



REVERSE MIGRATION IN UTTARAKHAND IN THE DURATION OF COVID-19 : ANALYSIS AND SUGGESTIONS

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Abstract

Migration is the act of moving from one place to another, either permanently or temporarily. In most growing countries, people move from the countryside to the cities, and sometimes they leave their own countries to find a better life in another one. Uttarakhand is a state in the western Himalayas. Most of the people who live there live in rural places. The moving of people from rural to semi-urban or urban places, either temporarily or permanently is a major cause for concern. Migration from rural parts of the state is a problem that shows economic inequality and a lot of other problems, such as agriculture going down, rural incomes going down, and the rural economy being stressed. A report from the Migration Commission 2018 found that since 2011, more than 3.5 lakh people have left their homes in search of better jobs, schools, and hospitals. The COVID-19 outbreak has been bad for India and everyone else around the world. Millions of people around the world have lost everything because of this disease. Lakhs of people had to go back to their towns and home states because of the lockdown and lack of jobs in cities. People moved backwards from "urban" to "rural" places on a large scale in many parts of the country during the panic. After the central government declared a national lockdown on March 25, 2020, to stop the COVID-19 pandemic, the government moved people back to their original homes in "ghost villages" across the state. Most of the data used in this study paper came from other sources. Indian Census (2001–2011), Uttarakhand Migration Report 2018, 2020, and other research papers and books were used as sources for this research work.

Keywords: *Migration, Reverse migration, COVID-19, Uttarakhand.*

Introduction

A permanent or semi-permanent shift in a person's place of residence is referred to as migration. Very brief moves or shifts in residence within the same region, however, are not regarded as migration. In most developing nations, there is migration from rural to urban regions, and these individuals frequently go across international borders in the pursuit of a better living. The majority of people in the state of Uttarakhand, which is situated in the western Himalayas, reside in rural areas. The majority of the state's terrain is mountainous. A significant source of worry is the temporary or permanent migration of individuals from rural to semi-urban or metropolitan regions, which has led to a fall in village population that has reached double digits in several villages and impacted the primary sector (agricultural). has also been diminished. However, the influx of people into cities is putting pressure on resources both inside and beyond the state. Urban pollution, traffic, poor sanitation, and a lack of water are making the issues facing towns and cities already grappling with urbanization worse. The issue of migration from the state's rural areas is exposing economic inequality in addition to a host of other issues, chief among which are dwindling rural incomes, diminishing agriculture, and a pressured rural economy .

The issue of migration, or the exodus of individuals from their home villages in search of work and education, has long plagued the Himalayan state. As a result, in rural, steep parts of the state, 'ghost villages' with few residents were created. These impoverished settlements had poor infrastructure and were sealed. To address the issue, the Uttarakhand government established the Migration Commission



in 2017. According to the Commission, since 2011, over 3.5 lakh people have left their hometowns in quest of better employment prospects, access to healthcare, and educational possibilities. In the state, a minimum of 1,768 communities were designated as "ghost villages".

India has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as has the entire world. Worldwide, the lives of millions of people have been decimated by this pandemic. Numerous people were compelled to return to their villages and home states because of the lockdown and lack of employment opportunities in the city. In several regions of the country, there was a massive reverse movement from "urban" to "rural" areas as a result of the panic. Seeing hundreds or thousands of labourers return to their villages in need of solace and compassion above all else, since finding anything else will be quite challenging. Thousands of individuals lost their employment as a result of the lockdown, and many were compelled to return to their hometowns. During the lockdown, there was also a significant reverse migration in Uttarakhand, a hill state. The migrants were forced to return to their villages and hometowns as a result of the widespread closure of manufacturing facilities, hotels, and other commercial operations in the metropolis where the majority of the hill people were employed. During the COVID-19 epidemic, more than 2.15 lakh individuals returned to their homes in Uttarakhand from cities like Gurugram, Faridabad, and Bengaluru as well as countries like Dubai, Singapore, and Ireland, according to data given by the Uttarakhand Migration Commission in July 2020 (Roy, 2020). People employed in the unorganized and informal sectors in metropolitan regions experienced a reverse migration trend as a result of the statewide lockdown, fearing long-term unemployment and the loss of their means of subsistence.

