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## **MIGRATION AND LABOUR RETURNEES FROM GULF: A STUDY OF REMITTANCES IN EASTERN UTTAR PRADESH**

### ***Abstract***

*This paper attempts to examine the emergence of Eastern Uttar Pradesh (EUP) as the source of labour supply to the oil-producing Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The oil-producing countries, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have shown a path of infrastructural development. In the beginning of the 'oil boom,' the South Indian states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh were the top migrant-producing states, but later, the North Indian states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar replaced them. These GCC countries have opened the door to employment opportunities for developing countries. The labourers of EUP come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This paper aims to understand how the migrant labourers and their families utilize the remittances at their origins. We will also briefly address the social life of the migrant labourers and the challenges they face in GCC countries. Data has been collected from six districts of EUP, employing a purposive sampling method, face-to-face individual interviews, and observations in the homes of migrant returnees. Interestingly, our study indicates that remittances correlate with monthly income and working hours per week. Consequently, migrants from EUP are inclined to work longer hours and exhibit lower absentee rates compared to the local workforce in GCC countries.*

**Keywords:** *Migration, labour, GCC countries, oil boom, remittances, employment.*

### **Introduction**

International labour migration from Uttar Pradesh has a long historical trajectory. It began in the 1820s, when a significant number of agricultural labourers, artisans, and cultivators migrated for British colonies such as Trinidad and Tobago, Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, and Suriname during the colonial era (Sarkar, 2020). In post-independence period, migration shifted to the Arabian

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region as a result of the oil boom. Since the oil boom, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries have emerged as one of the primary destinations for Indian labourers. In India, Kerala received a lot of attention in the 1970s because of the enormous number of expatriates to the GCC countries (Azeez & Begum, 2009). Later, after 2002, the migration trend in India shifted significantly from the south to the north (mainly Uttar Pradesh and Bihar). In 2009, Uttar Pradesh replaced Kerala with 1,25,783 emigration clearance (MOIA, 2010-11) and still remained the top labour producing state in India for the GCC countries.

Eastern Uttar Pradesh (EUP) is divided geographically into east and west region. Since the colonial period, EUP has made an important contribution to worldwide migration flows. For instances, indentured labour migration was an important phenomenon of EUP region, particularly from Basti, Gonda, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur, Allahabad, Banaras, Ghazipur, Faizabad, and the like (Jain, 2006). In the twenty-first century, migration patterns are primarily concentrated on GCC countries which are similar to indentured in terms of contract and exploitation. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Overseas Employment Division 2022, approximately 3,73,434 Indians obtained Emigration Clearance of which 1,23,702 are only from Uttar Pradesh and 60,945 from Bihar in north India (MEA, 2022). Many migrants from EUP have been working in the GCC for many years. The trend, nature, and magnitude of migration from EUP to the GCC countries are influenced by various factors such as unemployment, economic diversity of the place of origin, migration networks and the demand for the specific workforce. In EUP, the unemployment rate and wage differs by region, which influences migration flow to the GCC.

Rapid economic expansion in the GCC has created huge development projects that have always drawn skilled workers in multinational corporations (MNCs) as well as unskilled labourers for construction projects. Hence, nearly 30 million foreign nationals reside in the GCC countries, accounting for approximately 52% of the total population (De Bell-Air, 2022). According to the Gulf Labour Markets and Migration (GLMM) report 2020, the expatriate population is much higher compared to nationals. Therefore, nationals have become a minority in their nation in terms of the employed population, such as Saudi Arabia (76% non-national), Kuwait (85% non-national), Qatar (95% non-national), Bahrain (78% non-national), and Oman (77% non-national), as a result of demographic imbalances (GLMM, 2020). Many migrants from the EUP play important roles in development projects that strengthen the GCC's economies.

Labourers from economically disadvantaged and marginalized backgrounds face a relentless struggle for employment, with many remaining unemployed, especially among the youth. This situation reflects systemic issues within the local economy (Yeasmin et al., 2022). The trend of labour migration

from EUP to the GCC countries has altered the socio-economic landscape for numerous households. Migrants are not just seeking better opportunities; they are actively transforming their family's financial situation through remittances that significantly enhance their household income and living standards. Strong migration networks play a pivotal role in this dynamic. These networks, comprised of existing migrants and their contacts, including friends and relatives, are instrumental in facilitating the migration process while creating high expectations for lucrative wages abroad. It is these aspirations for improved economic conditions that drive individuals to pursue job opportunities beyond their local environments, making this migration not just a choice but a necessity for many seeking to escape poverty and improve their lives.

