

SEASONAL MIGRATION AND COVID 19 IN INDIA

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Abstract

In December 2019, a novel Coronavirus has resulted in the outbreak of a respiratory illness known as COVID-19. Human coronavirus is the major cause of the 'common cold'. This virus has emerged from bats, adapted in other small wild mammals, and now acquired efficient human transmission. The novel disease has turned into a global outbreak. The COVID19 outbreak is upending life for families around the world. Schools, childcare centre are closed for this outbreak. Everyone is finding themselves stuck at home for most of the day due to lockdown. Emerged in 2019, the disease began threatening the health and lives of millions of people after a few weeks. These have declared a public health emergency through the whole world. Now the disease achieved a pandemic status. The goal of this research topic is to stimulate investigations on how migrants people are affected by the COVID19 emergency. Migrants are not familiar with their new environment in which they temporarily lived in. they are now facing various social, psychological, and emotional trauma in such situations. Previously they were forced to leave their native places. Now, they are facing decimations from their native places. The paper is based on secondary data sources and observations of the researchers during the lockdown phase of COVID19.

Keywords: Seasonal Migrants, Women and Migration, COVID 19



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INTRODUCTION

People migrate for one or more push and pull factors to develop their standard of living. These moves might be of short to long distance as well as of short to long duration (Kosinski and Prothero, 1975; Massey, 1990; Stone, 1975). It is evident from the available literature that there is a widespread occurrence of temporary and seasonal migration for employment in developing countries (Brauw, 2007; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2006; Hugo, 1982; Lam *et al.*, 2007; Mberu, 2006; Yang, 1992). Temporary migration is also one of the most significant livelihood strategies, adopted among the poorest section in rural India, predominantly in the form of

seasonal mobility of labour (Breman, 1978; Breman, 1996; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009, Deshingkar and Start, 2003; Haberfeld *et al.*, 1999; Mosse *et al.*, 2005; Rao and Rana, 1997; Rogaly, 1998; Rogaly *et al.*, 2001). Short-term and spontaneous migration, has been a subject of much discourse. It is a sort of mobility where the economic activity of a person is moved but not the usual residence (Bilsborrow *et al.*, 1984). According to the school of New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), temporary migration is considered a risk diversification strategy (Prothero and Chapman 1985; Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark and Levhari 1982).

Temporary migration is one of the most significant livelihood strategies adopted by the poorest sections in rural India, predominantly in the form of seasonal mobility of labour (Breman 1978, 1996; Deshingkar and Farrington 2009; Deshingkar and Start 2003; Haberfeld *et al.* 1999; Mosse *et al.* 2005; Rao and Rana 1997; Rogaly 1998; Rogaly *et al.* 2001; Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003). People also move from rural areas to nearby or distant cities to find jobs in construction or the unorganised informal sector (Breman 1994; Deshingkar and Farrington 2009; Haberfeld *et al.* 1999; Vijay 2005). Mukherji (2006) has termed this distress migration, which, according to him, paves the way for urban decay by causing urban poverty, unemployment and a shortage of housing. Breman (1994), on the other hand, sees seasonal labour migration in western India as an important survival option for landless labourers. Agricultural labourers in Gujarat, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Jharkhand, who are trapped in debt bondage and belong to the lower social strata (scheduled tribes and castes or STs and SCs), migrate seasonally within or outside their states (Breman 1994; Deshingkar and Farrington 2009; Haberfeld *et al.* 1999; Jaya raman 1979; Rogaly 1998; Rogaly *et al.* 2001; Vijay 2005). For instance, the monsoon frequently fails in Panchmahals district of Gujarat and seasonal migration of the tribal population to nearby rural and urban areas is common (Jaya raman 1979). Similar circumstances prompt temporary migration among tribal women in Jharkhand and West Bengal as well (Dayal and Karan 2003; Rogaly *et al.* 2001). Though such migration can be taken as a sign of dynamism, it has more to do with increasing inequalities, agrarian instability and inadequate livelihood generation in many parts of rural and urban India (Chandra sekhar and Ghosh 2007; Keshri and Bhagat 2010).

