AN ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S UNCALLED MIGRANT LABOR CRISIS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: CASE STUDY OF BIHAR

Bhavana Kumari

Necessitous men are not free men.
(Franklin Delano Roosevelt)

The chapter discusses the migrant labor crisis in India that surfaced because of the lockdown imposed during the first wave of the SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) in 2020. Despite several relief measures, there have been lapses that resulted in unwelcome consequences to the fate of migrant laborers. This chapter attempts to find the reasons behind the unfortunate consequences and offers an in-depth analysis of India's COVID-19 lockdown and its effects on the socio-economic challenges of domestic migrant laborers. Neoclassical Migration and Dual Labor Market theories are applied to understand the nuanced situations of migrant laborers in India. This research makes an inductive and qualitative analysis. The chapter uses official empirical data available for study, and takes Bihar, a central eastern state of India, as a case study for a better understanding of the issue.

Keywords: India, COVID-19, lockdown, migrant laborers, Bihar

1. Introduction

India registered the first case of the SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) on January 30, 2020, in Kerala, a southwestern coastal state of the country (Andrews et al. 2020, 490). A student returning home for winter vacation from Wuhan University, in Wuhan, People's Republic of China (PRC), tested positive for the deadly virus. The student did recover from the infection later (Andrews et al. 2020, 490). However, the COVID-19 cases kept on increasing slowly but steadily in India. On March 24, 2020, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the world's most stringent

lockdown on only four hours' notice to fight against the pandemic. The decision was praised as it initially helped to keep the number of infections low. However, at the time of writing this chapter, with more than 33 million cases,[1] India has become the world's second worst-affected country by the COVID-19. The sudden and stringent lockdown, which lasted for more than two months, brought India's economy to its knees. The country recorded a 23.9% contraction in its GDP in the first quarter, that is April-June month, of 2020 (GoI 2021, 2). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated India's economy to grow at 11.5 % in 2021, after the country comes out from the lockdown (Mitra et al. 2021).

However, the second wave of COVID-19 hammered India more severely than the first one. India recorded an average of about 0.35 million COVID-19 cases daily from April 20 to May 8, 2021.[2] Unlike the 2020 lockdown, which was announced by the Central Government of India, during the second wave of COVID-19 infections, it was the state governments which took initiatives to curb the surge of infections. The initiatives included measures like a complete lockdown and weekend curfew. Such measures are further expected to hinder the country's economic growth. This slowdown of the national economy results in high unemployment rates. It eventually affects the lives of the poor and voiceless class of Indian society, particularly migrant laborers. In 2001, India had 315 million registered migrant laborers out of a total workforce of 406 million (GoI 2001). The number included both intra-state and inter-state migrant laborers. A decade later, the total number of migrant laborers saw a significant increase and went up to 452 million (GoI 2011). The share of migrant laborers in the national workforce, which was 463 million then, went to 97%. They also contributed 10% to the national GDP.

Table 1: India's labor force and migrant laborers

Year	Total labor force (in millions)	Migrant laborers (in millions)
2001	406	315
2011	463	452
2020	471	Not available

Source: Census Data (2001, 2011) and World Bank Data (2020)

The exact figures of internal migration are always disputed because of mismanagement and problems in maintaining empirical data. India has postponed its population Census 2021 enumeration due to the pandemic. The data of 2021 should present a better picture about the number of migrant laborers in the coun-

1 Data updated on September 28, 2021, on worldometers.info.

2 Data updated on May 9, 2021, on covid19india.org.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

try. This chapter presents an analysis based on the 2011 Census Data and other latest economic survey reports. Migrant laborers usually come to urban areas and big cities to earn their livelihood. According to several news reports and economic surveys, the number of inter-state migrant laborers is estimated to be around 150–200 million. India has a population of 1.3 billion. This means that, on average, every seventh person in the country is an inter-state migrant.

In India, there are four major types of migrant laborers: permanent, semi-permanent, seasonal, and circular migrant laborers. Semi-permanent, seasonal, and circular migrants are more vulnerable to exploitation due to the irregular market wages and job-availability, when compared to the permanent migrants. Seasonal and semi-permanent migrant laborers are approximately 14–15 million in number. It is also estimated that India has around 30–70 million circular migrants (Krishna and Rains 2020). The plight that has been reported in the media was mainly of the latter three categories of migrant laborers. So, talking in conservative numbers, approximately 50–80 million migrant laborers were heading back to their native homes during the first phase of lockdown in 2020.

This chapter conducts a study about the plight of migrant laborers, which happened during the COVID-19 induced lockdown in India in 2020. It finds the reasons for the hardships of migrant laborers by understanding their socio-economic background and their place in India's dual/segmented labor market. The chapter also analyses the measures taken by the central and state governments to address the migrant labor crisis in the country. The crucial section on Bihar, a state which saw a large-scale reverse migration during the lockdown, helps to meet the above stated objectives.

This chapter argues that India was facing a migrant labor crisis for the past few decades, but the pandemic made the crisis publicly visible and further worsened it. The economic imbalances between states and social conservatism pushed laborers from poor states to migrate towards other rich states. The chapter also asserts that migrant laborers' needs were long ignored by the governments, industrialists, and their recruiters. The reasons for such ignorance could be the lack of any significant political, social, and economic power of migrant laborers in India.

2. Theoretical framework

To understand the scenes that unfolded during the lockdown, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of India's labor market and where a migrant laborer fits in the system. India's labor market is one of the most complex labor markets in the world because of its vast size and no unified system. It includes both the organized/formal and unorganized/informal sectors. So far, no theory has clearly explained the migration issue in the Indian labor market. However, in this chapter,

the author has used the "neoclassical" migration and "dual/segmented labor market" theories to draw some understanding.

The neoclassical theory makes three important arguments about the labor migration. Firstly, it argues that internal migration happens during the process of economic development because of the "geographical differences in the supply of and demand of labor" (Massey et al. 1993, 433). People from a low-wage market with a higher endowment of labor migrate to areas that provide higher wages but have a lower endowment of labor power. India is one of the fastest developing economies in South Asia. However, internally, not every Indian state shows a similar rate of economic development. The North-South regional division is depicted in ample survey results. The southern states have outperformed the northern and eastern states of India on many socio-economic parameters like Human Development Index, per capita income, and GDP growth (Paul and Sridhar 2015, 1). In intra-northern regions, the Delhi-NCR area has outperformed the other states of India. As labor migration occurs in the process of economic development (Todaro 1980, 361; Massey et al. 1993, 431), India's better performing regions see a major influx of migrant laborers from less developed states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and others.

Secondly, the neoclassical theory also argues that migrating people consider better wages as a long-term benefit of relocation and mitigates the monetary risk taken during the initial period. In India, semi-permanent, seasonal, and circular migrant laborers coming from poor states take the risk of traveling for days before reaching their preferable workplaces. Most of the time, they remain jobless for weeks and even for months, before getting a job with pay that justifies their skills. However, they evaluate such risks to be fruitful for them in the long run. Thirdly, according to the neoclassical theory, individuals are the rational actors and decisions regarding when, where, why, and how to migrate are purely taken by the individuals. Indian society is mostly patriarchal. It is rare to see women making decisions to migrate due to work, either alone or with the family. Though male migrant laborers are themselves not well educated, their female partners are even less educated. This often results in the decisions of a female partner being insignificant in family affairs and the final decision is mostly made by the male head in the family.

The understanding, that the decision making mostly rests on the male head of the family, helps us to rule out the "New Economics" theory of migration for this study. This theory argues that the social dimensions, usually household/family, play a decisive role for migration of an individual (Massey et al. 1993, 436). The theory seems to be unsuitable for a typical Indian family. Therefore, the New Economics theory was not applied for this study and neoclassical theory is considered essential in explaining the migration of laborers in India.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

Once migrant laborers reach the target workplace, they enter in the dual/segmented Indian labor market. The dual labor market theory emerged in the United States and was developed in the 1960s and 1970s. The theory divides the labor market into two sectors: primary and secondary. The primary sector labor market is more formalized, while the secondary sector has informal employment. The labor markets in the primary sectors offer high wages, stable employment, job security, and good working conditions. On the contrary, the labor markets in the secondary sectors offer no job security, no grievance mechanism, no promotion guarantee, and no labor union. Wages are low and largely unregulated in the secondary sectors. In India, there is a concept of organized sectors (equal to the primary sectors) and unorganized sectors (equal to the secondary sectors). Organized sectors are part of the formal economy and unorganized sectors constitute the informal economy. Since the last decade, even in the formal and organized sectors, the percentage of contract labor employment has been increasing (Anant et al. 2006, 205). The unorganized and informal sectors are labor intensive, employ less-skilled laborers, and pay low wages with no or minuscule job security and other benefits. Ninety percent of the working population in India are part of the informal economy and just two states (Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) share more than 80% of the labor force in informal economy (Patel 2020). Moreover, 90% of migrant laborers work in the unorganized sectors that lack formal employment mechanisms. Segmentation based on class, caste, religion, region, and gender is another primary feature of the Indian labor market (Srivastava 2019, 49).

