

Draft

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Title: Locating the Inter-State Migrant in the Urban during COVID-19 Pandemic: A view from Policy and Practice

Abstract

Through this paper, I wish to understand the migrant in the cities; the migrants whose lives have been studied through (and sometimes reduced to) by numerous statistical analysis need to be understood in relation vis-à-vis their lived realities in the urban and what they had to bear in the times of the pandemic. I posit and investigate the existing urban policies of state welfare before the lockdown laid bare the inbuilt bias against the migrants in the Urban. And thereafter, the lockdown and ensuing state response only reinforced that leading to the mass movement of people and the trauma suffered; thereby arguing and trying to understand the real causes of the migrant crisis in the pre- lockdown urban and its structuring of policies, while not absolving the state and society of 'just' inaction and indecision during the chaos following lockdown. Such an attempt is markedly different from the other approaches until now.

Firstly, it gives a glaring policy gaps and timelines through which the State angst on migrant issues becomes visible. Secondly, the policy perspective reveals a deep-seated bias that treats migrant bodies with an equal amount of contempt and desire. The research also hopes to contribute to the Metanarrative of the conflict of migrants and informality in the urban. I will also hope to share the efforts made by CSOs and other organizations working on the ground to address the issue of migrants and highlight the key learnings, and of how even the CSOs and their interventions were corrupted by state policy prescriptions. I also hope to share with the research group the so-called progressive State responses that we studied in detail in leading up to policy formulation for migrants. The research will contribute to the larger discourse on assessing the migrants' crisis and other informal sector livelihoods through the prism of the policies of relief and support introduced by the union government and different State governments following the pandemic. The inquiry will be heavily based also on the practice of the CSO interventions and assessments that I was a part of.

Introduction

Migration is the movement of people away from their usual place of residence, internal or from outside of state borders. The official data on migration in India is from the 2011 Census, which says 45.5 Crore Indians or 38 per cent of the population could be classified as "migrants"¹ – a marked increase compared to 31.5 crore migrants in 2001, then 31 per cent of the population. While population grew by 18 per cent, the number of migrants increased by 45 per cent between 2001 and 2011. While the story of the labour migrant is supposedly of the successes of economic reforms and India opening up its economy to the world in the early 1990s, the other side of this glittering coin is large scale informality and an ever-deepening chasm of inequality, and characteristic systemic precarity built into the everyday lives of the country's laboring poor in the urban workforce. As per the 2016 Economic Survey, the size of the migrant workforce is over 10 crores.² At just 4.5 Crores, economic migrants make up less than a tenth of all migrants in India.³⁴ This includes inter-state

¹<https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/migration.html>

²<https://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/migration-india-and-impact-lockdown-migrants>

³ The Census defines a migrant as a person who is at a different place from his or her "usual place residence" at the time of the Census enumeration. However, the vast majority of these "migrants" are women who have moved out of their village or town to get married.

⁴[https://www.thehindu.com/data/45.36-crore-Indians-are-internal-migrants/article16748716.ece#:~:text=45.36%20crore%20Indians%20\(37%20per.data%20released%20on%20Thursday%20reveal.&text=Around%2021.7%20crore%20of%20the.per%20cent%20%E2%80%94%20cited%20this%20reason.](https://www.thehindu.com/data/45.36-crore-Indians-are-internal-migrants/article16748716.ece#:~:text=45.36%20crore%20Indians%20(37%20per.data%20released%20on%20Thursday%20reveal.&text=Around%2021.7%20crore%20of%20the.per%20cent%20%E2%80%94%20cited%20this%20reason.)

migrants as well as migrants within each state. Migrant flows can be classified on the basis of origin and destination – in rural and urban binary; i.e.: i) rural-rural, ii) rural-urban, iii) urban-rural and iv) urban-urban. Rural-urban and urban-urban movement accounted for around only 8 crore migrants. Another way to classify migration is: (i) intra-state, and (ii) inter-state. In 2011, intra-state movement accounted for almost 88 per cent of all internal migration (39.6 crore persons) and there were only 12 per cent (5.4 crore persons) as inter-state migrants.⁵ Of course, there is variation across states in terms of inter-state migration flows. The better developed west and southern regions of the country received the migrants as destinations, whereas northern and eastern regions acted as origin states, thereby exhibiting a clear spatial trend. It is estimated that Uttar Pradesh and Bihar account for the origin of 25 per cent and 14 per cent of the total inter-state migrants, followed by Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, at 6 per cent and 5 per cent respectively.⁶

