



EMPOWERING REPATRIATED SUBSISTENCE INDIAN WORKERS FROM THE GULF

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WHAT AND WHY?

ABSTRACT

Return Migration has been an integral part of the cycle of migration that has defined human progress since the beginning of time. The draw of a location, people and culture that is known is often irresistible and at other times inevitable. In an increasingly boisterous international conversation surrounding migration, the issues related to return migration often get silenced or ignored; often at great peril.

This report has been written with the objective of funnelling the scope of return migration to the Subsistence Weavers from the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh who are drawn to the sands of Arabia by golden dream but have to often face with the harsh reality of repatriation when their labour contracts are terminated. We have tried to highlight the challenges they face in meeting their basic human needs and in supporting their families and loved ones in the absence of viable employment opportunities. In addition, through this report we intends to share with the readers the causes behind the migration of these weavers, the existing conditions in the Gulf States that forces them to return, and then finally propose solutions that are grounded in reality and are within the implementation scope of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations interested in taking up the cause.

To sum it up, this report is meant both as a discussion and an implementation tool for the betterment and *“Empowerment of Subsistence Indian Workers (Weavers) repatriated from the Gulf”*.

OUR MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THIS PROJECT

Being Non-resident Indians/ People of Indian Origin, all three authors – Gourav, Gautam and Anubhuti are fascinated by migration from and return migration to India. On the one hand they are excited by the charge of the tiger, while on the other are concerned about changing socio-economic conditions in India and the rising disparity between India’s cities and villages. The objective behind this project was to address some of the emotions that one faces when analysing the paradox that is India. The final thread of interest was provided by the experiences that two of the authors – Gourav and Anubhuti have had during their extensive years of living in the Gulf States and having seen first-hand some of the experiences that shape the lives of migrant Indian workers to the Gulf and also their anxieties and anticipations before returning to India.

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TAKING OFF

INTRODUCTION

MIGRATION AND REMIGRATION

Migration is perhaps as old as mankind itself – driven by the basic human desire to lead a better life. The factors driving migration are complex and varied, from being a simply journey of reuniting with a family member to being forced out by force majeure. In any case, migration is often not an easy task; involving the uprooting of a known way of life and separation from one's roots, culture and values. The process has pervasive socio-economic consequences on both the society from which migration is taking place as well as on the society to which it is taking place. At an individual level too migration can have far reaching consequences – positive or negative, which in turn affects families and communities.

Return migration is the process of the migration back to one's country/place of citizenship/origin after having been migrants for a certain period of time ^[1] ^[2]. As with migration, return migration can be either voluntary or involuntary (*repatriation*). It can also be circular – whereby a person repeatedly travels to and from destination countries. The return of migrants can also have significant consequences on the demographics, employment scenario, wages, and even the political geography of a particular place ^[3] ^[4]. Since the pattern of return migration is complex and countries adopt different methods of measuring return migration, obtaining exact figures for remigration and therefore classification of people is often difficult. This is further complicated by countries prioritizing immigration and emigration differently across the world.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND MIGRATION

According to the United Nations and the International Labour Organization, there were in excess of 231 million immigrants across the world (3.2% of the world population) ^[3] ^[4]. According to estimates by the International Labour Organization, more than 90% of international migrants today are workers and their families. 58% of international migrants are concentrated in developed countries and make up about 10.8% of the total population there ^[5] ^[6] ^[7] ^[8]. Countries that host the maximum number of international migrants are the United States, Russia, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In 2013, Asians represented the largest diaspora group residing outside their major area of birth with around 38 million living in North America, Europe and Oceania ^[9] ^[10] ^[11].

MIGRATION – AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

As one of the largest group of migrants, Indians and People of Indian Origin make up number nearly 3.18 million in the US ^[12], 2.2 ^[13] million+ in the United Arab Emirates, 2.45 million in Malaysia, 1.8 million in Saudi Arabia and 1.5 million in the United Kingdom ^[14]. Migration patterns from India differ significantly depending on the destination; for example, Indians form the largest community of tertiary educated migrants to the OECD (~2 million) ^[15].

Even within India there is a huge disparity about the source and destination of migrant workers. In 2012, India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh was the number one source of migrant workers – having sent ~190,000+ workers; mostly to the Gulf States. At the same time, its neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh sent only 1,800 workers abroad ^[16].

DESTINATION GULF – RETRACING A HISTORIC ROUTE ^[17] ^[18]

India and the GCC share historic trade ties which go back centuries. In fact, according to certain sources Vasco Da Gama was piloted to the southern Indian port of Calicut (modern day Kozhikode) by the Arab navigator and cartographer Ahmed Ibn Majid (born in Julphar, modern day Ras Al Khaimah in the U.A.E.). Like in the past, the modern ties between the Gulf States and India too have been shaped by trade and development. The GCC as a bloc is India's most important trading partner as its number one export market and also the source of over 50% of its oil supplies – India's number one import commodity. In terms of human capital, the GCC plays host to close to 7 million Indians, whose remittances of over \$50 billion in turn are a major contributor to India's foreign exchange corpus.