### **Methodology**

We employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Our qualitative research utilized purposive sampling through face-to-face interviews and direct observations in the homes of migrant returnees. The fieldwork spanned six districts in Eastern Uttar Pradesh: Gorakhpur, Mahrajganj, Azamgarh, Deoria, Kushinagar, and Mau. We conducted fieldwork from August 2018 to November 2018 and April 2022. We identified six blocks within each district and, with the Panchayat's collaboration, pinpointed twenty villages that significantly contributed to migration to GCC countries. We successfully engaged one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from one hundred and thirty (130) households, including returnees and current migrant workers, often interviewing multiple individuals from the same household. Additionally, informal interviews provided critical insights into the migration process and the significant impact of remittances on these families. The qualitative data have been sourced from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) reports, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Indian Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Organization of Migration (IOM). For the quantitative analysis, we employed the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The primary data were collected from return migrants and their families through both structured and unstructured questionnaire schedules.

### **Theoretical framework**

The push and pull theory significantly elucidates the factors driving labour migration. As Evert Lee (1966) highlights, migration from EUP to GCC countries is influenced by push factors such as unemployment and poverty, alongside pull factors like better job opportunities and enhanced living conditions. This perspective emphasizes the socio-economic shifts within households and is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the migration process. Male migration from rural areas is the predominant form of migration from EUP. The Census of (2011) clearly indicates that male out-migration for work is particularly pronounced in lower-income regions like Uttar Pradesh

and Bihar (Sarkar, 2020). Uttar Pradesh, with its dense population and insufficient industrial growth, severely limits local employment opportunities. Many labourers who migrate are literate but unskilled or have dropped out of school. In analyzing labour migration from EUP to GCC countries, we cannot overlook the crucial role of migration networks in facilitating this emigration. These networks are instrumental as they provide vital information about job opportunities and challenges, directly influencing the decision-making process for migrants. Once these labourers establish themselves in the GCC, these individuals form their own networks, encouraging chain migration and instilling hope in potential emigrants through detailed insights on job prospects, wages, and the cultural dynamics of the host societies. Therefore, chain migration significantly impacts the relationship between the EUP and the GCC countries, playing a crucial role in facilitating labour migration. Network Social theory network posits that "...migration networks can be defined as sets of interpersonal relations that link migrants or returned migrants with relatives, friends or fellow countrymen at home. They convey information, provide financial assistance, facilitate employment and accommodation, and give support in various forms" (Arango, 2000). Understanding these social networks is crucial, as they fundamentally influence migration decisions at the place of origin. Over time, as these networks strengthen, they foster what is known as chain migration, thereby sustaining and amplifying the flow of migration (Ababa, 2016).

### **Migration from EUP to GCC Countries**

This study clearly establishes that migrant labourers from EUP predominantly come from underdeveloped rural areas, particularly backward villages where job opportunities and income sources are scarce. Most of these individuals rely entirely on the traditional agrarian economy. The migration from EUP is driven by compelling pull factors and oppressive push factors that vary by individual and region, with a vital goal of achieving a more favourable economic status in society. Uttar Pradesh is unequivocally a "BIMARU" state in India, lagging significantly in economic growth, education, healthcare, employment, and wages (Singh, 2023). Consequently, local labourers are often left with wages ranging between INR 5,000 to INR 10,000 (five to ten thousand) per month, which is inadequate for family sustenance. This dire situation necessitates that families send at least one member to GCC countries, where the earning potential rises to between INR 25,000 and INR 30,000 per month, almost double from what they make in India.