TEMPORARY AND SEASONAL MIGRATION IN INDIA: CONCEPT AND DEFINITION

Before we proceed further we should note that in the literature the identification of a short term migrant is not based on a uniform definition. Nguyen and Winters (2011) define a short term migrant as an “individual who stays in the household for a cumulative period of less than or equal to 6 months in the past twelve months prior to the survey, but was gone the remaining part of the year” (p. 74). De Brauw (2010) defines “seasonal migrants as members of the household who left for part of the year to work, but are still considered household members” (p. 116). At a conceptual level Carletto *et al.* (2012) argue that the following five individual characteristics can help researchers to determine who is a migrant: place of birth, whether or not the individual resides in the place of birth, household membership, duration of any stays away from the residence, and time period of reference. The NSSO data set identifies a short term migrant based on the last three characteristics. Instead of place of birth and whether or not the individual resides in the place of birth we have an indicator for the individual’s usual place of residence in the 365 days preceding the survey. Hence the NSSO survey has a reliable indicator of short term migrant that meets the basic requirement outlined by Carletto *et al.* (2012).

In case of a short term migrant, we have information on his or her current industry of work and industry of work when he or she had migrated for more than one month but less than six months. For individuals who had multiple spells of migration this information is available for the spell with the longest duration away from the usual place of residence. The industry of work is coded as per the National Classification of Industry-2004 (NIC-2004). The NIC-2004 can be grouped into 17 sections coded A to Q (Government of India, 2010, pp. 17-18). These 17 sections can be collapsed into four broad sectors: primary, secondary, construction and services.

Internal migration in India has been low historically (Davis, 1951) and migration statistics up to the early 1990s show a further decline in mobility (Kundu and Gupta, 1996). However, National Sample Survey figures for 1992-93 and 1999-2000 suggest that there is an increase in mobility during the last decade (Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003). In addition, census results show that labour mobility (migration due to employment or work) has also increased during the same period (Bhagat, 2010). Temporary and seasonal migration is an important form of labour mobility in a country with an increasing shift of labour force from agriculture to industry

and the tertiary sector. Large-scale temporary intra and inter-State mobility of labour is observed in various parts in India (Breman, 1996; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009a; Mosse *et al.*, 2005). For instance, women's labour mobility from Bihar and some parts of West Bengal to the Bardhaman, Murshidabad and Medinipur districts of West Bengal in the transplanting season (known as *Boro* in local language) as well as the harvesting season (known as *Aman*) of paddy crops (Rogaly *et al.*, 2001) and the movement of tribal groups from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat to work in sugar mills have been documented in the literature (Haberfeld *et al.*, 1999; Mosse *et al.*, 2002; Sharma *et al.*, 2009). With the stalling of the rural economy people have begun to move from rural areas, particularly in the lean season of agriculture, to nearby or distant urban areas for employment in construction, the garment industry or in the informal sector as a street vendor, rickshaw puller, domestic helper, or waiter and labourer in small hotels (Breman, 1994; Deshingkar and Farrington, 2009a; Haberfeld *et al.*, 1999; Vijay, 2005).

Impact of COVID 19 on the Status of Seasonal Migrant Workers

Generally, economic crisis in the destination reduces the number of migrants, reduces remittances, and disrupts migrant systems (Curran *et al.*, 2016). The Economic Survey 2016–2017 had estimated that more than 9 million people migrate annually within the country, and most of such migration is for job or education. While Delhi, followed by Mumbai, is the top destination for migrants, many people are migrating to the cities in southern states, like Bangalore, Chennai, etc. The largest number of these migrants sets off from the states of Bihar, UP, Bengal and Assam. The Census 2011 data show that, in India, a large proportion of migration of the workers is within the district and to the other districts within the state (Figure 1). Around one-fourth of the total migration is to the other state. The migration of workers is more in urban areas due to the availability of educational and employment opportunities.

International migration constitutes around 2.6 per cent of the total migration (Census, 2011). As per ILO (2018), there are over 30 million Indians overseas, with over 9 million of the Indian migrants concentrated in the GCC region (now known as the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf). Over 90 per cent of Indian migrant workers, most of whom are low- and semi-skilled workers, work in the Gulf region and South-East Asia. The contribution of migrant workers, both highly skilled and low skilled, has led to India becoming the top recipient of remittances in the world, with over US\$62.7 billion received in 2016 (ILO, 2018).