In return, Indians have played a crucial role in the development of the GCC countries since the migration boom began in the 1970s following the independence of all the Gulf States. They have been instrumental in providing essential services, ranging from labour for the construction industry and driving taxis, to engineering, information technology and professional management. They form the largest expatriate group in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman and are a critical feature of the socio-economic canvas in these countries.

INDIAN WORKERS IN THE GULF ^[19]

Since the 1970s Indians have been an integral part of the development story of the Gulf States. Unlike Indian migrants to OECD countries, workers to the oil rich GCC countries belong to all three categories of labour – professionals, semi-skilled and unskilled, with semi-skilled and unskilled workers making up about 70% of the migrant Indian workforce. Most of the migrant workers who go to these countries hail from South Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh and of late an increasing number from the Northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The South Indian states have enjoyed historical connect with the region for centuries driven largely

by transoceanic trade and marriage ties. In addition, along with Uttar Pradesh they also share a common pattern of having large Muslim populations and the Gulf being the site of Sunni Islam's holiest sites is often looked upon as a revered destination by migrants. This desire is further exacerbated by the deep socio-economic chasms which exist between religious communities, especially Muslims in India. With an average per capita expenditure of just Rs. 32.66 (~0.51USD) per day, Muslims have the lowest living standard among all religious communities in India or about 87% of that for the majority Hindus [20].

Due to the conditions existing in these countries (which is described in detail in a following section), *return migration for a significant proportion of those heading to the Gulf States is inevitable*. Although by sending remittances from the Gulf, migrant workers are able to improve the lives of their families back home, the conditions they come back to are often very different from the ones they get used to while living in the Gulf States; this is more severe for those migrant workers who are repatriated or forced to return to India as a result of a loss of a job or change in legal working conditions. In 2013 due to changes in the Saudi Arabian labour laws – also known as Nitaqat, around 18,000 Indian workers had to be repatriated [21]. This caused alarm in returning communities across India and in spite of the efforts taken by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, and the Central and State Governments in India the problems faced by these workers especially from certain impoverished communities was stark.

UTTAR PRADESH – THE NEW SOURCE OF CONTRACT WORKERS FROM INDIA

Since 2002, Uttar Pradesh has been rapidly climbing the ladder to become the largest source of India's migrant workforce for the Gulf States. As India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh has an abundance of labour. However, poor economic growth has stifled the conditions of a large section of people living in the state, resulting in it having one of the lower per capita GDPs in the country [22] [23] [24]. Although internal migration within India from Uttar Pradesh is not a new phenomenon, Uttar Pradesh's new found love for the Gulf States is shaped largely by the demographics of the migrant workers heading out of the state and the prevailing economic conditions.

A significant proportion of those heading out to the Gulf belong to Uttar Pradesh's large community of weavers who can be classified as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. As one of the leading historical sources of handlooms in the country, Uttar Pradesh has been the hotbed of weaving activity in India for a long time. A decline in traditional handloom sales across India since the early 2000s (accelerated by the ban on imported silk yarn since 1998 by the Indian government), has affected the weaving community severely, forcing the already impoverished weavers to look for greener pastures outside their traditional hometowns of Varanasi and Barabanki. For the largely Muslims weavers, the Gulf States are a natural draw.

CONDITIONS IN THE GULF

EXPATRIATE LABOUR IN THE GULF – AN OVERVIEW ^[25]

The era of rapid development which was unleashed in the Gulf States following the oil boom in the 1970s and the shortage of skilled “native” workers in these countries resulted in a huge increase in demand for expatriate workers. Unlike in other countries across the world, the Gulf States did not consider a policy of naturalization for the expatriate workers due to the fear that mass naturalization would change the basic social, cultural and religious fabric of these societies which are still deeply rooted in a tribal system. After all as the old Bedouin saying goes, “I against my brother, my brother and I against my cousins, then my cousins and I against strangers”.

The labour market in the present day Gulf States too is dominated by expatriate workers, mainly from South Asia and non-GCC Arab States. But unlike in the past there is an increased emphasis on the skill development of nationals and thus a push for their employment in both public and private sectors. The presence of migrant workers in the Gulf however continues to be perceived as a national security threat rather than as equal partners in the development process. This is evidenced from the system of local sponsorship (kafala), employment of contract labour, restrictions to job changes in most of the GCC countries, and an increased emphasis on localization (nitaqat, emiratization, qatarization, omanization etc.).

KAFALA – AN INVITATION OR A FETTER? ^{[26] [27] [28]}

Since foreign migrants are perceived as a threat to the local cultural and religious values, the GCC have put in place a sponsorship system for employment, known as the “Kafala” system. Under this system, in exchange for the permission to work, a worker agrees to work for the sponsor (kafeel) who can be a company or individual. Even when an individual wishes to start a business/venture, as per this system they must enter into a partnership with a local/national who retains at least 51% of the business at hand. With a few exceptions such as the “free zone” areas in the United Arab Emirates, workers of all skill levels are bound to work for their sponsor. Once, the employment relationship is broken and a new “kafeel” is not found, a migrant worker is treated as an illegal resident.

