

## Internal Migration after Covid-19

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**Abstract:** The coronavirus (Covid-19) is declared as a worldwide pandemic has spread over several countries around the world including India. The disease is transmitted from person to person. Till now there is no specific treatment or vaccination is available for this virus. World Health Organization declared it as a Global Public Health Issue. India is a highly populated country and always gives priority to life over livelihood. In order to protect our people from this deadly virus Indian government declared completely lockdown all over the country. This caused a massive movement of migrant labourers from urban areas to their rural counterpart which was never predicted. They are forced to move due to hunger, uncertainty of their income and employment in urban areas along with the risk of health hazards. Demobilization of these migrant labourers are easy but remobilization will be a big challenge at this point of time. Due to lockdown unemployment is also increased which have an adverse impact on our economy. This article is about internal movement of migrant laborers after the imposition of lockdown due to covid-19 and its effect on our economy.

**Keywords:** Internal Migration, Covid-19 and unemployment

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has its impact on more than 210 countries around the world and declared as a novel coronavirus pandemic. The outbreak of Coronavirus was first reported in Wuhan, China on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019. This disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2). The disease is transmitted from person to person. This virus has no particular treatment or vaccination available till now. Our Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, declared "Janata Curfew" on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020. To combat with COVID-19, Indian Government decided to put countrywide lockdown from last week of March, 2020 in order to protect our 1.3 billion population from this deadly virus. Covid-19 is a health issue not only for the human being but also for the economy. Lockdown in our country has affected lives and livelihood of people. This caused a massive migration of semi-skilled and unskilled migrant workers to go back to their rural hinterland from large urban cities. India prefers life over the livelihood always. That's why Indian government took the immediate decision of completely lockdown in order to marginalize the spread of covid-19 compared to other countries like Italy, USA etc. That's the reason there was nationwide lockdown except the availability of certain essential services. According to CMIE (Center for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd.) report, India's unemployment rate is increased to 23.48 per cent in May which was about 7 per cent just before the pandemic in March 2020. India's employment situation is in a bad condition after this lockdown. This article is about migration of laborer after the imposition of countrywide lockdown due to this pandemic and its effect on our economy.

Migration leads to higher growth in urbanization. There are different types of migration. Here we are discussing about internal migration especially. Globally big cities attract international migration, while cities of developing countries receive huge number of internal migration (IOM 2015; UNDP 2009). Always rural poor people prefer to come and engage in informal sector activities in large cities compared to small and medium cities. Because in large cities they will get better and multiple opportunities and higher wage compared to small and medium cities. That's the reason in large cities population density is more compared to small and medium.

The announcement of lockdown as a major to combat the spread of the pandemic in our country which result in massive movement of labourers especially migrant and informal sector workers from urban areas to their rural counterpart. They were moving back to their villages because of the uncertainty of their income and employment situation in urban areas along with the risk of health hazards. On the other hand, lack of information about the pandemic, forcing them to move back to their native place with their full family at any cost. Many of them believes it's an urban disease and they will be safe in their rural homes.

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People had travelled hundreds of kilometers on their bare feet above the 40-degree heat temperature with their family and friends. There was a lot of emotional stress and anxiety among those migrant workers. This brings a massive shock to the employment situation in our country, which was never predicted. There is a prominent reduction in all categories of workers in all sectors in urban areas. This will result in a reduction of labor supply in urban sectors. As a result, employment in the urban informal sector is reduced compared to the rural counterpart.

From the work of Nobel Prize-winning economist Arthur Lewis, we know that an apparently inexhaustible pool of cheap rural labor has been the main source of growth in the cities of the developing world. Similar scenes have transpired across the rest of the developing world, where the informal sector accounts for more than two-thirds of employment. Migrants usually work in small enterprises, or are self-employed, or work as daily wages at construction sites. If they can't work, they aren't paid, they can't eat, and they may not be able to make rent. Most of these poor migrants become jobless as businesses and establishments have shut down due to lockdown. In the absence of money, jobs, and deprived of any food, savings, or shelter in large cities, they were distressed to return to their villages. Going back home, at least they can hope for a safe roof over their heads and possibly a harvest to bring help in their livelihood.