Maya Devi is the wife of a migrant from Gorakhpur district. She said "*My husband was working in Punjab for a meager salary and we did not have a single 'Kathha' (a local term in EUP used to measure agricultural land) of agricultural land. After the disintegration of the joint family, my children and I have been living in a single 'Kutchra' House.*" Her husband lived for ten years

in Punjab but was not able to buy even a television for his children due to the low wages. According to his wife, *"We were not able to send our children to school due to the shortage of money. I was living at home with our children and engaged as a daily wage worker in agricultural lands for survival."* Somehow, her husband came into contact with somebody who was working in the GCC. He came back home from Punjab and learned to drive cranes for six months and then applied for a passport to move to GCC, but he had no money to pay agents for visas and airfare. His relatives also were not able to help him. After some time, he could borrow some money from the moneylenders in his village and finally went to Saudi Arabia. *Mahendra Prasad, 60 years 60-year-old migrant from Azamgarh said "We were living in very poor conditions. I was not able to provide good food for my family. It was a very difficult time and situation for me to feed my children."* He spent several years as a daily wage labourer in Mumbai but was unable to construct a better home for himself. His kids were very interested in learning, but they were unable to go to good schools because of their family's financial situation. In this perspective, low wages, a high unemployment rate, and poverty are the leading cause of labour migration from EUP.

Due to the poor income and persistence of poverty, the migrants are seeking a better place to get high wages and the GCC countries give them hope to fulfill their expectations. Massy (1993), also argues that a migrant's decision to move is influenced by the prospect of earning more money and expecting income maximization. Borjas also points out that migrants may choose a variety of destinations, where they expect huge returns for their migration (Olejarova, 2007). Therefore, the majority of the migrants from EUP are motivated by expectations of high wages. Sahanaj 26 year migrant engaged in a stitching job in Saudi Arabia said, *"When I came to Saudi Arabia, I expected to make a significant sum of money. I was given the same job and a large salary as I was told by the visa agent. I shared an affordable rental apartment with two other migrants at the time. I am now satisfied with my income because I recently constructed a new home and got married after moving."* This kind of positive outcome inspires others with the promise of a prosperous future. The majority of the migrants were dissatisfied with their pay because they worked as daily wage workers in their home cities. As a result, they decide to emigrate to the GCC to improve their socio-economic status in their place of origin. For instance, Ramkeval, a 42-year-old migrant preparing to go to the UAE as a construction worker (Shuttering) said, *"My earnings are not sufficient to meet the basic requirements of my family and children. I was working in Gujarat as a paint polisher for a daily wage. My salary was very meager; therefore I decided to go to Dubai. There, I can find lucrative employment options and increase my income."* Therefore, we can say that emigration from the EUP region to GCC countries is influenced by multiple push and pull factors. Each migrant comes from a diverse socio-economic background, and their challenging economic conditions play a crucial role in shaping their expectations. These expectations

are directly linked to the pull factors that drive them to migrate.

### **Migrant's demographic profile**

According to the NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2022, Uttar Pradesh is one of the most backward states in India (Bhat, 2022) and the EUP region is the most populated and backward in terms of industrialization and development. As a result, young individuals in EUP from marginalised groups such as *Chamar*, *Pasi*, and *Dhobi* who are unemployed, unskilled construction labourers, and literate and illiterate are seeking employment opportunities in GCC countries. Therefore, this study found that the majority of migrants are between the ages of 30-35 years and 35-40 years, owing to the younger population being the region's largest group of school dropouts (see table no. 1). They prefer to migrate to the GCC countries in quest of respectable employment and more lucrative economic opportunities after gaining some experience with construction work in industrialized cities in India such as Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bangalore and Delhi. The majority of migrants are involved in circular migration and have worked for many years; therefore, their present ages and ages at the time of migration are different. Hence, the majority of migrant workers at the time of departure were between the ages of 25 and 35 (61.3%), indicating that the younger generation is driving the flow of labour migration toward the GCC countries. Uttar Pradesh is predominantly Hindu, with a significant 79.3% of migrants belonging to the Hindu community, while the Muslim community constitutes 20.7%. This demographic distribution demonstrates the dominance of Hindus in the region. That's why Hindu community accounts for 79.3% of migrants, followed by the Muslim community, which accounts for 20.7%. Hindu domination in migration flow from EUP to GCC shows a global picture of religious harmony in the world. Because despite the domination of Islamic theocratic laws the GCC countries are providing employment opportunities for Indian labourers.

