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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MIGRANT WORKERS IN INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF GARIB KALYAN **ROZGAR ABHIYAN: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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Abstract

The study aims at analysing the impact of Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown on migrant workers in India and to focus upon the recently announced Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan as a remedy for minimising the problems of migrant workers. Workforce in general and migrant workers, in particular are highly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown in India. Around four crore migrant labours are engaged in various works in different parts of the country as per announcement of central Government official. Most of the migrant workers are engaged in informal sector. They are not capable to save much money to bear the cost of their livelihood during the period of Covid-19 induced long lockdown. Most of migrant workers have lost their jobs due to shutting of factories and business houses. Due to lack of food, shelter and fear of virus, majority of stranded workers forced to return their native place though there remains uncertainty for getting job. Government of India announced the Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan (GKRA) as an instrument to cope up with the problems of unemployment in rural areas arising out of Covid-19 pandemic. In this backdrop this paper, based on secondary data is an effort to focus upon the Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan as an instrument for minimising the problems of migrant workers as well as in the direction of self reliant villages. Various articles, newspapers, Government Reports are consulted to compose the study. The paper is to be divided into three sections. Section- I is an introductory in nature, highlighting methodology, objectives of the study and review of literature, Section – II deals with discussion and analysis, Section – III remains for conclusion and suggestions.

Key words: Covid-19, migrant workers, GKRA

SECTION: I

1.1.Introduction:

In India the first positive case of Corona virus was detected in Kerala in the month of January but it has increased to 467 including active case of 424 and death of 4 cases on 23rd March. Considering the spread of virus, nationwide 21 days lock down in India was imposed in first phase, from 25th March in this year, as a preventive measure against the spread of Corona virus. According to the Government, lockdown is defined as an emergency protocol that is implemented by the authorities to prevent people from leaving their homes or a particular area. After imposition of lockdown, people are not allowed to travel or go outside their houses like before. During the period of lockdown series of regulations were imposed such as restriction in public movement, close down the industry, factory and business houses, etc. In the second phase the period of lock down further extended until 3 May, with conditional relaxations after 20 April for the region where the spread was minimal. In the third phase nationwide lockdown was extended till 17th May. Considering the spread of virus, Government of India divided districts into three zones red, orange and green. The relaxations were made according to the basis of zone. In the fourth phase the National Disaster Management Authority extended the nationwide lock down up to 31st May 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown severely devastated the economy of the country due to the suspension of all transport services like road, railways, and air ways; close down of business houses, educational institutions, hotels etc with exceptions for transportation of essential goods, fire, police and emergency services. Under such a situation migrant workers were directly affected by losing their jobs, shelter etc and they have no way left except to return their native villages for sustaining their livelihood.

1.2. Objectives of the study:

The study is mainly concerned with the difficulties faced by migrant workers in India due to spread of Corona Virus pandemic 2019. The paper is composed with two objectives. One of the objectives is to analyse the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on migrant workers in India another is to focus upon the recently launched time bound rural employment scheme Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan as a remedy for minimising the problems of migrant workers.

1.3. Methodology:

The present study is an analytical one, based on secondary data. In the present study, data is collected from the published document by Government of India, news papers, different websites. The statistical tools like line charts, bar charts and table are used to justify the study. Several articles related to this topic are consulted to compose the study.

1.4. Literature Review:

Bhagat R.B. and others (2020) in their study highlighted that in-migration rate is higher in high-income states such as Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka, and low-income states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Odisha reported relatively higher rates of out-migration. Migrant workers are seems to be quite vulnerable to the vagaries of the labour market and lack social protection as about 30% of migrant workers are casual workers. Only 35% migrant workers are employed as regular salaried workers. The study recommended the database on migration and migrant households through Census.

Jan Sahas (2020) made Phone based quantitative rapid assessment survey between 27-29 March 2020 on 3196 migrant workers of construction industries and observed that around 94% labourers are not eligible for availing BOCW related benefit transfer as they do not have any identity (BOCW) cards. 42% such labourers mentioned that they had no ration left for the day and 17% do not have bank accounts. This survey also highlighted that 62% workers did not have any information about emergency welfare measures provided by the Government and 37% workers did not know the mechanism to access the existing schemes. Two major recommendations of this study were in favour of providing unemployment allowance and debt waiver facilities to migrant labours.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (2019) conducted by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India highlighted the worse condition of workers in informal sector in-terms of the coverage of benefit such as social security, leave etc. The share of informal sector among male and female workers was 71.1% and 54.8% respectively in non-agriculture and AGEGC sector. About 49.6% workers were not eligible for any social security benefit among regular wage/salaried employees in the non-agriculture sector and among females the rate is 51.8%. About 71.1% among regular wage/salaried employees in the non-agriculture sector had no written job contract and 54.2 per cent were not eligible for paid any leave.