3. Socio-economic background of migrant laborers

When a person is listed in the Census at a different place from his/her place of birth, he/she is called a migrant (GoI 2001). As per the Census Data of 2001 and 2011, the annual growth rate of migration has doubled from 2.4% to 4.5%. Migrant laborers usually belong to socio-economically backward sections of society. They are poor, less educated, and politically overlooked. They hesitate to use their surname, to hide their identity and escape from being exploited based on caste, class, or culture. If we try to divide the migrants based on their social caste category, Other Backward Castes (OBCs) comprise 36.94% of rural-urban seasonal migrants, Dalits comprise 30.57%, Adivasis comprise 12.63%, and Muslims comprise 11.03% (Tyagi 2020). The General Category castes share only 5.5% and Brahmins only 2.8% (Tyagi 2020).

Males contribute 68.4% of the national workforce and women 31% (GoI 2011). However, the percentage of migration for women is, somewhat surprisingly, more than that of men. Marriage is the primary reason for women to migrate, whereas males migrate mainly in search of jobs and a better lifestyle (Rajan, Sivakumar, and

Srinivasan 2020, 1023). Women are part of the "invisible economies of care" (Shah and Lerche 2020, 720). They are the primary caretakers in most Indian families. They bear immense physical and psychological pressure while nurturing their children (Bhattacharya 2013). They do unpaid domestic work at home which further facilitates their male relatives to travel for work. The patriarchal mindset of the Indian society also supports such rules for women. The reproductive activities of female partners should be considered as a supportive factor for the productive activities of males at the workplace (Shah and Lerche 2020, 721). Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) highlights such relation between production and reproduction. The concept builds on the factors of domestic labor and women's economic role in the capitalist society (Bezanson and Luxton 2006, 3). Having said that, some female partners do take up jobs after migrating. Still, their primary reason for migration is listed as marriage in official records. The female partners who join the workforce are often paid lower wages than their male counterparts for the same job. As mentioned earlier, gender discrimination is a part of the segmented labor market, and female migrant labors are not unaffected. Women migrant laborers are also the first ones to bear the brunt of unemployment.

From an economic perspective, India's per capita income was USD 156 for the year 2019–2020. With an average monthly income of USD 437, India has been ranked at 72nd position among 106 countries in the global list of countries with average monthly income (PTI 2018). According to survey data of the Centre for the Study Developing Societies (CSDS), 22% of Indian households monthly earn less than USD 26, 32% have monthly income of 26–66 USD, and 25% manage to earn 66–133 USD as monthly household income. Only 13% of households' monthly income is between 133–266 USD and 8% earn more than or equal to USD 266. A migrant worker in India earns approximately USD 137 monthly, which is even lower than the national average (PTI 2020a). The money is insufficient to live a healthy and decent lifestyle. Given the fact that the cities they help to build become far too expensive to accommodate its poor builders, migrant laborers prefer to live in the outskirts of the city where they can get rooms at cheaper rates. However, even those rented houses are not easy to find, because laborers are new to the city, to its native culture, and its code. They also feel alienated in the destination states. As a result, migrant laborers often choose to live at their worksites in poor and unhygienic conditions. Article 42 in the Constitution of India (CoI) guarantees good working conditions and maternity leave for women. The poor and unhealthy working conditions at worksites show the real face of implementation of rules. Moreover, in the lack of data, how many female migrant laborers have been granted maternity leave are unknown.

In occupational terms, nearly 42% of rural-urban seasonal migrant laborers' primary source of income are non-agricultural works, 22.5% take up cultivation

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

jobs, and 18.9% are engaged in allied agricultural activities (Tyagi 2020). In the case of rural-rural seasonal migration, 31.9% of laborers work in non-agricultural sectors, 21.9% are cultivators, and 29.5% are engaged in allied agricultural activities (Tyagi 2020). Densely populated Indian states like Bihar (17.88%) and Uttar Pradesh (16.88%) comprise the highest proportion of rural-urban seasonal migrants (refer to Table 2). Other states like Jharkhand in the east, Madhya Pradesh in the center, Uttarakhand in the north, and Rajasthan in the west are some of the major sources of migrant laborers.

Table 2: Major sources and destinations of rural-urban seasonal migration

Major sources of migration	Top destinations
Uttar Pradesh	Delhi
Bihar	Maharashtra
Rajasthan	Gujarat
Madhya Pradesh	Haryana
Jharkhand	Punjab
Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka
Tamil Nadu	Kerala
Uttarakhand	

Source: Census Data (2011)

Lastly, the number of child migrant laborers is also increasing in significant numbers in India. Though there is no separate data of child migrant laborers, India is estimated to have about 10.1 million child laborers in total.[3] Articles 23 and 24 of the CoI prohibit any kind of forced labor and child labor. However, in a liberal and democratic system, where social mobility is encouraged by the institutions in place, millions of children particularly from the lower and voiceless sections of societies are replicating the professions of their parents (Clark, Baldwin, and Carter 2012, 2011). They join their parents at labor worksites. However, they get paid low wages.

4. Challenges of migrant laborers

The chapter looked at the inter-state migration and migrant laborers issue, as it is these who were stuck in *pardesh* ("foreign land"). In many Indian languages, particularly of the northern belt, *pardesh* refers to a land of different cultures, languages, and customs. So, whenever a person leaves his/her home and travels

[3] Data collected from the official website of UNICEF India. https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/child-labor-exploitation. Accessed on May 26, 2021.

to other Indian states, a land of a different language and culture, it is said that the person is going to a foreign land.

Migrants always face challenges when moving from home to *pardesh*. Firstly, they need to overcome the language and culture differences between their home and the destination states. This is often the biggest problem for them, and often results in migrants being looked down upon in the destination states. They are seen as "aliens" for the native society of the destination state. They find difficulties in communicating with their employers. Therefore, sometimes, they compromise with low wages and inhospitable living conditions. They work in Dickensian conditions and reside in slum areas. They do not settle at their workplace because of the expensive urban environment. They prefer to keep families at their native places and travel between workplace and home multiple times a year. Secondly, if they belong to the vulnerable sections of society, their challenges multiply manifold. One of the major challenges that migrant laborers from vulnerable sections have been facing, even before the pandemic, is discrimination based on class and caste. Those who belong to the upper class and castes are better educated. They are placed in comparatively better jobs compared to migrants who are from socially weaker classes. Poor and socially suppressed migrant laborers lack land ownership and usually migrate to escape from the feudalistic approach of the dominant class in their region. They are less educated and have low skills, which gives them low bargaining power. They migrate from their native places, but the hardships continue at the destination workplace. "Dirty, dangerous and demeaning work being invariably carried out by migrant laborers from low status caste," writes Ravi Srivastava (2019, 56). Lower status migrant laborers get little chance to develop or improve their living standard.

Thirdly, migrant laborers are also treated as a threat to domestic laborers. Low-wage domestic migrants within countries are there to fill the gaps left by low-wage international migrants (Kofman and Raghuram 2015, 23). Many rich Indian states like Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra are major sources of labor force for Gulf countries. The gap left by these labor forces back in their native states is filled by the cheap and easily accessible migrant laborers coming from other poorer states. However, as states have data servers for their non-resident Indians, they don't have a similar mechanism for internal migrants, much less for the labor class. Up to date data on internal migrant laborers help in keeping records of their whereabouts and in case of any emergency they would be easily traced and helped. Moreover, those labor forces who choose not to migrate abroad but would not work at low-wage jobs in their home state see migrant laborers as threats and as someone who would pollute and corrupt their society (Mishra 2021). They regard migrant laborers as "work snatchers" (Mishra 2021).

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

Lastly, migrant laborers from poor states face discrimination because of the sense of "nativism" among the people of richer states in India. Many states' social security systems have domicile requirements. These schemes favor the native population and leave migrant laborers from accessing government-sponsored benefits like healthcare (Rawat et al. 2020). Seasonal, circular, and temporary migrants are not eligible for domicile rights in their destination states. Several social welfare schemes like Public Distribution Schemes (PDS), which distributes food and other essentials at subsidized prices, are not available to them. They cannot access rice, lentils, and kerosene provided to the poor at subsidized rates under the state's PDS, which increases their spending and reduces their overall saving. Migrant laborers also need to send remittances back home.

It can be concluded that migrant laborers' challenges do not end after migrating to high-income states. One can understand why the migrants were rushing towards their homes after the sudden and abrupt announcement of the nationwide lockdown. They were forced to travel on foot and, unfortunately, some of them even died on their way back home.

5. Why migrant laborers wanted to leave cities during the lockdown?

India announced a nationwide lockdown on only four hours' notice. It pushed millions of migrant daily wage laborers out of their jobs overnight with little to no savings left to survive. The situation brought the country's invisible apathy towards its internal migrant laborers into visibility. Figure 1 shows the direction of reverse migration that happened during the first country-wide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. The map indicates only the inter-state reverse migration and not the intra-state migration. Nonetheless, one cannot deny the fact that intra-state reverse migration also happened during the same time. However, they did not catch the attention of the media or the government.

