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## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MIGRANTS WHILE FIGHTING AGAINST COVID-19**

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It is an established fact that human beings are subjected to suffering. The reason may vary from time to time and we have to face a negative and depressing situation during that time. Human suffering may distinguish by intensity and duration. The pandemic novel corona virus affected the lives of many in different ways and its impact will go far beyond the disease. Rigorous global lockdown imposed in India to tackle the pandemic left no sign of ending. In view of the public health through physical distancing and lockdown comes at a huge social, economic and mental cost. A large population was ready to face the lockdown and social distancing. The rest population who is never the concern of any government and policy was ready to face the danger imposed both by men and by nature. COVID-19 itself will directly cause financial losses for everyone and everywhere, but particularly so for the living of the margins of the economy. It will affect employment and livelihood on an enormous scale that will lead to emotional trauma.

Migrants had already started when the national lockdown was suddenly imposed. They started the long and painful march towards their homes travelling through side roads and railway tracks to avoid the police. Rough journeys have been taken down by most men and women without food and water by bicycles and by foot. Many tragic incidents took place on railway tracks and on highways when most of them lost their life in search of life with small children in town. Many died due to exhaustion on the way although it is claimed that the causes of the death are their own diseases. There are 13.9 crore migrants in India according to the Economic Survey of India 2017 and they are desperate for the safety of their families or about their livelihood. And the control measures will affect the health, human capital and income of the vulnerable population in multiple ways over the short and long-term.

Hardships faced by the migrant workers are an unending and there is no uncertainty in it. Death and illness was looming due to Covid19. Many telephonic surveys have been conducted and it is found that 84% of respondents reported loss of income and nearly 30% experience shortages of jobs and medicines. No doubt, the government has acknowledged the economic downturn but more sensitivity is demanded to understand the hardships faced by the migrant workers. Empathy is the utmost tool to understand the problems of the sufferer.

During the pandemic the government has realized the issue and many steps have been taken to lighten their problems. *Shramik* Trains were being run and bus transportation was arranged, but to go in home states was not only the issue here, as the saga has no end. Special flights and buses were arranged for the privileged ones but for underprivileged a small number of trains for which they had to pay and to face the complicated system in which online booking and confirmation and for each step they were depended on the middlemen. The man who started journey due to the loss of job engulfed himself in new debt. Falling income and loss of

livelihood have already made their life tiresome. On the name of social distancing there was tiresome journey in packed buses and trains that could only spread the infection. For stranded migrants handful was provided to meet the hunger but after lining up for hours and not much in respectful manner.

All of us are weathering the same storm but migrants are not in the same boat. Side effects of this crisis will differ from financial catastrophe to emotional gaps for this segment of the society. We are in the same country facing the same crisis but unfortunately the working pillar of the society will face more hard times. How can we expect for an ideal state in which we talk about education and health where a large section is struggling for survival. Their condition is going to be worse as there is a large number of students who migrated with their families. There is no scope of education for them. There is not even proper data handling of how many students have dropped their schools due to migration. If there is any we do not have any specific plan for the same.

On one platform we talk about education for all and about online education but on the other hand there is a large population that is deprived from food as well as other basic commodities so how can one think about schooling and education. Lack of food and work will lead to death and mental stress as well as lack of education will make them die while living. Situation is going to be worse and all this dissatisfaction will lead to crime, anarchy and social unrest. Uncertainty looms over them and distorting the face of their life which has never been attracted even before.

It makes me remind the lines of W.B. Yeats

**“Things fall apart: centre cannot hold  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.”**

We cannot live in parts while ignoring the basic requirements of the section whose efforts bring more possibility in each area. No area can go smoothly without their presence like agriculture, construction sector, small industries, domestic work, mines etc. It is beyond our imagination that the effecting people have a major role in the building of infrastructure of the society. They play a vital role in the Indian economy. They vibrate the nation through their hardships. The irony is that the nation is watching mutely the crisis of migrants, stories are being written and told creating mercy.

