

SOCIAL ACTION

A Quarterly Review of Social Trends

Labour Migration and Economic Development

- **Cities as Exclusionary Zones: Labour Migration and Creation of Precarious, Unidentifiable & Isolated Community of Workers in Gurgaon**
Archana Prasad
- **Indian Labour Migration to Gulf Countries: Development and Distress**
Trilok Chandan Goud & Rajesh Kumar Sinha
- **Labour Migration and Exclusion: India's experience during COVID-19 Pandemic**
Tattwamasi Paltasingh & Prakash Bhue
- **Waves of Reverse Migration in the times of COVID-19: A Case Study of Uttar Pradesh**
Roli Misra, Shivani Tewari & Nidhi Tewari
- **Migrant Labour, Informal Economy & COVID-19 Pandemic: Narratives on Choice between Life and Livelihood**
Sangeeta Krishna
- **Labour In-Migration and the Production of the New Subaltern in Kerala**
Saji P. Jacob & Prasad R.
- **MGNREGS as a Safety-Net: Reflections in the Context of Economic Crisis and COVID-19**
Andrew Michael S.
- **Domestic Workers and Roles of Social Institutions: The Indian Context**
Amir Jafar

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July-September 2021

(Last date to receive articles : 15 May 2021)

Quality Education and Building Social Capital

October-December 2021

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Public Health and Wellbeing

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Labour Migration and Economic Development

During the last three decades, since neo-liberal economic policies were introduced in India, there has been a significant increase in the number of people migrating in search of employment from the more backward northern and eastern States to the more prosperous western and southern States in India. A vast majority of the migrant workers are engaged in informal and casual labour in economic activities, such as textiles, construction, stone quarries and mines, brick-kilns, small-scale industry, fish and prawn processing, hotels, restaurants, street vending, domestic work, security services, sanitation workers, etc. They not only contribute in fueling economic activity in the country, but also boosts rural economy through the remittances they send back home. It is estimated that there are about 100 million migrant workers who contribute about 10 per cent of India's GDP. However, due to absence of data on migrant workers, they remained invisible to policy makers. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden complete lockdown of the entire nation in March 2020 to contain the spread of the virus, resulted in a monumental humanitarian crisis with millions of migrant workers walking or clinging to any available means of transport to return back home. The Government was able to help over 10 million people return home through special *Shramik* trains introduced for over three months. The plight of millions of stranded migrants and their long arduous journeys back home shook the conscience of the nation and firmly established the need for governments and policy makers to address the issues faced by these invisible and voiceless domestic migrant workers. In addition, there are millions of Indian nationals working in different countries in the world, a large proportion of them are in the Gulf countries. They send remittances to their families back home fueling the local economy. However, during the pandemic they were stranded in their destination countries and had to be brought back to India through the '*Vande Bharat*' mission, which was the largest repatriation of people in the world. International migrants and domestic migrants engaged in formal employment may be able to withstand economic shocks caused by the pandemic, but greater attention is needed from policy makers to help migrants in the informal economy to survive during times of national disasters and economic crises. There are many factors that have contributed to informal migrants remaining invisible to policy makers. Primarily, these migrants belong to socially disadvantaged sections of society, such as Dalits

and tribals, coming from rural areas of backward regions of the country. In a country, where there is stark inequality and development is uneven, people migrate from regions with a low wage rate to regions with a higher wage rate. Besides, migrants are often treated as ‘outsiders’ and blamed for all evils that plague society in the place of destination. They are often unable to benefit from any social welfare schemes as their identity documents issued in their home state is not recognized in the destination state. Dalit and tribal migrant workers are the worst affected due to the non-portability of their identity documents and certificates. In addition, the only law on migrant workers, known as Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act 1979, is so poorly implemented that hardly any migrant workers benefit from this law or other labour laws. Finally, there is no concrete data on migrant workers in India with the Government or policy makers and so it is difficult to address the issues they face. During the last year, the Government has initiated the process of collecting data on migrant workers and has introduced the ‘One Nation One Ration’ scheme to ensure the portability of ration cards across the country. However, a lot more needs to be done in terms of a robust social security system in India that guarantees universal access to education, healthcare, housing, welfare benefits, insurance, pensions, credit, public distribution system, employment and even unemployment benefits. Pan-India recognition of identity documents of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will help migrant workers to access their rights and entitlements in the destination state. Finally, a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship and employment-oriented skill development in agricultural and non-agricultural trades will help migrant workers to be gainfully employed and contribute to the economy in the place of destination.

