of total workers in India are casual labourers (i.e. about 93 million people) earning about Rs 1,754 per week. Another 23 per cent are regular wage earners who get an average Rs 4,063 per week. The rest, 52 per cent workers are self employed who earn about Rs 3,460 per week. The complete lockdown will affect casual labourers the most. It is estimated that Indian economy will face an income loss of Rs 1.7 lakh crore per week during lockdown²³.

Government of India increased "rural employment guarantee" daily wages, from Rs.182 to Rs.202 for MNREGA workers. In April 2020, only 3.4 million households were employed in the MNREGA, compared to 17 millions in April 2019. An additional \$5.33 billion to be allocated to MNREGA employment, over and above the earlier budget estimate of \$8.13 billion for fiscal

year 2020-21 . Similarly, it seems that the JDY accounts were not accessible to more than half of their holders either because they leave too far from the nearest banking point or because of personal issues. Government of India announced a second relief plan which represented 10% of India's GDP – that is, Rs. 20 trillion, or \$270 billion but it was not of much help to migrants.

Conclusion: The Indian economy is particularly badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The government imposed a severe lockdown to a fragile society that includes a huge informal and poor sector and economic

slowdown had already made it vulnerable since 2017. People migrated to urban areas in search of better job opportunities which were not available to them at their original place of residence. The lockdown which was imposed to control the spread COVID-19 pandemic left these migrant workers suddenly without work and no wages and facilities to fight these adverse circumstances. Little saving from their meager income forced them to take reverse migration, in poor management, back to their home. It is ironical that now they are seeking shelter in that home which earlier they left for better livelihood and income.

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