



Covid-19 and the Situation of Migrant Workers in India

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ABSTRACT :

The Covid-19 has brought a serious threat to the all section of society in all over the world. One of the most vulnerable section among them is the migrant workers of India. This corona virus disease is very transmissive in character and there was no vaccine at that time. Therefore, the only way before the government to stop the transmission of this disease was to imposed lockdown in all over the country. Sudden lockdown in India posed unprecedented misery to all section of people but it brought out the migrant workers i.e. huge workforce of the country into forefront as they were remained invisible. Joblessness and starvation pushed them to returned to their homeland. During that course of time migrant workers had faced various challenges whether it was hunger, no money situation, transportation problems, lack of medical support, uncertainty about lives etc. This covid-19 has compelled us to rethink the importance of all sections of people and their security concerns. This paper analysis the plight and misery of the migrant workers of India and also discussed some measures which had taken up by the government for the safety and security of the people.

Keywords: Covid-19, Joblessness, transmissive, unprecedented misery, vulnerable section,.

I. Introduction:

The Covid-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented condition in all over the world. The outbreak of covid-19 has reported on December 2019, in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. In India, the first case was confirmed on January 30, 2020 in Kerala. This virus spreads very quickly in all over the world and has impacted severely in all aspects of life whether it is economically, mental, politically and socially. India was also facing serious threat due to this pandemic and hence observing the situation Indian government had decided to be imposed sudden lockdown in the whole country at the midst of March 2020. Due to this sudden imposition of lockdown people as a whole had been facing immense hardship. Among them, the most vulnerable group is the migrant workers of India. Millions of migrant workers had faced various challenges like lack of money, starvation, absence of basic amenities and uncertainty about their life. The Covid-19 has challenged the status quo as these migrant workers are the



base of urban areas, though they are remained invisible and they have no permanent residency as well as rights. But because of this pandemic they came into forefront and move towards their permanent homeland. The World Economic Forum has estimated that there are 139 million migrant workers in the country. The International Labour Organization (ILO) predicted that due to this pandemic and lockdown, about 400 million workers would be poverty stricken. This Paper analysis the impact of Covid -19 on the migrant workers as well as government initiative to safeguards the lives and livelihood of these migrant workers.

II. Migrant workers of India:

Migrant workers are those who are migrated either within their own country or to outside basically for economic motive i.e. to pursue work for their livelihood. They mostly belong to poor categories and engaged in the labour works in the urban areas. They have no education and no skills, no rights and no voice. They have no permanent residency that means they stay where they work. There are 2 categories of migrant workers i.e. Internal and International migrant workers on the basis of their movement. There are 3 categories of migrant workers depending on where they stay and how long they stay:

- i. Permanent migrant: those who migrant from native state to the destination state and permanently stay.
- ii. Seasonal migrant: Those workers who migrated to the destination state and returned back to the native state after completing the season.
- iii. Casual migrants: They are floating people. Where they get work they reside there.

As per 2011 census there were 4.5 crore migrant workers and in 2020 total migrant workers. The major pathway where people are moving i.e. from Bihar to West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Delhi, from West Bengal to Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, from North East to especially South India. These are main corridors of migrant workers. Maharashtra has the largest number of migrants.



Among the biggest employers of migrant workers is the construction sectors(2.5crore) Domesticwork(2crore), Textile(1.1crore),Brick kiln work(1crore)etc. are engaged of migrant workers.

Due to nationwide imposition of lockdown,there were sudden closed the income path of these workers and they were forced to come back to their native homeland as they faced hardship to continue their livelihood ad they have no savings.Due to lockdown all transportations were closed therefore they started walking on foot towards their homeland.More than 300 migrant workers had died due to this lockdown for the reasons like starvation,suicides,exhaustion,road and rail accidents,police brutality and denial of timely medical care.

III. Problems faced by migrant workers:

1. Loss of income: Due to lockdown,most of them have lost their source of income.Majority of these poors living in metros have no ration cards at the place of their work. It is because they come from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar,Jharkhand, Orissa.Therefore, they ineligible to get the benefits of the food from their destination place which led to the extreme hunger
2. Housing problems: Migrant workers have facing problems not getting houses in an affordable rate in their metro cities.So, they live in slums areas as per their low incomewhich is more vulnerable to their heal condition as it is so much unhygienic.
3. Scarcity of foods: Another problem has faced by the migrant workers that they have lack of foodgrains for that reason they had been suffering from hunger,starvation.There was unequal distribution of foodgrains for that reason though government had provided free supply of foodgrains they were inaccessible to it.
4. Problems relting to travelling:Due to lockdown,a vast migrant worker facing no work no money problemsso that they had decided to go to return their native land rather died in hunger int the city.So far as possible they were walking on foot or riding bicycle.During that time many of them allegedly beaten up by the police,or some had arrested, someone died in the road accidentor sleeping on the tracks.
5. Identity crises:Migrant workers are invariably from the category of poor and they have mostly non-educated and non-skills laborers.They are coming to the cities through the



contractors. As they have no rights and no voice, no demand and no legal liabilities, they have faced identity politics and parochialism.

IV. Government initiatives for the migrant workers:

1. Free food grains to migrant workers: The migrant workers who have neither ration card nor the beneficiary of National Food Security Act (NFSA) in that particular city or state in which there is habitat area. Rs 3500 crore expenditure would be incurred for providing this extended food supply. This was taken care by the central government and the State government was responsible for implementation, identification of migrants and full distribution.
2. One Nation One Card: This system enables migratory ration card holders to live their food grains from any shop of their choice by using their existing or earlier same ration card issued in their home state and to avail this portability just like mobile portability. They only go through the bio-metric authentication. This helps them to transfer their food supply from one place to another as they are not static to one place.
3. Transport facilities: Due to lockdown migrant workers had started their journey to their homeland. For that they face immense hardship. Seeing their situation Ministry of Home Affairs allowed states to co-ordinate individually to transport migrants using buses. Government also introduced Shramik Special Train for facilitate their journey by train. In this context it should be mentioned the humanitarian actor Sonu Sood who had selflessly offering helping hand and sending lakh of migrant students across geographic abroad. For honoring his actions United Nations Development Programme conferred him SDG Special Humanitarian Action Award 2020.
4. Providing houses: For migrant workers a scheme has been launched by the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan for Affordable Rental Housing Complexes under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY). Under this scheme incentives were given to public and private agencies to construct houses for rent. Also introduced Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme under PMAY.
5. Provide Monetary fund: The migrant workers were needed money along with the food grains. Hence the government provided economic stimulus of Rs 500 per month to poor



women having Jan DhanAccounts.As these people lost their jobs.The former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said that saving the economy,saving people was most important.

V. Conclusion:

The contribution of migrant workers to the national income is so much significant.Approximately 30-40% economy supports by the migrant workers in the cities.But in return they have been always neglected.There are very few things done by the government for their safety,security and wellbeing.An unequal and poverty-ridden country cannot be developed in true sense.A country is called a developed country when the people of that country is free from hunger, starvation and all sections of people are equal.As the most of the migrant workers are engaged in the corporate sector so to developed this sector we should developed the status of migrant workers. It is because a hungry, uneducated, inefficient and unhealthy workforce cannot contribute to the development of the country. Therefore, we should take care of them.Without the overall growth of the people in the country there cannot be inclusive and sustainable growth in the country.Industrial growth is positive also when their labour should be educated, healthy, safe and happy. If poor become poorer then the development cannot be happened in true sense.This covid-19 teaches us the importance of all sections of people in a country.Covid-19 brought this invisible visible and highlighted an unequal scenario of society where a major workforce have been neglected unknowingly.

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