This issue of *Social Action* consists of articles related to the contribution of migrant labour to economic development of the nation and its people. The articles also bring to light the challenges they face due to their neglect by policy makers in the country. In the article “Cities as Exclusionary Zones: Labour Migration and Creation of Precarious, and Isolated Community of Workers in Gurgaon”, Archana Prasad points out to the paradox of urban growth and development of cities, and the exploitation and vulnerability of migrant workers, who toil to make cities a symbol of progress. Through case studies, she reveals how the same cities that survive on migrant labour do not include them but allow them work under precarious and unhygienic conditions, and with low wages. Trilok Chandan Goud and Rajesh Kumar Sinha’s article “Indian Labour Migration to Gulf Countries: Development and Distress” has highlighted the issues of Indian migrant workers, who had to return from Gulf countries due to the global economic crisis caused by

the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors have recommended the intervention of the host Governments to provide adequate assistance to them to reduce their distress in the host country. The article titled “Labour Migration and Exclusion: India’s Experience during COVID-19 Pandemic” by Tattwamasi Paltasingh and Prakash Bhue has analysed the plight of migrant workers during the country-wide lockdown imposed by the Government from March 2020. The authors also suggest some migrant-sensitive policy measures for their inclusion in the development process. “Waves of Reverse Migration in the times of COVID-19: A Case Study of Uttar Pradesh” by Roli Misra, Shivani Tewari and Nidhi Tewari is the outcome of a qualitative study based on testimonies of migrants from a nondescript village in Uttar Pradesh, who were stuck at home, who returned back to work in cities and who remained unemployed due to the pandemic. The authors conclude by making several policy recommendations for the inclusion of migrants in the development process. Sangeeta Krishna’s article on “Migrant Labour, Informal Economy and COVID-19 Pandemic: Narratives on Choice between Life and Livelihood” aims to examine the reasons and trends of the mass exodus of migrant workers from their place of work to their native place during the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors have also examined the measures adopted by the State to respond to the crisis and have made some recommendations to meet the challenges of post-COVID times. The article on “Labour In-Migration and the Production of the New Subaltern in Kerala” by Saji P. Jacob and Prasad R. is the outcome of an ethnographic study of a village in Ernakulam District which indicate that the influx of migrant labourers from different parts of the country is creating new subaltern spaces in Kerala. The authors have found that the development model of Kerala has attracted a large number of migrant labour from different parts of the country, who are treated as slave castes by the local population. Andrew Michael’s article on “MGNREGS as a Safety-Net: Reflections in the Context of Economic Crisis and COVID-19” argues that in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, MGNREGA played an important role as a safety-net for migrant labour returning home and other poor households in rural areas. According to the author, the experience of the implementation of MGNREGA in Tamil Nadu reveals that it has the potential of empowering the rural people and removing social inequalities, besides rescuing the government during economic crises and rural distress. The article titled “Domestic Workers and Roles of Social Institutions: The Indian Context” gives a glimpse of the conditions under which domestic workers have to work in metropolitan cities. Based on testimonies of migrant domestic workers in Kolkata, the

author argues that various social institutions have to play an important role in trying to ensure that domestic workers have decent working and living conditions.

