

Walking on the Margins of the National Imagination: Migrant Workers Amid Covid-19

Devika Mittal and Nazish Hena Khan

Introduction

As the Covid-19 pandemic gradually gripped the world, after its emergence in the city of Wuhan in China, countries prepared a response.¹ While the first case in India emerged in late January, the government imposed a nationwide lockdown starting at midnight on 24 March.² Given the massive size of the population and reports about the dire situation in even developed countries, the Indian government thought of lockdown as a critical measure to cope with the pandemic. With the imposition of a nationwide curfew, the movement of people was severely restricted. One way to achieve compliance was to invoke nationalism. As Indians were clapping, banging steel *thalis* and lighting *diyas* to pay tribute to frontline workers engaged in essential services and to mark the solidarity of more than 1.3 billion people, a national imagination was being constructed in their minds.³ But it was one that kept a large section out. So when, amid the lockdown, thousands of interstate migrant workers assembled near state borders, some news channels were quick to label them as irresponsible. It took repeated images of blistered feet, teary faces and many incidents of death of people while walking back to their villages to stir some outrage and action. The migrant workers' plight had found no place in the initial speeches and plans of the government, and as we write this several months after the lockdown, there is still no clarity on the action taken by the government for this section of the population. There remains a general apathy towards the crisis of the internal migrant workers.

This paper explores the apathy surrounding the migrant workers' crisis amidst the Covid-19 pandemic by investigating the nature of nationalism from a class perspective. Based on the analysis of the migrant workers' predicament and the persisting attitude towards it, the paper argues that even though nationalism is a popular ideology across classes, it is the middle class that represents the nation. The poor, including the migrant labourers, remain at the margins of the nation and struggle to find a space in the national imagination in terms of having their concerns, struggles and aspirations recognised and addressed. This typology of

Devika Mittal (devikamittal31@gmail.com) teaches sociology in Bharati College, Delhi University.

Nazish Hena Khan (nazishkhan@gmail.com) teaches journalism in Bharati College, Delhi University.

nationalism, actively promoted by the government, has strong supporters in the media and even the judiciary.

The paper studies the migrant workers' struggles during the Covid-19 lockdown and focuses on the reportage and response to tracing the roots of the apathy towards migrant workers to the elitist nature of nationalism. The paper is organised into sections that deliberate on government strategies, discuss media reportage and its role in upholding a nationalism with an underlying class bias, and bring out perspectives of migrant workers on the invisibility of their struggles in state concerns.

The Huge Distance between the Two Indias: Insufficient Concern for Migrant Workers

While the first case of Covid-19 was reported at the end of January, India took slow-paced preparatory steps to face the pandemic until March.⁴ It was only in the first week of March that the government called for universal screening of all passengers at all airports and seaports.⁵ Thereafter, as the cases started rising and spreading across the country, the central and state governments issued travel advisories, imposed restrictions on public gatherings, and eventually closed down public recreational sites and educational institutions.⁶ Along with the restrictions in government offices, the Centre issued an advisory to private employers to allow their employees to work from home. Two days after this advisory, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation wherein he advised people not to move out unnecessarily and gave his assurance that there would be no shortage of supply of essential items.

Further, people were advised to stay at home for fourteen hours and observe 'Janata curfew' on 22 March. This ensemble of assurance of continued food supplies, an advisory against the unnecessary movement, and call for a 14-hour curfew was riddled with ambiguities. Although these were indications that a complete lockdown was in the offing, it remained a mystery as to when that would happen. Further, there were sudden and unforeseeable announcements such as trains getting cancelled.⁷ Two days before the announcement of a complete lockdown, the railways minister declared the cancellation of all passenger trains till 31 March.⁸ At 8 p.m. on 24 March, the prime minister announced a nationwide lockdown from midnight. Even though he reassured the population about the supply of essential commodities and services, there were reports of panic buying across the country, underscoring the prevailing environment of anxiety and uncertainty among people.⁹

