

# The Unknown Pandemic: It's Effect and Mass Exodus of the Migrants in India

<sup>1</sup>Bijoya Ganguly, Samir Kumar Pandey

ICFAI University, Jharkhand, India

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## ABSTRACT

The Global Corona Virus pandemic has completely brought humanity to a standstill. Since December 2019, when the Chinese province of Wuhan got severely affected by the deadly corona virus, many human losses have taken place across the globe. The COVID 19 is an infectious disease which spreads through human chains through personal contacts and by visiting crowded places, and it has been accepted contemporarily a pandemic which no individual can deny worldwide. Amidst the burning crisis faced by humanity in 2020, all the nations have taken the task to fight this with every possible measures and protective shield to break the human chain. No nation is barred from the human and associated loss. USA, Italy, Spain, France and even India – all are facing the loss of lives daily but are still very determined to stop the wide spread of the virus through strict and humanitarian measures like Lockdown and Social Distancing other than medical precautions like use of sanitizers, masks and also developing immune system of human body. However, the measures taken by government and regulatory bodies have also led to widespread economic losses, financial losses and also political losses. However, despite the strict government rules to “stay home stay fit”, people have been travelling and migrating to different cities and provinces out of panic. In developing economy like India, large chunk of laborer's and workers have been migrating from urban clusters to their own villages and towns in states creating many possible vulnerabilities of massive outbreak of the disease and also creating economic problems for in house states and union territories.

This calls for an analytical perspectives mass movement takes many factorial incidents to account and also subaltern effects across the globe. This paper exemplify the effects of exodus and influx of migrants in India.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

Indian Democracy with 130 billion population is constantly facing the challenge community outbreak of Corona Virus. Since the lockdown decision taken by union government at New Delhi on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, for the citizens to stay safe and stay home for breaking the human chain of corona virus, many developments have taken place in terms of seen and unseen aspect of LIFE and DEATH. History has seen that; no development is unitary in nature. Every sociological and economic development is preceded by a measure incident which when goes out of control becomes difficult to comprehend and decipher.

## II. NEED OF LOCKDOWN AND SELF QUARANTINE:

A lockdown is basically an attempt by the state for civilians to stay aloof deliberately from the date of enforcement. This pertains to specific restriction in free movement. The term "stay-at-home order" is frequently used for lockdowns that affects an area or nation with huge demographic populace. In India, country wide lockdown was announced on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 [Table 1] for all the districts, States, Union Territories to promote “social distancing” and health awareness. This was to break the chain of transmission of corona virus among the masses and population. The lockdown was implemented in phases.

Table 1: Phases and Dates of lockdown (Sources: Wikipedia.org/COVID\_19/Pandemic)

Phase	Dates
Phase 1	25 march - 14 April, 2020
Phase 2	15 April – 3 May 2020
Phase 3	4 May – 17 May 2020
Phase 4	18 May – 31 May 2020

### III. QUARANTINE:

To stop the spread of a contagious disease, especially if it happens to be a pandemic, the community or even as an individual, needs to defy from coming into contact with each other. This state of deliberate isolation is called quarantine. Under the strict guidelines of the concerned government (India and outside) and keeping the health status of population in mind, infected patients with asymptomatic are kept under strict observation. Laws have also become stringent, to state into view that people who are deliberately going against the norms of the guidelines, are being taken into task. During the quarantine phase, all transports in air, road and rail were all suspended, and some are still continuing to do so but with certain exemptions like essential goods, police, medicines ATM and petrol pump. They have been given leverage so that sustenance of life continues. The group of people on whom restrictions are imposed may have to undergo medical diagnosis. The imposition is for certain time period whereby all assistance to control the disease is given. Once the biological disease is killed, the person concerned is being freed from quarantine zone.

20<sup>th</sup> century world. The ongoing pandemic of (COVID-19), caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) had its outbreak in Wuhan China, in December 2019. However, every time it has shown its outrage, the authorities have faced grave challenges to curb and protect the human race. It definitely demands anthropological and biological research.