These articles provide different perspectives on the issues related to migrant labour in the context of their contribution to economic development and their plight manifested during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is hoped that governments and policy makers will address the lacunae in policy and legislative framework to ensure that migrant workers are guaranteed decent working and living conditions throughout the country. □

Denzil Fernandes

Cities as Exclusionary Zones: Labour Migration and Creation of Precarious, Unidentifiable & Isolated Community of Workers in Gurgaon

Archana Prasad*

Abstract

The new mark of progress and development in the twenty-first century is to boost industrial and urban growth for the making of millennium cities. The project demands a high number of semi-skilled and unskilled workers who toil to make cities as a symbol of progress. The same city that survives on the labour of migrant workers however has no plan or policy to include them as insiders and inhabitants. It is a known fact that migrants work in unethical and unhygienic conditions with low wages. This precariousness at the workplace is carried to their residence which is located amidst urban space which denies workers their identity. Further, precarity at workplace limits workers from fulfilling their urban aspirations and lifestyle. The exploitation and vulnerability experienced by migrant workers stands in paradox to the progress and development of cities. Thus, cities have become exclusionary and add to the woes of migrant workers.

Keywords- Migration, Cities, Working Conditions Precarity, Isolated community

Introduction

Over the years, the rate of migration of labour to cities and metropolises has increased exponentially. Cities have become the receptor of a large scale of migrants but fail to be inclusive, leaving them without any space and the right to citizenship. These workers are subjected to double exploitation, first on account of being outsiders and secondly, on account of being unrecognized and fragmented. The absence of a collective voice among these workers is the primary cause of their exploitation. To further exacerbate the situation, high rates of informalization and casualization add to the woes of migrants. They continue to live in precarious conditions, unidentifiable for state sponsored programs and schemes and left to live in isolated communities with no connection with urban life. Their rights to work and livelihood have long been neglected both by state and society

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for a very long time. However, in recent years under the garb of neoliberal capitalism there has been a complete erosion of workers' rights not only in India but across the globe. Migrant workers continue to work and live in cities with no capacity to fulfill their aspiration of living in urban cities. This is quite ironic if we look into the contributions that migrant workers offer in the making of cities. Migrant industrial workers act as pillars on which booming economies of cities are built.

We live in the age of the city. The city is everything to us — it consumes us, and for that reason we glorify. In the rush to glorification the city tends to forget its own architect, the worker, who soiled to make the city bright and upright (Okome: 2003:316).

The exploitation and vulnerability experienced by migrant workers stands in paradox to the progress and development of cities. In the process of churning out a world city, the workers are being marginalized or left out in the process of urbanization (Alkazi 2015; Donthi 2014). Cities in the developing countries are not expanding in terms of urbanization which is giving way to formation of networks, corridors and hierarchies (Davis 2006). The most manifested hierarchies are emerging in urban areas where there is not only the distinction between urban and rural but also between local and migrant, the former mainly having better economic status and part of the middle and upper class whereas the latter forms the majority of migrant workers. The situation has become grave because of the State negotiating with private players and acting on behalf of the local and upper-middle class. In such a situation, the migrants are identified as outsiders and left ostracized to fend for themselves in a system that has no hope of improvement (Gilbert and Ward 1985: 254).

The paper is based on a research¹ carried out in the city of Gurgaon located in the NCR, Delhi². Gurgaon, a city lying on the outskirts of the capital of Delhi and part of the National Capital Region, known as the '*Millennium City of India*', is the symbol of neoliberal urbanism (Kalyan 2011). At the same time Gurgaon is also known as the city of migrants where large numbers of migrant workers come with hopes of fulfilling their urban aspirations. However, these workers reflect on the paradox of development because although they are virtually present in all sectors of the economy, they remain invisible. They form the core of a city's industrial and manufacturing workforce but are unaccounted for, living off-the-map in the city's urban villages (Cowan 2015). In this paper, I vividly describe the variant experiences of precarious working conditions, loss of identity and

isolation of the industrial workers in Gurgaon (NCR Delhi). The problems faced by the workers are not specific to them but reflect the deeper crises of the working class in our present neoliberal economy.

