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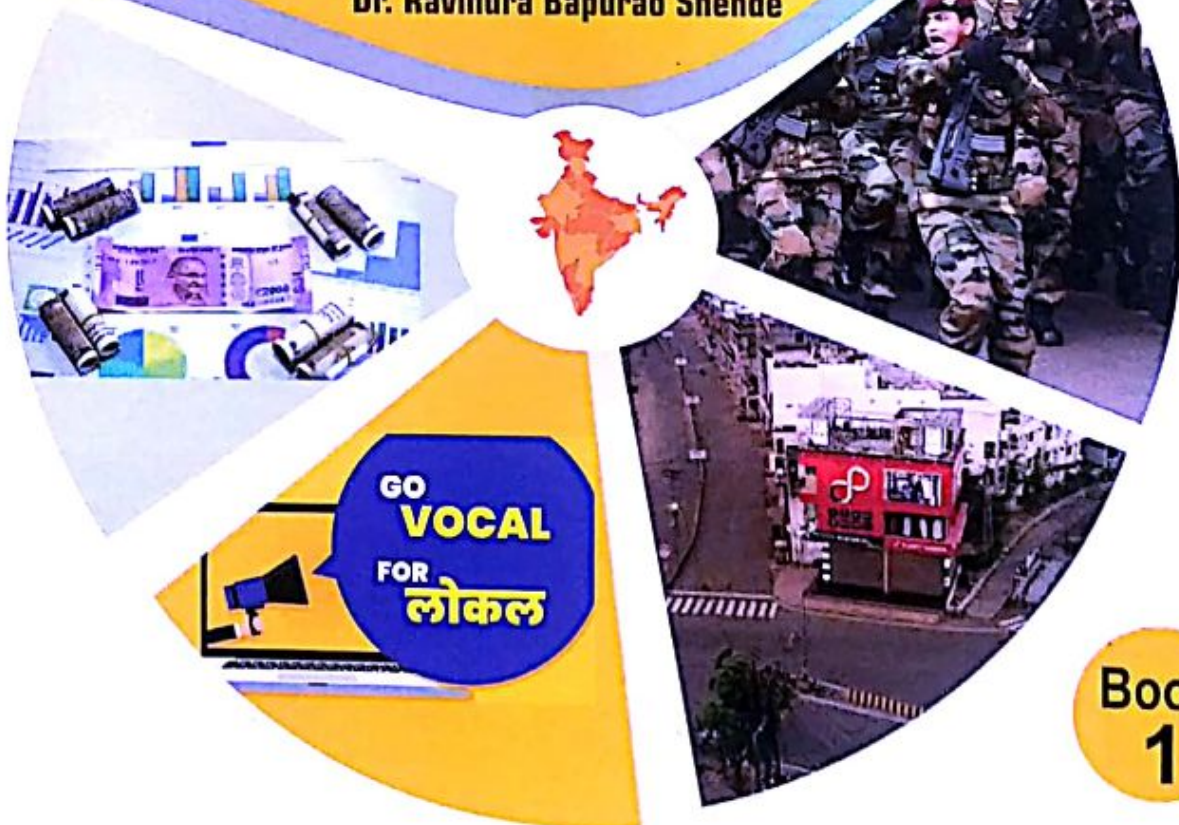
Special Issue of Department of Economics,
Lokmanya Mahavidyalay Warora, Dist. Chandrapur (MS)

on

SELF - RELIANT INDIA (ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT) : OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Chief Editor
Dr. Subodh Kumar Singh
Principal

Editor
Dr. Ravindra Bapurao Shende



**Book
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INDEX

SR. NO.	TITLE & AUTHOR NAME	PAGE NO.
1	INDIAN CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SELF RELIANCE <i>Dr. Manjusha Y. Dhoble</i>	1-4
2	A STUDY OF NEW EDUCATION POLICY IN INDIA <i>Dr. Santosh Bansirao Gaikwad</i>	5-8
3	IMPACT OF COVID - 19 ON BANKING SECTOR AND HUMAN ACTIVITIES: A STUDY <i>Dr. Sanjay Dhanvijay</i>	9-15
4	IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES AND HUMAN ACTIVITIES: A STUDY <i>Dr. Sanjay B. Bagde</i>	16-23
5	OLD VEHICLES SCRAPPED, INDUSTRY WILL MAKE A PROFIT! <i>Prof. Vinay D. Kawade</i>	24-26
6	ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT FOR MSME <i>Dr Anand V. Kulkarni</i>	27-31
7	SELF-RELIANT INDIA AND INDIAN AGRICULTURE <i>Prof. Swapnil S. Fokmare</i>	32-35
8	COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAN <i>Dr. T. P. More</i>	36-39
9	MENTAL HEALTH ON PUBLIC IN INDIA ON COVID-19 <i>Shree. Shankar G. Bonde</i>	40-43