In India, COVID-19 was a tragedy that migrant laborers are often stigmatized and unjustly blamed for the spread of disease (Lau et al. 2020). But in reality, they were one of the worst affected groups. The impact of the pandemic on domestic migrants of India was extreme and the poor and marginalized were the hardest hit. Migrants died due to reasons ranging from starvation, suicides, exhaustion, road and rail accidents, police brutality, and denial of timely medical care (Guha et al., -2020). The announcement of the lockdown triggered mass exodus and reverse migration of unskilled and semi-skilled laborers from major urban cities who walked back to their villages without food and money. (Dandekar & Ghai 2020; Singh et al., 2020). The continuous reverse migration of millions of migrant workers to their native villages had a very detrimental impact on their physical, mental, and economic well-being. As per an estimate putting together the numbers of short-term seasonal/circular and long-term occupationally vulnerable workers gives us about 128 million (12.8 crores) workers whose livelihoods may have been adversely impacted with the onset of COVID19. (Vasudevan 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic induced reverse migration brought many families to their native places and the onus shifted on creating more jobs for a person particularly under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) scheme- 2005, which is a rural employment scheme that guarantees 100 days of employment to all. However, schemes have their limitations and not all can find jobs under the scheme. There have been reports of tussles between the already registered laborers working in villages under various schemes and migrant laborers returning home due to lockdown amidst pandemic.

India has a vast workforce with more than 450 million people in the informal sector (Sharma 2020). According to one estimate, about 90% of women work in informal sectors, of which 20% work in urban areas (Geetika, Singh and Gupta 2011). The informal sector in India is highly insecure and unregulated, with few or no social security provisions. The COVID-19 crisis is expected to have a long-term impact on informal sector workers (International Labor Organization 2020) as they are the most vulnerable communities and are more exposed to the current global pandemic (Sengupta and Jha 2020). Pachauri (2020) argues that COVID-19 will result in a long-term shock for poor people in the informal sector. Extreme poverty and food scarcity are already an issue for most informal sector workers (Khan and Mansoor 2020).

The pandemic and subsequent measures to control its spread have posed profound social, economic, and structural challenges to migrant workers across many countries (Foley and Piper 2020). The loss of livelihood options created fear among them of falling back into

poverty (World Bank 2020). Recent research shows that the pandemic has exacerbated existing disparities, further deteriorating the conditions of poor and migrant workers (Che, Du, and Chan 2020; Baas 2020). The lives and livelihood of poor communities in south-Asian countries are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 (Hamiduzzaman and Islam 2020), but in particular migrant workers in countries like India are negatively impacted (Bhagat et al. 2020). The uncertainty in the time of the pandemic has also led to a lack of financial security for the working poor, as about 89% of all workers in India fall under the category of informal workers. Of these workers about two-thirds are not covered by any minimum wage laws. This is especially the case with inter-state migrants who constitute the “footloose laborers” of the country. Between 2011 and 2016, the magnitude of inter-state migration was estimated to be approximately nine million over a period of year in India. According to the Economic Survey, 2017, workers mostly from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan migrate to states like Delhi, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu in search of jobs. In cities, they are usually employed in menial jobs leading a precarious existence working long hours for low wages, often in poor working conditions and living in squalid surroundings. Among these workers include agricultural laborers, coolies, street vendors, domestic servants, rickshaw pullers, garbage pickers, auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers, construction workers, brick kiln workers, workers in a small way-side hotels and restaurants, watchmen, lift operators, delivery boys, etc that we often see and interact with in our day-today lives.

Apart from economic problems the migrants also had to encounter various psychosocial issues like high degrees of anxieties and fears due to various concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Choudhari 2020). There were reports in print media related to many migrant workers facing serious nervous breakdown and depressive psychotic disorders.

The difficulty in organisation of the informal sector due to problems of irregularity, non registration, unincorporated business worsens the situation even more and renders even the law-making bodies helpless. At such a difficult crossroad, the only question that the scholars and law-makers need to address is whether there is a solution to provide the informal sector the benefits of the formal sector with the existing irregularities or is it more feasible to attempt to transform the entire labour class of India to formal sector?

The Pandemic and Women’s Work

The recent survey conducted with self employed, casual and regular wage workers across 12 Indian states (Lahoti et al., 2020) highlights the impact of COVID-19 on women workers.