Objectives

The paper is about the conflict and contestations workers face on a daily basis both in their public (workplace) and private life (residence) as migrant industrial workers. Living conditions in the place of residence is compared with the conditions at the workplace to reject the dichotomy between private and public. The findings are based on narratives of everyday life experiences, constant negotiation and compromises made by migrant workers for enjoying urban lifestyle. By looking at the experience of workers in Gurgaon, the objective of the study is to explain the hidden logic of capitalism that has pushed migrants to the margin. Due to denial of basic amenities and services due to neglect by state, employer and society, there is an increase in unrest and violence. Today we live in the midst of historically significant worldwide wave of class based protest and labour unrest (Silver 2003). The occurrence of protests and violence is not only the outcome of deteriorating wages and income but also the desperation due to the limited resources to meet the aspirations of modern urban cities. An in-depth examination of the residential areas, working conditions, access to basic amenities and services enabled describing the city as an exclusionary zone having three salient features: precarity at the workplace or the factory, indignity and lack of identity in the urban space and a neglected community subject to vulnerability.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology is used with the objective to explore living conditions and livelihood of migrant workers in urban cities. The choice of qualitative method is in keeping with the nature of the subject of research. The working and living conditions of the workers need to be understood by looking at the complex networks built through intersection of the state, market and culture. Both primary and secondary data has been collected through fieldwork. Secondary data, in the form of reports, newsletters and magazines from the company and the trade union provided background information. The techniques of interview, focus-group discussion and case studies have been used for collecting primary data.

Findings of the Study

The major finding of the research is how Gurgaon (NCR Delhi) has

emerged as an exclusionary zone leading to the creation of precarious working conditions, loss of identity (unidentifiable) and isolation of the migrant workers. The problems faced by the workers are not specific to one particular city or state but reflect a deeper crisis of the working class in the present neoliberal economy.

The findings of the research have been described below in terms of precarity as a way of life, lack of identity of workers in the city and an isolated community of workers symbolic of continual neglect by local authorities and state officials.

I. Precarity as a Way of Life

Today, precarity has become a norm and accepted as part of everyday life of the workers. The concept of precarity and precariousness became prominent in the beginning of the twentieth century as the vanguard of the working class. The term was used for the first time by Pierre Bourdieu (1963) to describe the colonial working class in Algeria in the 1950s. The term ‘precariat’ referred to casual or contingent workers, who were different from permanently employed workers. The term became popular in the 80s & 90s in the studies on migrants and informal workers and by the early 21st century, the term precarity became an organizing principle to demonstrate ongoing struggle by workers across the globe (Neilson & Rossiter 2008).

I have borrowed the term, ‘precarity’ as used by Guy Standing in his book, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (2011). According to Standing, the term refers to a multiplicity of processes that has led to the formation of the working class as a dangerous class. These processes are fragmentation of workers, flexibility, and casualization, the demise of state protection, increased social risk and vulnerability. The term has been used by and large to describe nature of employment like temporary, casual, non-permanent, etc. But in this study, I have used the term precarity to highlight the conditions of vulnerability and insecurity faced by migrant workers living in cities.

The definition of precarious work as given by Evan & Gibb adequately describes the lives of migrant workers.