10	BARRIERS IN ONLINE EXAMINATION ON COVID-19 <i>Dr. Shreekrishna P. Raut</i>	44-49
11	SELF-RELIANT INDIA AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT <i>Mr. Vilas B. Kamble</i>	50-53
12	SELF-RELIANT IN INDIA UNDER THE CHALLENGES TO FEMALES LIBERATION REGARDING AVAILABLE PRESENT GOVT. SCHEMES IN NAGPUR DISTRICT <i>Dr. Ashok H. Dhote</i>	54-57
13	COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND FINANCE POLICY FOR ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT <i>Dr. Annaji Madavi</i>	58-61
14	A STUDY ON GIG ECONOMY IN INDIA <i>Dr. Razeka Khan</i>	62-66
15	IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR <i>Dr. Harinder Kour</i>	67-70
16	SELF-RELIANT INDIA-AN INITIATIVE TO CHANGE THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE OF THE COUNTRY <i>Dr. Manisha Vinay Aole</i>	71-74
17	MIGRATION OF WORKERS SUFFER ON COVID-19 IN INDIA <i>Dr. Ishwar Wagh</i>	75-81
18	A STUDY ON 'SELF-RELIANT INDIA' FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MSME SECTOR <i>Dr. Harish B. Badwaik</i>	82-85

MIGRATION OF WORKERS SUFFER ON COVID-19 IN INDIA

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Abstract

There are an estimated 139 million migrants in the country, according to the World Economic Forum. The International Labour Organization (ILO) predicted that due to the pandemic and the lockdown, about 400 million workers would be poverty-stricken. Most migrants in the state originate from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, followed by Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The cities of Mumbai and Delhi attract the highest number of migrants. While most men migrate for work, women migrate due to marriage.

Migrant workers consist majorly of daily-wage labourers working in the manufacturing and construction industries. They are often denied adequate healthcare, nutrition, housing and sanitation,^[12] since many of them work in the informal sector. They are mostly from rural areas but live in cities for work for most of the year. Many have no savings and lived in factory dormitories, which were shut due to the lockdown. Additionally, there was no central registry of migrant workers, despite the existence of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979.

According to research published in the Royal Geographical Society, the workers who have been treated the worst are from areas like Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, in which the indigenous population's natural resources were extracted by outsiders. Further, workers paid the least for the hardest work belong to the backward classes, mainly from the Dalit and the Adivasi communities. The research also indicated that the families of the migrant workers supported them by maintaining their houses and taking care of them, either when seasonal work is unavailable or when they are no longer able to work.

Maharashtra has the largest number of migrants, according to the 2011 Census of India. Its state government imposed a lockdown on 20 March in Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and Nagpur, leaving the migrant workers with no work. Thousands then gathered at the train and bus stations, seeking transport to their hometowns. With the nationwide lockdown, all transport facilities were closed.

Key Word:- Covid19, Pandemic, Migrant Labour,

Introduction :

A **migrant worker** is a person who either migrates within their home country or outside it to pursue work. Migrant workers usually do not have the intention to stay permanently in the country or region in which they work.



Young male migrant hawker carries colorful Indian print on his head for sale
Migrant workers who work outside their home country are also called foreign workers. They may also be called expatriates or guest workers, especially when they have been sent for or invited to work in the host country before leaving the home country.

The International Labour Organization estimated in 2014 there were 232 million international migrants worldwide who were outside their home country for at least 12 months and approximately half of them were estimated to be economically active (i.e. being employed or seeking employment).^[1] Some countries have millions of migrant workers. Some migrant workers are undocumented immigrants. Some are slaves.