A study of CSDS and Azim Premji university in 2019 estimates that 29% of the population in India's big cities is of daily wage laborers. The abrupt and complete cessation of economic activities overnight led to a large scale of unemployment for daily wagers, street-vendors, and contractual seasonal and circular migrant laborers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in an address to the nation on March 24, 2020, said that the fight against the pandemic will take three weeks (Pandey 2020). However, the restrictions were extended further for months, with a few exemptions for essential services. Millions of migrants found it hard to cope with the harsh realities of cessation of economic activities. They suffered from lack of food and money. As mentioned in the previous section, migrant laborers are deprived of domicile rights in other destination states. Due to the lack of documents,

migrant laborers were turned away from the destination state's PDS shops and free ration distribution was not made available to them initially. It was only after the government relaxed norms for availing ration benefits, some of them could collect rice, lentils, and oils from the PDS shops (Tripati 2020). Soon, the PDS shops ran out of stock for relief foods, as the number of claimants exceeded the estimates.

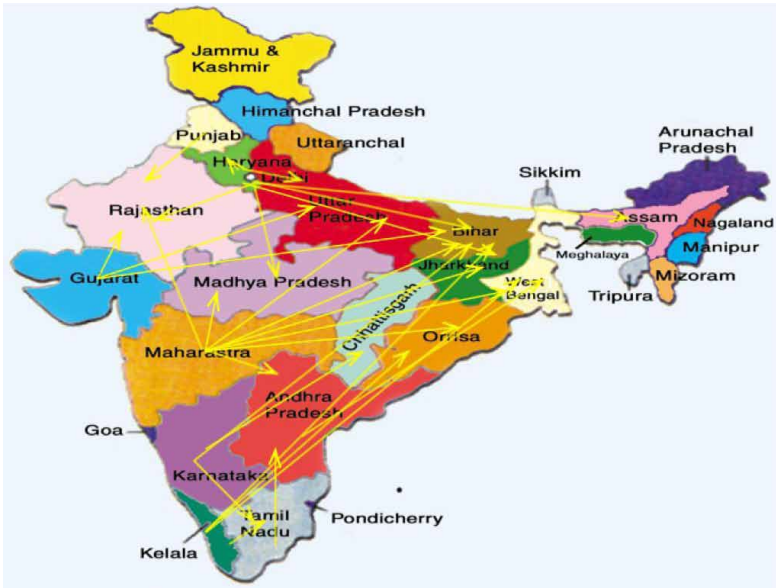

Figure 1: Reverse migration during the first lockdown in March 2020

(Source: Compiled by the author)

Migrant laborers also felt abandoned by their employers (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020). The contractors and recruiters of migrant laborers failed to provide any help. It is estimated that nearly 4 out of 5 workers were left unpaid by their employers (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020). Swain, a 45-year-old migrant laborer, said in a telephonic interview, "Nobody was understanding our problems there. My employer did not lift the phone when I contacted him to ask for my 10 days' wages pending with him. They are big people. What can we do?" (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020).

The relief camps, set up to provide housing to the migrant workers, along with meditation and yoga classes to ease distress and anxieties, were overcrowded as the number of shelter and food seekers was far more than the government's estimated figures. The camps also lacked basic sanitary facilities, making lives of women and children more troublesome (Pandey 2020). Migrants were unsure about the reopening of workplaces any time soon. Therefore, with no hope for

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

reopening of workplaces, no place to live, and no savings left, migrant laborers preferred to move back to their native home (Pandey 2020).

The other most crucial factor that led to a mass exodus of migrant laborers is the lack of communication about the situation, which eventually created a sense of panic (Sengupta and Jha 2020). They were aware that a new virus was spreading in urban areas, which was also highly contagious, but the precautions required to be taken were not well communicated to them. Later, when the government ministries and local administrative officers tried to convey precautionary measures with them, they found it impossible to follow (Sengupta and Jha 2020). Practicing physical distancing is not possible for everyone. In a country like India, it is a privilege. Migrants also feared that, though the mortality rate from the virus is low, if they got infected, they might face harassment from local community (Kumar et al. 2020). Therefore, they believed it would be better to leave the urban and metropolitan cities and live in their villages.

However, their journey back to home also had several hurdles. As per the records of the Railway Protection Force (RPF), 80 migrants died in trains, run by the governments, while traveling back to their respective home states (Dutta 2020). They allegedly died due to lack of food and extreme heat. Article 38 clause (1) of the CoI says that the state should aim to be a welfare state. Clause (2) of the same article says that the state should try to eliminate inequalities in society. Keeping these clauses in mind, one must compare the repatriation flights operated under the Vande Bharat Mission to bring back stranded Indian nationals from abroad to the scenario where the migrant laborers were left in their precarious conditions in locked cities at nobody's mercy until they started walking to their home state under scorching heat in the months of April–May in 2020. Privation undergone by migrant laborers due to the lack of jobs, food, and shelter clearly shows that the central and state governments were not anticipating such harsh results of the lockdown. The lack of political voice of the migrant laborers could be one of the reasons behind such steps taken by governments. The case study of Bihar further discusses this point in detail.

6. State's play

In March 2020, the Government of India invoked Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 (EDA) combined with National Disaster Management Act, 2005 (NDMA), and designed the complete plan of how and until when the nation will be under a complete lockdown. State governments had little to no power to make any changes in the given format of executing the lockdown order. The Central Government granted 14.8 billion USD to the Indian states and Union Territories under the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF) (Ministry of Home Affairs 2020). The

grants were used to provide temporary shelter, food, and medical care to homeless people, including the migrant laborers. The PDS shops were allowed to open throughout the lockdown period. Around 80 million migrant laborers received 5 kg of rice per person per month and 1 kg of chickpeas per family per month, even if they could not present a valid ration card[4] (Tripati 2020). The supply was for two months (June and July 2020). This was done outside the ambit of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 (Agarwal and Srivas 2020). The government also aimed to launch the One Nation, One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme[5] by March 2021. According to the latest reports 34 states/Union Territories out of 36 could implement the ONORC scheme by August 2021 (Express News Service 2021). Others are in the process of integration to the scheme. According to reports, 17 states also borrowed an additional 5.1 billion USD in 2020–2021 to implement the plan (Sharma 2021).

Several state governments promised an immediate monetary help of 7–14 USD per month to each migrant laborer in their respective states (Telegraph News 2020). There was no mention of the termination date of this monetary help. However, it was widely anticipated that the help would be extended for at least two to three months.

For those who wanted to head back to their home, trains named "Shramik Trains" were started in collaboration with the state and central governments (Dutta 2020). "Shramik" is a Hindi language word for "labor". Indian Railways is among the world's largest rail networks and its route length network. It is spread over an area of 23,236 square kilometers with 13,523 passenger trains, 9,146 freight trains, 23 million travelers, and 3 million tons of freight transported daily from 7,349 stations (Shah 2021). Despite this enormous capacity, around 40 out of 3,000 trains lost their way and did not reach their destination on scheduled time (HW News 2020). Many got delayed and diverted. Railway Board Chairman Vinod Kumar Yadav clarified that since most of the trains were reaching only two states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, "[t]here has been a surge in crowding of people. This is the reason why the railways had to change routes of some trains" (HW News 2020). Therefore, a journey which was supposed to be covered in a day took 60 hours to complete, thereby causing great distress and sufferings to passengers who starved due to lack of food and water, which as mentioned earlier also led to death of some of the migrant laborers (The Wire Staff 2020). Apart from trains, some buses were also arranged later, mainly by the states that were suppliers of migrant laborers (Express News Service 2020). However, before the traveling mechanisms became

[4] Ration cards are the documents that governments issue to persons who are eligible to buy food grains and other essentials at subsidized rates from PDS shops under NFSA.

[5] ONORC is aimed at providing universal access to PDS food grains for migrant workers.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

smooth, the distressed migrants were caught in inter-state political disputes as well. States like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu initially refused to send the migrant laborers back, due to the fear of not getting them back after reopening of the economy (Wielenga 2020).

The Central Government also launched a 7 billion USD Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan to provide work for over three months to returnee migrant laborers in six states (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Odisha) (PTI 2020b). The Central Government allotted 13.8 billion USD for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005[6] (MGNREGA), which protects the "Right to work" in rural India, to boost employment in villages (Agarwal and Srivas 2020). The government raised average daily wages of MGNREGA laborers from 2.44 USD to 2.70 USD (Shukla et al. 2021) and also increased the minimum number of working days from 100 to 150 days (Special Correspondent 2021). The demand for jobs under MGNREGA saw a sharp rise as around 20 million people requested for work in April 2020 (Sharma 2021). The number is the highest since the launch of the scheme in 2006. One major limitation of MGNREGA scheme is that it leaves out the poor population in towns and urban areas, so for them the government tend to provide another package. An economic package of 0.6 billion USD to provide a Special Credit Facility for Street Vendors (SCFSV) was also announced by the Central Government. The SCFSV scheme for street vendors is estimated to cover around 5 million street vendors (Agarwal and Srinivas 2020) which is a number based on 2011 Census data. By 2020, the numbers must have been significantly more.