NSSO (2010) highlighting the 64th round survey report focused upon that the employment opportunities are the major cause of migration as per 64th round National Sample Survey report2007-08. According to this report about 55% households in rural areas and 67% in urban areas migrated for employment-related issues. Migration from rural to urban areas was higher than from urban to rural areas. About 57% migrant households in urban areas were

from rural areas, against 29% from urban areas to rural areas. According to this report about 43% of Delhi's population are migrants, with over half of which are coming from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, two of India's less developed states.

Arvind Indulekha (2020) in her article pointing out the views of Dilip Rath's, the lead economist of World Bank highlighted the unprecedented levels of effects on the migrant economy due to the ongoing Corona Virus pandemic. Most of the migrant workers from India to Gulf countries became stranded and they have lost their ability to keep earning and remitting money. Remittances to India fall by almost 23% which will lead to cause hardships in terms of meeting international payment obligations and 37% foreign direct investment is expected to fall due to this ongoing pandemic.

SECTION: II

Discussion and Analysis: World Economic Forum estimated 139 million migrant in India. The International Labour Organisation predicted that about 400 million migrant workers in India would be affected due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown and most of migrant workers in India originate from the state of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

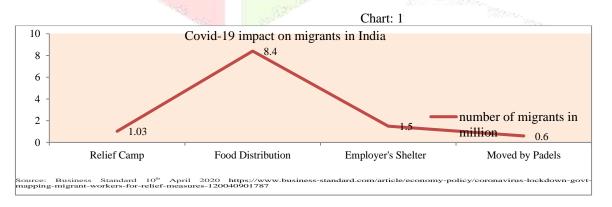
As per report of the Working Group on Migration it is observed that highest number of female migrant workers are engaged in construction sector and highest number of male migrant workers are engaged in public services (transport, postal, public administration services) and modern services (financial intermediation, real estate, renting, education, health).

> Table:-1 Share of Migrant Workers among Total Workers in major Sectors

Sector	Rural		Urban	
at the	Male	Female	Male	Female
Primary	4	75	20	65
Manufacturing	13	50	38	51
Public Services	16	69	40	56
Constructions	8	73	32	67
Traditional Services	10	65	29	55
Modern	16	66	41	52
Total	6	73	33	56

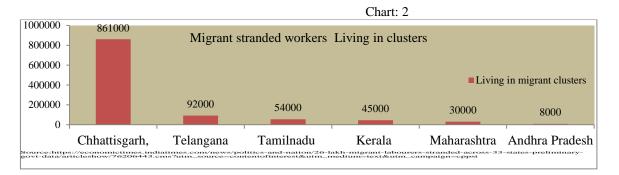
Source: Report of the Working Group on Migration-2017, Ministry of Housing and Urban and Poverty Alleviation, GOI.

National Sample Survey (NSS) in 2007-08 reveals that about 28.3% of the workforce in India is migrants. Every nation requires skilled and unskilled human capital to run its economy smoothly and migrants filled up the gap of required human capital. The table-1 highlights that migrants contribute highly in total workforce. A woman becomes a migrant when she moves to her husband's house after her marriage; such migrant's workforce is high in primary and construction sector in rural areas on the other side migrant male workers are high in urban area's manufacturing, public sector and modern services.



Government of India is exercising in mapping of migrant workers who are treated as victims of Covid-19 pandemic residing at relief camp, shelters provided by employers, receiving foods distributed by Government and NGOs, and who moved their native villages by waking finding no other way to survive in the workplace due to lack of food, shelter, and fear of spreading over the virus. According to the estimates of central Government as filed in the Supreme Court, published in Business Standard disclosed that around 1.03 million and 1.5 million migrant labour are residing in relief camps and employers shelter respectively, 8.4 million have left without food and forced to availing the foods distributed by the Government and NGOs. About 6 lakh migrant forced to return home on foot due to suspension of passenger's transportation due to Covid-19 induced lock down. But it is a preliminary estimation. The number of migrant will be much more if all the shelter homes is considered. As a

preventive measures to protect virus 21-day lockdown started from March 25, led workers leaving cities and return to their villages. The preliminary data released by central labour commissioner, under the Ministry of Labour and employment revealed that 26, 17,218 migrant workers became stranded due to the impact of Covid -19 pandemic in 33 states across the country. Majority of such migrant stranded workers i.e. 46% are in migrant cluster and only 10 % are in the relief camps, provided by Government, rest 34% are in work places managed by employers.