Precarious work refers to “forms of work characterized by atypical employment contracts, limited or no social benefits and statutory entitlements, high degree of job insecurities, low job tenure, low wages and high risks of occupational injury and disease.” (Evans & Gibb:2009)

The understanding of precarity becomes significant as it influences the lives and livelihoods of migrant workers. Precarious working conditions functions to make the workers toil hard without providing them basic amenities and social security. Workers are not seen as human beings, but only as a part of the production process, just as any machine, required to work to meet production targets. There is complete neglect of their human agency. Their precarity becomes a life condition for these workers and imprisons them beyond control, as described by Guy Standing:

“[the precariat] consists of multitude of insecure people, living bits-and-pieces lives, in and out of short term jobs, without a narrative of occupational development, including millions of frustrated educated youth who do not like what they see before them, millions of women abused in oppressive labour, growing numbers of criminalized tagged for life, millions being categorized as ‘disabled’ ...they are denizens, they have a more restricted range of social, cultural, political and economic rights than citizens around them.” (Standing: 2011)

The above description neatly describes the lives, working conditions and livelihood of industrial-migrants workers in Gurgaon. The conditions or precarity heighten the level of exploitation of workers which in Gurgaon can be described as multi-dimensional.

Workers in the cities are subject to exploitation on following:

- i. Virtue of being workers who are at the lowest rank in the social and economic hierarchy.
- ii. On account of having an ambiguous identity - neither insider nor outsiders.
- iii. As a fragmented and dispersed class incapable of forming a collective.

Various actors part of exploitation of workers in the workplace and residential area:

- i. Employers, managers, and supervisors exploit them by giving low wage, forcing overtime work, and they suffer abuse and intimidation.
- ii. Contractors and sub-contractors bring them to cities on false promises, ally with managements in non-payment and deduction of wages and overtime payment, take commission from workers for providing them with employment, give the workers loan as and when needed, thereby trapping them in indebtedness.

- iii. Landlords allure tenants (migrant workers) to buy ration and grocery from shops owned by them. Often these workers do not have enough money to buy daily essentials and keep buying without payment. The landlord maintains a register of borrowing and often manipulates the amount.
- iv. Officials of local authorities, who have a negative perception of workers and negative assumptions, prevent them from helping workers to avail benefits of government schemes and programs.
- v. Upper-middle class inhabitants of the city, who have the wrong notion that the city belongs to them and the workers destroy the beauty of the cities as they are dirty and dangerous, label migrants as illegal, outsiders and criminals. These negative attitudes towards workers prevent them from developing healthy relations. As a result the workers live in isolated communities with no connection with other inhabitants.

Other effects of precarious work include:

- Doing dirty, dangerous and dull work, which is required for beautification of urban life.
- Lack of safety & social security – neither from state, local authorities nor from employers.
- Life of stress, anxiety & depression
- Declining living standards and rising poverty
- High unemployment, under employment and job instability

II. Unidentified citizens

In the last few decades, Gurgaon has witnessed a high circulation of workers, that is, the movement of people from place of origin to the place of work and vice-versa. The movement is two way but a larger number coming to the city are from the lower class with no source of income in their native place. The high influx of migrants as industrial workers to the city makes it difficult for every migrant to obtain a lucrative or well-paid job that would enable them to sustain a proper life in cities. As most of the migrants are with low levels of education and lack any technical skills, they are able to get employment only as helpers, sweepers and other menial work. The city of Gurgaon, portrayed in the media as ‘a city of the millennium’, attracts these workers, however only those having educational and technical skills are absorbed. As stated above, due to the pressure to

comply with international labour standards in order to be part of the foreign market, a number of factories have adopted the labour standards. However, this is applicable only to workers in large scale export factories where audit for international labour standards is mandatory. However, it has left out a larger chunk of workers who are unskilled, casual, informal migrants from getting social security or monetary benefits. This has led to the emergence of intra-class division among workers, thereby further fragmenting the working class.

Creation of new hierarchies based on intra-class division

Studies on the economic impact of globalization make reference to the process of fragmentation, casualization and feminization (Afshar & Barrientos 1999). In this study, I have used the term ‘hierarchization’ of workers implying that a hierarchy has been created amongst the workers and living conditions have deteriorated but comparatively the conditions of workers in factory regulated by codes of conduct and other forms of private regulations have improved relatively more than industrial migrants workers in non-regulated factories.