This paper is aimed at studying the human response of Pandemic in India. Along with it a broad study of migration of laborer's from different Metro cities have been studied from economical and sociological point of view. Due to pandemic, both exodus and influx (outmigration and immigration) of laborer's present in Urban clusters in India were seen. The incident occurred not in isolation but had Pygmalion effect. Also, as they started walking, many administrative, local problems erupted. The response to pandemic also aggravated economic and health crisis. A brief attempt to highlight the problem has been made here in the paper. Simultaneously, emerging solutions to avoid such mass scale confusion has been sighted for civilians, administrators, NGOs and also common man.

### IV. MIGRATION DURING LOCKDOWN IN INDIA: WHO ARE MIGRANTS?

According to the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, a person who is enumerated in census at a different place

than his / her place of birth, she / he is considered a migrant. This may be due to marriage, which is the most common reason for migration among females or for work, what is the case as generally among males, etc. It also happens that many return to their place of birth after staying out. To capture such movements of population, census, collected last helps to build a better picture for current situation. As per Census 2011, the total number of internal migrants would be 450 million—more than 30% higher than 2001—the actual numbers perhaps are higher than what is captured by the census.

The Census 2011 is the latest official data on migration in the country. However, the Economic Survey of India 2016-17 had reported that there were 60 million interstate migrants in the country. Another study suggests that the short-term migrants, who work in the informal economy of India, are around 60-65 million (Srivastava 2020). According to Census 2011, there are 55 million interstate migrants in the country.

### V. HOW TO HANDLE INFLUX AND EXODUS OF MIGRANTS?

The migration of so many workers to villages has both social and economic dimensions. Socially, the migrants are united with their family for sense of security. Economically, the task of gainful employment for them is a matter of concern. This can be achieved by way of schemes MGNREGA, PMAY, Rural Drinking water scheme and also schemes like UNNATI and PMGSY. This may clearly absorb 10 – 15% of migrant labor. Also, state government can tap the potential of human resources for Skill Mission through DDU-GKY under Ministry of Rural Development. The classification of laborer's as skilled, unskilled and semi-skilled can be done and they can be assigned training for self-employment. This will help them in facilitating services either door to door or through the set up at workplace.

Second challenge is to fill up the gap/lack of workforce created at urban clusters due to migration to their home states. Most of the workers in big urban clusters were involved in real estate construction. With their departure, a big gap has been created bringing down the economy of those clusters. This demographic dividend of unorganized workforce needs to be well protected through strict labor laws and also ensuring social security benefits like leaves, pension and provident funds. The employers of these registered or non-registered firms need to understand the implication of nonpayment of wages to these laborer's during lockdown despite government

regulations and orders. Proactively, the government needs to register the enterprises, MSMEs, and also agro based industries with regulatory framework like Labor Laws, Tax compliances etc. A study by Centre for study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Azim Premji University in 2019 estimated that 29% of population in India's big cities is of daily workers/wagers. With such huge chunk of population wanting to move to states, it is really a matter of concern for the state to accommodate and provide gainful employment to these workers.

The problem of lack of opportunity and entrepreneurship can be solved at village and state level with prudent. The government will have to play very proactive and rehabilitation role by upgrading farm practices through promotion of mix farming, large scale initiatives for food processing units and also providing training and skill development of laborer's in the mode of "earn while you learn". There has to be concerted efforts on development of backward and forward linkages and cold chain logistics to create demand and supply in a sustainable manner. These may be taken up in PPP (public private partnership mode) to ensure professional approach.

Another area to be looked upon is construction workers. The government may think over to give training of architectural and civil construction skill to young educated workers to enable them to function as team leaders of their group and undertake construction work in rural and semi urban areas.

## VI. ROLE OF MEDIA DURING PANDEMIC:

Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. It is a platform for objective information and critical rational discourses. The health of journalism can be assessed in times of crisis. However, in India, many corporates control the media business. The business household has tie ups with the political parties for their own gains. Thus, the resultant effect on the quality and type of news to be circulated among the Indian citizens can be easily gauged. In addition, there has been huge debate in terms of many media households providing information with variations. The underline expectation from media to pass on "positive message" and follow the official line is observed everywhere.