For long-term benefits, the Central Government announced an affordable rental housing scheme under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana for migrant laborers and urban poor. The mentioned relief measures had been announced and carried out after a few days of lockdown and some were taken on the recommendation of the Supreme Court of India. However, after their announcement, planning and proper execution have been a major hurdle in front of states. There was no or minuscule central registry of migrant laborers, despite having Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Acts 1979 in place, which further derailed the PDS and cash transfer schemes of the governments (Venkataramanan 2020). The lack of literacy among laborers usually makes them unaware of their rights and the state's efforts to make them aware have not been enough; the labor inspectors who are assigned to monitor the implemen-

[6] The program aims to provide livelihood security in rural India by providing at least hundred days of employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Official Website for MGNREGA. Government of India. https://nrega.nic.in/Nregahome/MGNREGA_new/Nrega_home.aspx Accessed January 3, 2021.

tation of these laws rarely operate (Shah and Lerche 2020, 728). Thus, making the laws is the least beneficial for the labor class. The execution is always the toughest part of any law and if this is not done with strict monitoring, legislation could be of no use.

Further, in May 2020 as the lockdown restriction were relaxed, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government announced a 271 billion USD economic package under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan[7] to bring back the country's slumped economy out of the COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, state governments also carried several reforms to send relief to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and bring back their confidence in the Indian economy. However, in this process states took steps to abolish a few labor rights, which was again criticized by the labor groups, particularly the migrant laborers. The next section discusses the reforms and suspension of those labor rights.

7. Reforms and suspension of labor rights

In 1991, India moved from being a planned economy to a capitalist and free market economy. But the reforms made then were largely in the product and service sectors, not in the factory market. After 2014, under the leadership of Narendra Modi (2014–2019), India has brought reforms into its labor laws. To make laws simpler and easily executable, 44 Union laws have been condensed into four laws:

1. The Code on Wages, 2019
2. The Industrial Relations Code, 2019
3. The Occupation Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019
4. Code on Social Security, 2019

The above-mentioned four new laws intend to bring revolution in the factory and labor market. The new laws include provisions like paid leave with medical care which will apply to all laborers, irrespective of working as full-timers, part-timers, casual, contractual, domestic, or home-based employees (Vanamali 2021). The reforms in laws attempt to bring the unorganized sectors and the informal economy in line with the organized sectors. They also attempt to eliminate the segmentation of the labor market and bring uniformity in wages and other benefits for working groups including migrant laborers. Firstly, to catch the interest of industrialists, the laws provide powers to employers where they do not need the government's permission for shutting down companies and firing less than 300 employees (Vanamali 2021). Earlier, the cap used to be at a hundred employees. It

[7] Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan means Self-reliant India Campaign. The campaign aimed to make India and its citizen independent and self-reliant. The campaign is focused on India's economy, infrastructure, system, vibrant democracy, and demand.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

can be inferred that the move might send relief to SMEs which are facing a crisis and are on the verge of closing. However, from an employees' point of view, the provision will bring unfair outcomes for them.

Under The Code on Wages, 2019, seasonal laborers will be given a gratuity of pay equal to their seven days of work (Ministry of Law and Justice 2020). The point here is, as the government stresses that the new laws would safeguard both employers and employees, it forgets that 90% of India's workforce including migrant laborers work in informal sectors (Sharma 2020) where implementation of these laws has become a herculean task. The implementation of The Code on Wages, 2019, has been postponed from April 1, 2021, till further notice as states were not prepared with their Plan of Action (PoA). India's labor law reforms come under the concurrent list, so finally, states will decide how to implement them according to their ground situations.

At the provincial level, states have extended working hours in industries from 8 to 12, though some states like Punjab have also doubled pay for extra hour work (Krar 2020). Some states suspended labor rights amid the pandemic. The rationale behind the suspension is that labor rights are inflexible and demotivating for investors. In May 2020, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan suspended labor laws with few exemptions for three years, while the state of Gujarat suspended them for 120 days (Ghose 2020).[8] States like Assam introduced fixed-term employment (all became contractual laborers). According to the law, labor rights can only be suspended during the case of external aggression or a war-like situation, and not during a pandemic (Gowda 2020). However, due to its weak enforcement, the law seems to do little to stop the states from suspending labor rights. SMEs indeed need the support of the governments to pay their laborers well and survive during hard times. However, further investigation is needed to know whether Indian investors have invested their money back in the country's economy after receiving relaxation from the government or invested abroad.

India is a developing country with the largest young and working age population in the world. Every year, around 12 million youths are added to the country's workforce (Sarkar 2021). Private sectors play a vital role in providing opportunities to fresh young talents and subsuming them in the nation's economy. India has some huge private sectors enterprises that contribute around two-thirds of the country's GDP (Banerjee 2019). Narendra Modi's government aims to strengthen the private sector because they believe that "asset monetization and privatization will empower Indian citizens, enhance India's infrastructure, and increase economic efficiency" (Pathania 2021). However, at the same time,

[8] Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1976, Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment 7 and Condition of Service) Act, 1996, and workers security provision are exempted.

the government should also take care of those who are invisible but omnipresent in every sector that contributes to the country's economy. An affirmative reform means relaxation for industrialists and investors, at the same time providing more wages and better working conditions for the employees. Governments must play the role of mediator between industrialists and employees. It needs to maintain a balance between capital and labor. So far, the migrant laborers have not received many benefits from the policy change. Instead, it looks like they will be exploited more in the name of crisis management and the need to revive the economy at the earliest. The extension of daily working time from 8 hours to 12 hours would severely impact the health of factory laborers. Experts note that the government's steps are largely focused on boosting the supply side (Krar 2020). However, there is an urgent need to increase the demand side as well, for which India's poorest need to have cash in their hands. Without an increase in demand and people's purchasing capacity, an economy like India could never recover after the crisis. Moreover, with less pay and harsh working and living conditions, India's poor will be hapless.

8. Bihar: A case study

Bihar is one of the states which saw the largest reverse migration during the pandemic-induced national lockdown in 2020. An estimate shows that 14.3% of the more than 10.5 million returned migrants were Bihari migrant laborers (Parth 2020). The state, located in the Indo-Gangetic belt, has vast fertile lands and is rich in mineral resources. Still, more than 50% of households in Bihar are exposed to migration (Mishra 2020). People from Bihar struggle to find jobs with decent pay in their home state. Bihar, a state once known for its learning culture and as the center of power in ancient India, is currently one of the poorest states and ranks lowest on HDI (0.576). In terms of population (refer to Table 3), Bihar ranks the third most populated state of India and has the second-highest population density. The state's 33.73% population lives below the poverty line, which is again higher than the national average of 21.92%. Under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India is aiming to eradicate poverty in the country by 2030. But, if the states like Bihar are not developed, the country will remain a poor developing country. Recent reports flesh out that 58% of the population of Bihar is under the age of 25, and 11.3% population lives in urban areas, which is the second lowest in India (Varma 2015). The state's literacy rate in the state is 63.82%, ranking third last in India, and 13.8% lower than the national average of 77.7%.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

Table 3: Bihar data chart

Total area	94,163 km^2
Total population (2011)	104,099,452
Population density (2011)	1,102 / km^2
GDP (2019–2020)	USD 86 billion
Per capita income (2020–2021)	USD 661
Human development index (2018)	0.576
Literacy (2011)	63.82%
Sex ratio (2011)	918 ♀ / 1,000 ♂
Population below poverty line	33.73%
Industrial area (2021)	68
State certified startups (2021)	76

Source: Census Data (2011), Department of Industries, Government of Bihar (2021)

There are a set of issues, the "4Ps" – Population, Politics, Policies, and Partition – which the author believes led to the large-scale migration from Bihar. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Bihar is the third most populous state in India and its population density is the second highest in the country. Due to the lack of jobs and ample supply of laborers, the people in Bihar could not get good wages. Natural calamities like floods in the northern region and drought in the southern districts of the state, further affects employment generation. Secondly, the feudalistic approach of the dominated class complicates the social and economic equilibrium in the state. Bihar's politics is also highly divisive and the voters favor candidates from their own caste and class. The high rate of corruption is another serious issue in Bihar (Bhalero 2019). Such incidences dilute the vision of achieving economic development and leaves Bihar behind on several economic parameters.

Thirdly, policies like Freight Equalization Policy (1950–1993), which said that one can set up factories anywhere in the country and the raw materials would be provided by the government at a subsidized rate or almost at the same price where the raw materials are coming from, proved to be unfair for mineral-rich states like Bihar (Krishna 2017). The policy laid big blow to industries like the sugar industry, Morton chocolate industry, and the textile industries in Bihar. Gradually, some of them were closed and some shifted to the coastal states. Lastly, on November 15, 2000, a state of Jharkhand was formed from a relatively underdeveloped southern part of Bihar. However, Jharkhand has rich natural resources and today is one of the leading suppliers of minerals in India. The state was the hub of mining industries in pre-partitioned Bihar that employed a lot of Bihari laborers. Therefore, one can see how the "4Ps" led to the lack of economic opportunities, education, and a better lifestyle in Bihar. Consequently, people from Bihar started migrating

to other economically well-performing states. The migration is also cost the state its economic growth.