Functioning of hierarchies

The findings of the study suggest that in Indian cities, discrimination, exclusion and inequality is not only on the basis caste and gender, but also predominantly based on intra-class differences. The working class in these cities has witnessed the emergence of several intra-class differences due to differential impact of private regulation. As a result, this class is not only fragmented but strictly hierarchized into different levels and their position in the hierarchy determines the access to resources as well as their vulnerability. In the course of the study, industrial-migrant workers in Gurgaon can be ranked into different categories depending on a number of factors:

A. Classification on basis of place of skill acquired:

The state labour law on minimum wage categorizes workers into three categories - skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled. However the three classes can be further divided into

1. Permanent skilled
2. Permanent semi-skilled
3. Permanent unskilled
4. Casual skilled

5. Casual semi-skilled
6. Casual unskilled

The category of casual is ambiguous as it includes temporary, part time, contract and subcontract workers. The level of vulnerability increases as we move down from permanent skilled to casual unskilled. The casual unskilled workers are larger in number but their experiences of exploitation and vulnerability are much more than skilled workers.

B. Classification on the basis of place of employment:

The workers' access to city life and capacity to improve their living conditions depend to a large extent in the place of employment. Over the years the first two categories have been able to move up the ladder of economic progress but for the latter two, there has been stagnation.

1. Permanent workers in audited factories
2. Casual workers in audited factories
3. Permanent workers in non-audited factories
4. Casual workers in audited factories

Most studies that suggest an improvement in the working conditions of workers due to the initiation of corporate social responsibility and international labour standards refer only to permanent skilled workers in the audited factories. It is only an impartial reflection of the status of the working class in the era of neoliberal economy. The study found out that the larger percentage of 'reserve army' (a term used by Karl Marx to refer to industrial working class waiting at the gates of factory to get employment due to easy hire and fire policy), are those who are exploited and more vulnerable, that is casual workers in non-audited factories, and they lie at the bottom of the hierarchy. Thus a growing underclass has emerged within the working class who has lost all means of extricating themselves from vulnerability and violence.

III. Neglected Community & Isolated Living

Neoliberalism has produced the vulnerability of the proletariat (Hale and Wills 2005; Esbenshade 2004) toiling hard so that the middle class can consume the best products. The repression of this is the creation of a neglected community of workers. The state has shifted from being pro-labour to being pro-industry and is least interested in ensuring that conditions under which workers toil reduces. Migrant workers face verbal

abuse from landlords and factory owners. The latter have developed a negative mindset assuming to consider migrants as unhygienic, dirty, criminals and as lumpens. This psychological image of migrants as dirty and dangerous is reflected in everyday conversation between them and workers. In addition, migrants are seen as outsiders and blamed for overcrowding the cities. In case of any urgency they are asked to vacate the cities. This sense of un-belongingness goes a long way in negating the existence of migrants as a community. Areas where a large majority of migrants reside become an 'unknown' in the minds of residents and records of the administration. These areas lack proper attention by local authorities and local politicians, who make false claims during elections, as most of the migrants do not have voter identity of the state to which they migrate. A visit to any locality inhabited by migrants gives the view of open sewage, piles of waste and garbage, dirt and dust all around.

Women workers in Gurgaon have to cope with sexual harassment and violence on an everyday basis. They face harassment on the streets, at their workplaces and in public spaces, face threats and intimidations from local residents and their landlords. Verbal abuse, lewd comments and gestures and eve teasing are common part of growing up of adolescent mothers, wives and daughters of migrants. Women working in the factories similarly face verbal and physical abuse by male co-workers and supervisors on a regular basis. The women narrate how supervisors and floor in-charge use abusive language, if they do not meet the production targets and also physically abuse them at times by touching their bodies in an inappropriate manner. Most women reported that due to rising cases of violence and sexual assault, they usually travel in groups and take longer routes (avoid routes that are isolated) to reach home after work. Many also stated that they are often accompanied by their husbands in case they have to travel late at night. Women also expressed apprehension in sending their daughters alone to the market and said that they usually prefer sending their sons to buy groceries or other essentials items. Due to the fear of sexual assault and lack of safety, girls often drop out from school after attaining puberty. This patriarchal mindset is further complicated due to the presence of negative impressions of migrants.