Defination of Migrant Labour:

International Organisation for Migration:

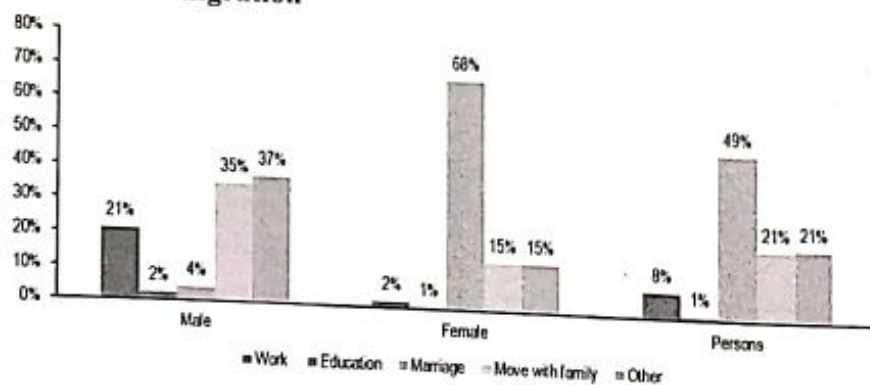
The International Organization for Migration (IOM) differentiates economic migrants from labour migrants . It defines several subgroups of migrant worker, including business travellers, contract migrant workers, established migrant workers, highly skilled migrant workers, immigrating investors, project-tied workers, seasonal migrant workers, and temporary migrant workers.

“Labour migrants” are defined as those who move for the purpose of employment. “Economic migrants” form a potentially broader group that includes people entering a state to perform economic activities, such as investors or business travellers, but can be understood also in a narrower sense similar to the category of “labour migrants”.

International Labour Organisation :

A “migrant worker” is defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments as a person who migrates from one country to another (or who has migrated from one country to another) with a view to being employed other than on his own account, and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant for employment.

Reasons for intra-state migration



Sources: Census 2011; PRS.



The media has been full of stories and images of tens and thousands of migrant workers trying to trudge back from urban centres to their homes in villages and smaller towns. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and other independent studies indicate that the percentage of casual and self-employed workers in urban areas is over 60% of the workforce. These sections have had the immediate loss of earnings due to the Covid-19-related lockdown measures.

On 14 September 2020, Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar stated in Parliament that information collected from state governments indicated an estimated 10 million migrants had attempted to return home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown. He later stated in Parliament on 15 September 2020 that no data was maintained on the number of migrants in the country who had either died, or become unemployed, as a result of the pandemic.

With no work and no money, and lockdown restrictions putting a stop to public transport, thousands of migrant workers were seen walking or bicycling hundreds of kilometres (or even more than a thousand kilometres) to go back to their native villages, some with their families. Many did so while hungry. Social distancing was not possible for these migrants since they travelled together in large groups. According to some of them, they would rather die from the virus at their own village than starve because of no work in the city.

Many were arrested for violating the lockdown, after being caught at inter-state borders, forests between states and even on boats to cross rivers. Some of the migrants died of exhaustion. Others died in accidents on the roads after walking or hiding in vehicles. On 31 March, as many as 120 migrant workers were allegedly beaten up by the police in Gujarat and forcefully rounded up in a single lorry and dropped in Maharashtra, despite being wounded. In Aurangabad, 16 migrants were killed on 8 May after a freight train ran over them while they were sleeping on the tracks, exhausted from walking. 26 migrants were killed in an accident between two trucks carrying migrants in Auraiya on 16 May. Later in May, a 15-year-old girl carried her ailing father on a bicycle for 1,200 kilometres (750 mi) from Bihar to Gurugram over the



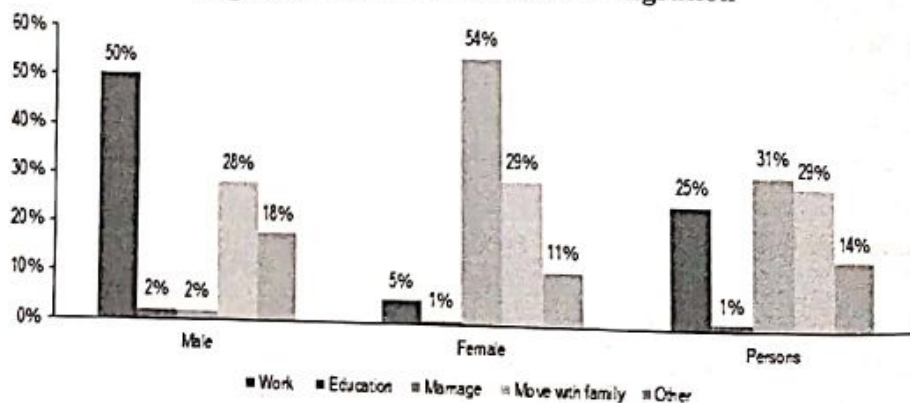
course of a week. She was later approached to try out for the National Cycling Academy by the Cycling Federation of India.