Just before nationwide lockdown, prints, and electronic media owners were asked by government to support the effort to combat the pandemic and present positive news (sagar 2020). These were the owners and editors of national and regional newspapers, who were advised to abide by the narrative and present information as told by

government. This seems correct but at the same time also raises serious eyebrows on their role and code of conduct. Media has become a battleground of ideologies as there are pro -voice and counter voice both in the group. Today, India has many English and regional/local language news channels. They tried their best to cover the migration of labor and their plight on roads, bus stops, restaurants keeping in mind the sensational value. But, the real picture of measures and decisions taken by central and state government for the stranded workers should have been telecasted during the pandemic times. This would have more soothing effect on the citizens all over the country.

The need of the hour is holistic and honest conversation between government and media. In nutshell, this is the time to introspect and examine the role of state and the media, to avoid creating a future that threatens to destabilize democracy. The pandemic has thrown open a question about the democratic pillars and their effective functioning in the interest of citizens and also nation. What should be the reporting pattern of journalism- proactive, or other way? Should the media be backed up by political ideology or they should survive by reality bite? In the long run, India needs to address these issues with constitutional values so that human rights and individual freedom are not curtailed and always found at the highest virtues. The Pandemic has shown clear picture to all of us. The nations need to respond to the calls and also provide effective path for every stakeholder's sustenance.

## VII. LESSONS TO LEARN: HOW TO HANDLE PANDEMIC?

The Covid 19 Pandemic in India severely forced the government to take Policy and scheme-based actions immediately. However, Implementation of policy decisions for such a big population of 130 crore is not an easy task. The implementation of policies at center, state, district level demands Management thinking and acumen. It requires Planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. The acronym POSDCORB is used widely in the field of management and public administration. They reflect classic views of organizational theory. Since resources like food, transport, infrastructure, time are always limited, one needs to have strong Management Acumen to deliver results. This part of paper, actually deals with practical aspect of implementation which if kept imbibed in policies itself, can help catch the deviations and also restrain the problem.

a) Since laborer's and stranded migrants are getting back to their home states, the state

government needs to provide them skilled and semi-skilled jobs in MGNREGA, and in other development schemes with less “restrictive labor Laws” implemented for the poor and stranded workers. This will give boost to the economy of the state by way of demand and supply mechanism. In addition, it will pave the way for social security measures for the welfare of the poor and stranded.

- b) Use of IT help desk in Pandemic: This demands more and more positive use of social networking sites through mobile to facilitate cooperation and coordination between central authorities, district and Commissionerate, subdivision and, block and gram panchayat level. IT revolution and social media should be proactively used to transmit correct and authentic knowledge about diseases, its cure and different support system started by government and non-government agencies. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Block Chain and Machine learning for controlling and restraining the side effects of pandemic is a must.
- c) Decentralized Accountability: This concept has to be implemented till village level. Government should initiate with reactivity the methodology of PDCA (Plan, Do, Check and Act). This will ensure proper utilization of resources in the hands of authorities when they are handling the pandemic related issues at quarantine centers, rail transportation and also hospital maintenance.
- d) Mission based Action: Government should come to fore front to set more clear guidelines for safety, cleanliness, sanitation to be maintained in day to day life. Another area to be prioritized is the development of machinery to safeguard health and education of women, children and other vulnerable sections of society. A free hand to be given to NGOs like Navjivan, Each one Teach one and also to Psychological Association in India.
- e) Promotion of Inclusive Market and Consultancy Economics in underdeveloped areas: This refers to development of job oriented urban clusters/centres/special economic zones (SEZ) in and around cities. This can be done through decentralized governance and autonomy to resource based small business to grow and flourish. Development of self- sufficiency economics for each state can be a big achievement. Also, effective measures can be taken by government to tap and utilize both natural and manpower resources of underdeveloped

regions for streamlined economic growth. This will certainly balance the migration wave from those regions. Balancing people and profit, growth and inclusion can be a boost for long run sustenance of people in rural and semi urban areas. A consultancy driven approach involving premier consultants from technical and management institutions can help rebuild the economy and also give boost to demand and expenditure.

### VIII. CONCLUSION:

Pandemics bring uncertainty and vulnerability everywhere. India is not an exception to the same. The coming years are going to be more challenging if the human society has to survive and flourish. India needs investment in health and education and also welfare schemes. The year 2020 has thrown open challenge to every Indian. We, the people of India has to collaborate and cooperate with each other to build a better home, workplace and society which can march ahead towards development and growth. The need is to think holistically and make our nation a winner from this pandemic which has destroyed every one of us physically, mentally and emotionally.

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