To keep the repatriated migrants in the Himalayan state, the Uttarakhand administration adopted a number of actions. On March 25, 2020, in an effort to contain the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the state government ordered all citizens to return to their hometowns, or "ghost villages," around the state. made plans. On April 23, 2020, the state's Rural Development and Migration Commission presented an interim report that stated that 59,360 migrants had returned to ten different districts, with the exception of Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar, and Dehradun. Vice-chairman of the Uttarakhand Migration Commission Sharad Singh Negi speculated that this might be a temporary reverse migration (M. Prakash, Down to Earth, April 28, 2020). The government views this as a chance to keep its young people by educating them about the programs and giving them meaningful work.

Study Area

Uttarakhand is the 27th state of India. It was formed on 9 November 2000 by organizing the hilly districts of Uttar Pradesh. The latitudinal extension of Uttarakhand is from 28°43' north latitude to 31°8' north latitude and the longitudinal extension is from 77°35' to 81°02' east longitude. Uttarakhand has been divided into two divisions named Kumaon and Garhwal. In which there are total 13 districts. The proposed research is based on Kumaon division, in which 6 districts are located. The Kumaon division is a mountainous region located in the north of the country, in the middle of the mountain ranges, dense forests and Terai region.

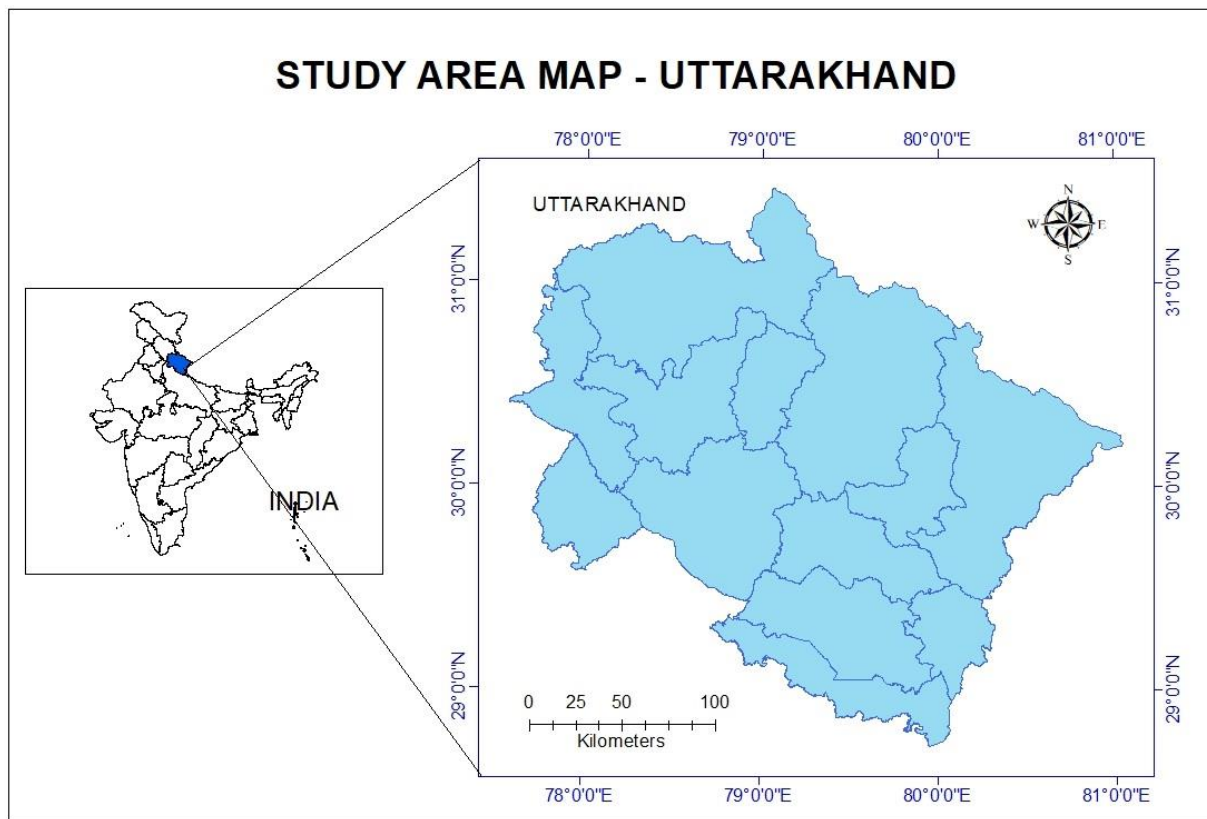


Fig No. 1 Study area map extracted from ArcGIS

Methodology

The research paper primarily relies on secondary data. The research paper on The Indian Census (2001-2011) and the Uttarakhand Migration Report 2018, together with several other research papers and books, have been utilized to finalize the study. Assistance from Microsoft Word, Excel, and ArcGIS software was utilized to generate diagrams and maps. The data has been subjected to comparative analysis using a range of statistical tools. Prior to map preparation, the raw data obtained from "Survey of India" was accessed, and ArcGIS version 10.8.2 played a significant role in this task. The study area map was created using ArcGIS. A table and graph were generated using Microsoft Word 7. ArcGIS use a coordinate system to accurately depict latitude and longitude on a map, employing a scale for measurement. The map is completed through the process of supervised classification.

Objective