The most marginal and vulnerable are the inter-state workers. A huge number of them work in the informal sector and are short-term migrants. Unlike overall migration, which is far more intra-state than inter-state, short-term migrants are more likely to migrate between states and they move largely to urban areas and over longer distances than long-term migrants for economic opportunities.⁷ Long term migrants are more likely to be educated, come from upper income groups, are mobile, with social networks/ privileges. In contrast, short-term migrants are less educated, tend to be *Dalitor* or *Adivasi* origin, and come from the poorer sections of the society. They come from households where head was either illiterate or had only completed primary education.⁸ They occupy the lowest ladder of migration. The monthly household income of 22 per cent daily and weekly wagers is lower than or up to Rs 2,000; of 32%, between Rs 2,000 and 5,000; of 25%, between 5,000 and 10,000; of 13%, between Rs 10,000 and 20,000; and of 8%, more than Rs 20,000 – thereby leading a hand to mouth existence in urban India.⁹

The Pandemic and the Lockdown

In the morning of May 9, almost 50 days into India's COVID19 lockdown, more than 1000 migrant workers protested on the streets of Surat, demanding to be sent back to their native states. 'Reasonable force' was used by the local administration to thwart the protests which violated the countrywide lockdown. The police arrested about 50 migrants and detained others. (ANI, 2020)¹⁰

Incidents of migrant workers protests dotted the country's lockdown experience in India as across cities, workers from distant Indian states demanded to be sent home in a safe and dignified manner. Migrant workers took the streets and voiced their concerns for perhaps the first time in contemporary India, contrary to their image as docile, cheap labor. The Coronavirus has triggered unprecedented chaos and clamour throughout the globe, variously affecting different social and economic communities. While the impact of the pandemic and that of measures of control and prevention continue to be grappled with across disciplines and practices, the experiences of the most vulnerable and marginalized have percolated into public knowledge through extensive news coverage and social media. The migrant crisis in India has become one such experience, capturing global attention for the plight of workers, as they walked back home. For societies across the globe, especially in the developing world, the COVID19 pandemic has been a watershed moment. The ongoing pandemic has won appreciation and laurels to States and governments for their efficient management and stories of solidarity and charity flooded the world news. Along with the havoc wreaked as a public health crisis, the pandemic has exposed lacunas and disparities in governance, policy, society and economics.

⁵<https://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/migration-india-and-impact-lockdown-migrants>

⁶<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/coronavirus-india-lockdown-migran-workers-mass-exodus-6348834/>

⁷<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/429181519662555108/indias-internal-labor-migration-paradox-the-statistical-and-the-real>

⁸<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/why-india-migrants-walked-back-home-11590564390171.html>

⁹https://www.lokniti.org/media/upload_files/politics-and-society-between-elections-2017-report.pdf

¹⁰https://twitter.com/ANI/status/1259025652033847296?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1259025652033847296%7Ctwgr%5Eshare_3&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fthelocalindian.com%2Fnews%2Fmigrant-workers-protest-at-mora-village-near-the-industrial-area-of-hazira-in-surat-21016

As the lockdown was announced suddenly, millions of migrant workers, found themselves unhinged to the urban economy and society, desperate to return to their villages. The return migration of workers from urban centers to the places of origin has been understood as not only one of the biggest movements in India in the recent past, but also one of the most apathetic and inhuman ramifications of the COVID lockdown. Existing literature on the COVID19 pandemic and immigration/ immigrants have successfully highlighted the immigrant communities as one of the worst affected facing not only economic hardships, policy neglect and lack of access to health services, but also become victims of racism and xenophobia (Page, Venkataramani, Beyrer, & Polk, 2020) (Bauomi, 2020)¹¹. In India, the case of internal migrants and their struggle through the pandemic lockdown has been documented through media and other platforms. Sengupta and Jha (2020) shed light on the lockdown experiences of migrant workers,

Migrants began fleeing the cities out of fear of COVID-19 infection. They left on foot due to transport lockdown. As the period of lockdown kept increasing, migrants preferred to leave for rural homes because they lacked the economic means to support themselves and self-isolate in urban areas. The initial government response to prevent migrant movement towards their homes was informed by the fear that they would carry the contagious coronavirus to their hometowns and villages leading to community transmission of the COVID-19. Thus, migrants were not allowed to leave the city (p 160).