The Indian social system is dominated by castes, which are hierarchically divided society into four categories such as *Brahmins*, who are considered priests, scholars, and teachers; *Kshatriyas*, who are known as warriors, administrators, or rulers; *Vaishyas*, which refer to the merchant and farmer communities; and *Shudras*, which are considered impure (bottom in the Hindu social order) that do not have social accessibility since five thousand years. However, after the independence of India, constitutionally the *Shudra* categorised into three categories; Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) based on socio-economic circumstances. They are socially, economically, and politically backward and marginalised communities that have fewer educational qualifications (Prasad and Akundy, 2021). Therefore, the proportion of unemployed and construction labourers in unorganised sectors is much higher than the other higher castes (*Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, and *Vaishyas*). These three Varna have maximum

ownership of agricultural land and representation in government sectors and trade and business. Hence, the Brahmin and Kshatriyas have a very small proportion of labour migration toward the GCC countries. They contributed merely 4.7% whereas Other Backward Classes (OBC) consist of 42.0%. Although OBC is a group of castes that are also backward concerning socio-economic development, their status in society is better than Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) (Keshari & Bhagat, 2010). There are two types of class in the OBC community: the first is *economically underprivileged* with limited economic resources, while the second is *economically and politically privileged* and has access to agricultural land, decent employment opportunities, and a variety of economic sources. Those who are economically underprivileged are not able to find good economic source due to the less qualification. Therefore, they search for job opportunities in the GCC countries due to the growing unemployment rate in the state for survival.

In Uttar Pradesh, Dalit leaders have concentrated solely on winning political power rather than promoting growth and industrialization to provide new job prospects for marginalized people. Thus, when compared to upper caste and OBC groups in the EUP region, Scheduled Castes continue to have the lowest socio-economic conditions. Among the Scheduled Castes, there are three distinct categories. The first category consists of government employees. This group is typically educated, well-maintained, and lives in good housing. Their primary source of income is government employment, and their children often attend colleges and universities to further their education. They generally do not seek labour work, focusing solely on government job opportunities. The second category includes an agriculturally prosperous group. Members of this class possess very little formal education and have limited participation in government employment. Agriculture provides their main source of income, but they often send their children to nearby cities to prepare for government jobs. Occasionally, they may also travel to the GCC countries or encourage their children to explore better economic opportunities. The third category is the labour class, which has little to no economic resources. This group consists of unskilled and uneducated workers who engage in daily wage employment either in their villages or in nearby cities. They constitute the majority of the migrant labour force among the Scheduled Castes, driven by poverty and unemployment.

**Table no. 1: Demographic Profile of Migrants**

Sr. no.	Name of the Variable	Determinants	Frequency	Percent
1	<i>Age of migrants during migration</i>	18-25 age group	39	26
		25-30 age group	92	61.3
		30-35 age group	13	8.7
		35-40 age group	6	4
2		18-25 age group	14	9.3

		25-30 age group	23	15.3
	<i>Present age of migrants</i>	30-35 age group	30	20
		35-40 age group	49	32.7
		40-45 age group	18	12
		Above 45 years age	16	10.7
3	<i>Marital status</i>	Married	133	88.7
		Unmarried	17	11.3
4	<i>Social category</i>	General	7	4.7
		Other backward classes	64	42
		Scheduled castes	79	53.3
5	<i>Religion</i>	Hindu	119	79.3
		Muslim	31	20.7
6	<i>Qualification of migrants</i>	Primary	22	15.3
		Middle level	35	22
		Secondary level	47	31.3
		Senior Secondary level	30	20.7
		Undergraduate	9	6
		Graduate	7	4.7
7	<i>Household Structure</i>	Joint family	122	81.3
		Nuclear family	28	18.7

Sources: Data have been collected through the fieldwork

The Scheduled Castes face significant literacy challenges, with a literacy rate of just 60.9% compared to the overall population (Census, 2011). This means that the remaining 40% of this community must navigate severe obstacles for their survival. A large portion of migrants comes from these Scheduled Castes, which comprise about 52.7% of the population, predominantly from the Chamar community, which constitutes roughly 42.7%. The Chamar, alongside Dhobi and Pasi, represent marginalized groups in northern India with hereditary occupations. Sadly, many children from these families drop out of school to contribute to their household income due to a lack of alternatives. Moreover, Chudihar and Qureshi, making up 4.7% of the total Muslim population, also experience similar hardships but tend to engage in self-employment opportunities. Many individuals from these communities are economically disadvantaged and therefore look to the GCC countries for better prospects.