1. To study and analyse the data of migrants who returned due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Suggestions to stop migrants returning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data analysis and findings

An analysis has been conducted on the data of migrants who were repatriated during the initial and subsequent waves of the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on this analysis, recommendations are being formulated to aid in the rehabilitation of these migrants. Specifically, the focus is on migrants who were repatriated during the first wave of Covid-19, until September 2020.



1. Approximately 357,536 migrants repatriated to their countries of origin by September 2020. The districts of Pauri, Tehri, and Almora had the highest number of returning migrants.
2. Approximately 70% of the migrants have come back from various states within India, while some have returned from different districts within Uttarakhand, the same district, and even international countries.
3. By September 2020, around 29% of the migrants who had returned to the state as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak had migrated again. A significant number of individuals have relocated to different districts inside the state, while the remaining individuals have once again gone outside the state.
4. About 71% of the migrants who returned to the state have gone to their native regions or areas close them. As of September 2020, over 33% of the population rely on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and similar activities for their living. Another 38% depend on the MNREGA program, 12% are engaged in self-employment, and 17% rely on other sources of income.
5. In the Almora district, around 39% of the migrants who have returned rely on self-employment, a much higher proportion compared to other districts. A significant proportion of repatriated individuals in Nainital, Udham Singh Nagar, and Tehri districts are demonstrating their reliance on self-employment.
6. A huge proportion of returned migrants depend on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry etc. for income. Of these, the highest districts are in Nainital (59%), Pithoragarh (57%), Bageshwar (53%), Champawat (40%) and Uttarkashi (45%).
7. The migrants who have come back rely heavily on MNREGA for their means of living in the districts of Haridwar (75%), Pauri (53%), Tehri (51%), and Chamoli (43%).

Number of Returnees / Reverse Migrants

S No	Name of districts	Number of Returnees / Reverse Migrants
1	Almora	43784
2	Nainital	9650
3	Pithoragarh	5451
4	Champawat	15097
5	Bageshwar	1925
6	Udham Singh Nagar	21958
7	Pauri	60440
8	Chamoli	5877
9	Dehradoon	2254
10	Haridwar	3136
11	Uttarkashi	19405
12	Tehri	19242
13	Rudraprayag	7656
Total		215875