The Migrant Crisis: The Timeline

Phase I – Unplanned Lockdown and Stranded Migrants

Nationwide lockdown in March caught millions of migrant workers and the bureaucracy off-guard, leaving them no time to plan and prepare. With factories and workplaces shut down due to the lockdown imposed across the country, migrants had to deal with loss of income, food shortages and uncertainty about their future. The earliest reports from a rapid assessment survey of the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers had carried suggested that 92.5 per cent of the labourers surveyed had already lost anywhere between one to three weeks of work. The report highlights that 62 per cent of the interviewees did not know the emergency welfare measures, and 37 per cent of them did not know how to access the schemes, while almost 42 per cent of the workers said they had little to no ration.¹² According to another study carried out by the Stranded Workers Action Network (SWAN), 33 per cent of the respondents said they were stuck in cities due to the lockdown with little or no access to food, water and money.¹³ Following this, many of them and their families went hungry. Due to sudden announcement of lockdown and unprepared for the suspension of public transport, a large number of migrant and their families began undertaking their journeys on foot to go back to their villages and hometowns. Ministry of Home Affairs authorized state government to use their disaster response funds to support these migrants' labours with shelters and food. Those were the first wave of migrants walking back home from March end onwards. This phase saw at least 300 number of migrants deaths.¹⁴

Phase II – Lockdown Extended and Chaos Followed

By the end of April it was amply clear that the State had lost its plot. Scenes of migrant workers discontent was clear as thousands gathered on the streets in Mumbai, Surat and many other cities. Only a miniscule minority of which some 6 lakh workers have found relief in government-run shelters and 22 lakh have been provided food. Quick assessment reports revealed that 96 per cent had not

¹¹ <https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/05/covid-19-and-xenophobia-why-outbreaks-are-often-accompanied-by-racism>

¹² <https://idronline.org/covid-19-voices-from-the-margins/>

¹³ https://www.thehindu.com/news/resources/article31442220.ece/binary/Lockdown-and-Distress_Report-by-Stranded-Workers-Action-Network.pdf

¹⁴ <https://gulfnnews.com/world/asia/india/the-human-cost-of-indias-coronavirus-lockdown-deaths-by-hunger-starvation-suicide-and-more-1.1586956637547>

received rations from the government and 70 per cent had not received any cooked food.¹⁵ It was reported in a study by SWAN, that 78 per cent of people have less than Rs. 300 left with them and 89 per cent have not been paid by their employers at all during the lockdown; thereby suggesting glaring gaps in relief efforts by the state and central government.¹⁶

In a delayed response, after a full month, the Central and State Governments took various measures to help the migrant workers, and later arranged transport for them. An MHA order dated May 1 permitted the travel of inter-state migrants by special Shramik Trains to be operated by the Ministry of Railways.¹⁷ But this also was uncoordinated and resulted in chaos and struggle for stranded workers to travel. Since April 29, the MHA has issued at least eight different travel orders and the number of trains running has also been inadequate. This stage of lockdown was also heavily critiqued for conflicting orders and announcements, unhelpful helplines, complicated portals and an entirely opaque system of scheduling trains and assigning priority for travel.¹⁸ It was apparent that there was centralization of planning and also, in all state responses, policy afterthought and implementation were not considered. This extension of the lockdown, saw another wave of migration, now more people desperate to get home. The spate of deaths of migrant workers continued in road accidents, exhaustion due to walking long distances, dehydration and hunger.¹⁹

Phase III – *AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan*²⁰ and Migrants Let Down Again

Between May 1 and June 3, Indian Railways operated 4,197 Shramik trains transporting more than 58 lakh migrants.²¹ Top states from where Shramik trains originated are Gujarat and Maharashtra. The destinations were Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Subsequent to the first four stages of lockdown, there was an announcement of the *AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* (ANBA) package. Though migrant workers and their concerns were voiced as critical factor in the lead up to ANBA, the short and long-term needs of migrants were left unattended. On 14th May 2020, under the second package of the ANBA, it was announced that free food grains would be provided to migrant workers who do not have a ration card for two months and it was expected to benefit eight crore migrant workers and their families. The ANBA also launched a scheme for affordable rental housing complexes for migrant workers and urban poor to provide affordable rental housing units under PMAY. Ironically, some of these policy measures were welcomed though the immediate challenges the migrants faced were not really attended to. Most importantly, ANBA failed to live up to providing migrants with food, travel and livelihoods.²² **Aside from this some** state governments (like Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) announced one-time cash transfers for returning migrant workers. Some other states, like Uttar Pradesh announced the provision of maintenance allowance of Rs 1,000 for returning migrants who were required to quarantine. This phase also, very surprisingly, saw the massive dilutions of labour law in the guise of policy reforms.²³ These laws are bound to impact and further deteriorate the condition of migrants in cities.