Among the conditions usually laid out under this system, employees of all levels are required to obtain permission by their sponsor if they wish to join another employer. In the case of a dispute and discontinuation of employment, the sponsor has the right to impose a ban on the worker, prohibiting him/her from entering the country for a specified period of time (e.g. 6 months in UAE). Unskilled and semi-skilled employees also require their sponsor’s permission to travel to their home country for visits. Upon the completion of a labour contract skilled workers often have the choice to leave the country, with the permission of their sponsor. In the case the sponsor is a

company, it sends a representative to the airport to grant permission of exit and ensure the worker has left the country. In the case of unskilled or semi-skilled migrants, labour contracts are at times renewed without the knowledge of a worker who is then bound to his “kafeel” for a designated period of time. Sponsorship regulations in the UAE and Saudi Arabia clearly indicate the extent to which workers are dependent on their sponsor. As a result, their bargaining power with regards to aspects such as work/payment conditions is severely reduced and they face the risk deportation and/or entry bans if they have disagreements with their sponsor. Finally, this system allows for the employment of “contracted” labour – whereby workers (usually unskilled) are hired by labour agencies usually in South Asian and Arab countries and “contracted” out to companies supported/sponsored by locals/nationals.

WEAVING IN THE DESERT – WORKING CONDITIONS FOR WEAVERS IN THE GULF

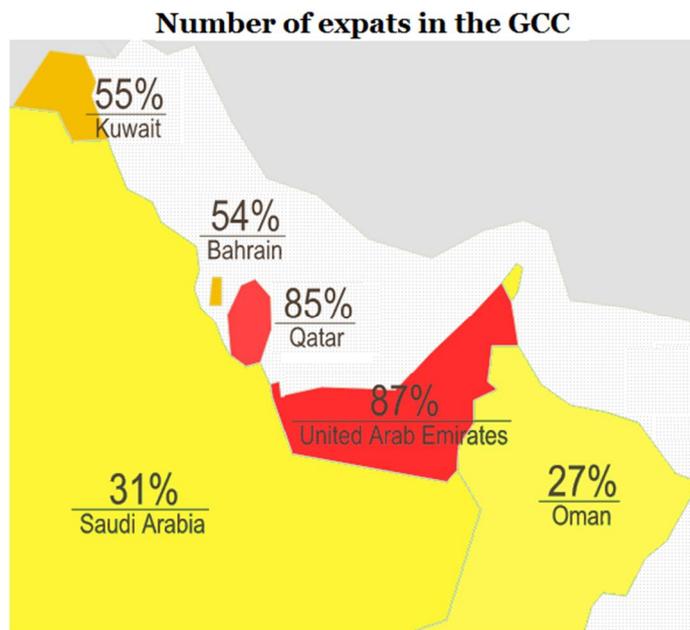
The ease of “contracting” labour from poverty stricken regions of South Asia have helped in the creation and flourishing of illegal “sweatshops” or zardozi shops across the Gulf countries, primarily in Saudi Arabia. Loomless weavers or youngsters from subsistence/impooverished families of weavers are lured by agents of these companies with the promise of a decent pay and lifestyle. In reality, a large number of these youths (almost always male) are duped into working as bonded labours with their passports and mobile phones having been confiscated – leaving them dependent almost entirely on the mercy of the owners/managers.

Even in the scenario where conditions aren’t as horrific as described above, they are often forced to work for long hours for little pay (the reason that is often provided is that a portion of the pay is paid to the agent as “fees”) in a strange, new country often resulting in bouts of depressions, fear and an increased sense of insecurity; and therefore not entirely solving their problem of subsistence.

ENCOURAGING REPATRIATION – LOCALIZATION MEASURES [29] [30] [31] [32] [33]

The GCC country economies are highly dependent on expatriate workforce. The term expat in the Gulf refers to everyone who does not hold the nationality of the country they are residing in. The proportion of expat residents in Saudi Arabia and UAE is as high as 31% and 87% respectively. As of 2013 Indian expats accounted for 19.4% of Saudi Arabia’s expat population. In light of this high dependency on expat workforce and to preserve nationality identity, GCC countries have initiated nationalization of workforce initiatives. This involves setting mandatory target ratios of citizens working in an organization, particularly in the private sector. For Saudi Arabia, this process is known as Saudization, for UAE this process is referred to as Emiratisation, Qatarization in Qatar, Omanization in Oman, Bahrainization in Bahrain and Kuwaitization in Kuwait. The

initiative's key goal is to involve local citizens in the economy and enhance their skills in order to



create a valuable contribution for the country.

In the U.A.E. the target was set as the minimum employment of 2% of local citizens and at least one Emirati Public Relations Officer by private companies. As of 2006 88% of companies in the private sector in UAE had achieved this target. The financial sector being of key importance to the country, led the way in this initiative by employing an average of 34% Emiratis as of 2010.