**Table:1 - Share of Non-farm employment (Formal and Informal) in India 2005-2018**

	Formal(%)			Informal (%)		
	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18
Manufacturing	10.4	10.9	15.4	89.6	89.1	84.6
Non-manufacturing	7.2	5.3	5.2	92.8	94.7	94.8
Service sector	19.2	19.9	21.5	80.8	80	78.5
Non-farm total	14.8	14.4	16.5	85.2	85.6	83.5

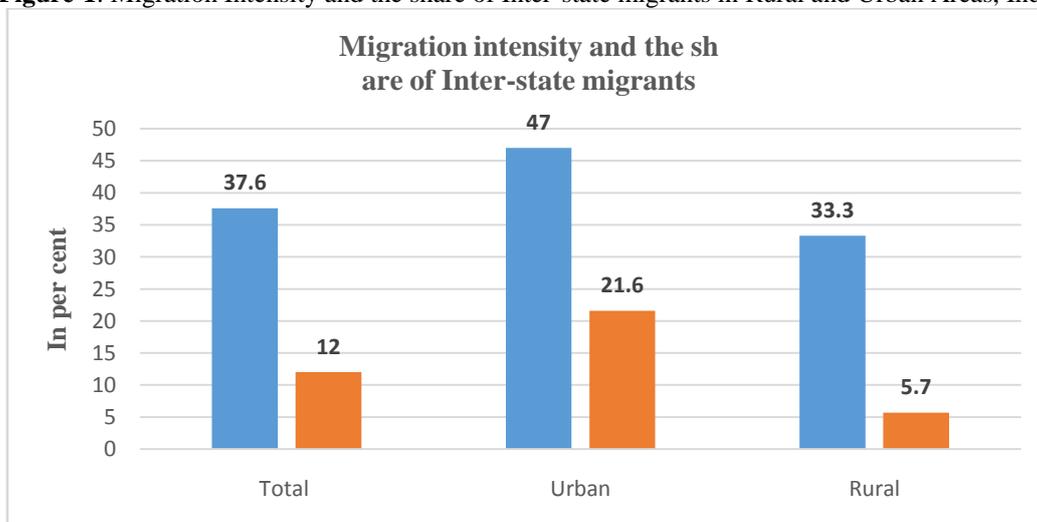
Source: NSS various rounds

The table-1 shows that the share of formal and informal employment in various sectors of India from 2004-5 to 2017-18. This shows that the share of informal employment is more compared to the share of formal employment. The percentage share is very high, i.e. above 90 per cent in non-manufacturing sectors over the period 2005 to 2018.

#### Migration and Livelihood:

Migration is a livelihood approach assumed by millions of people in our country. Most of the migration for work and employment is directed towards the urban centers from rural parts. Figure-1 shows that about 50 per cent of the urban population are migrants and out of that one-fifth of them are inter-state migrant population.