While this environment of uncertainty gripped everyone, as did the restrictions, the emerging pain was far from uniform. The nation had stood in solidarity at the beginning of lockdown to clap hands and bang steel *thalis*, but the pandemic both exposed and aggravated the great divide in the subsequent days. The Covid-19 lockdown of India can be understood as a set of contrasting images. The stories of boredom stand in sharp contrast to the tears of anxiety

and constant worry about means of survival. While some were struggling with ‘work from home’, there were millions who now had neither home nor work. While there were aeroplanes and ships ready to get the overseas Indians back home, thousands of Indians living in the country were forced to depend on their blistered feet to reach home, which was in many cases hundreds of kilometres away.

Those walking back home were the migrant workers in the unorganised or informal sector. While they constitute a large percentage of the country’s workforce, they remain insignificant in policies and invisible in the national imagination. Workers in the informal sector are the most vulnerable in terms of social and legal protection.¹⁰ And within the category of informal sector workers, migrant workers, especially the seasonal or short-term migrants, are the most vulnerable (Jan Sahas 2020, 4–5). They are involved in different types of work: factory workers, delivery boys, loaders, cooks, painters, rickshaw pullers, domestic help, vegetable sellers, etc.¹¹ The pandemic loomed in this prevailing culture of structural violence, as Galtung (1969) terms it, and perpetuated it as the state remained apathetic towards these workers.¹² Even when it could be well anticipated that the pandemic and lockdown would hit the poor the hardest, the prime minister’s initial speeches made no mention of them. While he did assure the people that there would be no ‘inconveniences’ in the food supply, he did not assure help for a critical prerequisite – money – that daily wagers were rapidly running out of. The scope of the ‘Covid-19 Economic Response Task Force’ that was to be set up was also unclear. Rather, the prime minister appealed to the people to take care of each other, to not cut salaries or wages of the employees, even as the footsteps of thousands of people on national highways traced out a harsh reality – one that exposes the failures of the central and state governments and the judiciary in discharging their responsibilities.¹³

According to Shyam Sundar and Sapkal (2020), while the Ministry of Labour and Employment had issued an advisory to employers not to terminate their employees’ contracts and pay them full wages, it was only an advisory, hence, had no binding effect on them. Roy (2020) also affirms this. In his work, he describes temporary accommodation arranged by a construction company in Bengaluru for its employees:

The project, a 24-storey commercial complex, has just begun, only two floors have been constructed so far, and it would take another 4-5 years to complete. The sudden Lockdown forced them [workers] to abandon work and remain in the temporary quarters erected by the construction company there. There are around 200 workers who are residing there, in temporary quarters made of tin roof and tin walls. Sagram Tudu reveals that at least four persons are sharing one room. Toilets are there, but much fewer than the requirement. Initially, they had to buy ration from the market and arrange for cooking in their common kitchen. Now, only a few days back, the contractor arranged for their ration, the cost of which will be adjusted against their payment in future (Roy 2020, 76).

While these workers were given some basic accommodation, there are many reports about companies which deserted their workers, providing them neither a place to stay nor wages. The sudden and strict lockdown also made it difficult for certain workers, such as domestic help, to go to their employers to collect their salaries. With no money to pay the rent or buy food, the migrant workers were left with no option but to return to their villages (Jha and Pankaj 2020, 56–57). Despite the claim of food distribution by the governments, there was an acute shortage of food supply.¹⁴ Besides, the workers were worried about their families back home. There was, however, no way to go back as public transport was suspended.

What happened thereafter is vividly summarised by Samaddar:

Thousands upon thousands, evicted from their temporary shelters, without money and food, desperately tried to reach home – villages and small towns – from wherever they were working. Tens of thousands of migrant workers – mothers with children, young boys and girls, single women, husband and wife, young single workers – trekked hundreds of kilometres, some reports tell of workers walking five hundred kilometres to reach home, with some perishing on the roads. We do not know how many lost their way, how many reached home in what condition, how many perished, but we know of savage incidents as the one when a group of workers was sprayed with disinfectants like dead animals to purify them of Covid-19. Migrant workers carrying their belongings and small children were beaten up, baton-charged and frog-marched on interstate highways because they had disturbed the lockdown measures and the disease containment plan (Samaddar 2020b, 15).