The chart -2 gives a glimpse on condition of migrant stranded workers during the Covid-19 outbreak in India. The chart shows that about 8,61000 stranded migrant workers followed by 92000 in Telangana, 54000 in Tamil Nadu, 45000 in Kerala, 30000 in Maharashtra and 8000 worker in Andhra Pradesh, have no other option to stay but to live in clusters. During the Covid-19 pandemic it is necessary as per guidelines issued by Government for protecting spread of virus to maintain social distancing and social gathering, but in a cluster it is not possible to follow these guidelines. Covid-19 outbreaks not only create job uncertainty among migrant workers but health crisis also.

Most of the migrant workers are working as a daily wage labourer, they have lost their jobs, no money is left with them, and under such pathetic condition they have no other option but to leave the work place. Thousands of migrants began walking or bicycling to return their native villages as there was no means of transport due to the lockdown. Many of them caught in inter-state border and were arrested for violating the lockdown. Some migrant workers were not capable to bear the exhaustion in long journey and died. Many of migrant workers died in road accident and rail accident. Realising the difficulties and problems of migrant workers Government of India took measures by providing buses and trains for sending migrants to their native villages. Times of India in its news on 24th May reported the message of Joint Secretary, Union Home Ministry, Government of India, highlighting that 75 lakh of Migrants returned home in trains and buses since imposition of nationwide lockdown. Since 1st May Indian Railways have engaged 2600 Shramik Special Trains for transportation of migrant workers from various parts of country to their destination.

But it is true that labours' born in poverty and die with poverty. The problems are lying with the migrant workers as and when they come back to their native villages. This situation creates two fold problems; one is the enhancement of unemployment in villages and another is to enhance social cohesion. Considering this emerging phenomenon due to the covid-19 outbreaks Government has declared different measures to minimise it. A relief package worth Rs 1.70 lakh crore under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana was announced in March for migrant workers, urban and rural poor. Under this package additional five kg of wheat or rice each month for the next three months for free of cost above the five kg which they already are entitled to will be provided 80 crore people across the country. Besides, one kg of pulse according to regional preferences for each household will also be provided for the next three months. In the month of April an amount worth Rs11,092 crore for providing food and shelter arrangements for migrants was released by central Government to states and Union Territories under the National Disaster Response Fund. On 1st April the average daily wages under the MGNREGA were increased by Rs 20 and stands to to Rs202 for helping the poor workers. In the month of May an announcement for providing free food grains to the migrant workers was made by Finance Minister, Government of India targeting 80 million migrant workers. But these measures were not sufficient enough to mitigate the emerging problems of huge unemployment due to Covid -19 pandemic. Considering the reality Government of India launched the time bound employment generation Scheme to provide jobs in rural areas where returnee migrant workers are over populated under the umbrella of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA)

Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA) was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 20th June 2020 with a view to generate employment and livelihood opportunities for migrant workers who have returned to villages due to the negative impact of Covid -19 pandemic. This day is termed as a historic day as a massive campaign kick-started in the direction of welfare of the poor, for their employment. The scheme is designed as a mission

mode in116 districts across the six states where maximum number of the migrant workers have returned. According to the central government official more than 75 lakh migrant workers left cities, their workplace, by buses and trains provided by the Government and large numbers of migrants providing self styled transportation returned to their native villages, becoming unemployed. GKRA is a 125 days' time bound programme for providing employment in six states in addition to provide better rural infrastructure in the proposed areas. Budgeted amount for implementation of this Abhiyan is worth Rs 50000 crore. The concentration of returnee migrant workers is observed in 6 states, namely, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Odisha. The implementation of GKRA, launched on 20th June is to be implemented in these 6 states. About 67 lakh migrant workers which account for around two-third of the total returnee migrant workers will be provided employment for 125 days in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Odisha. The nodal Ministry for this campaign is assigned to the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and in implementation of this Abhiyan close coordination with the State Governments will be maintained.