Further, there is a limited or no communication with relatives or other people outside the workplace. There has been a general decline in the average length of time people spend their time with family because of the fact that they have to toil for a longer period to be able to survive in the city. There is an absence of both family life and sense of belonging at the workplace.

Workers are often recruited through contractors and sub-contractors and at times have never met their real employer (factory owners). Further, due to frequent change in the workforce, there is an increase in individualism as most workers are unfamiliar with their colleagues at work. There is a lack of any community feeling or consciousness of belonging to one group. Since the management is more concerned on achieving production targets, less attention is paid on interpersonal relations. The situation is one of powerlessness and alienation in which the factory is only a place to work – absence of any social relations dehumanizes workers. Under the new management, the ‘worker’ is a mere instrument needed only for the production process and that too temporarily. On account of frequent change in workforce due to easy hire and fire policy, using contract workers (for specific production periods), workers fail to develop any familiarity, closeness and social relations with co-workers or managers. The frequency of movement is so fast that many workers have not seen the face of co-workers hidden behind working robes and masks. The factory has become a dehumanized space for production losing its social meaning.

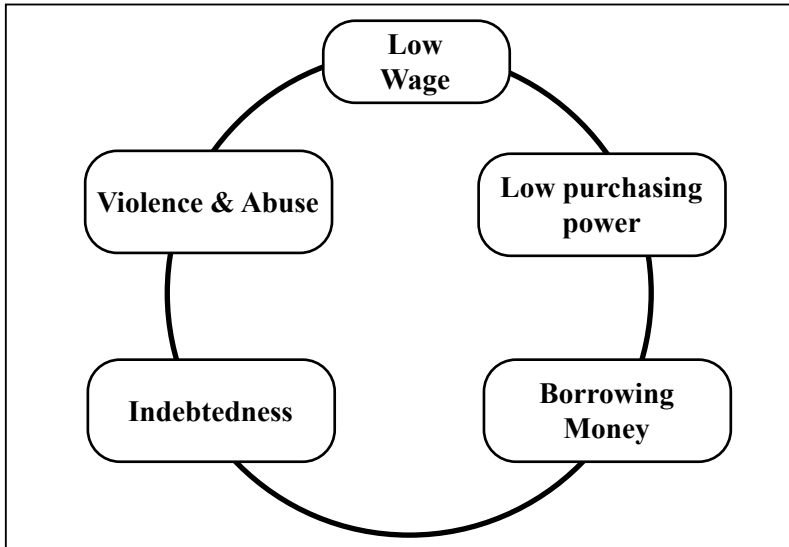
Differential relations with multiple actors

In their everyday life, workers have to constantly negotiate with the whole hierarchy of officials, who have their own set of prejudices and biases towards migrant workers. These officials include factory owners, managers, supervisors, bouncers (heavy weight men kept to ensure maximum discipline inside the factory) and security guards. They keep a close watch on the movement of workers. The migrants also regularly interact with local government officials, labour inspectors, contractors and landlords. A study of the kind of relations the migrants have with the different categories of individuals found that they had two contrasting behaviors. Inside the factories, workers pretend to be cordial and subservient, else the fear of losing their jobs. However, their relations outside is resentful and aggressive. They become more violent and threatening in their communication with security guards, local authorities and landlords. Management and factory owners use the logic of capitalism whereby they appear cordial to workers and ensure availability of provisions and benefits. This fake appeasement is to prevent a sudden outburst of any kind of rebellious behavior, which would affect the production process.