While the description shines a spotlight on the dismal plight of the migrant workers, it is also a commentary on nationalism. The numerically large but socio-economically weak remain at the fringes of the nation in terms of its concern and priorities. The chemical solution that was sprayed on the workers reduced them to mere biological bodies, bereft of any human meaning, observes Tiwari (2020, 46). But as we noted earlier, it is not just the administration that must be held accountable. There were reports of upper middle class people asking their domestic help to come and work even amidst the lockdown. There were also reports that those who could not come to work because of lockdown restrictions were not given paid leaves or provided any kind of help by their employers.¹⁵ The domestic workers seemed to have been seen simply as human machines which, however, must be shunned if they catch an infection.

As international media, alternative, crowd-funded media and eventually the mainstream media began to cover the long marches of the migrants, the prime minister sought ‘forgiveness’ from his ‘brothers and sisters’¹⁶; but this did not herald an end to their misery. Jha and Pankaj describe how the central and state governments used much of their energy and resources to blame each other (Jha and Pankaj 2020, 59-63). Several incidents of mismanagement due to lack of coordination between authorities and amongst state

governments, for political reasons, compounded the problems; many migrant workers spent whatever was left of their savings to buy tickets and/or reach the bus or railway station or bus stand only to discover they had been cancelled.¹⁷ Besides political wrangling, other factors may have been behind such mismanagement, as Ranjan's work suggests. He points to the possibility of a nexus between the corporate world and the government to bar the migrants from leaving the cities as it would affect their business (Ranjan 2020, 81).

The judiciary, as Sarmin (2020) and Samaddar (2020a) note, also appears to have largely backed this apathy. While some high courts did direct the government to assume responsibility, the Supreme Court seemed to rely exclusively on government reports and statements. Samaddar (2020a) refers to petitions demanding state responsibility that the Supreme Court dismissed on the grounds, or rather the assumption, that since the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojna (PMGRY) takes care of the poor, including the migrant workers, the migrant workers should not have rushed back to their villages (Samaddar 2020a, 24). Sarmin (2020) reiterates the Supreme Court's seeming lack of interest in holding the government accountable.

In contrast to this were the Governments' enormous efforts to bring back Indian citizens from across the world. How do we understand this contrast? The contrast is, as Shekhar Gupta in his feature show on *The Print* notes, between the celebration of the aspirations of the middle-class immigrants and the invisibility of the aspirations of poor and lower-middle-class migrant workers in the informal sector in India.¹⁸ Studies on nationalism reveal that this contrast is neither new nor startling: nationalism has long been an elitist ideology that projects the elite and middle class's demands and aspirations as those of the nation (Mishra 2016). In the Indian context, Deshpande (2003) and Fernandes (2006), among others, have argued that the middle class is seen as representative of the nation. Deshpande notes that the term 'common man' in media and everyday discourse – as also rendered through the iconic figure created by cartoonist R. K. Laxman – captures a sense of middle-class identity (Deshpande 2003, 130). As the middle class is highly segmented, it can be further argued that it is largely the middle-middle-class and upper-middle-class whose interests conflates with upper-class interests, which are prioritised when the contours of the nation's anxieties, aspirations and concerns are drawn. The pandemic situation fits into this prevailing arrangement of social stratification. In this sense, the pandemic did not upset society; instead, it exposed it. The state reproduces a nationalism underlying a class bias that the people consume through media, among other ideological apparatuses.