Around 52 percent of respondents were women workers. Overall, 67 percent workers lost their employment and women workers were at a higher risk of food insecurity as compared to men. Another survey by Action Aid (2020) highlighted that the loss of employment was gendered with more women reporting loss of work as compared to men. The survey also highlighted that about 90 per cent of women with paid employment are in the informal sector, often in jobs which are undervalued and underpaid. The survey further identified that 52 percent women workers lost wages due to non payment in the initial phases of the lockdown in India (mid-March–May 2020), which led to a loss in savings at the household level. This coupled with watering down of labor rights with new amendments to labor codes (Magazine, 2020) implies flexibility in favor of the employers and a greater demand for contractual labor (Das, Deb Kusum, Choudhury & Singh, 2015; Magazine, 2020) leaving women workers more vulnerable. Migrant workers, and particularly women, are more vulnerable and face multiple deprivations from being poor and from their position as informal workers. Women face losing their livelihood, suffering human rights violations, and contracting COVID-19 (UN Women 2020). Women are potentially affected more because in many contexts they are considered to be less productive and subsequently have a lower position and rank in society (Chakraborty 2020). Female-headed families are significantly affected by COVID-19 and are unable to meet household needs due to the lack of economic options (Kamanga-Njikhoand Tajik 2020). The pandemic also aggravates prevalent gender inequalities and vulnerabilities. It is characterized as a gendered pandemic in combination with its classed and racialized dimensions (Harvey 2020). COVID-19 has unevenly impacted women and girls in the domains of health, economy, social protection, and gender-based violence (UN 2020).

COVID-19 has added considerable burdens to the lives of women migrant workers and their families in India. A telephone survey of migrant laborers in north India found that around 92% have lost their work, and 42% are negatively impacted with no food or supplies (Jan Sahas 2020). Though they are crucial to the urban economy, policy and social security measures have largely neglected them, which further disadvantage their inclusion in urban communities in India. Amid the nation-wide lockdown, lakhs (100,000s) of migrant workers had to flee to their home place on foot. It was disheartening that many suffered from hunger and lost their lives on this journey. Migrant workers who remained in their urban enclaves encountered similar experiences (The Hindu 2020; Bailwal and Taniya 2020). Besides the loss of livelihood and income, the pandemic has a myriad of implications for the lives of migrant

women workers. However, we currently lack empirical evidence documenting the experience of India's migrant workers during the pandemic. In this context, the present study aimed to explore the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers and their families from the perspectives of migrant women workers who remained in their urban areas during the lockdown.

The pandemic's impact on migrant workers also has a gendered dimension. The coming together of extant migrant-specific characteristics and social norms working against women has had a debilitating impact on women's agency and empowerment. Conceptually, the pandemic's effect can be studied considering the 3Cs, viz., Constraints (social and religious), Choice (availability of basic amenities), and Career (employment).⁷ First, the unequal sharing of unpaid work is a constraint, often perpetuated by existing social norms. During the pandemic, social norms have contributed to a bad equilibrium in which women have to bear the double-burden of inferior labor market conditions in addition to the unpaid care work they are invariably expected to perform.

Millions of migrant workers have lost their incomes due to COVID-19. Migrants who work in the informal sector, as do the majority in South and South-East Asia and in South America, are at a greater risk of losing their jobs and of having no access to severance pay or social security. As migrant women form a disproportionate part of the informal economy, they are particularly vulnerable as they are often the first to be let go, with little to no social protections or unemployment benefits. In contrast with the previous global financial crisis, in which unemployed migrant workers were often able to change sectors, the World Bank (2020a) notes that changing sectors in this crisis may not be as feasible, due to the skills and experience needed for essential sectors such as health care.

Second, the role of the state is brought to the fore when one considers the impact of provision of basic amenities. The availability of basic amenities such as fuel, safe water, childcare, etc. significantly reduces the time spent on unpaid work. India has traditionally followed childcare services that address early childhood development for children.⁹ Adapting these services to better serve the needs of parents can have a positive impact on women's choices and flexibility to engage in paid work.¹⁰ For instance, increasing the reach of these services by ensuring they are located near workplaces and within primary school compounds can increase gender-parity in contributing to care activities at home. To cite another example, women in India spend an equivalent of two or more weeks each year collecting fuelwood.¹¹ State-provision of such amenities through ration shops closer to homes will have a positive effect on shared

responsibilities and allow women to engage in other activities that have a direct bearing on their well-being. Since most of these amenities are public goods, the role of the state cannot be overstated in providing these services.

Third, trading-off unpaid care work for paid work makes sense when labor market conditions are rewarding. During times of low economic activity, subdued wages substantially reduce the incentive to make this trade-off. With the inimical social norms already at play, weak labor market prospects lead to a precarious situation that threatens to stagnate female labour force participation. A widening gender gap does not only adversely affect the social fabric of a country, but is also associated with significant economic costs.¹² These pre existing factors provide an important framework to understand the survey results discussed below.