8.1 Theoretical analysis

Bihar's migration fits well in the example of neoclassical migration and dual/segmented labor market theory. As elaborated is the theoretical section, the neoclassical migration theory stresses that the internal migration occurs in the process of economic development, due to the "geographical differences in the supply of and demand of labor" (Massey et al. 1993, 433). The theory also says that migrants are the sole rational decision-makers and they consider long-term monetary benefits over the short-term cost of relocation. Bihar is India's poorest state (Shillong Times Reporter 2021), with an unemployment rate of 7.2%, which is higher than the national level of 6.1% (Surya 2020, 1). Bihar has huge economic disparity in comparison to other rich Indian states. The state's economy is still largely dependent on agriculture and traditional sectors, like handloom, art and craft industries, etc. Both agriculture and traditional sectors employ massive manpower, however, not at a satisfactory rate. Moreover, the agriculture sector is gradually becoming non-productive with low yields (Haq 2020). Increasing landlessness and lack of the state's financial support are other reasons for Bihari laborers to leave agriculture (Kumar and Kumar 2020). The traditional sectors do not generate a desirable profit either. Therefore, with the higher unemployment rate and weak economic conditions at home state, Bihari laborers choose to work in rich Indian states, which need cheap laborers to run their big factories and industries, for economic benefits. Apart from economic disparity, Bihar has a highly patriarchal society, and given the low literacy rate among women, male laborers are the sole rational actors behind making decision of migrating to other states for work. Lastly, they believe that their short-term hardship would yield benefits in the long run. Therefore, it can be said that all three silent features of neoclassical migration theory explain the migration in Bihar.

Looking from the dual/segmented labor market theory, Bihar has the largest number of laborers employed in informal sectors (GoI 2020), reported by Periodic Labor Force Surveys of 2017–2018 and 2018–2019. They are put into unskilled or semi-skilled jobs that are usually low-paid, have no job security, and are left by the local labor force (Ghosh, Chaudhary, and Noronha 2021). From a gender perspective, the percentage of Bihari women laborer participation in the total workforce is also lower than the other states (Mitra and Rajput 2020). In addition, they are also paid less and preferred only in a few job sectors. They usually find employment in garment industries as tailors, take up jobs as maids, house helpers, cooks, etc. The other important fact is that Bihari migrant laborers are also looked down upon due to their state of origin.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

The following subsections explore the problems that surfaced in Bihar from the high-scale reverse migration during the COVID-19 crisis. The subsections also evaluate the Bihar state government response to the challenges of reverse migration and why Bihari laborers were again compelled to move to the cities which they once left in anger. I also explore whether the migrant laborers were able to make their anguish acknowledged by the ruling government by making their votes count in the state election that was held soon after the first wave.

8.2 Government's relief measures and reverse migration

The Bihar government had been announcing a number of relief measures since the reverse migration of its workforce started in April 2020. On the direction of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Bihar State Health Society (BSHS)[9] initiated a mental health program for migrant laborers (Sopam 2020). The program was conducted at the isolation and quarantine centers where the migrant laborers were kept upon their return. They were provided counseling, psychiatrist support, and basic medical treatment for mental health problems. Around 14,000 migrant workers had used the facility by July 18, 2020 (Sopam 2020).

Under Corona Sahayata (Corona Help) drive, the Bihar government has provided a one-time assistance of USD 13 to all migrant laborers who came from other states, provided the applicant proves his/her eligibility (Government of Bihar 2020). The money is not enough to sustain the monthly expenses, however, a family of three to four members could buy ration for two to three weeks with the amount. The amount was directed to be credited to migrant laborers' Jan Dhan Accounts.[10] According to government reports, 1,857,991 beneficiaries registered out of which 1,578,853 applications were accepted by the bank for this assistance program and 271,602 were rejected for various reasons (GoB 2020). The program has two major shortcomings that restricted many poor and uneducated migrant laborers from availing the benefits. Firstly, the applicant can apply for the Corona Sahayata fund only through online portals, and secondly, laborers younger than 18 years can not apply individually (GoB 2020). They can only use of the benefits if their bank accounts are registered in their parents' names, and they are included as minors. Thousands of laborers who are lacking smartphones/access to the Internet cannot avail the state's monetary relief.

[9] BSHS has been established as an institution which is in direct link with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MHRW), Government of India. It manages the funds receive from MHRW and organizes programs, training, meeting, conferences, policy review studies/surveys, workshops, and inter-state exchange visits. For more information, see: http://statehealthsocietybihar.org/aboutus.html.

[10] Jan Dhan Account is a special savings account with no minimum balance requirements. It is a benefit provided by Indian government to its citizens with low income.

The lockdown in India, which was announced on March 24, 2020 was initially expected to last three weeks. However, the crippling lockdown lasted until the May 31, 2020. As the lockdown duration increased, the amount of 13 USD proved to be insufficient. People were in desperate need of long-term support and solutions to their problems. People wanted jobs that could guarantee them food and money. Though Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, "It's the government's resolve, all returned migrant laborers will be provided employment in Bihar" (Kumar 2020), the administration could not meet the expectations of the returned laborers. Around 1.4 million Bihari laborers returned to their home state during the national lockdown in 2020 (Parta and Umesh 2020). The Center for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reports that the unemployment rate rose to 46.6% in April 2020 (Mehrotra and Roy 2020). Darbhanga, Madhubani, East Champaran, West Champaran, Motihari, Gaya are some of the districts in Bihar which received the maximum number of returning migrants. Migrants were returning to their traditional agriculture activities in the rural districts. However, the less availability of agricultural land and the low productivity did not keep the returned migrants for long. The state government started employing migrant laborers on May 27, 2020 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005. Those who completed their mandatory 14 days quarantine were eligible to take up the work. Unfortunately, not everyone who registered for work managed to get a job. According to People's Action for Employment Guarantee (PAEG) reports, 1.1 million MGNREGA job cards were issued in Bihar from April 1, 2020, to August 31, 2020 (Parta and Umesh 2020). However, only a few thousand (2,136) could get a hundred days of work as promised under the MGNERGA program (Zumbish 2020). This number is one of the lowest in the entire country. One of the reasons for low employment under MGNERGA program could be the floods in the northern districts of Bihar. The northern districts of Bihar like Darbhanga, Katihar, Saharsa, Samastipur are often flooded due to heavy monsoon rains during the months of May to August. As majority of the migrant workers returned during these months, it became difficult in employing them in agricultural jobs or in other construction jobs. In addition to above measures, Bihar government also conducted a skill analysis survey of 0.14 million Bihari laborers who came home because of reverse migration till May 17, 2020 (Thakur 2020). The survey has been conducted under the JEEViKA project initiative.[11] However, no data could be found regarding the number of migrants workers that could get employment under this program.

Facing poverty, unemployment, and flooding of their homes, the migrant workers had to borrow money, sometimes even from illegal private money lenders

[11] The initiative has been administered by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS), an autonomous body under the Department of Rural Development, Bihar. Official Website for JEEViKA, Government of Bihar: http://brlp.in/overview. Accessed May 17, 2021.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

at higher interest rates to survive. Although the Bihar Money Lending Act of 1974 prohibits illegal private money lending and requires registration for all private money lenders, the illegal borrowing of money increased in rural Bihar during the lockdown due to lack of law enforcement (Taskin and Yadav 2020). Finally, with no new investments in the state, private loans on high-interest, the shutdown, and slowdown of jobs in the already existing industry, migrant laborers were left with nothing but to march back to cities in the fall of 2020.

8.3 Bihari migrant laborers moving back to cities

Migrant laborers have been pledging to their families that they will never ever take the roads to *pardesh* again (Srivastava and Nagaraj 2020). However, every pledge does not meet the destiny. Because of the high-interest loans from local moneylenders and acquaintances, along with running out of savings, migrants were left with no other choice but to return to their workplaces in other states. The situation in their home state became even worse compared to the pre-pandemic period due to the economic slowdown. Although they did become an agenda for opposition political parties during the election times, nothing changed in reality. Migrants received no equal or better opportunities in their home states.

As mentioned earlier, India's high-income states are also the source of the labor force for Gulf countries, due to the pandemic those states have themselves seen a huge influx of domestic laborers returning from abroad (Parkin and Singh 2020). The states will obviously be prioritizing their own laborers returned from abroad, which could make the situation for low-skilled laborers from other states grim. In this highly competitive labor market, many migrant laborers decided to return to their previous jobs as soon as possible, even if they are paid less. According to a survey, only a few could manage to get reinstated on the pre-pandemic pay scale (Azim Premji Foundation 2021, 15). Adding more to this, employers in high-income states need the cheap workforce to re-start their industries and business, and for better or not, they did ask migrant laborers to come back and join the work. The contractors and employers were even willing to pay for the transportation of migrant laborers (Nahata 2020). According to research conducted by Azim Premji University in Bengaluru, the capital city of Karnataka state, 50% or more migrants (including migrants from Karnataka) left the city in the first few months of lockdown (Azim Premji Foundation 2021, 5). Around 18% of them returned after the opening of workplaces. Some of those who did not come back in the initial months of opening of the economy were planning to return by January 2021 (Azim Premji Foundation 2021, 5). Female migrant laborers suffer the most and are the last ones to join back the workforce due to the uncertainty of how and when the job will be made available to them, and on what severity scale the next wave of virus hits them.