Manufacturing National Apathy: The Role of the Media

There exists a nexus between media, corporate class and the state. In their famous work *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988), Herman and Chomsky explain the mass media through the 'propaganda model', arguing that the mass media furthers the interest of those who fund it. Citing the case of the US media,

Herman and Chomsky establish that mass media is dominated by the state and elite groups. Further, they explore how mass media is used to manufacture consent from the general populace. The Indian media industry reveals a similar pattern. It is an open secret that political parties fund television media. There is also a nexus between the politicians, corporates and journalists. This became apparent in instances such as the Niira Radia case of 2009, wherein tape recording conversations between Radia, a powerful lobbyist, and various business people, politicians and journalists were leaked.¹⁹ These conversations revealed the collusion and uncomfortable closeness among corporate units, politicians, and journalists and portrayed a world where the line between politics and business, or public relations and news, is increasingly blurred. The masks have further slipped as this nexus has only been growing stronger.

Analysing the ‘paid news phenomenon’, Mathew also refers to a leaked report of the Press Council of India titled “Paid news”: How corruption in the Indian media undermines democracy’ that mentioned about 126 confirmed cases of paid news involving electoral candidates buying media space for campaigning (Mathew 2016, 103). Further, Mathew establishes the mutually profiting partnership between media houses and corporates (Mathew 2016, 104). Besides the profit, state censorship in the name of national security is also applicable in the Indian context. Exploring the role of media in national security, Abraham (2012) uncovers a strong and symbiotic relationship between the media and government.

Recent developments in the relationship between the media and government are captured by India dropping down to 140th rank in the World Press Freedom Index 2019.²⁰ The drop has been attributed to the increasing state censorship under the current government. Attempts at censorship have been reported by both international and some alternative and crowd-funded media. Several articles point out since 2014 that the media has portrayed the prime minister mostly in a positive light:

Since Mr. Modi came to power in 2014, they say, his government has tried to control the country’s news media, especially the airwaves, like no other prime minister in decades. Mr. Modi has shrewdly cultivated the media to build a cult of personality that portrays him as the nation’s selfless savior. At the same time, senior government officials have pressed news outlets – berating editors, cutting off advertising, ordering tax investigations – to ignore the uglier side of his party’s campaign to transform India from a tolerant, religiously diverse country into an assertively Hindu one.²¹

Research papers around the reportage of demonetisation, the anti-CAA movement and the Delhi riots of 2020 point to similar arguments (Kalyan 2020). The pandemic does not mark a change in the prevailing set-up. The media, particularly the mainstream and television media, seem to have become the Modi government’s mouthpiece.

During Covid times, the government seemed more explicit in its expectations from the media. The prime minister's official website provided the text of his address to the nation to several media houses just hours before the nationwide lockdown announcement, wherein he emphasised: "Citizens need to be assured that the government is committed to countering the impact of COVID-19." To keep up the fighting spirit, the channels were also supposed to make efforts to 'tackle the spread of pessimism and negativity'.²²

The media houses seem to have interpreted this to mean that the government must not be criticised and any problem should be played down. This included all the issues triggered by the sudden lockdown. On a mainstream news channel, TV anchors were playing *Antakshari* (a singing game).²³ Besides lauding the government's efforts and representing the plight of the bored privileged class, the media, especially the television media, extensively used this time to spread Islamophobia while presenting biased narratives of the Tablighi Jamaat incident in Delhi.²⁴ Analysing the reportage of the Tablighi Jamaat incident, a report traces the way the media labelled an entire community the sole spreader of the Covid-19 virus in India.²⁵ While serving the government's Hindu nationalist agenda, the media also used this communalising propaganda to prevent the people from reflecting on the failures and loopholes in government strategies.

This strategy, however, became a challenge when thousands of migrant workers assembled at state borders across the country. The mainstream media shifted its course from a communal to a class bias. Singh observes, "While a few in the media made visible their plight, a particular kind of media coverage and projection also led to the middle-class blaming migrants for their 'irresponsible behaviour' during the pandemic" (Singh 2020).