The proportion of unmarried individuals would likely have been much higher before migration (Rahman, 2001). However, after migration, the study found that the majority of migrants were married, with only a small percentage remaining unmarried (see Table 1). Traditional rural social structures are still prevalent in EUP, as a vast majority of migrants (81.3%) come from joint families. While working in contemporary industrial societies, these migrants



continue to hold onto their beliefs and preserve their social norms and values. As a result, the number of joint families remains significantly higher than that of nuclear families in EUP. The study indicates that Saudi Arabia is the most favoured destination for EUP migrants, with 55.3% choosing to move there for employment opportunities. In comparison, 22.0% migrated to the United Arab Emirates, while 8.7% went to Qatar, 7.3% to Oman, 4.0% to Bahrain, and 2.0% to Kuwait. Although some migrants have visited various GCC countries in search of better employment, this group is relatively small, comprising only 0.7% of the total migrant population.

### **Utilisation of Remittances**

The remittances in EUP vary according to the GCC countries' monthly earnings and employment structures. When a migrant's monthly income is high, they send as much as they can, but when it is low, they send very little to their families. Therefore, the average amount of sending remittances ranges from INR 5,000/- (Five thousand) to the maximum of INR 30,000/- (Thirty thousand) but some people send approximately INR 50,000-1,00,000/- (Fifty thousand to one lakh rupees) after the two- or three-months gap for important work such as wedding, construction of new home or purchased household assets and the like. Jawahir Kushwaha 46-year-old migrant working in Saudi Arabia since 2015, said, "*For the first time, I sent INR 20,000/- (twenty thousand rupees) to my family in EUP which was the lowest amount I had ever sent, but afterward, I use to transfer enormous amount after three to four months totaling somewhere between INR 50,000-70,000/- (Fifty thousand to fifty thousand rupees).*" The households and their members such as wives, children, brothers, and parents are the main beneficiaries of GCC remittances. Similarly, Dilawar Ali was working in Cooperative Society Pvt. Ltd said "*I typically provided little sums of money each month, but every two or three months or whenever my family needed larger amount, I sent INR 50,000-60,000/- (Fifty thousand to sixty thousand rupees).*"

It was exceedingly challenging to obtain the migrant workers' monthly salaries, but instead of providing their actual pay, the respondents provided an estimate of their monthly earnings. As a result, we created this variable based on the figures they provided. Therefore, the study found that the majority of the migrants received INR 20,000-30,000/- (Twenty thousand to thirty thousand rupees) per month including overtime work, because most of them work as unskilled labourers on construction sites (see table no 1). They are unable to obtain higher paid jobs because of their low educational qualifications but those who were being paid INR 30,000-40,000/- (Thirty thousand to forty thousand rupees) per month, work 4-5 hours extra beyond the fixed hours per day to increase their monthly salary. Some people have been working for a long time and have work experience in their field, they are employed in various reputable companies along with fixed working hours and working days in a week, but

their proportion is relatively low. Their average monthly income was INR 40,000-50,000/- (Forty thousand to fifty thousand rupees). Some of the migrants recently went through the agents to the Gulf nations. The majority of them are watchmen and domestic workers making below INR 20,000/- (Twenty thousand) per month without overtime. A few of them were mistreated by the home's owner, who made them scrub the house's floors and tend to the garden.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, maximum migrant workers (from EUP) either return to their homes or are unable to send money to their families. Remittances to EUP are spent as income on things like food, clothes, housing, education, and health care, leaving just a small amount of money for so-called "productive" investments (Golddring, 2004). The study found that most of the migrant labourers are sending money directly to the accounts of their family members but a few of them who are 'new migrants' also bring goods such as jewelry, mobile, and other personal things for personal use but their proportion is very low. The banking system is the principal mode for the transfer of money such as the State Bank of India and Western Union. These bank accounts are found to be mostly in the name of either the wife of the migrants or their parents. According to respondents, the cost of sending remittances varies across countries and regions within the GCC nations. If the migrant sends money, the Western Union bank charges 27 Riyals for the 3000 Riyals, which is located in an urban area where they must pay 5 Riyals for a taxi ride. A 36-year-old migrant named Shambhu Panday said, *"My wife has an SBI account. I deposited money to any Qatari banks, and they transferred INR 50,000 (Fifty thousand rupees) to my wife's account along with 18 Riyal fees."* Similarly, Upendra Yadav is a 37-year-old migrant driver in Bahrain. He said *"My father is still my guardian, I prefer to send money to his account solely but I occasionally send money to my wife's account as well to pay life insurance and save for my children's future. In addition to the required money, I send money for my wife's personal needs."*