Response of the Central and State Governments:

The spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), and subsequent nationwide lockdown to control its further outbreak brought turmoil in the lives of millions who are primarily involved in the informal sector. To mitigate the effect of the lockdown on the vulnerable groups, Government of India on 26 March 2020, announced a Rs. 1.70-lakh-crore package under the Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana. It has within its ambit health workers, farmers, MGNREGA workers, economically vulnerable categories, especially women, elderly, and unorganised-sector workers, Jan Dhan account holders and Ujjwala beneficiaries. The scheme entails an additional 5 kg of wheat or rice and one kg of preferred pulses every month to 80 crore beneficiaries for the next three months. Central Government also gave an order to the state governments to use Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund of Rs.52000 crores to provide relief to Construction Workers through direct benefit transfer (DBT) (DHNS, 2020; Government of India, 2020a). The RBI also joined later with a sharp cut of interest rate along with a series of unconventional measures to lend to besieged businesses (Bloomberg Quint, 2020).

However, the fear of loss of livelihood sparked into the mass exodus of millions of these migrant labourers in some parts of country, who started on a long 'barefoot' journey with their families, in the absence of the transportation facilities, to their native places (Bindra and Sharma, 2020). Looking at the gravity of the situation, many states, i.e. Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Karnataka arranged special busses to drop these workers and their families to either state borders or to their districts (Bhora, 2020; NDTV, 2020; Press Trust of India, 2020a; Press Trust of India, 2020b). This massive migration led to the chaotic situation

on national highways, bus stops and railway stations and raised misunderstandings between states. As this was the violation of and a threat to the benefits of lockdown and was risky for them and for people in the villages, Government of India gave a strict order to seal all interstate and district borders on 29 of March 2020 and asked states to issue necessary orders to District authorities to ensure adequate arrangements of temporary shelters (especially near highways) with adequate amenities and basic requirements, provision of food, clothing and health measure for the poor and needy people including migrants labourer, stranded due to lockdown measures in their respective areas (Press Trust of India, 2020c; Government of India, 2020).

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) also asked the landlords not to charge rent during this crisis and employers to make the payment of wages of their workers without deduction for the period of closure (Government of India, 2020b). MHA set-up a control room to monitor the situation 24X7 to ensure the access to essential commodities to anyone (Press trust of India, 2020d). States were allowed to utilise money in the State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) to provide food, accommodation and medical care to homeless, including migrant workers, stranded due to lockdown and sheltered in relief camps and other places (Joy and DHNS, 2020; Press Trust of India, 2020c). Till 31st March, 2020, 6.6 lakh migrant workers were accommodated in the 21,604 relief camps with provision of food, shelter and other basic necessities. Additionally, arrangements for food have been made for 23 lakh persons (Kulkarni, 2020).

Constitutional Provisions

The COVID-19 crisis not only saw loss and suffering every single day but also an uneven and inequitable treatment of the persons suffering from the same crisis. The divide between the privileged and unprivileged section started becoming clearer when one side had the ability to stock up necessities, food supplies and toiletries lasting for over a month while on the other hand, some persons on the road could not even procure one meal a day. Right to Equality enshrined in Article 14 of Constitution of India 21 was unfortunately denied to more than half of the Indian population when the government failed to treat everyone facing the same health crisis equally. The effects of the money and muscle power is evident from the time and effort used by the government to organize flights for students and other residents mostly from good income families who were stranded abroad while thousands of migrant workers often from marginalised sections were denied even train tickets from one part of the country to their homes. The migrant crisis also brings focus on the blatant breach of the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' enshrined under Article 14. The same principle was elaborated and argued in State

of Orissa v. Balaram Sahu²² where there was a contention on the entitlement of equal pay by the daily wage, casual workers in the State of Orissa for undertaking the same responsibilities and duties as the permanent employees. The Supreme Court elaborated on this point of law by upholding the dissimilarity between the duties and responsibilities of casual workers and permanent employees. The Apex further emphasized on the qualitative difference under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. However, the Court made it clear through the judgement that the State must ensure that minimum wages are prescribed and paid to workers in an attempt to bring socio-economic parity.

Article 19 of the Indian Constitution is an umbrella provision constituting six freedoms within its purview.²⁴ The ones applicable to the migrant crisis are Article 19 (1) (e) that specifically provides for the right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India read with Article 19 (1) (g) which allows for any person to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.²⁵ True economic growth and realization of these fundamental rights in its true sense without compromising on the lifestyle would occur only with even and equitable territorial development all over the country. In the present situation, the workers are often forced by their dire circumstances to migrate in order to run their households often doing menial jobs.