Eventually, the mainstream media became mellower in its tone in terms of migrant workers. Different reasons for this have been suggested. Singh argues that 'the media organisations were compelled to show the labourers' plight because of its sensational value' (Singh 2020). Another reason could be that since the government eventually started addressing the plight of the migrant workers, the media was allowed to cover the long marches. The media, however, helped the governments evade accountability, with media reports and prime-time debates tending to become blame game sessions. The media was able to continue playing its role of invisibilising the migrant workers from the national imagination.

Further, the Islamophobic propaganda exacerbated the plight of Muslim migrant workers. There were reports of Residential Welfare Associations (RWAs) restricting the entry of Muslim vegetable sellers into residential colonies in Delhi.²⁶ This resulted from the media's continuous pattern of accusing Muslims of deliberately spreading the virus with fake news reports of Tablighi Jamaat members spitting and roaming naked in public.²⁷ In another incident, in the posh Defence Colony locality of New Delhi, a Muslim security guard was blamed when the family he worked for tested positive for Covid-19. He was accused of visiting the

Tablighi Jamaat gathering. Later, the security guard tested negative for Covid-19.²⁸ The falsehoods were so blatant and numerous that the police had to intervene and debunk tweets by media organisations and their representatives. A wave of sensational headlines constantly stigmatised an already beleaguered community. Through this, the media was also diverting attention from pressing issues, such as that of the plight of migrant workers.

Voices from the Margins: Migrant Workers on being rendered invisible

We observe that the brand of nationalism being manufactured and promoted has a class bias. Based on interviews with three migrant workers, this section deliberates upon how the workers may place themselves in the nation and how they make sense of their apparent invisibility in the dominant discourse on nationalism.

All three migrant workers who have been interviewed hail from Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh. For 28-year-old Abhinav Jaiswal (name changed), the lack of employment opportunities in his village and his desire to shape a better life for his seven-member family made him venture into a city. In Thane, Maharashtra, he was engaged in welding work as a daily wager. He had been working for five years, but when the lockdown was imposed, and he couldn't pay his rent, he and his co-workers moved to a temporary shelter. But since the conditions there were terrible, they decided to go back home. He borrowed money from one of his friends to buy a train ticket and came home after two months of suffering. Recalling his struggle and the response of the state, he remarks:

People like us have never mattered – the government doesn't care what happens to us. Planes are sent for the rich, and they are the ones whom everyone cares about. We have always been neglected. People were beaten by the police even when they went out to get food. They weren't stealing food, but even then, they were treated like thieves.

While narrating his ordeal, Abhinav also reflects on the existing social divide, on how class-based discrimination denies the poor equal rights and dignity. Abhinav has decided he will not go back to the city. He says, "I will work in the fields in my village and will somehow provide for my family. My family also doesn't want me to go back now. They fear I will contract the virus if I go back, and then there won't be anyone to take care of them."

Like Abhinav, 34-year-old Shiv Kumar (name changed) also struggled for bread and respect. He worked as a driver in a well-known cement company in Thane. Shiv recounts his ordeal:

The last salary I received from the company was for the month of March. I lost my job because of the lockdown, and the company stopped paying us. I faced an extreme scarcity of food and essential items. The *chawl* where I lived had some cases of

Coronavirus infection, so there was a lot of chaos, and residents were fearful. It was something I had never encountered before. Many people couldn't access any medical facilities. The atmosphere was full of panic and despair. I was planning to move my family to Thane, but I'm glad I didn't.

Further, he shares his disappointment that no one helped him. "No authority, nobody, gave us anything. We were treated like insects whom nobody cares about and who are left to die." He adds:

The government should have told us in advance about the lockdown. This was the most important thing Modi should have done. He should have told the factory owners to help employees. Why didn't he tell them to do that? PM should have asked the landlords not to force us to vacate their *chawls* if we didn't have money to pay rent. The announcements of packages, trains, food are all a farce – we didn't get any such relief.

Like Abhinav, Shiv also feels that a section of the citizenry continues to be neglected by the state. However, unlike Abhinav, Shiv may return. After all, he doesn't have an option.