Rural Development and Migration Commission, Uttarakhand, July 2020

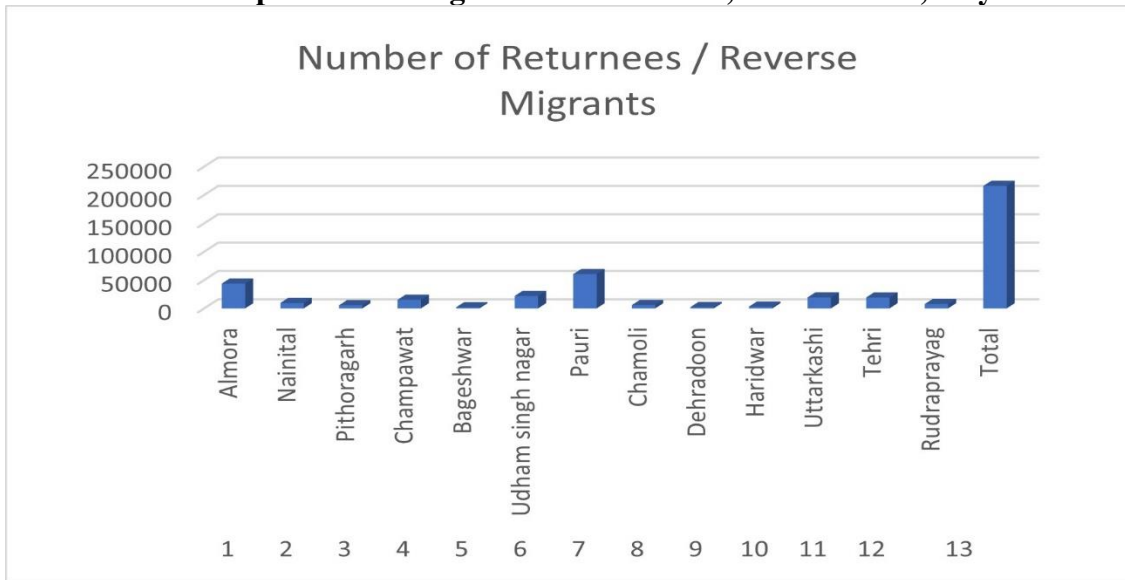


Fig No.2 Bar Diagram Reverse Migrants

Repatriates have come back as a result of the resurgence of Covid-19, specifically as of 5 May 2021.

1. Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, the data of a total of 215875 migrants who returned to rural areas of Uttarakhand state, clearly demonstrates that the biggest number of migrants is in Almora district at 27.97%, Pauri at 17.84% correspondingly. In Tehri district, 15.23% of migrants have returned, whereas the lowest return rates are observed in Haridwar (0.11%), Dehradun (0.29%), and Udyam Singh Nagar (0.66%) districts. These figures indicate a higher level of migration from rural areas in hilly districts.
2. Out of the total 53092 migrants who returned to rural areas of Uttarakhand state between April 2021 and May 5, 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is evident that the highest number of migrants, accounting for 19.13%, were in Almora district. Pauri district had 13.50% of the migrants, while Tehri district had 10.19%. On the other hand, the 25 least populated districts, such as Haridwar, Dehradun, and Udyam Singh Nagar, had a very low percentage of migrants returning from other states of the country, ranging from 0.05% to 0.63%.
3. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant number of migrants returning to the districts of Uttarakhand state between April 2021 and May 05, 2021. The largest percentage of returnees can be observed in Almora district at 8.60%, followed by Pauri at 3.67%, and Tehri district at 4.72%. The districts with the lowest percentages were Haridwar with 0.06%, Dehradun with 0.07%, and Udyam Singh Nagar with 0.02%.
4. The data from migrants who returned to Uttarakhand between April 2021 and May 05, 2021, reveals that the state's biggest number of development blocks, out of the total 95, had surpassed the thousand mark due to the second wave of the Covid-19 epidemic. Sealdah and Salt are constituent units of the migrant district Almora, mostly focused on development.