The Vicious Circle of Vulnerability

Exploitation and violence take place in a vicious circle of vulnerability that workers face due to low wages and high indebtedness to their employers,

contractors and landlords. The vicious circle of vulnerability is illustrated below:



Vicious Circle of Vulnerability

The two case studies below are used to illustrate how workers are trapped in a vicious circle of vulnerability. Their vulnerability enters into a vicious circle - low wage, inability to meet their daily needs, compelled to take loan, lack of capacity to return, sustain violence and abuse on account of indebtedness.

Case study 1-Fixed at low wage, no hope of improvement

My name is Gridhari Lal (pseudo name) and I come from Bihar. I have been working in Orient fashion for last five years. I came to Delhi in search of a good job and one of my village friends referred me to a factory in Gurgaon. I worked there for two years as a semi-skilled worker and then joined this factory. But for so many years I have been receiving Rs 8000 as monthly wage and there has been no improvement. So many times I have requested my supervisor to increase my wage but he scolds me and threatens to remove me from work. Many times I feel tired and think of going back to my village but I cannot because I have taken a huge amount of loan from my landlord and I have to pay him back. I don't know from where I will get the money as there is no chance of improvement.

The case of Gridhari Lal illustrates that in garment export factories employers do not increase the wages of employees for many years. Because of getting low wages, the workers are forced to take loans from landlords who charge reasonable interest. The indebtedness goes on increasing and the workers are caught in its grip such that they cannot go back to their village and now are being exploited by both employers and landlords.

Case study 2 - Unemployed in the village and irregular employment in the city

My name is Khamir Chand (pseudo name) and I am from Odisha. I came to the city in search of a job. I am illiterate because my father was a poor farmer and did not have money to send me to school. In the village, we had a small farm, which we cultivated and we survived. But seven years back, my father fell ill and we had to sell the land for his treatment. After he died, I did not have any work and had to take care of my mother, two sisters and younger brother. I tried looking for some work in my village but did not find one. Then I came to Gurgaon, where I worked as casual labour in a garment factory. After six months, my mother fell ill and so I had to go home for two months and on my return I had no job. For the last two years, I do work for some time and am without any work for a long period. I also have to go frequently to my village so my chance of a permanent work is not possible.

This case illustrates that many of the workers, who belong to poor families, are unable to receive education and end up doing menial work. They migrate to cities without their family and have to travel to the village in case of medical emergency and other family problems. They continue to work as casual and irregular workers because of which they are without a job for many months.

Conclusion

It is evident from the above case studies that the migration as a process has led to further deterioration of the living and working conditions of the migrant workers. It reflects the paradox of development which seems to be one sided - only the rich and upper class reap the benefit of development. The precarious working conditions not only denies workers the right to decent work but also snatches their ability to consume the basic amenities of urban life. The sheer persistence of precarity in Gurgaon hints at the fact that there is an absence of both decent working conditions and inclusive urban planning for industrial workers in Gurgaon. Another related problem

is the absence of inclusive urban planning policy for workers, who play a crucial role in the city. Despite the high pace of growth of urban cities, there seems to be no single and clear-cut solution to the problems faced by migrant workers. Some stress on the revival of the welfare role of the state in regulating the working conditions and formulating inclusive policy that would integrate workers into the urban cities. While others promote a mixed approach where different actors play a complementary role. For them the most effective way to improve working conditions of workers across the globe would be to link public, private and social forms of governance (Gereffi 2018). In the context of Gurgaon, public-private partnership can be suggested as a measure to achieve the twin goals of decent work and inclusive cities as both are related. The denial of decent work implies exclusion from being a worker as well as a consumer because it is the work that determines the capacity to consume. Cities need to be planned in a manner to make workers integral to the process of development. In order to ensure that the true meaning of development and urban growth be achieved, cities have to be inclusive. □

Endnotes:

1. The research was funded by ICSSR as part of post-doctoral fellowship.
2. National Capital Region of Delhi (NCR Delhi) includes the districts of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh bordering with Delhi, the capital of India.

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