The company I used to work for has resumed operations and I will have to go back. I don't want to go back. I don't know if I will get work again there, but how will my family survive without money? We don't have any land or other valuables. I can't let my family starve. I will go back once the risk of getting infected drops.

This view is also shared by the third interviewee Suraj (name changed), who worked at a well-known telecom company in Delhi. Narrating how the sudden lockdown affected him, he says:

In Delhi, there was a ban on public gatherings from 16 March onwards, but I had no idea there would be a nationwide lockdown from 25 March. I continued working till 25 March, but after that, there was no work left for me as I am a field worker. I couldn't go out any more to install broadband devices.

As for the support from the company, he shares:

The company did give us some salary, but it wasn't much. When the lockdown was announced, the company told us we'd be paid regularly and asked us not to go anywhere. The state authorities distributed rice and pulses at a school near the Seelampur area where I live, but it was irregular and inadequate. People who didn't have a ration card didn't get any food supplies. I spent all my savings on paying rent and buying food.

On being asked if the governments did enough, he expresses his resentment towards the Delhi government but still rates the prime minister high in his handling of the crisis and doesn't blame him for the treatment meted to migrant workers:

The Delhi government could have done more to help us. Modi ji is also trying to help us, but India is a big country and it is difficult to help everyone. Modi ji has to look after the entire nation and he is doing the best he can. There isn't enough food, and Delhi has been affected badly by this virus – the cases are rising every day. There is a lot of panic in Delhi – daily workers are left without a job and food.

Despite his disappointment and suffering, Suraj will go back. In fact, he has already informed his company about this decision. He reasons, “I like living in Delhi. I don't think I can live in my native place any more, and how will I earn here anyway. This place is very backward and there is no scope for growth.”

As we note, while corroborating the claims in this paper about the impact of the sudden lockdown and the state's inadequate and inefficient support, these three stories also reflect on the absence of a place for the poor migrant workers in the national imagination. The poor and lower middle class migrant workers failed to grasp the concern of the state and their fellow patriots.

Conclusion: A Long March to Uncertainty

This paper highlights an apparent class bias in the ideology of nationalism by reflecting on the migrant worker crisis amidst the pandemic. The migrant workers suffered because of the capital-focused idea of development that has shaped nation-building. During times of crisis, the alienation of the poor migrant workers increased. These migrant workers have long been viewed solely as a means of capitalist exploitation and sites of extraction. When, due to lockdown, their labour could not be utilised, they were stranded.

This apathy was manifested not just by their employers. As the paper argues, it was supported by the state whose policies and concerns failed to address the plight of the migrant labourers. This pandemic has, thus, exposed the complex realities of labourers who struggle to survive in a country where only the middle class had become the social base of nationalism.

An immense crisis has highlighted the deep-rooted inequalities that have persisted for years in India. The pandemic has also highlighted an entrenched sense of derision and inability to empathise with those on the margins. It is clear that in the Indian context, the ideology of nationalism does not focus adequately on the economically marginalised sections of the society.

Notes

1. An Aljazeera report provides a timeline of the spread of the pandemic across the world: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/timeline-china-coronavirus-spread-200126061554884.html>.
2. <https://www.firstpost.com/health/pm-narendra-modi-announces-a-national-lockdown-for-21-days-starting-midnight-of-24-25-march-8185961.html>.
3. During his first address to the nation regarding the pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to pay respect to medical and other frontline workers by clapping or banging a *thali* on a specific day and time. See <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/pm-modi-calls-for-janta-curfew-on-march-22-from-7-a-m-9-pm/article31110155.ece>. In another address, he called for lighting a candle or *diya* as a nationwide show of solidarity. See <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/pm-narendra-modi-on-coronavirus-lockdown-light-candles-use-mobile-flashlights-on-sunday-at-9-pm-2205306>.
4. The first Covid-19 case in India was reported in Kerala on 30 January 2020. See <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/30/india-confirms-first-case-of-the-coronavirus.html>.
5. <https://thewire.in/government/modi-covid-19-airport-screening-factcheck>.
6. <http://www.newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=383105>.
7. On 19 March, 150 trains were cancelled on grounds of low occupancy. On 20 March, news report declared there would be no trains during the Janata curfew but the report did not state that all train services would soon be suspended. See <https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/railways/no-passenger-trains-on-janta-curfew-day-indian-railways-cancels-train-services-details-here/1904932/>.
8. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/indian-railways-cancels-all-passenger-trains-until-march-31-delhi-metro-provides-new-rules/as74758085.cms>.
9. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pm-modi-coronavirus-national-lockdown-panic-buying-groceries-essential-items-1659291-2020-03-24>.
10. <https://www.businesstoday.in/sectors/jobs/labour-law-reforms-no-one-knows-actual-size-india-informal-workforce-not-even-govt/story/364361.html>.
11. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/the-pandemic-exposes-indias-two-worlds/609838/>.