Saudi Arabia on the other hand faced declining per capita income and rising population growth, leading to 20% unemployment and a large proportion of citizens living under the poverty line. The Kingdom had aspired to achieve a goal that 70% of the country's workforce would be Saudi nationals by 2007. Upon failing to achieve this target, it set out to launch its initiative known as '*Nitaqat*'. According to this program different nationalization quotas have been set out for different sectors and total number of employees. Companies are then classified into platinum, green, yellow and red categories. Based on the category achieved, the company enjoys certain flexibility in hiring workers from national and non-national categories. If a company's performance has been unsatisfactory, it will face restrictive sponsorship and visa related rules. The penalisation of unsatisfactory businesses also includes monetary penalties and rejection of renewal of work permits.

Activity	Size	No. of workers		Red		Yellow		Low Green		Medium Green		High Green		Platinum	
		From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To		
12 Wholesale and Retail Trade	Small	10	49	0	4	5	9	10	20	21	23	24	26	27	100
	Middle	50	499	0	4	5	16	17	27	28	30	31	33	34	100
	Large	500	2999	0	9	10	23	24	30	31	32	33	34	35	100
	Mega	3000		0	9	10	24	25	32	33	34	35	36	37	100

The above shows an example of the classification of a retail business into categories based on its total number of employees. If a company has less than 9 or less employees it is exempt from nationalization quotas but must employ a minimum of 1 Saudi national. As a result of the Nitaqat

scheme more than 18,000 Indians who were formerly employed illegally or in companies falling under the red or yellow categories had to leave the kingdom and return to India. A large number of these repatriated migrants were subsistence weavers from Uttar Pradesh.

The cries for following the Saudi example of Nitaqat is growing louder in countries across the Gulf. For example, in 2013 following the Saudi announcement, Kuwait's Cabinet discussed the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program's (MGRP) proposal of changing the percentage of Kuwaiti employees in the private sector – involving the setting of timetables according to commercial activity and according to profession.

RETURNING HOME

CONDITIONS FOR WEAVERS IN INDIA

THE HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN INDIA – A BACKGROUND

The Handloom weaving Industry in India is the second largest sector in terms of employment, second only to the agricultural sector [34]. The state of Uttar Pradesh with its population of over 190 million has housed a large proportion of Indian handloom weavers. The city of Varanasi (formerly Benaras) is said to be the home for textiles and is popularly known for its Silk Saris. There are approximately 125,000 weavers in Varanasi, making it the largest geographical concentrations of handloom weavers in the country [35]. More than 95 % of the weavers in Uttar Pradesh hail from Varanasi and a town called Barabanki.

The handloom sector had traditionally been characterized by a diverse raw material base, cheap labour, and a healthy domestic demand. However since the last few decades, the handloom industry has been facing a gradual decline and has considerable lost market share. The primary reasons for this are an increasing use of capital intensive technology with power-loom cloth, and control over labour processes. These macroeconomic changes have adversely affected not only the handloom industry in general, but also the condition of handloom weavers in India, especially in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The main difficulties associated with the revival of this industry are:

- Illiteracy of Weavers
- Procurement of Raw Materials
- Fluctuation in yarn prices (market volatility)
- Shortage of Input
- Power Cuts

MAJOR PLAYERS IN THE HANDLOOM INDUSTRY [36] [37]

The key players in the handloom industry in Uttar Pradesh are the 'Gaddidars' or the merchants, the 'Master Weavers' or the 'Grihastha' and the weavers. The Gaddidars are generally Hindu businessmen who supply capital and 'machinery' for the weaving process. These businessmen also look after the sales and marketing of the finished products, pocketing the proceeds as their profits. The Grihastha is the second group of entrepreneurs, who supervise the process in their own production units, often providing a small amount of personal capital. This group of people is usually Muslim. The weavers are the last part of the chain and performed the task of producing the different products. The weavers are paid wages, also known as 'Bani' or 'Majduri.' More than 79% of the weavers work in the two cities of Varanasi or Barabanki under Gaddidars. The

Gaddidars pay them majduri depending on the ability of the weaver to negotiate or on the complexity and design of the desired products.

TARGET GROUP – LOOMLESS WEAVERS

Our study focusses on a specific set of weavers, also known as the Loomless weavers. This particular group of labour has no loom of its own but is employed as wage earners to other loom. It is this set of people that are most exploited and face the greatest adversities among the weavers of Uttar Pradesh.

The loomless weavers have been particularly hit by the emergence of the powerloom. By automating the weaving process, powerlooms help to produce products that are poor quality and cheaper imitations of handloom products. The raw materials used for these cloths are also inferior in quality and are thus sold at lower rates. Since the wages of the weavers depends on the money made from the products, these amounts have decreased drastically. Additionally, the power loom can be operated by a single weaver, hence with an increasing use of power looms, there is an exponential increase in the number of weavers, who have been displaced from their job.