The Constitution of India also provides for Directive Principles of State Policy under Part IV (Article 38-51) to aid in achieving the goals of a welfare state and social, economic and political justice as well as equality of opportunity and status as mandated by the Indian Preamble. Article 39 of the Constitution aims to secure to the citizens the right to adequate means of livelihood and puts a responsibility on the State to also ensure equal pay for both men and women for the same job or activity.³³ Right to work and secure wages with a good standard of living is provided for in Article 41 and 43.³⁴ Even though Directive Principles of State Policy are not enforceable in the Court of law and citizens cannot approach the Court to get protection against the violation of these rights, the judgement of the landmark case of *Minerva Mills Ltd. & Ors v. Union of India*, DPSPs were given the equal weightage as the Fundamental Rights and they were placed on

an equal footing.³⁵ The principles enshrined in Articles 39(a) and 41 must be given enough weightage for the true realization of enforceable fundamental rights. The obligation upon the State to secure adequate means of livelihood and the right to work to each and every citizen comes with the unspoken inclusion of the right to livelihood within the broad umbrella of right

to life. Any denial of the right to livelihood which is outside the exception of procedure established by law is a downright offensive to the principles of Right to life under Article 21.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS :

Since most of these workers are employed in a very small and medium enterprises in the informal sector, in enterprises that are teetering at the edge of collapse, given the deepening economic slowdown. Preventing shutdowns of these enterprises in the informal sector in order to ensure their survival is also essential in testing times. These enterprises should be provided with special assistance, such as a special economic package from the government to stay afloat in drastic circumstances. Most importantly, the need of the hour is to ensure that adequate measures are taken to cushion the impacts of the pandemic on the working poor in the midst of a deepening economic slowdown. This has to be done by both the central and state governments working in tandem not only to ensure adequate resources but also to implement schemes suited to the unfolding situation at the ground level. Unemployment and money problem, along with public goods and transportation shut down, hundreds and thousands of migrant workers who do not have a job security or protection were forced to trek hundreds of miles back to their home towns and villages along with some deaths on their journey. The crisis which had affected the life and property of thousands of people across different states brought into the limelight the inefficiency of our existing laws and policies concerning this section of population. One silver lining of this situation is that these instances and the plight of the workers were widely reported by the media channels. Without the imposition of lockdown as a side effect of COVID-19, the plight and inefficiency of policies probably wouldn't have been recognised as an early stage. The time is now for the statesmen, legislators and policy makers to take action on this newly spread information and awareness of this human rights issue.

The impact of the migrant crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic must teach and serve as a wake-up call to the concerned authorities to prepare for more efficient laws and policies for the migrant labourers along with organised implementation at the ground level so that the nation is better equipped to handle and contain any potential crisis that may arise in future.

To look on the brighter side, India is in its 12th month since the virus took over and the journey has been a roller coaster ride. With the great cooperation, dedication and selfless efforts of doctors, government officials and manufacturers/workers ensuring us basic necessities, the nation has witnessed an incredible recovery rate from the virus. According to the live data released by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the recovery percentage of India

as of 23rd December 2020 is 95.65%. However, it is important to note that the crisis is not yet over as the workers are still facing the financial brunt of their displacement even months after the lockdown. With the recognition and detection of a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus by the United

Kingdom government, there might be a possibility of imposition of lockdowns or restrictions in future with grave impact and further worsening of the situation of these migrant labourers. The adequate precautionary measures need to be taken at this preliminary stage of a potential novel virus to avoid the fatal impacts on the health and situations of people.

The pandemic attack of COVID-19 in India boosted the feeling of insecurity among the migrants across various parts of the country. Even though the government swung into action for arranging food essentials and various staying arrangements for these migrant workers, transportation, health facilities but many of these “guests” are reluctant to venture out because of sense of insecurity as they are outsiders. Since they are left with no work, no money, it became difficult for them to take care of their family members. The migrants send the weekly earnings to their families and survive on a bare-bone budget. The lockdown has a bolt from the blue for them. As discussed above different efforts government has made and still making should focus and enhance its micro and macro planning for these migrant workers in particular who are major part of informal sectors. Micro planning is about short term planning like giving them shelters and food along with money if any of such epidemic happens in near future. Macro planning requires policy for their interests to be catered on since they are part of economic system. (informal sector) their housing facilities, health facilities along with preserving their cultural values will help them to be part of that particular land.

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