The frequency of remittance varies depending on the demands or requirements of the families back home. It has been observed that migrants will send remittances every month or as needed if the family or household in EUP has no other source of income and is solely dependent on overseas remittances. However, if the migrant's home has another source of income then the migrant tries to save money and send it to the family's requirements. Therefore, the study found that approximately 36.7% of migrants fell into the category of migrants who send remittances every month, while 31.3% of migrants fell into the category of migrants who sent remittances on a mixed basis (monthly and quarterly). Please see table no - 2 below.

**Table no. 2: Remittances and its Utilisation**

Sr. no.	Name of the Variables	Determinants	Frequency	Percen
1	<i>Monthly Income</i>	Bellow 20,000	5	3.3
		INR20,000-30,000	70	46.7
		INR30,000-40,000	51	34.0
		INR40,000-50,000	16	10.7
		Above INR50,000	5	5.3
2	<i>Frequency of Remittances</i>	Monthly	55	36.7
		Quarterly	13	8.7
		Monthly and quarterly	47	31.3
		Based on need	35	23.3
3	<i>Constructed/renovated house after migration</i>	Yes	100	66.7
		No	50	33.3
4	<i>Purchased agricultural land/plots</i>	Yes	42	32.7
		No	108	67.3
5	<i>Investment in business</i>	Yes	35	23.3
		No	115	76.7
6	<i>Investment in children education</i>	Yes	119	79.3
		No	31	20.7
<b>Sr. no.</b>	<b>Purchased household assets</b>	<b>Determinants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	<i>Television</i>	Yes	129	86.0
		No	21	14.0
2	<i>Gas connection</i>	Yes	124	82.7
		No	26	17.3
3	<i>Motorcycles</i>	Yes	108	72.0
		No	42	28.0
4	<i>Washing machine</i>	Yes	24	16.0
		No	126	84.0
5	<i>Tractor</i>	Yes	18	12.0
		No	132	88.0
6	<i>Car</i>	Yes	5	3.3
		No	145	96.7
7	<i>Refrigerator</i>	Yes	49	32.7
		No	101	67.3

Data Sources: Data has been collected through the fieldwork

Some migrants prefer to send remittances as needed, accounting for 2.3% of all migrants, as they either have additional sources of income in their families or their father or elder brother provides economic support to the families. Furthermore, there is a portion of migrants who send remittances quarterly or more frequently, but they account for only 8.7% of total migrants (see table no 2).

In EUP, household possessions such as motorcycles, cars, tractors, refrigerators, and agricultural land have become symbols of prestige. Somebody has more esteem and social capital if they possess these attributes. Hence, migrant families make an effort to buy significant household items to show their socio-economic power to others in their villages. The study found that 72.0% of households had bought motorcycles using GCC remittances (see table

no. 2) and the families who already had agricultural land purchased tractors so that they could do farming well and produce better grains. GCC remittances have contributed to a beneficial change in families' modern lifestyles because they are not only dependent on traditional socio-economic structural systems, but they also use modern machinery tools to make life easier, such as washing machines, televisions, and refrigerators. The study found that purchasing television for children is a household's top priority since it allows other family members to learn about contemporary cultural norms and technological advancements in society. Few of the households were from the top class among the OBC and SC communities, who were financially wealthier than other migrants; as a result, they purchased cars after the accumulation of GCC remittances, however, their proportion is quite modest (see table no. 2).

Remittances have a micro and macro level impact on household level because it is not only utilizing for survival but also for the sustainable development of households. The use of GCC remittances is not limited to household assets but it has been used for several important works such as the construction or renovation of homes, the establishment of businesses, purchased agricultural land for economic stability, and the like. Business ownership may also attract remittances if the existence of the business has single remitters that there are worthwhile investment opportunities in the home societies (Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo, 2006). The study found that most of the households have invested remittances in small sustainable businesses after migration which constituted 23.3% while 32.7% of migrant households purchased agricultural land or plots to construct new houses and 66.7% constructed new homes but those who already had houses, they renovated their homes after migration. Therefore, there is a positive use of remittances in EUP which contributes to micro-economic development at the household and societal levels.