Number of Returnees / Reverse Migrants

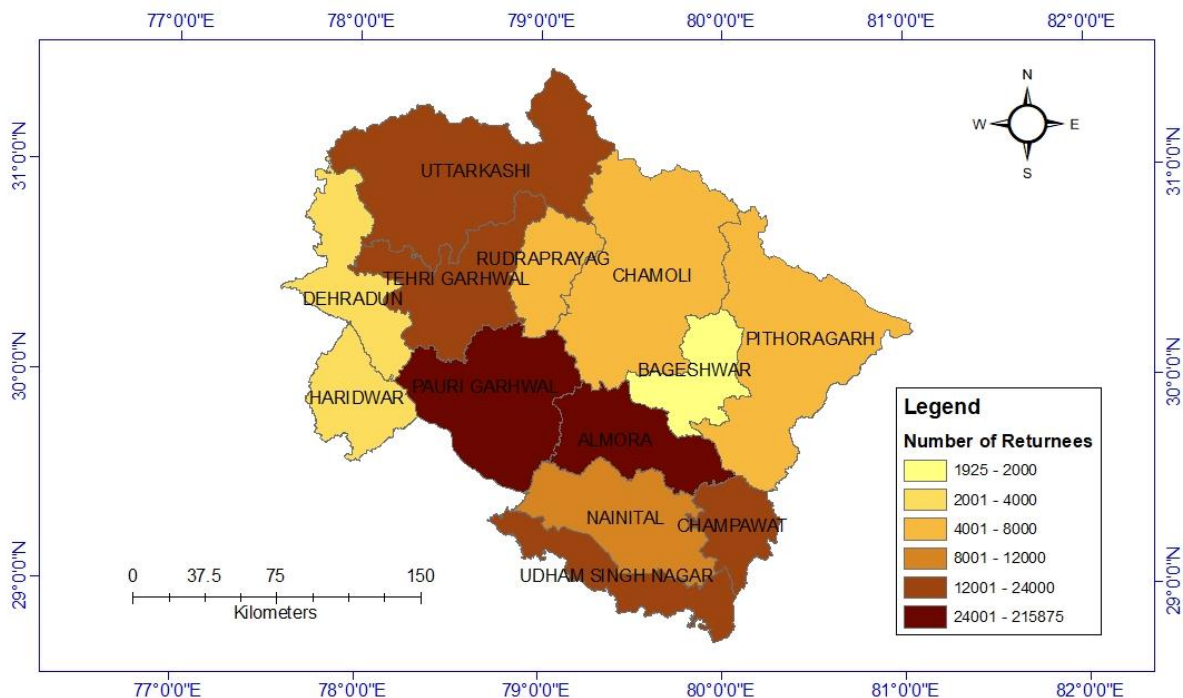


Fig No. 3 Number of Returnees / Reverse Migrants extract from ArcGIS

Suggestions

1. The state government must implement specific measures to economically rehabilitate reverse migrants. Implementation of this initiative will enhance rural development in the mountainous districts of Uttarakhand, leading to an amelioration of social and economic circumstances, thereby mitigating outmigration from the state.
2. During this process, returning migrants will be offered opportunities for sustainable livelihoods while residing in the districts, and essential services in rural regions will also be enhanced.
3. The emphasis should solely be on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, tourism, and self-employment. Each department should revise its plans for the economic reintegration of Reverse Migrants, making any required adjustments.
4. The Reverse Migrants who arrived in the state following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic possess considerable expertise in their respective domains. For example, the hospitality sector and other service sectors. These benefits can be obtained through several means such as staying in a home, hotel, engaging in eco-tourism, or participating in adventure sports. Based on their expertise, a significant number of these individuals have the potential to achieve success in creating a sustainable income by remaining inside their respective district.
5. In order to ensure the success of this endeavour, it is imperative to promptly establish a specialized unit (referred to as the Dedicated Cell) inside the Planning Department or Rural Development Department at the state, district, and tehsil/development block levels. This



institution will oversee the coordination of all rehabilitation efforts for Reverse Migrants in collaboration with the Rural Development and Migration Commission.

6. It is imperative to build personal connections with all these individuals in order to get knowledge about their experiences, interests, and needs. A database should be developed using this information, which will be accessible at both the state and district levels. An individualized plan should be devised for each individual or group to prevent further migration. A significant portion of the population is unaware of the diverse government initiatives. To enhance this process, it is crucial for development block level officers from different departments to establish communication with these reverse migrants and provide them with guidance.
7. The hotel sector, eco-tourism, micro firms, and similar industries can receive loans with fixed interest rates, incentives, and access to affordable electricity.
8. Additionally, it has been seen that individuals residing in rural regions are receiving numerous advantages from programs such as MSME, Employment Generation Scheme, and Veer Chandra Singh Garhwali Scheme. It is imperative to allocate greater funds for these programs.
9. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, numerous individuals engaged in reverse migration in different areas of the state and have attained significant economic prosperity. Currently, reverse migrants can be motivated by showcasing their success stories.
10. A significant number of migrants who came back during the initial surge have not undertaken migration once more. An analysis of their means of subsistence can be used to develop a framework for the reintegration of the migrants who have returned as a result of the second wave.

Conclusion

We have learned from the Corona pandemic that every nation needs the necessities for self-sufficiency. The crisis has reinterpreted the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Gram Swaraj (Village Republic), in addition to challenging numerous presumptions and concepts like globalization, outsourcing, and the global village. Gandhi's idea of "Gram Swaraj," or an independent village system, can serve as a global leader in the post-COVID world order and as a substitute for outsourcing. In his speech to the country during the lockdown, the prime minister emphasized the need for "Gram Swaraj" to become self-sufficient and advocated for every Indian to become a "vocal for our local." To investigate the reasons behind the people's forced migration to urban areas and to understand the circumstances surrounding their return to their native villages, a thorough policy research is also required. Now what are the possibilities and opportunities to retain these people in their native places? Investigating workable plans to keep migrants in Uttarakhand's local communities is urgently needed.

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