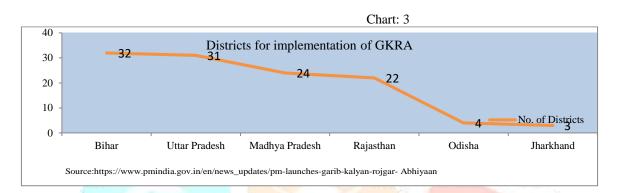


Chart-3 focused upon the districts which are taken for implementation of GKRA. 116 districts of 6 states are taken into consideration under this Abhiyan considering concentration of the maximum number of migrant workers in the concerned districts. 32 districts from Bihar, followed by 31 from Uttar Pradesh, 24 from Madhya Pradesh 22 from Rajasthan, 4 from Odisha and 3 from Jharkhand was under taken under the umbrella of GKRA.

Table:2

29, (14.7	
State	No. of Districts	No. of Aspirational Districts
Bihar	32	12
Uttar Pradesh	31	5
Madhya Pradesh	24	4
Rajasthan	22	2
Odisha	4	1
Jharkhand	3	3
Total	116	27

Source:https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pm-launches-garib-kalyan-rojgar-abhiyaan-on-20th-june-2020-to-boost-employment-and-livelihood-opportunities-for-migrant-workers-returning-to-villages-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-outbreak/

Table 2 highlights that the GKRA is extended to 116 districts including 27 Aspirational districts. Bihar accounted for 12 such aspirational districts followed by 5 districts in Uttar Pradesh, 4 in Madhya Pradesh 3 in Jharkhand. The districts with 25000 or more migrant workers are selected for addressing the hardship of large number of migrant workers

The objectives of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA) are lying within the line of 'Atma nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan,' the creation of self reliant villages by providing job to rural workers and building up of modern digital infrastructure in concerned villages. The objectives of GKRA are:

- (a) To provide immediate employment opportunities to returnee migrant workers and similarly affected rural population.
- (b) Saturate villages with public infrastructure and assets
- (c) To enhance long term livelihood opportunities.

Under this Abhiyan the numbers of identified projects are 25. These 25 projects are very much related to meet the requirement of the villages like rural housing for the poor, Plantations, provision of drinking water through Jal Jeevan mission, Panchayat Bhavans, community toilets, rural mandis, rural roads, and other infrastructure like Cattle Sheds, Anganwadi Bhavans etc. the above mentioned 25 works are instruments in realising the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The selection of the works is designed in such a manner that the benefit of the scheme to be reached to the targeted segment in earliest. For providing instant benefit to the targeted segment which is the urgent need of the hour, selection of the 25 works is made on the basis of five criteria as given below:

- These are the ongoing Funded Scheme
- Works have Potentiality to generate employment and livelihoods
- Works have Potentiality to accelerate the implementation of rural public infrastructure
- Works are implementable in 125 days
- Realistic trackable output indicators

It is not like other schemes which generally take a lot of time to reach at ground reality but this is a time bound scheme, the Government of India has taken steps to ensure effective and timely implementation of the programme. Proper implementation of the Scheme will create the foundation for strengthening the rural economy by providing not only generation of rural employment but to promote the public infrastructures in the villages which is in the direction of "self-reliant" villages. This is the real step towards fulfilling the vision of Gandhiji, the father's of nation's "Gram Swaraj"

SECTION III:

Conclusion: Migrants workers affected due to the Covid-19 induced Lockdown require urgent initiatives from central as well as respective states Government for minimising their problems. Some of experts' opined in favour of direct cash transfer to the migrant workers. Government of India took several measures announcing financial packages and granting NDRF fund to state Governments for helping the migrant workers. Government Initiatives include cash transfers, distribution of free ration, and arrangement of transportation to reduce the suffering of migrants. But all are the temporary measures and were not capable to find any solution of the emerging problems of migrant workers. The only solution seems to be the ensuring of employment opportunities to migrant workers returned in their villages for sustaining their livelihoods. The massive employment opportunity without public investment is not possible at that juncture. The announcement of Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan is a right scheme in right time which will boost rural economy by providing modern infrastructure in one side, and generate employment opportunities to returnee migrant workers. The 25 works which are to be undertaken under the Scheme are core works which are instrumental in realising the recently announced Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. The objective of creation modern villages under this scheme is in the direction of achieving 'self reliant' villages. This Abhiyan will bring cash in the hands of the poor which will revive the rural economy as a whole and livelihood of migrant workers in particular. But the coverage of this Abhiyan is limited within 6 states, it is necessary to implement this scheme other states also for inclusive growth of the nation which is the need of the hour.

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