### **Labour Camps: Social Life of the Migrants**

The working environment of GCC countries impacted the social life of migrants in terms of interaction, accommodation, and immigration policies. Labour camps are generally used in the GCC countries that refer to a wide variety of labour accommodations (Gardner, 2010). Therefore, the majority of migrant workers stayed in labour camps, which consists of 83.3 %. According to Gardner (2010), labour camps are not evenly distributed in the Gulf cities, instead, these camps coagulate in particular regions of the cities that are a long distance from the working place. Hence, the migrant labourers are forced to go a minimum of 10 kilometers each day either by walking if the company is near or by bus if the company is situated at a long distance. Indeed, the research found that approximately 46.0% of migrant workers traveled 20 to 30 kilometers per day, while 21.3 traveled 30 to 40 kilometers each day from their labour camps to their working sites by vehicles provided by the employers

or companies (data has been collected through fieldwork). These areas do not have public transportation, and taxi fares from these areas to the main cities are much higher (Brusle, 2009). Therefore, migrant labourers face difficulties in meeting their relatives and so, 23.3% of migrants are unable to interact with their friends or relatives due to long distances.

Dubai is the most developed metropolis in the GCC and home to the biggest labour camp for instance, Al Quoz and Sonapor, a typical labour camps with a small room of 12 by 9 feet that is shared by 5-8 workers in Dubai (Human Rights Watch, 2009). This type of labour camps is not only distributed in Dubai alone but also entire GCC region which has been divided into several categories based on skills and the nature of employment. The research finds that EUP migrant labourers were residing in three different types of housing in the GCC countries. Firstly, apartment-type camps with multiple bedrooms shared by 4-6 labourers; secondly, dormitory-style camps with 10-20 labourers and with more than 10 people in a single room but their proportion is very less; **and third is single rental rooms hired by migrants in the major cities who were engaged in self-employment such as tailoring and shopkeepers.** “...Many unskilled labourers dwell in ad hoc structures throughout the cities and their peripheries — in converted garages, plywood structures, shipping containers, or dwellings built from construction detritus” (Gardner, 2010). Arvind, a 32 years-old migrant who immigrated to Saudi Arabia in 2012 (when he was 23 years old.) said, “*After arrival at the airport, some people came to receive me and took me by four-wheeler to the labour camp, which was a container. There were 10-15 containers and each one was shared by 5-6 emigrant workers. I adjusted three days and I thought they might shift me to the other labour camp because I had a driving visa. One week later, they provided me labour work in a construction company. Sometimes, they forced me to clean highways with scant drinking water along with other emigrant workers*”.

It seems that the Kafeel or employer does not provide separate bedrooms for their migrant labourers. Therefore, the study found that 64.3% of labourers tend to live with 5-7 people in a single room whereas 18.0% of migrant labourers stayed with 2-5 people which is much better than sharing a room with 7-10 migrants which consist 15.3%.

### **Challenges in GCC Countries**

Migrants from eastern EUP face several challenges due to the working environment of GCC such as long working hours, wage disparity, labour camps, and late payments. However, the working hours in the GCC countries are fixed but to enhance their income, the majority of the migrants prefer to work beyond the fixed working hours. Working overtime in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is calculated according to a strict system and the amount of reimbursement is equal to 50% of the basic wage (Ameen, 2021). Therefore,

the majority of migrants from EUP work an additional four hours per day on average (around 56.0%) while 25.3% work at least two hours beyond the normal working hours due to low wages. Dilawar Ali said, *"The working time was set for eight hours but to earn more money I worked an additional 3-4 hours per day."* The study also found that some migrants work 5-6 hours overtime to enhance their monthly salary but their proportion is much less.