Later in May, despite the launching of special trains and buses by the government, the migrant workers chose to either travel together in large groups in the cargo compartments of trucks and containers, or travel by foot. They did not wait for their turn to board the government-arranged transport, mainly due to starvation. Additionally, they felt that going back to their hometowns, they could return to farming and take up small jobs under the MGNREGA. The consumption of mobile and broadband data under BharatNet more than doubled in rural areas. In September 2020, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai stated that the exodus of migrant workers had been caused by "panic created by fake news regarding the duration of lockdown.

Food Shortage :-

According to government reports, there was enough food grain stocked up in the FCI godowns to feed the poor for at least a year-and-a-half. While government schemes ensured that the poor would get additional rations due to the lockdown, the distribution system failed to be effective as the ration cards are area-specific and fair price shops were largely inaccessible. Additionally, the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' system has been implemented in very few states, as of mid April. While the scheme allowed migrant workers to retrieve foodgrains for free anywhere across the country, very few were aware of the scheme. In addition to this, the scheme also required biometric authentication, which was discontinued due to fears of spreading the virus through common fingerprint sensors. In Telangana, many could not avail of the ration due to a lack of Aadhaar cards. As such, many were left without food and money due to the lockdown. A survey published by 'The Hindu' states that 96% migrant workers did not get rations from the government, and 90% of them did not receive wages during the lockdown.

Figure 3: Reasons for inter-state migration



Sources: Census 2011; PRS.

States reserve jobs for own residents

Even as measures to improve migrant workers' lives have been slow-going, some states have proceeded to reserve jobs for their own residents, in the face of the ongoing economic

crisis. In March 2021, the Haryana government notified a law to reserve 75% of private jobs for local people. Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh already have, or have proposed, similar provisions.

Article 19 of India's Constitution allows citizens the fundamental right to freely migrate and seek employment anywhere in the country. But domicile-related provisions will restrict opportunities for migrant workers and go against the recommendation of a 2017 working group that said states must "pro-actively remove domicile provisions in laws relating to work in an accelerated manner".

But state job reservations apply to formal employment, and since migrant workers mostly work in the informal sector, they will be less affected, said Peter. Of around 61 million jobs created in India over 22 years post-Liberalisation in 1991, 92% were informal jobs.

Urban employment schemes designed like MGNREGS, but without the payment delays that have marred the central government's marquee rural jobs programme, could provide jobs and income security for the low-skilled urban poor. The government would have to ensure that migrant workers are purposefully included in the ambit of such schemes, added Varma.

Issues faced by migrant labour

Article 19(1)(e) of the Constitution, guarantees all Indian citizens the right to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India, subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of the general public or protection of any scheduled tribe. However, people migrating for work face key challenges including: i) lack of social security and health benefits and poor implementation of minimum safety standards law, ii) lack of portability of state-provided benefits especially food provided through the public distribution system (PDS) and iii) lack of access to affordable housing and basic amenities in urban areas.²

Poor implementation of protections under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 (ISMW Act)

The ISMW Act provides certain protections for inter-state migrant workers. Labour contractors recruiting migrants are required to: (i) be licensed, (ii) register migrant workers with the government authorities, and (iii) arrange for the worker to be issued a passbook recording their identity. Guidelines regarding wages and protections (including accommodation, free medical facilities, protective clothing) to be provided by the contractor are also outlined in the law.

In December 2011, a report by the Standing Committee on Labour observed that registration of workers under the ISMW Act was low and implementation of protections outlined in the Act was poor. The report concluded that the Central government had not made any concrete and fruitful efforts to ensure that contractors and employers mandatorily register the workers employed with them enabling access to benefits under the Act.

Lack of portability of benefits

Migrants registered to claim access to benefits at one location lose access upon migration to a different location. This is especially true of access to entitlements under the PDS. Ration card required to access benefits under the PDS is issued by state governments and

is not portable across states. This system excludes inter-state migrants from the PDS unless they surrender their card from the home state and get a new one from the host state.