8.4 Could Bihari migrant laborers speak?

Migrant laborers swing between their home state and target state to make ends meet. Gradually, their identity becomes less acknowledgeable at the former and unidentifiable at latter place. The state, politicians, and even the well-off middle-class population of India did not pay much heed to their existence despite knowing that without migrant labor, the whole system of urban places would have collapsed. To some extent, it did collapse when migrant laborers started moving back to their homes. As migrant laborers circulate from one state to another throughout the year, it becomes difficult for them to make a union or organize meetings against any unfair treatment they experience. So, is there any way for them to raise their voice? Probably through their votes.

In a democracy, everyone meeting the eligible age criterion, has power to vote. Usually, migrants are not able to cast their vote in state or national election because their voter IDs belongs to their state of domicile, i.e., their home state. Due to high transport costs and the fear of losing jobs, migrant laborers forgo their right to vote and thus lose their political voice (Rajasekaran 2019). However, during lockdown, as they were living in their home states, they choose to use their vote power.

Bihar conducted its state legislative assembly election in three phases from October 28, 2020 to November 7, 2020 (Election Commission of India 2020). The migrant labor crisis became a hot election campaign agenda. Compared to the 2015 poll, 29 districts out of 38 in Bihar saw more turnout of voters and all 29 districts had seen major reverse migration (Vishnoi 2020). In Bihar as well, migrant laborers used their vote power to show their anger against the ruling government. The election results shocked most people, as Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's party saw a sharp decline in its vote share and stood in the third position. However, Narendra Modi's party which is also in alliance with the Nitish Kumar's party, emerged as the second-largest party in Bihar (PTI 2020c). Surprisingly, the prominent opposition party (Rastra Janta Dal) that the people of Bihar had rejected for fifteen years because of the corruption of its leaders, emerged as the single largest party. The results showed that although migrant laborers might need to keep a low profile in other states, they raised their voices and made everyone, including the ruling regime, in their home state feel their presence and realize their pain.

9. Conclusion

According to its constitution, India is a democratic and socialist country. However, somewhere the question arises on the system that lacks sympathy towards its socially and economically disadvantaged population. The internal migration of laborers drives not only the economy of the big cities and rich states, but it also dares India to aim at becoming a global power. Migrant laborers who are

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

jobless or underpaid in their home states leap at the opportunities provided by the rich states. However, the expensive maintenance and irregular income compel circular and seasonal migrant laborers to keep their families at home, and travel between their origin state and workplace multiple times a year. Their hardships and laborious lifestyle have been invisible to the media and the general public till now, but, whether for good or bad, it became visible due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown from March 24 to May 31, 2020. The rising unemployment rate, especially for migrant laborers, shows that their conditions have deteriorated in the pandemic even after reopening of the economy. The chapter explains that when migrant laborers' employment avenues dwindled, they were left on their own. The relief measures provided by the government and civil societies were insufficient to help them. The case study of Bihar, a state with the second-highest rate of migration, shows that the economic disparities between the Indian states have widened. Despite having rich resources, Bihar could not capture and create sectors that could generate mass employment and help in reducing its rate of labor migration. Unequal migration of labor results in lack of skill in the origin state and burden on the destination states. The Bihar government needs to anticipate factors that push its people to migrate to other states and work in precarious conditions. The migrant labor receiving states need to anticipate that though the migrant laborers do not have a political voice in their system, but they also contribute to the states' economic development. Thus, destination states should consider the needs of migrant laborers and work for their development. They have the right to live a dignified life in their own country and should not become victims of nativism.

India is an emerging economy and a country full of opportunities. It will see more internal migration in the future as more rapid urbanization takes place and big cities are developed. The complexity of India's internal migration cobwebs cannot be solved in a single tenure of any government. The system must function well for decades. It must work with sincerity and vigor for the betterment of the labor class, and not just for rich and powerful people. In a federal set-up like India, the onus lies on both the central and state governments to establish a national network that reaches to the most vulnerable people of society, particularly the migrant laborers. India needs a separate and robust annual data collection system for migrant laborers. The years' old data is insufficient in handling relief package distributions. India needs to introspect, anticipate, make rules, and execute them properly. After all, if a democracy is to function, then its foundation should always be on the principle of "for the people, of the people, and by the people" in true letter and spirit. The chapter concludes that without any prior COVID-19 mitigation measures and proper communication with citizens, the draconian style lockdown of a nation with a 1.3 billion population wreaked havoc on its vulnerable citizens, particularly migrant laborers. Though, some reforms in labor

laws were made in the pandemic years, the state has to carefully monitor their implementation and try to take constant feedback from all stakeholders, because India need to learn from its mistakes and do a better job in future if faced with a similar situation again.

DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

References

Agarwal, Kabir, and Anuj Srivas. 2020. "How Much Will Sitharaman's Plan for Migrant Laborers and Farmers Really Help?" *The Wire*, May 15, 2020. https://thewire.in/economy/nirmala-sitharaman-migrant-laborers-farmers.

Anant, T. C. A., Rana Hasan, Prabhu Mohapatra, Rayaprolu Nagaraj, and S. K. Sasikumar. 2006. "Labor Markets in India: Issues and Perspectives." In *Labor Markets in Asia*, edited by Jesus Felipe and Rana Hasan, 205–300. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Andrews, M. A., Binu Areekal, K. R. Rajesh, Jijith Krishnan, R. Suryakala, Biju Krishnan, C. P. Muraly, and P. V. Santhosh. 2020. "First Confirmed Case of COVID-19 Infection in India: A Case Report." *The Indian journal of medical research* 151, no. 5: 490–492. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijmr.IJMR_2131_20.

Arango, Joaquin. 2000. "Explaining Migration: A Critical View." *International Social Science Journal* 52, no. 165: 283–296. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2451.00259.

Azim Premji Foundation. 2021. "Impact of COVID-19 on Livelihoods of Informal Sector Laborers and Vulnerable Groups in Bengaluru: A View from the Ground." Accessed May 15, 2021. https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/pdf/COVID19-Impact-on-Informal-Sector-Bengaluru.pdf.

Banerjee, Chandrajit. 2019. "What the Private Sector Can Do for India's Economic Growth." *World Economic Forum*, October 1, 2019. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/10/private-sector-investment-in-india.

Bezanson, Kate, and Meg Luxton, eds. 2006. *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-Liberalism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Bhattacharya, Tithi. 2013. "What Is Social Reproduction Theory?" *Socialist Worker*, September 10, 2013. https://socialistworker.org/2013/09/10/what-is-social-reproduction-theory.

Clark, LaToya Baldwin, and Prudence L. Carter. 2012. "Social Reproduction." In *Encyclopaedia of Diversity in Education*, edited by James Albert Banks, 2011–2012. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Dutta, Anisha. 2020. "Railway Protection Force Reports 80 Deaths on Shramik Trains." *Hindustan Times*, May 30, 2020. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/railway-protection-force-reports-80-deaths-on-shramik-trains/story-psJl3EenY4B0uUYMRvkChL.html.

Express News Service. 2020. "1,500 Buses Bring Back Workers: You Are Our Responsibility, Says UP CM." *The Indian Express*, March 30, 2020. https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/lucknow/1500-buses-bring-back-workers-you-are-our-responsibility-says-up-cm-6338612.

Express News Service. 2021. "34 States/UTs Now Implementing Ration Card Scheme: Govt." *The Indian Express*, August 28, 2021. https://indianexpress.com/article/india/one-nation-one-ration-card-scheme-states-uts-7475799.

Ghose, Debobrat. 2020. "Suspension of Labor Laws by UP, MP, Gujarat Crushing Workers' Rights, Says Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh National General Secy Virjesh Upadhyay." *Firstpost*, May 21, 2020. https://www.firstpost.com/health/suspension-of-labor-laws-by-up-mp-gujarat-crushing-workers-rights-says-bharatiya-mazdoor-sangh-national-general-secy-virjesh-upadhyay-8390871.html.

Ghosh, Amber Kumar, Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, and Arlene Noronha. 2021. "Need for a Holistic Perspective towards India's Migrant Workers." *Observer Research Foundation*, September 28, 2021. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/need-for-a-holistic-perspective-towards-indias-migrant-workers.

Government of Bihar (GoB). 2020. "Apada Sampurti." *Portal for Disaster Compensation Disbursement*. Accessed May 20, 2021. https://aapda.bih.nic.in.

Government of Bihar (GoB). 2021. "Current Activity." *Department of Industries*. Accessed May 20, 2021. http://www.startup.bihar.gov.in/Current_Activity.aspx.

Government of India (GoI). 2001. "Data Highlight- D1, D2 &D3." *Registrar General of India, Office of the RGI and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs*. Accessed May 5, 2021. https://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/migrations.aspx.

Government of India (GoI). 2011. "Data Highlight – D3 & D4 Series." *Registrar General of India, Office of the RGI and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs*. Accessed May 5, 2021. https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/migration.html.