The slogan **“*Ek bharat shreshtha Bharat*”** reflects the brotherhood which may promise for unity in all aspects. But it will fade its hues if we cannot sensitize ourselves towards their problems. We talk about emotional bonding and cultural diversity but in reality the picture is vague. Actually there is a lack of fear that they can unite and fight for their rights or can impose danger over any political party. They are unable to exercise their voting rights. They cannot impose any danger due to the lack of vote bank that exercises in our country. In that way it is easy to ignore their concerns in their home state as well as host state. If they had been given an opportunity to cast the vote the entire scenario would have been changed. We should not underestimate the inner strength of the vulnerable. Rabindranath Tagore once remarked:

**“The weak can be terrible**

## **Because they try furiously to appear strong.”**

“The world suffers most from the disinterested tyranny of its well-wisher”- Rabindranath Tagore

There is a lack of socio-emotional learning (SEL) with our education that we cannot realize the inhuman behaviour of which they are targeted. The suffering increases due to the disinterestedness of the powerful. Being a human it becomes our duty to feel the pain and anguish of the sufferer community. For the development of nation equal participation is required from each section of society and in the same way their rights must be preserved. Shared feeling is the prerequisite for it. We cannot forget the contribution of the workers in building the nation with their life and blood. We all are the culprit for ignoring them. Migrants are the segment of our whole. We have to ensure their rights to make a balance. Otherwise the existing gap of the elite and marginalized will increase day by day more rapidly. The disregard for the powerless population and a large section of society should be avoidable. It is barely recognised and this man made suffering causes more pain than natural calamity.

***" No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main, Any man's death diminishes me because I'm involved in mankind." abruptly said by John Donne.***

It is more than Covid19 because it is caused by their fellow brothers. Lockdown period was more comfortable for the privileged society and so it was welcomed by them, although a little discomfort was felt but it was not huge than their safety. We adjusted for the work from home and felt safe in their homes. Here a privileged section felt mentally disturbed or can say grappled with boredom and monotony of life brought more depression in our life. At the same time webinars are conducted to deal with mental stress and sleeping disorders for the well being of the privileged or so called elite group and on the other hand the backbone of the economy was being come to an end during their tiresome journeys and met with accidents on the roads. The issue of bread took over the issue of mental stress of the migrants and no one can think that their mental health is also on the stake and for that what is being done world knows, perhaps nothing. The indifference has not stopped here, It was preconceived in our society, it is only in last month's when it came on the surface. And then there is the big question of how the communities they come from originally will receive them. Meanwhile, many workers stay in shared accommodation, where it's not practical to maintain social distancing. There is a genuine risk for these people. Both the host state and Indian governments need to take care of them. Even in normal days they are discriminated against in the country. There is more fear that they might be the carrier of the infection.

We need a vision for a post COVID-19 economy especially for the migrants and daily wages workers. There is need to work on an idea that conserves Nature and her children. Introspection is required when we talk of one nation. Lots of jobs spread of hunger and pandemic, children without school, lack of medical facilities and mental trauma lead to uncertainty. A collaborative relief effort of Centre and state is the need of the hour. Relief programmes should provide long term support instead of short term relief to the vulnerable population. A holistic approach to solve the riddle is the need of the hour. It is high time to

realize that a part of our nation is often neglected and no policies have been designed for the same. It is the call of the nature and we should understand that a single person has its own value and we cannot neglect it. After normalcy has been maintained these migrants will be called by the other states to run their projects. Then how can we remain in limbo in this issue. There is a need to create an amalgamated effort from every side.

There are questions that try to toss and spread here and there; *Why migrants leave their own states? Haven't they enough to survive on their own land? Who calls them? Is there any welcome scheme for them? Is there any economic or social support that they get from other states? Is any policy or any term that covers their security? Do they get any reservation or any help on any ground?*

I don't find any reason to escape all these questions that are surprisingly looking at the ruling and opposition parties at the same time. They are living on margins and unfortunately the system cannot allow them to live on that also. We have to bring them at our own level. How can we think that one nation is lightening candles or beating utensils and the other part is struggling on the roads unknown to this culture of positivity and unity that runs across the nation. It is the high time to realize the fact that the thread of fraternity and equality should run out across the nation without any knot. This is the peak time to realise the problems and build economic reforms for the migrant workers. This time one nation one ration card may be a step towards the upliftment but assurance of work in post-lockdown scenario is the utmost urgency of the time.

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