The migrant workers' link with the city- labor was suddenly lost. In absolutely unprecedented times, migrants wanted to return home and undertook long arduous journeys on foot. Many migrants fell outside the purview of any social security and the panic was inevitable. In a state of lockdown, the piecemeal efforts and policies of the State to protect the migrant workers from the risk of disease, hunger, unemployment and starvation proved insufficient. Various civil society organizations worked to help migrant workers, raising funds through online crowdsourcing and working on the

¹⁵<https://thewire.in/law/kerala-centre-supreme-court-lockdown-migrant-labourers-shelter>

¹⁶https://covid19socialsecurity.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/32-days-and-counting_swan.pdf

¹⁷<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/railways-to-run-shramik-special-trains-to-move-migrant-workers-other-stranded-persons/article31481996.ece>

¹⁸<https://www.newsclick.in/Majority-Migrant-Workers-Stranded-No-Money-SWAN-Report>

¹⁹<https://thewire.in/rights/migrant-workers-non-coronavirus-lockdown-deaths>

²⁰<https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/building-atmanirbhar-bharat-overcoming-covid-19>

²¹<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/indian-railways-transport-over-58-lakh-passengers-in-4197-shramik-trains-11591235122774.html>

²² Forthcoming IGSSS publication – Decoding AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, June 2020

²³<https://www.newindianexpress.com/business/2020/may/25/ilo-expresses-deep-concerns-over-labour-law-suspension-tweaking-to-pm-modi-2147853.html>

grassroots. Main response to the humanitarian crisis posed by the lockdown came from the Civil Society, informal networks and the State. We look at the approach of the three in handling the crisis and the ways in which migrant citizenship seem to have been constructed in the process.

The key policies and practices of governing the migrant worker that emerged during the lockdown was the following -

1. **The non – implementation of the existing regulations for the migrant workers** – This is particular to especially interstate migrant workers. The workers – living a hand to mouth existence and lacking in any social and familial networks – suffer also because of numerous structural and policy gaps that make their situation further precarious. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 (ISMW Act), is the only law specific to the migrant interstate workers that provides certain protections for inter-state migrant workers.²⁴ Over the last 40 years of the Act, the Central and state governments had not made many concrete, fruitful efforts to ensure that contractors and employers mandatorily register the workers employed with them enabling access to benefits.²⁵ This law is not observed as workers are not registered nor are they getting any benefits as inter-state migrant workers.
2. **Lack of portability of benefits and entitlements** – With the short-term migration pattern, it is very tough to register oneself in a specific geography. And even if migrants register to claim access to benefits at one location, they lose access upon migration to a different location. Thus workers are unregistered, undocumented and living/working without any or little recognition as workers.
3. **Lack of affordable housing and basic amenities in urban areas** – Migrant workers do not have any official scheme or policy that provides for the housing needs of such groups. They are dependent on the renting habitable spaces in already overcrowded informal settlements or dependent on contractors for housing close to work/ livelihoods sites.
4. **Invisibilized and forgotten** - The lockdown, which is the first policy decision for control of the coronavirus epidemic, did not take into account the migrant workers. Experienced Policy makers, astute politicians could not predict the actions of the migrant workers, their identity as the ‘migrant’ is not taken into consideration. For the migrant worker, ‘stay at home’ meant travelling home 1000 kilometers. The migrant was not thought of at all when the lockdown was announced. The migrant worker is invisible to policy.
Pawn in the hands of politics-It was only on June 9th, months after the lockdown began that the Supreme Court directed the government to ensure free and orderly travel for migrant workers. Migrants found themselves caught between a power tussle at the State and central level, stranded in the hope for a resolution which came only after a couple of months. While some State governments actively discouraged migrants from coming back home, others made arrangements for the same. The state governments were reluctant in sending away ‘cheap labour’ in the hope for the lockdown to end and businesses to resume soon after.²⁶ Because of political tussles between different states as well as the states and centre, migrant workers found themselves stranded at state borders, railway stations and bus stops.
5. **Left out from the COVID relief package** - The economic package of ANBA announced does not offer solace to migrant workers in the immediate and focuses on other matters of reforms and long term measures to address the problems faced in the present. It does address the concern of construction workers to some extent; however, the most workers in the construction sector remain unregistered and other informal workers were mostly left outside of the relief efforts/ packages.