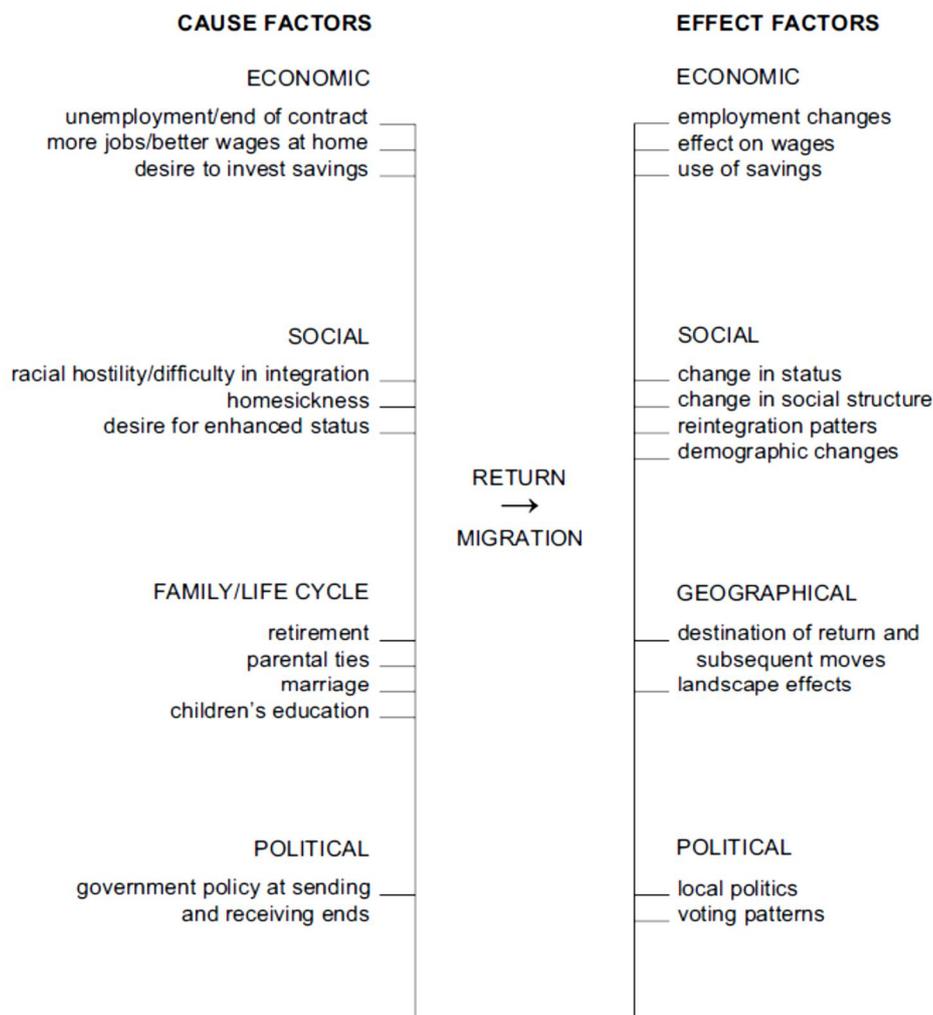
The situation of the loomless weavers and the industry as such is further worsened by the rising price of silk yarn (the main raw material) caused by difficulty in procuring the material and raw material shortages. Raw Material shortages cause halts in production, and therefore no work for weavers. This situation is a direct by-product of the ban by the Indian government on the import of Chinese silk in 1998 in an attempt to bolster the Indian silk industry.

The above conditions in turn affect the wage system in this labour intensive industry. The wages paid out to the labourers is usually not enough for their livelihood at the current market price. The Gaddidars give the weavers a post-dated cheque. Due to lack of education and the perpetual state of financial instability, these weavers do not have bank accounts. As a result of this weavers go to a third party to receive their money. This third party takes a cut of 2% to 3% from the original amount and pays out the rest, leaving the weavers with very little to take home. This system of exploitation also known as 'Bata Katna' combined with industrialization, domination by the Gaddidars, low wages, power cuts, high raw material prices, absence of development infrastructure and lack of governmental support is one of the key reasons for high weaver migration out of Uttar Pradesh to the more developed countries of the Gulf.

RETURN MIGRATION

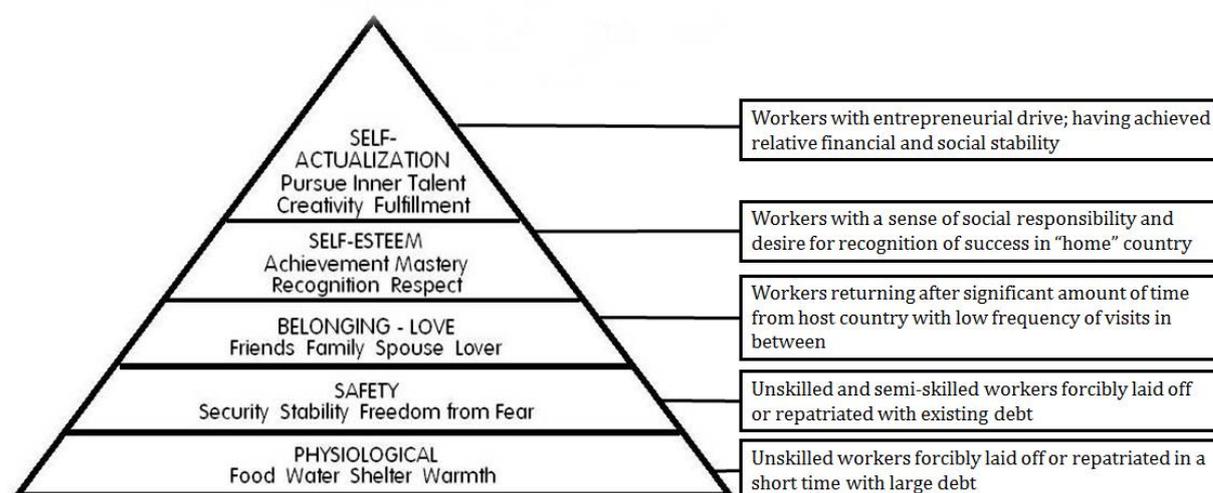
CAUSE AND EFFECTS OF RETURN MIGRATION [38]