The study identifies two types of discrimination in GCC countries. The first is social prejudice based on location and religion, and the second is economic discrimination in the form of wage disparities between migrant and local labourers. Asfaque Ahmad claims, *"Foreign workers in the Gulf region are paid significantly less than local or native workers. Local labourers do not work hard; they simply come to be present in the company, but the company must pay them in full without doing any hard work. In Saudi Arabia, engineers and foremen earn a decent wage and have greater respect than construction labourers."* Wage disparities among the migrant labourers have become a major challenge. Most labourers disagree with these practices and claim that while they put in great effort for the company, they only get a modest salary, in contrast to locals who just arrive and sit all day at the company and receive full pay. Wage disparity among labourers has been the leading cause of strikes in the United Arab Emirates as well as across the GCC countries (Human Rights Watch, 2006: 30). In addition to wage disparities, migrants often experience social marginalisation. Due to their social exclusion from the major cities, it is clear that the local government solely employs them as labourers. It is prohibited for migrant workers to interact with the local population.

Although unions and strikes are illegal throughout the GCC countries and punished by deportation, the consequences associated with withholding wages are grave enough to drive workers to risk deportation (Hamza, 2015). The wages as specified in contracts and wages received by the migrant labourers after arrival differ in the entire GCC region. The actual wages received by the migrant labourers are lower than the contract wage. Amar Bharti, a gardener at **Al-Sabaan Contracting Company** gets a monthly wage of 900 riyal, as promised by the brokers at the time of departure, but he did not receive payment for three months, and then he received just 1200 riyal. Similarly, Brijesh Yadav, 22-year-old gulf migrant working in Dubai since 2018 said *"I was given a job offer as a Fitter at Danam Company in Sharjah with a monthly salary of 1050 Dirham. I was delighted and had high expectations, but when I arrived at the Dubai airport, a company representative took my passport and visa. I did the same job for five months, but they didn't pay me for the first three months. Nevertheless, it took me four months to receive 2700 Dirham and the fifth month's payment was not made."* That means the actual salary differs from what was promised by the agents faced by each migrant from EUP. That indicates that employers and agents who exploit migrant workers made false promises about salaries that were not paid. Such deception is rampant across

the GCC companies. The poor labourers from EUP are docile labour forces who are not unionized and they remain voiceless. They do not have an agency to seek justice and protest against their employers.

These circumstances given a legal way of exploitation, such as low salary, late payment, sexual abuses and long working hours (Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, 2008), domestic labourers are not covered by labour law and their work are not recognised or classified as a form of work (Bajracharya & Sijapati, 2012). Consequently, these labourers are unable to exercise their rights and freedoms in their destination place and the immigration policies adopted by the GCC countries have created many hardships and socio-economic problems (Zachariah et al, 2003). This study found that none of the women from EUP migrated to GCC to work or live with their spouses.

Migrations from EUP to GCC countries are closely associated with push and pull factors. Migrants expect high wages and seek better employment opportunities with a ray of hope to improve their socio-economic condition. The GCC countries represent cross sections especially Indian Hindus (79.3%) who are engaged in various skilled and unskilled jobs in GCC countries. However, it appears that the job market in the GCC is not egalitarian, and the wage differences are quite high between expatriates and local natives (Fabian, 2020). Hence, wage disparities are a common issue for each migrant labourer of EUP. Therefore, it has become a general objection of the migrant labourers in the entire GCC regime.

Due to the Nitaqat Law, Saudi Arabia formally employed their nationals at low wages while telling them to stay at home (Hertog, 2014) and using migrant labourers by paying low wages. The proportion of migrants in Saudi Arabia is higher than in other GCC countries because Saudi Arabia is the largest geographical region. Many projects run for development and these development projects open a huge number of job opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

The link between labour migration from the EUP and economic development in GCC countries is well-established. Remittances sent by migrants, for example, surpass the value of household and regional development. The amount of remittances is influenced by monthly income, including working hours per day and working days per week. As a result, migrants from EUP are more willing to work longer hours and exhibit lower absenteeism rates compared to the local workforce. Social networks play a crucial role in shaping migrants' destination choices, and social contacts at the destination reduce the psychological aspects of migration by providing technical support during the adjustment period. This support also reduces economic costs by providing information on job opportunities and material assistance during employment searches (Banerjee, 1983). Consequently, some households

tend to send at least one or two members to GCC countries with the assistance of relatives and friends. Examining the transnational Indian diaspora in this context can provide valuable insights into trade, assimilation, and cultural change in host countries and the homeland.

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