²⁴<https://clc.gov.in/clc/acts-rules/inter-state-migrant-workmen>

²⁵<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/inter-state-migrant-workmen-act-1979-dead-letter-64979/#:~:text=The%20Act%20failed%20to%20live%20up%20to%20its%20intended%20purposes.&text=The%20exodus%20of%20migrant%20workers,been%20implemented%20in%20its%20entirety.>

²⁶<https://scroll.in/latest/960758/covid-19-host-states-dont-want-to-lose-cheap-labour-claims-jean-dreze-on-migrant-crisis>

6. **Stressing on documentary proofs and papers** -Other benefits and emergency support offered like the PDS rations, direct cash transfer remain irregular for migrants who may or may not have documentary proof, thereby leaving many out from the support. Despite various records and reporting of migrant distress and death because of the lockdown, the government denied any records of such deaths.

Locating the Migrant Worker- Migration, Labor and the City

Conceptualizing the migrant citizenship- experience of citizenship is stretched across geographical locations- and the migrant worker is traversing these distances, experiencing hierarchies of citizenship across the spectrum of *gaanvand sheher*. And while documents and identity cards become markers of citizenship, the migrant constructs its citizenship in its everyday negotiations with the State, Civil Society and the city along with expansive informal social and economic networks. In this paper we explore the aspects of migrant citizenship drawing from experiences of the COVID 19 pandemic, bringing together insights from practice and policy along with migrant experiences to piece together the citizenship experience. The pandemic, is a watershed moment, also in terms of welfarism as economies across the world crash and pace uninhibited towards an aggressive capitalist model of development. As elucidated through some of the welfare schemes introduced to assuage the economic and social blows of the pandemic in India, the State's approach is markedly shifting to a credit-based and privately- funded model of welfare, which may again create security nets which leave out the migrant, the ones not defined by location. The pandemic has reasserted and also redefined the contours of citizens and citizenship in the country, building solidarities but also pitting two different notions of citizen against one another. and this juncture requires a deep engagement, probing into the ways in which the stakeholders through practice and policy define migrant citizenship for the pandemic as well as understand the migrant citizenship as it pans out in the post-covid world.

Post the 1990s, the cities in India have rapidly expanded and increasingly demanded a constant supply of cheap labor, provided entirely by migrant workers from less-developed regions of the country, both intra and interstate. Migration in the decade following the economic reforms saw a significant increase, becoming a major factor in urban growth (Bhagat & Mohanty, 2009). Higher wages and income opportunities in the cities has augmented rural incomes for migrant households, enabling economic and social mobility for a large section of laborers. In the larger sociological discourse on migration, choice and agency in a free-market economy are credited for the developmental prospects of internal migration through remittances, both economic and social (Deshingkar, 2006). The migrant laborer is, then a product of this economic reform, fruit bearers of the new economic model and the subsequent shrinking of the role of the welfare state. However, over the last three decades, labor has increasingly become informal and hence, vulnerable. Large section of poor migrant workers are engaged in the city's burgeoning informal sectors, with inbuilt precarity. In fact, exploitative regimes of forced labor continue to exist in parts of the country. While the risky labor mobility grew India's economy and contributed to minimal poverty reduction, it put migrant labor in the frontline to absorb the shocks of the declining agrarian sector and periodic economic crisis' (Sengupta & Jha, 2020 p. 156). Social and economic marginalization of the migrant in the developing world, and in particular in India, requires a reimagination of social policy and development practice to safeguard the rights and entitlements of the labouring migrant in Indian cities (Deshingkar, 2006).

Studies of international migration and global labour regimes articulate the citizenship experiences of immigrants and their 'hyper- precarious' life and work (Deshingkar, 2019; Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson, & Waite, 2015). However, the case of internal migration, especially in the developing world, has not received similar research and policy attention. One probable reason for this is the understanding of legal status as the same for all citizens, like in the context of India. However, the differential experiences of citizenship have been highlighted across developing economies. Despite juridical national citizenship, internal migrants often face a curtailment of citizenship rights as their citizenship is contested at the local level. the migrant/native divide is essential to our understanding of citizenship outcomes in India. The fact and experience of internal migration triggers reconfigurations of India's citizenship regime at local levels, through both official policies and informal practices (Abbas, 2016).