Government of India (GoI). 2020. "Periodic Labor Force Surveys." *Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation*. Accessed September 21, 2021. http://mospi.nic.in/Periodic-Labor-Surveys.

Government of India (GoI). 2021. "Economic Survey 2020–2021." *Ministry of Finance*. Vol. 1. Accessed May 20, 2021. https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/.

Gowda, V. Gopala. 2020. "Dilution of Labor Laws is Unconstitutional." *The Indian Express*, June 20, 2020. https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2020/jun/20/dilution-of-labor-laws-is-unconstitutional-2158931.html.

Gyam, Arvind. 2016. "Bihar Budget Analysis 2016–17." *PRS Legislative Research*, March 2, 2016. https://prsindia.org/files/budget/budget_state/bihar/2016/Bihar%20Budget%20Analysis%202016-17.pdf.

Haq, Zia. 2020. "Reforms Alone Can't Raise Farm Growth, Bihar Example Shows." *Hindustan Times*, October 10, 2020. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/reforms-alone-can-t-raise-farm-growth-bihar-example-shows/story-MpXftOn8Jbq7mw7dkJyOrN.html.

HW Staffs. 2020. "40 Shramik Trains Lost Their Way, Railways Busy Providing Clarification." *HW News*, May 24, 2020. https://hwnews.in/news/national-

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

news/40-shramik-trains-lost-way-railways-busy-providing-clarification/137847?infinitescroll=1.

Kar, Prashant. 2020. "Several States Extend Working Hours from 8 to 12 Hours in Factories." *The Economic Times*, April 24, 2020. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/states-extend-working-hours-from-8-to-12-hours-in-factories/articleshow/75342462.cms.

Kofman, Eleonore, and Parvati Raghuram. 2015. *Gendered Migrations and Global Social Reproduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Krishna, Anirudh, and Emily Rains. 2020. "The Virus Has Exposed India's Dickensian Urbanisation." *Livemint*, October 21, 2020. https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/the-virus-has-exposed-india-s-dickensian-urbanization-11603292651315.html.

Krishna, Raj Atul. 2017. "Freight Equalization Hit Bihar growth, Says Prez." *Hindustan Times*, March 24, 2017. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/freight-equalization-hit-bihar-growth-says-prez/story-eF9Dyi3JR1rXF1NDrwJ7oL.html.

Kumar, Avinash, and Manish Kumar. 2020. "Marginalised Migrants and Bihar as an Area of Origin." *Economic and Political Weekly* 55, no. 24 (June): 24.

Kumar, Krishan, Aseem Mehra, Swapnajeet Sahoo, Ritu Nehra, and Sandeep Grover. 2020. "The Psychological Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdown on the Migrant Workers: A Cross-Sectional Survey." *Asian Journal Psychiatry* 53, October: 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102252.

Kumar, Madan. 2020. "All Returned Laborers Will Be Provided Employment in Bihar, Says Nitish Kumar." *The Times of India*, May 23, 2020. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/all-returned-workers-will-be-provided-employment-in-bihar-says-nitish-kumar/articleshow/75924967.cms.

Kumar, Madan. 2021. "Bihar: More Than 8.10 Lakh People Provided Free Meals at Community Kitchens in Last Two Weeks." *The Times of India*, May 19, 2021. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/bihar-more-than-8-10-lakh-people-provided-free-meals-at-community-kitchens-in-last-two-weeks/articleshow/82775734.cms.

Massey, Douglas Steven, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, and J. Edward Taylor. 1993. "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal." *Population and development review* 19, no. 3: 431–466. https://doi.org/10.2307/2938462.

Mehrotra, Santosh, and Baikunth Roy. 2020. "Will Bihar's Economy Rise to the Reverse Migration Challenge?" *The Wire*, June 23, 2020. https://thewire.in/labor/bihar-economy-reverse-migration-challenge.

Ministry of Education. 2021. "Steps Taken by the Government to Ensure Equal Access to Education." *Press Information Bureau*. Accessed September 18, 2021. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1737692.

Ministry of Home Affairs. 2020. "On Directions of the Prime Minister, Home Ministry Approves Release of Rs 11,092 Crores Under State Disaster Risk Management Fund to All States." *Press Information Bureau*. Accessed January 4, 2022. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1610756.

Ministry of Law and Justice. 2020. "The Code on Social Security, 2020." *Legislative Department*. Accessed September 18, 2021. https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/SS_Code_Gazette.pdf.

Mishra, B. K. 2020. "50% of Bihar Households Exposed to Migration: Study." *The Times of India*, February 15, 2020. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/half-of-households-in-bihar-exposed-to-migration-study/articleshow/74141815.cms.

Mishra, Deepak K. 2021. "Migrant Labour During the Pandemic: A Political Economy Perspective." *The Indian Economic Journal* 69, no. 3: 410–424. https://doi.org/10.1177/00194662211021209.

Mishra, Manish Chandra. 2020. "Bihar's Rs 1,000 Relief Not Reaching Broke & Hungry Migrants." *India Spend*, May 27, 2020. https://www.indiaspend.com/bihars-rs-1000-relief-not-reaching-broke-hungry-migrants.

Mitra, Rohini, Chitra Rawat, and Nidhi Menon. 2021."Budget Acknowledges Migrant Distress but Falls Short in Key Areas." *India Spend*, February 4, 2021. https://www.indiaspend.com/budget/budget-acknowledges-migrant-distress-but-falls-short-in-key-areas-722383.

Mitra, Sona, and Hiya Singh Rajput. 2020. "Women's Workforce Participation in India (Bihar)." *IWWAGE*, March. https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Bihar-Factsheet-3.pdf.

Nahata, Pallavi. 2020. "For India's Migrant Workers, All Roads Lead Back to Cities." *BloombergQuint*, October 19, 2020. https://www.bloombergquint.com/business/for-indias-migrant-workers-all-roads-lead-back-to-cities.

Pandey, Geeta. 2020. "Coronavirus in India: Desperate Migrant Workers Trapped in Lockdown." *BBC*, April 22, 2020. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52360757.

Pandey, Neelam. 2020. "Mahabharata War Won in 18 Days, but Fight Against Coronavirus Will Take 21 Days, Says Modi." *The Print*, March 25, 2020. https://theprint.in/india/mahabharata-war-won-in-18-days-but-fight-against-coronavirus-will-take-21-days-says-modi/388267.

Parth, M. N. 2020. "No Jobs in Villages, Bihar's Migrants Are Returning to Cities." *India Spend*, October 18, 2020. https://www.indiaspend.com/no-jobs-in-villages-bihars-migrants-are-returning-to-cities.

Parth, M. N., and Umesh Kumar Ray. 2020. "Bihar's Migrant Workers Are Returning to Cities as Rural Employment Schemes Fall Short." *Scroll.in*, October 20, 2020. https://scroll.in/article/976175/bihars-migrant-workers-are-returning-to-cities-as-rural-employment-schemes-fall-short.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

Patel, Champa. 2020. "COVID-19: The Hidden Majority in India's Migration Crisis." *Chatham House*, July 13, 2020. Accessed January 12, 2021. https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/07/covid-19-hidden-majority-indias-migration-crisis.

Pathania, Ramesh. 2021. "India is Making the Right Moves with its Mega Privatization Plan." *Livemint*, April 22, 2021. https://www.livemint.com/opinion/columns/india-is-making-the-right-moves-with-its-mega-privatization-plan-11619028273985.html.

Paul, Samuel, and Kala Seetharam Sridhar. 2015. *The Paradox of India's North–South Divide: Lessons from the States and Regions*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

PTI. 2018. "Majority of Workers Earn Less Than Rs 10,000 Per Month, Says Report." *Business Standard*, September 26, 2018. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/majority-of-workers-earn-less-than-rs-10-000-per-month-says-report-118092501031_1.html.

PTI. 2020a. "Increase Employment Limit Under MGNREGA from 100 to 200 Days: Rajasthan CM to PM." *Livemint*, June 20, 2020. https://www.livemint.com/news/india/increase-employment-limit-under-mgnrega-from-100-to-200-days-rajasthan-cm-to-pm-11592668699475.html.

PTI. 2020b. "India Placed 72nd on Global List with Average Monthly Wage of Rs 32,800: Report." *The Economist Times*, August 28, 2020. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-placed-72nd-on-global-list-with-average-monthly-wage-of-rs-32800-report/articleshow/77806437.cms?from=mdr.

PTI. 2020c. "Bihar Elections: RJD Emerges Single Largest Party but NDA Maintains Slender Lead." *The Tribune*, November 11, 2020. https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/bihar-elections-rjd-emerges-single-largest-party-but-nda-maintains-slender-lead-168733.

Rajan, S. Irudaya, P. Sivakumar, and Aditya Srinivasan. 2020. "The COVID-19 Pandemic and Internal Labor Migration in India: A 'Crisis of Mobility.'" *The Indian Journal of Labor Economics*, no. 63: 1021–1039. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-020-00293-8.

Rajasekaran, R. K. 2019. "High Traveling Cost, Pay Loss Force Migrant Workers to Skip Voting." *The Times of India*, April 18, 2019. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/coimbatore/high-travelling-cost-pay-loss-force-migrant-workers-to-skip-voting/articleshow/68929715.cms.