Lack of affordable housing and basic amenities in urban areas

The proportion of migrants in urban population is 47%.¹ In 2015, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs identified migrants in urban areas as the largest population needing housing in cities. There is inadequate supply of low-income ownership and rental housing options. This leads to the spread of informal settlements and slums. The Prime Minister Awasas Yojana (PMAY) is a central government scheme to help the economically weaker section and low-income group access housing. Assistance under the scheme includes: i) slum rehabilitation, ii) subsidised credit for home loans, iii) subsidies up to Rs 1.5 lakh to either construct a new house or enhance existing houses on their own and iv) increasing availability of affordable housing units in partnership with the private sector. Since housing is a state subject, there is variation in approach of States towards affordable housing.²

Steps taken by the government with regard to migrant labour during the lockdown During the lockdown, several inter-state migrant workers tried to return to their home state to the suspension public transport facilities, migrants started walking towards their home state on foot. Subsequently, buses and Shramik special trains were permitted by the central government subject to coordination between states.[3]^[4] Between May 1 and June 3, more than 58 lakh migrants were transported through specially operated trains and 41 lakh were transported by road. Measures taken by the government to aid migrants include-

Transport:

On March 28, the central government authorised states to use the State Disaster Response Fund to provide accommodation to traveling migrants. States were advised to set up relief camps along highways with medical facilities to ensure people stay in these camps while the lockdown is in place.

In an order issued on April 29, the Ministry of Home Affairs allowed states to co-ordinate individually to transport migrants using buses. On May 1, the Indian Railways resumed passenger movement (for the first time since March 22) with Shramik Special trains to facilitate movement of migrants stranded outside their home state. Between May 1 and June 3, Indian Railways operated 4,197 Shramik trains transporting more than 58 lakh migrants. Top states from where Shramik trains originated are Gujarat and Maharashtra and states where the trains terminated are Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.[5] Note that these trends largely correspond to the migration patterns seen in the 2011 census data.

Food distribution:

On April 1, the Ministry of Health and Family Affairs directed state governments to operate relief camps for migrant workers with arrangements for food, sanitation and medical services. On May 14, under the second tranche of the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, the Finance Minister announced that free food grains would be provided to migrant workers who do not have a ration card for two months. The measure is expected to benefit eight crore migrant workers and their families. The Finance Minister also announced that One Nation One Ration

card will be implemented by March 2021, to provide portable benefits under the PDS. This will allow access to ration from any Fair Price Shop in India.

Housing: The Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan also launched a scheme for Affordable Rental Housing Complexes for Migrant Workers and Urban Poor to provide affordable rental housing units under PMAY. The scheme proposes to use existing housing stock under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Housing Mission (JnNURM) as well as incentivise public and private agencies to construct new affordable units for rent. Further, additional funds have been allocated for the credit linked subsidy scheme under PMAY for middle income group.

Financial aid: Some state governments (like Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) announced one-time cash transfers for returning migrant workers. UP government announced the provision of maintenance allowance of Rs 1,000 for returning migrants who are required to quarantine.

What a better migration policy would look like :

Migration scholars and activists interviewed by **IndiaSpend** suggested the following measures to ensure a robust migrant policy:

- All migrant workers, along with informal workers must be covered by universal, portable social protection schemes.
- Employers must be held accountable for the work conditions they provide.
- Labour laws should not be onerous, must be enforced strictly, and must make remedial justice accessible for migrant workers.
- Policy reforms should focus on building up adequate infrastructure and resources, including human resources, to implement welfare measures across state and central departments.
- Urban employment schemes to support the urban poor must include migrant workers.
- Needs of vulnerable groups such as migrant women and children must be addressed.

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SELF - RELIANT INDIA (ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT) : OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Self-reliant India (Atmanirbhar Bharat) is a new concept but it is run in various forms from ancient time as Gandhi's Swadeshi Movement, Lokmanya Tilak's Chatusutri, Self-reliance objective of third five year plan, Protection Trade Policy, Make in India, De-globalisation etc. Self-reliant means Swavlamban & help to others in crucial time. Atmanirbharta is an important tool for the optimum use of natural & human resources in a country. This e-seminar aims at discovering some social & economical innovations.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan or Self-reliant India campaign is the vision of new India envisaged by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. On 12 May 2020, our PM raised a clarion call to the nation giving a kick-start to the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan (Self-reliant India campaign) and announced the Special economic and comprehensive package of INR 20 lakh crores - equivalent to 10% of India's GDP – to fight COVID-19 pandemic in India.

The aim is to make the country and its citizens independent and self-reliant in all senses. He further outlined five pillars of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat – Economy, Infrastructure, System, Vibrant Demography and Demand. Finance Minister further announces Government Reforms and Enablers across Seven Sectors under Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

The government took several bold reforms such as Supply Chain Reforms for Agriculture, Rational Tax Systems, Simple & Clear Laws, Capable Human Resource and Strong Financial System.

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