In a context like India, experiences of citizenship vary for the migrant, and the 'native'. In fact, the idea of citizenship is dependent on the idea of the 'other' and the 'outsider'. The citizen vs migrant discourse is frequent in strife social and political landscapes which may emerge from time to time. Significant to our discussion could be the sons of the soil concept which catalyzed large-scale violence against migrant workers in Maharashtra in the last couple of decades. The trope of the other as a 'lesser-citizen' is commonly circulated for political interest, and even social and cultural discourses in the urban, despite cities being cultural mixing bowls, now even in the Indian context. This differentiation between experiences of citizenship also stem from the poor migrant worker's class identity, and his inherent informality in the urban- with regards to housing, livelihood etc. The migrant experience of citizenship is hierarchical owing to his social and political identity as the 'outsider', his everyday life of informality in the urban along with other markers like caste, region, religion and class in the city.

Why the Migrant Workers Suffered the Most - The Underlying Reasons

The migrant workers and their condition revealed during the pandemic and even in the state response to the pandemic reveals deep seated perceptions and biases that the policies and even civil society practice. The paper argues that they are the following -

The principle of cut-off date or the domicile – most prominent in more contested terrains of citizenship and their benefits, cut-off dates or the practice of seeking domicile for work, education, housing, and other welfare benefits of the states is common practice in Indian socio-politics. Though seemingly benign and only promoting local interests, these cut-off dates are arbitrary and run against the spirit of the constitution that enshrines the rights to travel and work in the country. And in practice, they mostly translate to restrict and deny citizenship rights to the many working and living away from their native. These domicile requirements/ criterias mostly emerge politics of nativism and allowing first access to the resources to the local population. Such state-level policy prescriptions make it really difficult to inter-state migrants to become a 'local', especially in the case of short duration migrant populations. Therefore remaining outside the state support and services.

The longing for permanence –All the policies and even civil society action works on the premise of making the migrants residents, thereafter begin working with them to avail services, rights, entitlements and so on. These kinds of interventions with a preconceived need for non-transitory and permanence of migrant bodies, go against the principle & web of migration that the migrants are caught in. The state also mostly replicates similar interventions that operates on the assumptions of settling migrant populations.

The love for villages –On the other side of the migrants lives and spectrum, lies a hangover from the past. The assumption that migrants want to working in the rural areas and will like to continue to work there as long as it possible. This presumption leads in many policies directing themselves towards retaining migrants in the urban, while urbanization and the economic trend is towards larger migrations in the future. It is this contradiction of policies that only focus on retaining and restricting migration that is not sustainable. This translates also into imagination of the 'return migration' that the migrant poor will undertake once the dignity and trust from the urban has been broken, only to realize that dominant forces of capital and the need for survival are much more than the aspiration – if at all it exists – for living in the rural.

Discouraging and negation of migration – all the interventions on migrant workers have focused either on the source or the destination and very less on the in-between. While it is this in-between that is critical for the many workers who spend and travel in different directions. It is this locating actions at source and destination that are a concern and does not take into account the migrant networks of travel and communication, and the migrant corridors to have specific tailored understanding on the policies required for migrant workers in specific migration corridors.

Migrant guest workers as the 'other'- migrant workers coming from the most marginal caste and class backgrounds are 'othered' in the destination states/ regions. The workers face discrimination

and social neglect for all the basic services and needs. The society, media and law enforcement agencies all share a biased imagery of the migrant as being encroachers, beneficiaries at the cost of the local populations and so on. The other states that respond now with euphemistic terms like guest workers forget the lack of mainstreaming of migrant populations in their states and cities. These relations are also eerily similar to the semi-feudal power relations and treatment of workers meted out during the crisis revealed the same.

Lack of inclusion and visibility in our cities –Workers and their rights discourse has never translated to what they aspire for in the destination cities. The workers issues have remained confined to the laws, the regulations, access to food and entitlements and so on, but never on the visibility and inclusion of workers in the cities they build. This restricted and circumscribed nature of engagement with the state is the other reason for the workers and their alienation from the cities.