As described earlier, return migration is “the process of a person returning to his/her country of origin or habitual residence”. King, in the “Generalization from the History of Return Migration” has identified the causes and effects of return migration as follows:



CLASSIFYING RETURN MIGRANTS

From the cause and effect relationship above, we can identify the main drivers behind return migration. This can be further used to classify the types of return migrants. Instead of adopting the traditional typology approach, we decided to classify return migrants based on their “*needs*” upon returning to the home country using Maslow’s hierarchy of needs:



In our classification of the above the types of return migrants we see that once a worker continues to work in the Gulf States for a significant amount of time, he becomes capable of meeting his and his family's "Safety" and "Physiological" needs. Even subsistence workers who work for long durations have been observed to have significantly improved their living conditions. ***In our report, we decided to focus on the categories related to "Physiological and Safety" as our target group of return migrants is the weaver community from Uttar Pradesh, India.*** This is the group that often faces risks of repatriation in a short time due to threats of getting laid off and employment of poor working conditions at (illegal) garment workshops.

WEAVING MAGIC, AGAIN – EMPOWERMENT

The empowerment of return migrants is a not a one step process. As the targeted workers belong to a category whereby they cannot easily migrate (legally) to other countries, and encounter repatriation in a short term, the measures in order to satisfy their “Physiological” and “Safety” needs once they return to India, needs to start before they actually leave for the Gulf.

Taking the above factor and also the problems on the ground with respect to the handloom industry into account, we have decided to divide the solutions that we would like to propose a three phase solution involving pre-departure from India, steps during their stay in the Gulf, and steps upon their return. The “pre-departure” and “during stay” measures can be implemented for all semi-skilled and unskilled workers leaving India, while the post-return steps are specific for weavers. The cycle of empowering workers cannot be closed if there is a gap at any of these levels.

PRE-DEPARTURE MEASURES [39]

SHORT TERM: COMPULSORY CREATION OF BANK ACCOUNT

The most important need for the migrant weavers upon remigration is usually the repayment of debt as well as any health problems which they or their family members encounter.

Currently as a part of the pre-departure requirements, semi-skilled and unskilled workers need to have the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana which provides an insurance cover of Rs. 1 million (provided the employment period is at least two years). There is however no coverage for the family members staying back in India (unless the migrant work suffers permanent disability or death). The scheme should be expanded to allow the health coverage for the basic health treatment of family members at government run hospitals for a nominal amount (say Rs. 125 or ~ USD2 per additional member) per year – currently the scheme is Rs. 275 for 2 years and Rs. 375 for 3 years. This will help to satisfy the “Safety” need of both the migrant worker as well as his family.

Also, following the inauguration of the “Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana” or the Prime Minister’s People Money Scheme which tries to ensure the access to financial services (namely Banking Savings & Deposit Accounts, Remittance, Credit, Insurance, Pension in an affordable manner) in 2014, one of the necessary pre-conditions should be the setting up of a bank account with a bank which has either a representative office/branch in the destination country and the issuance of RuPay Debit Card to the family members. Companies employing Indian workers must be obliged to transfer money to this bank account directly instead of following the current practice of paying in cash. This will have multi-fold advantages –

- i. Instead of following the current practice of transferring cash through agents and money transfer agencies, workers especially subsistence weavers will be able to transfer money directly to their families without losing out on exchange rates and transfer charges.
- ii. In the event of any emergency, the migrant worker/family members will not have to depend on scrupulous agents for financial requirements.
- iii. Presently, all the money that is sent back is usually collected by the family members in the form of cash from money exchange centres (usually post offices in rural areas – like the regions around Varanasi and Barabanki where the weavers are located). This money is rarely deposited in banks and therefore hardly accumulates any interest. Connecting the transfer of funds to a bank account will enable the accumulation of money on the part of the worker and his family and will also increase the money in circulation with the government.
- iv. Upon return to India in the long run, lines of credit at nominal interest rates for housing/education can be extended on the basis of this bank account.

The above measures will ensure the satisfaction of some of the basic physiological and safety needs of the migrant worker and his family.