**Figure-1: Migration Intensity and the share of Inter-state migrants in Rural and Urban Areas, India**

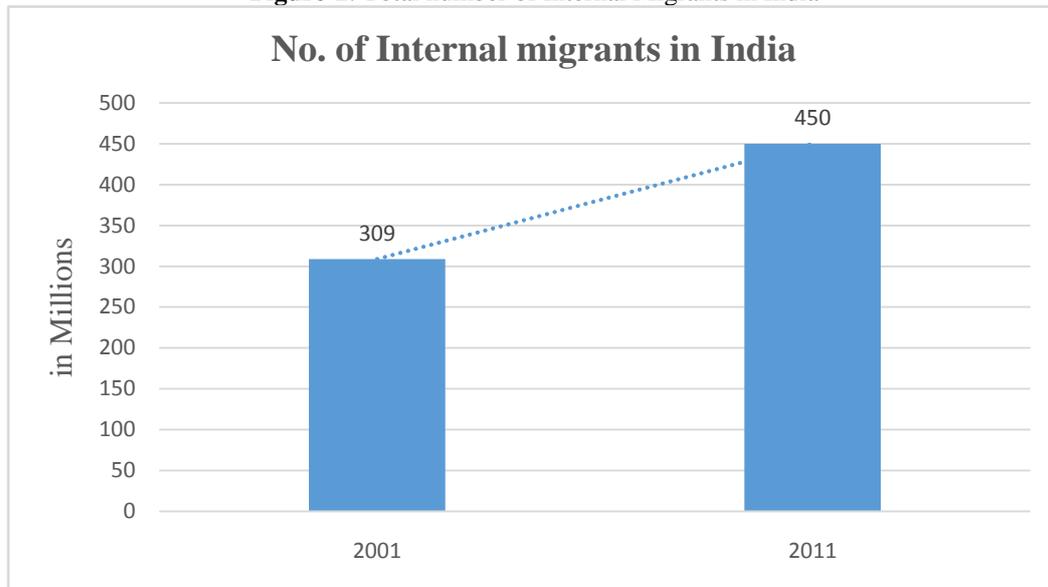


Source: Migration Table, Census of India 2011

Internal migration means the movement of people within a country, results in efficient allocation of human resources to different sectors and regions where they are better employed. As per Census 2011, about 450 million out of 1.2 billion Indians are considered as internal migrants which was accounted for 309 million in

2001. This is an increase of 45 per cent within these 10 years of duration. Out of these 450 million, 15.6 per cent i.e., 78 million are considered as domestic migrants, moved from rural to urban areas. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that around 400 million workers in the informal economy are at the risk of falling deeper into poverty during this crisis.

**Figure-2: Total number of Internal Migrants in India**



Data: Census of India 2001, 2011

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. As per the census report, the level of urbanization in India has increased from 27.81% in 2001 to 31.16% in 2011. Urban growth in Indian cities is a consequence of poverty-induced rural-urban migration. Looking at the states in India, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the major source states, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal. And the major destination states are large cities like Delhi, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Seasonal migrants are an unclear and distressing reality of our urban India. But their record is invisible in our census data as well as sample surveys data. They start their job life at very early age and experience no upward mobility. They are mostly engaged in the key sectors of urban areas such as construction, hotel, textile, manufacturing, transportation, services, domestic work etc.

No doubt long period of lockdown flattened the graph of covid in the beginning phase of this highly populated country but at the same time it affected the economy of the country very badly. During lockdown all supply chain system in the economy got disrupted, as a result demand also got collapsed and unemployment is increased.

**Table-2: Unemployment Rate (%) in India from January- June , 2020**

Month	India	Urban	Rural
January	7.22	9.7	6.06
February	7.76	8.65	7.34
March	8.75	9.41	8.44
April	23.52	24.95	22.89
May	23.48	25.79	22.48
June	10.99	12.02	10.52

Source: CMIE Report, 2020

The Table-2 represents the unemployment rate of India during the first half of the year from January to June, 2020. It shows that unemployment rate was below 10 per cent till March, 2020. But after the imposition of completely lockdown, the unemployment rate has increased to nearly 3 times during April and May, 2020. But after the unlocking of the economy, again in June it reduced to half proportionately. The unemployment rate is always more in urban than rural areas. The increase in unemployment must have a negative impact on the growth of the economy.

This pandemic which was totally unexpected crisis makes our country to understand that these rural migrant labourers are having a key role in the progress of our urban development. Demobilization of these migrant labourers are easy but remobilization will be a big challenge. It is going to become a very big challenge for the economy to be able to get back these migrant laborers into urban sectors. It's going to be very hard to bring these migrants back to urban cities again. Migrants will be reluctant to come back soon to their workplace. This will reduce supply of labour in urban areas. Getting back the confidence to have a safe life and efficient earning is a difficult task. The timeframe of this disease is so uncertain that it is very difficult to predict that when everything will come back to normal. So govt. should provide social protection to these migrant labourers in rural areas. Govt. involvement in different sectors of rural economy will not only provide some income opportunities to these migrant labourers but also improve the self-reliance system in the economy. Or else, it will result in an increase in poverty and disguised unemployment in rural areas. Despite govt. reliefs, many people are out of reach of it. Tens of Millions do not have ration cards to access the relief today. What our government is going to do to protect these vulnerable groups is a challenge. To formulate policies and provide services for seasonal migrant workers, the country needs to have a genuine statistical account of their number and an understanding of the nature of their mobility which is very challenging. Now the big question arises here is that what proportion of these migrated labourforce would like to come back to urban place once the situation will be normal.

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