Ravenstein, Ernest George. 1889. "The Laws of Migration." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 52, no. 2: 241–301. https://doi.org/10.2307/2979181.

Rawat, Chitra, Rohini Mitra, and Priyansha Singh. 2020. "How States Fare in Migrant Policy Index: Kerala on Top, Delhi Near Bottom." *Business Standard*, November 10, 2020. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/how-states-fare-in-migrant-policy-index-kerala-on-top-delhi-near-bottom-120111000539_1.html.

Reporters Without Borders. 2020. "2020 World Press Freedom Index." *RSF*. Accessed May 7, 2021. https://rsf.org/en/ranking.

Sarkar, Shankhyaneel. 2021. "India Adding 12 Million People to Working Population Every Year: Harsh Vardhan." *Hindustan Times*, February 21, 2021. https://www.hindustantimes.com/health/india-adding-12-million-people-to-working-population-every-year-harsh-vardhan-101613884150950.html.

Sengupta, Sohini, and Manish K. Jha. 2020. "Social Policy, COVID-19 and Impoverished Migrants: Challenges and Prospects in Locked Down India." *The International Journal of Community and Social Development* 2, no. 2: 152–172. https://doi.org/10.1177/2516602620933715.

Shah, Vinod. 2021. "Business and Investment Opportunities in Railway Infrastructure in India." *Urban Transport News*, March 13, 2021. https://www.urbantransportnews.com/article/business-and-investment-opportunities-in-railway-infrastructure-sector-in-india.

Shah, Alpa, and Jens Lerche. 2020. "Migration and the Invisible Economies of Care: Production, Social Reproduction and Seasonal Migrant Labor in India." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 45, no. 4: 719–734. https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12401.

Sharma, Harikishan. 2021. "Explained: Ration Card Reform, So Far." *The Indian Express*, July 6, 2021. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/one-nation-one-ration-card-benefits-implementation-supreme-court-modi-govt-7381857.

Sharma, Yogitha Seth. 2021. "Demand for work surges 89% under MGNREGA in April." *The Economic Times*, April 30, 2021. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/demand-for-work-surges-89-under-mgnrega-in-april/articleshow/82315979.cms?from=mdr.

Sharma, Yogitha Seth. 2020. "National Database of Workers in Informal Sector in the Works." *The Economic Times*, January 19, 2020. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/national-database-of-workers-in-informal-sector-in-the-works/articleshow/73394732.cms?from=mdr.

Sheetal, Bhalero. 2019. "This Is the Most Corrupt State in India: 78% Respondents Used Bribe to Get Work Done (India Corruption Survey 2019)." *Trak.in*, November 20, 2019. https://trak.in/tags/business/2019/11/30/this-is-the-most-corrupt-state-in-india-78-respondents-used-bribe-to-get-work-done-india-corruption-survey-2019.

Shillong Times Reporter. 2021. "Meghalaya Fifth-Poorest State in India: NITI Aayog report." *The Shillong Times*, November 21, 2021. https://theshillongtimes.com/2021/11/27/meghalaya-fifth-poorest-state-in-india-niti-aayog-report.

Shukla, Kritika, Mohak Srivastava, and Vedika Tibrewala. 2021. "Did MGNREGA Mitigate the Loss in Income and Unemployment Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic?" *Microwave Consulting*, May 28, 2021. https://www.microsave.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02

net/2021/05/28/did-mgnrega-mitigate-the-loss-in-income-and-unemployment-caused-by-the-covid-19-pandemic.

Sopam, Reena. 2020. "In Bihar, 14,000 Migrants Seek Counselling to Overcome Lockdown Blues." *Hindustan Times*, July 18, 2020. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/in-bihar-14-000-migrants-seek-counselling-to-overcome-lockdown-blues/story-jxQmhahb6CU0gpqKN5jjkL.html.

Special Correspondent. 2021. "Guaranteed Man-Days Under MGNREGA Increased to 150." *The Hindu*, November 21, 2021. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/guaranteed-man-days-under-mgnrega-increased-to-150/article37604245.ece.

Srivastava, Ravi. 2019. "Emerging Dynamics of Labor Market Inequality in India: Migration, Informality, Segmentation and Social Discrimination." *The Indian Journal of Labor Economics* 62, no. 2: 147–171. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-019-00178-5.

Srivastva, Roli, and Anuradha Nagaraj. 2020. "No Way Back: Indian Laborers Shun City Jobs After Lockdown Ordeal." *Reuters*, May 27, 2020. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-india-migrants-trf/no-way-back-indian-laborers-shun-city-jobs-after-lockdown-ordeal-idUSKBN234054.

Srivastva, Roli, and Anuradha Nagaraj. 2020. "'I Will Never Come Back': Many Indian Migrant Workers Refuse to Return to Cities Post Lockdown." *Scroll.in*, May 30, 2020. https://scroll.in/article/963251/i-will-never-come-back-many-indian-migrant-workers-refuse-to-return-to-cities-post-lockdown.

Surya, Saket. 2020. "Bihar Budget Analysis 2020–21." *PRS Legislative Research*, March 6, 2020. https://prsindia.org/budgets/states/bihar-budget-analysis-2020-21.

Taskin, Bismee, and Jyoti Yadav. 2020. "In Bihar, Reverse Migration is Forcing These Village Women into Another Crisis — Debt." *The Print*, May 23, 2020. https://theprint.in/india/in-bihar-reverse-migration-is-forcing-these-village-women-into-another-crisis-debt/427441/.

Telegraph News. 2020. "How States Dithered to Help Migrant Workers." *The Telegraph Online*, April 20, 2020. https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/coronavirus-how-states-dithered-to-help-migrant-workers-during-covid-19-lockdown/cid/1766566.

Thakur, Rajesh Kumar. 2020. "Bihar Government Starts Skill Survey of Returning Migrant Workers Amid COVID-19 Lockdown." *The Indian Express*, May 17, 2020. https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/may/16/bihar-government-starts-skill-survey-of-returning-migrant-workers-amid-covid-19-lockdown-2144124.html.

The Wire Staff. 2020. "Without Food for Days and in Searing Heat, Migrants Die on Shramik Special Trains." *The Wire*, May 27, 2020. https://thewire.in/labor/without-food-for-days-and-in-searing-heat-migrants-die-on-shramik-special-trains.

Todaro, Michael P. 1980. "Internal Migration in Developing Countries: A Survey." In *Population and Economic Change in Developing Countries*, edited by Richard A. Easterlin, 361–402. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tripati, Dhirendra. 2020. "Migrants to Get 5kg Free Foodgrain for 2 Months, 1 Nation, 1 Ration Card Soon." *Livemint*, May 14, 2020. https://www.livemint.com/news/india/migrant-workers-to-get-5-kg-free-foodgrain-supply-for-2-months-11589451324489.html.

Tyagi, Malvika. 2020. "How Much Do We Really Know About the Migrants Who Shuttle Between Bharat and India?" *The Wire*, August 5, 2020. https://thewire.in/labour/india-migrant-workers-covid-19-crisis-socio-economic-status.

Vanamali, Krishna Veera. 2021. "Four Labour Codes That Everyone is Talking About." *Business Standard*, December 29, 2021. https://www.business-standard.com/podcast/current-affairs/four-labour-codes-that-everyone-is-talking-about-121122900040_1.html.

Varma, Subodh. 2015. "Bihar Election: BJP's Campaign Found No Resonance in Village." *The Times of India*, November 11, 2015. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/elections/bihar-elections-2015/news/Bihar-election-BJPs-campaign-found-no-resonance-in-villages/articleshow/49742959.cms.

Venkataramanan, Krishnamurthy. 2020. "Coronavirus Lockdown: How Can Inter-State Laborers Be Protected?" *The Hindu*, May 10, 2020. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-lockdown-how-can-inter-state-laborers-be-protected/article31546299.ece.

Vishnoi, Anubhuti. 2020. "Bihar Elections: Higher Voting in Districts with More Migrants." *The Economic Times*, November 4, 2020. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/elections/assembly-elections/bihar/bihar-elections-higher-voting-in-districts-with-more-migrants/articleshow/79032640.cms?from=mdr.

Wallach, Omri. 2020. "These 3D Maps Show the World's Population Clusters Like You've Never Seen Them." *World Economic Forum*, August 27, 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/3d-mapping-global-population-density.

Wielenga, Karuna Dietrich. 2020. "'You Can't Go Back': Migrant Workers Told in Tamil Nadu." *The Wire*, May 9, 2020. https://thewire.in/labor/you-cant-go-back-migrant-workers-in-tamil-nadu.

World Bank. 2020. "Labor Force, Total-India." *World Bank*. Accessed October 15, 2021. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?locations=IN.

Zumbish. 2020. "How Nitish Kumar's Plans to Create Jobs Before Bihar Polls Failed." *The Caravan*, November 1, 2020. https://caravanmagazine.in/labor/how-nitish-kumars-plans-to-create-jobs-before-bihar-polls-failed.

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.02