SHORT TERM: COMPLUSORY PRE-DEPARTURE PACKAGE

Each subsistence migrant worker (unskilled/semi-skilled) must be given a pre-departure package specified for each country in the Gulf in his native language. Currently this information is available online and in English/ Hindi only. Currently before migrating each semi-skilled/unskilled worker needs to obtain his emigration clearance from a Passport Office (located all over India) and thus this information can be handed out at that time. It should contain information relevant to the Indian Mission in the destination country, emergency number, and all relevant safety/health instructions. A dedicated toll free IVRS (linked to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs) can also be created in multiple languages so that illiterate workers can call up and get all the relevant details before leaving the country.

LONG TERM: CREATION OF LABOUR AGENCIES IN ALL DISTRICTS, STARTING WITH THE ONES WITH HIGHEST MIGRANT COUNT:

A major source of financial stress for the migrant workers is the debt owed to the agent who acts on behalf of the recruiting agencies. By creating a migration labour office in each district in the country, with a central head office and regional/state headquarters, and by making it mandatory for any company wishing to recruit workers to go through the dedicated labour office the malpractices followed by scrupulous agents will most likely be reduced. Moreover, this office can

then be made the central point of contact for workers and their family in the event of an emergency (instead of going through the already strained office of District Magistrate as is done currently). This will also help to make companies (direct employer or labour recruiter) directly accountable for the treatment of workers instead of nameless agents. Further, in the event of a worker's inability to finance his departure, this department can also act as the coordinating agency with the bank for arranging the necessary line of credit (at low interest rates). Since the agency will have details of both the employer as well as the family, this will help in ensuring the steady repayment of loans and also act as point of contact for bank and other agencies in the event of an emergency.

MEASURES DURING STAY IN THE GULF

MONITORING OF BANK ACCOUNT BALANCE

The monitoring of bank accounts through the branch office/representative office will instil in the workers a sense of security and pride. Further, any steps such as additional insurance for family members/ investments can be easily financed through such a single point of contact.

MEASURES UPON RETURN TO INDIA – POST ARRIVAL [40] [41] [42]

[43] [44] [45]

Many of the weavers and subsistence workers who return to India face tremendous challenges in satisfying their basic physiological and safety needs – especially if the job has been terminated in the short term or when there is an existing debt (usually to the agent) to be repaid.

Since a large proportion of weavers who migrate out of India end up working in clothing/zardozi (a form of metal embroidery worked with gold and silver thread) workshops even in the Gulf States, the best way to make use of their acquired skills is to leverage that once they return to India.

COMPULSORY HEALTH CHECK UP AND TRANSFERENCE TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME (UHS)

At times given the nature of the conditions in which weavers and other subsistence workers live in, while in the Gulf, they become carriers for illnesses. A compulsory health check-up must be made mandatory upon arrival in India (using the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana at a government hospital). This will help to prevent the spread of diseases (including and especially Sexually Transmitted and Communicable Diseases).

Further, in order to ensure the continued health insurance coverage of family members, the weavers must be transferred free of cost for the remaining period of their insurance period from

the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana to the Universal Health Insurance Scheme of the Government of India. For example, before leaving if the worker had taken a Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana of three years but had his work contract terminated in less than a year, then he should have his and his family's coverage transferred to the Universal Health Insurance Scheme.

ESTABLISH LINE OF CREDIT

The recent 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna' (Prime Minister's People Money Scheme) introduced by the Indian Government would be a key value driver for the returning weavers. An easy credit scheme would be introduced which would enable the workers to get access to capital. This money would be transferred directly to their existing or new 'Jan Dhan' accounts. In doing so, repatriated weavers with debt burdens would find immediate financial relief. Furthermore, these accounts would serve as future interfaces for capital transaction.

Also, if the weavers are re-employed on the handloom, one of the major issues which they would currently be faced with is the interference of middle men. Since at present majority of the weavers do not have bank accounts, these middle men might take advantage of the situation (as they already do) to provide 'banking' services to the weavers. In doing so, they will take undue advantage and extract a greater 'cut' for themselves, leaving the workers with a substantially smaller sum of money than what they had worked for. The compulsory creation and use of the Jan Dhan accounts as proposed under the Pre-Departure solutions would allow the returning workers to by-pass these middle men and ensure that all future payments would be made directly to their accounts. This scheme can also be applied immediately to subsistence weavers who have been forced to return to India recently. Analysing it from the Maslow's hierarchy of need point of view, this will help to meet their safety and physiological needs immediately upon return, especially if they didn't have the option of creating a Jan Dhan account before leaving.

SETTING UP CO-OPERATIVES FOR REPATRIATED WEAVERS

Additionally, there could be an increased impetus given to the setting up of co-operatives of returning weavers. In addition to the sharing of knowledge and skill amongst themselves, these could also help them to access to larger lines of credit or capital, especially to set up their own micro level enterprises and thereby bypassing the established system of Gaddidars and Grihasthis.