12. Going beyond the idea of violence as direct and visible, Johan Galtung (1969) puts forward the concept of structural violence – violence that is built into the structure – which he says can simply be understood as ‘social injustice’ (Galtung 1969, 171).
13. In his address to the nation on 19 March, PM Modi urged employers to not cut salaries of employees. See <https://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-prime-minister-narendra-modi-s-address-to-the-nation-on-combating-covid-19-548861>.
14. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/hunger-fears-millions-indias-migrant-labourers-go-without-food/>
15. <https://www.firstpost.com/health/coronavirus-outbreak-dumped-by-mumbai-upper-middle-and-middle-class-domestic-workers-survive-on-charity-to-stay-afloat-during-covid-19-lockdown-8287141.html>
16. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52081396>
17. <https://www.insiderspirit.com/mumbai-migrants-wait-for-trains-turned-away-after-miscommunication-between-officials/>; <https://www.firstpost.com/health/with-maharashtra-and-gujarat-at-loggerheads-over-procedures-5000-gujarati-workers-languish-in-mumbai-waiting-to-go-home-8377971.html>.
18. Episode ‘White-collar, blue-collar, no-collar: Discovery of a working class Modi’s India forgot’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8hekc93Sbs&feature=youtu.be>.
19. <http://asu.thehoot.org/resources/media-ownership/media-ownership-in-india-an-overview-6048>.
20. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-drops-down-on-world-press-freedom-index/articleshow/68940683.cms?from=mdr>.
21. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/world/asia/modi-india-press-media.html>.
22. <https://www.narendramodi.in/prime-minister-narendra-modi-interacts-with-print-media-journalists-and-stakeholders-548937>.
23. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cxrQBxEs00>.
24. The Tablighi Jamaat was an international gathering that brought together many Muslims from all over India and the world. The event was organized in mid-March. However, due to the sudden lockdown, many attendees who had stayed back for a few more days could not travel, even as the organizers kept the local authorities informed.

Eventually, the organizers were falsely blamed for organizing the event despite the ban on gatherings. As some of the attendees were found to be Covid-19 positive, they were blamed for spreading the virus across the country. Subsequently, the media also started broadcasting unverified videos of Tablighi Jamaat attendees allegedly misbehaving with doctors and nurses. Source: <https://www.newslaundry.com/2020/04/27/audit-of-bigotry-how-indian-media-vilified-tablighi-jamaat-over-coronavirus-outbreak>.

25. <https://www.newslaundry.com/2020/04/27/audit-of-bigotry-how-indian-media-vilified-tablighi-jamaat-over-coronavirus-outbreak>.
26. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/delhi-daily-wagers-forced-to-sell-vegetables-being-asked-to-show-aadhaar-before-entering-colonies-1668727-2020-04-19>.
27. <https://www.altnews.in/old-video-from-pakistan-shared-as-tablighi-jamaat-member-roaming-naked-in-isolation-ward/>
28. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/delhi-defence-colony-coronavirus-security-guard-accused-of-infecting-3-of-delhi-family-covid-19-nega-2213025>.

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