In the first- phase specific model villages could be identified for setting up such cooperatives. These could thereafter firstly to the cover the rest of the districts of Varanasi and Barabanki in phase two and subsequently to other parts of Uttar Pradesh in phase three. The roll ours could be carried out in a period of 2-3 years and therefore, within a period of 8-10 years, all 75 districts of the state of Uttar Pradesh could be covered. In this initiative, having access to a larger sum of

money would allow returning weavers to invest in better machinery and therefore improve the output. The initial capital provided would foster their entrepreneurial drive and support them in creating a life and supporting the livelihood of their families post re-migration.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF AND COOPERATION WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played a critical role in the rehabilitation and empowerment of returning migrant worker in the Southern Indian states of Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. With the help of NGOS, partnerships could be developed to transfer techno-managerial skills to weavers even in Uttar Pradesh, achieve a 100% rise in their income and create local employment opportunities. Additionally, the NGOs could also provide educational facilities for the children of returning workers, who cannot afford to give them access to public education. The Handloom Weavers Development Society (HLWDS), in Kerala, is one such NGO that is actively changing the lives of workers in South India. Other ventures could involve actively supporting fledgling NGOs like Weavers Hut which are trying to improve the lives of weavers in and around Barabanki to also make use of the additional skills gained by the returning weavers from the Gulf.

SPECIFIC RETURN MIGRANT FOCUSED DEPARTMENT AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

Given the large scale migration and return migration that is now taking place out of Barabanki and Varanasi, a special "Return Migration" Department could be set up to look under the District Administration in both these districts. This department in addition to looking after the welfare of the returning workers can also be a point of contact for NGOs and other training agencies that are interested in either providing them with necessary tools to re-integrate into the community. Some returning weavers can also be made part of the department to provide assistance and guidance to other returning workers.

By coordinating with agencies like the Handloom Weavers Development Society or other such NGOs, returning weavers would have access to the different weaver clusters supported by the HLWDS across the country and be able to contribute and support such initiatives if required. This would allow information exchange and thus foster creativity and innovation. Additionally, it would also allow NRI workers to build new relationships and integrate faster into the community. Finally, this would also enable these agencies to smoothly extend welfare services such as livelihood programmes, training programmes on technical skills and legal aid programmes to them and their families.

MAKE THEM PARTNERS IN THE “MAKE IN INDIA” INITIATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Government of India has recently launched an ambitious plan for the Indian manufacturing industry – “Make in India”. The aim of this scheme is to foster and grow the manufacturing sector within the country. The Handloom and Textiles Sector (which is the second largest employer in India) besides being a major manufacturing contributor is also a large contributor to Indian exports. The Ministry of Textiles has recently been granted permission to build 13 Textile parks to boost manufacturing in this sector. Under this scheme, the Ministry aims to attract small and medium sized entrepreneurs in the textile division to these parks. Through this initiative, it aims to provide financial support and state of the art infrastructure in these parks to manufacturers. The returning weavers could play a big hand in promoting and helping this scheme.

Our proposal consists of the following initiatives for the returning workers:

- By providing subsidies to returning workers, the government can encourage them to use their existing and acquired (from the Gulf) skills and expertise to contribute to the Make in India’ scheme by providing 1st priority in the allocation of land and material to return migrants/ cooperatives wanting to set up shop in the textile parks This would provide a positive incentive for returning workers and would also allow them to create a source of revenue to maintain the livelihood of their families.
- Further, the government can also support them by subsidizing rates for land for new workshops/factories and subsidizing electricity rates on a 2 year contract basis. This would ensure the eradication of many of the ills which would have otherwise plagued their empowerment and development.
- For migrant workers who are still under debt/ are afraid to take risk of starting new ventures, the government should provide incentives to companies (tax breaks, subsidies on power consumption) upon hiring returning workers for a limited amount of time (say two years)
- Moreover, the government should as a principle for all enterprises in the textile parks ease the process of obtaining export licenses, and support especially those ventures involving returning migrant workers. Since, the returning weavers would know the customer requirements in the Gulf they would be able to tailor their products according to these specifications and ensure growth in export especially in domain like “zardozi” where it has been overtaken by Pakistan ^[46]. By making it easier for the returning workers to obtain an export license, the Government not only shows them good faith, but also creates a better export market

Given the fact that the Member of Parliament for the district of Varanasi is the Prime Minister of India and that for Barabanki is also from his party, the impact of the above measures if they are implemented will certainly be great.

CONCLUSION

This report tries to identify the drivers, causes and solutions to return migration of a specific community –Weavers from Uttar Pradesh (particularly Varanasi and Barabanki) in India. Since most of them migrate to parts of the Gulf and their meagre incomes (both in India and the Gulf States), their return to their homeland and their home communities is inevitable.

The solutions given in this report will address many of the issues plaguing them and the weaver community in general in Uttar Pradesh. The core driver behind this report has been the correlation drawn from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the needs of Returning Migrant workers. The attempt has been to ensure that the "Physiological" and "Safety" needs of the returning migrants are met by introducing and/or extending measures that can be taken by either governmental and non-governmental agencies. The ultimate aim through the establishment of these measures is to ensure the improvement in working conditions for weavers both within as well as outside India.

Although, we recognize the human need for migration in search for bettering lives, our desire is to alleviate the pain and misery experienced by the weavers and subsistence workers from India when they are forced to repatriate after having toiled in the deserts of the Gulf. Let the threads of gold and silver not be the source of tears of sweat and blood.

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