

# 15 Gulf Return Migrants in India

## Socio-economic Reintegration of Gulf Returnees in Rural West Bengal

*Snigdha Banerjee and T.V. Sekher*

### Introduction

Reintegration upon return can be addressed as a return migrant's participation in social, cultural, economic, and political life in their native country after staying in a foreign land for some period (Cassarino, 2008). As Ghosh (2000) described, a sustainable return is achieved when returnees can reintegrate into the community of return, often through taking on productive roles as members of such communities, without immediate inducement to leave again. Sustainable return, therefore, implies the successful reintegration of returnees. Reintegration must not occur within the first year of return. This process can take several months and even years to determine how well-adjusted an individual is upon return (Coniglio & Brzozowski, 2018; Hao et al., 2019). On reintegration into their own society after migration, experience becomes one of the most critical and challenging problems faced by return migrants (Sekher, 1997; Fejerskov & Zeleke, 2020). The severity of the issues faced by return migrants is also related to the amount of time they have been away from home. Returnees gain monetary achievement in their migration period. If that achievement is not utilised productively, it will not enhance their prestige and economic power after returning to their home country (Gilani, 1983). The declining social and economic status creates more adjustment problems in their community. Returnees' success is determined by their preparedness to return, which comprises both readiness and willingness. Readiness refers to accumulating required resources that facilitate the return and reintegration processes. Willingness emphasises how much the returnee wants to return. Spending a longer time in the country of emigration helps migrants to mobilise resources. Accumulating relevant information about the home country and more savings also plays a vital role in reintegrating well upon return (Nisrane, 2020). Gmelch (1980) identified two approaches to reintegration. He explained that returnees found a better job in the "Etic" perspective, participating in community-level work after returning. They maintained a good relationship with others, and they were very much satisfied with their return decision. However, returnees can contribute to the development of the sending country by investing their remittances and transferring the knowledge they accumulated in the host country (Wahba, 2015; Flahaux, 2020; Ianioglo et al., 2020). The other "Emic" perspective dealt with returnees' dissatisfaction after returning to their

original place. Returnees experience a “reverse cultural shock” (Eikass, 1979) and find “no place for them in home society” (Davison, 1968; Wang, 2020).

However, migration can promote occupational mobility for both emigrants and return migrants. This occupational mobility brings considerable changes in the life of migrants to accelerate their socio-economic reintegration process. Returnees are more prone to invest in changing occupations after return only if they have saved a significant amount of money to make the most profitable use of their limited resources. Changing occupation after the return is more dependent on the returnee’s education level, acquiring skills from abroad, savings, duration of stay abroad, social ties, age, etc. (Czaika & Varela, 2015). However, there is a possibility of “de-skilling” where overseas workers lose previously held skills (Arif & Irfan, 1997; Sekher, 1999). Workers use their savings to set up their businesses upon return for enhancing their socio-economic status at their place of origin (Rhoades, 1978; Gmelch, 1980). Further to overcome their reintegration problem, they plan to re-migrate. This re-emigration can be an additional mission for sufficient resource mobilisation to solve financial problems (Boere, 2010).

There are many studies in the Indian context that deal with the reintegration process of the return migrants (Jabir, 2014; Rajan, 2012; Rogaly & Rafique, 2003; Sekher, 1999; Rajan & Akhil, 2019; 2022). Kerala has received much attention since the 1970s, given a large number of emigrants to the Gulf countries as a result of the oil boom and the subsequent flow of returnees from the same countries (Zachariah et al., 2001, 2006; Zachariah and Rajan, 2011). The majority of return migrants were unskilled and semi-skilled workers returning due to the loss of jobs because of the ongoing recession and nationalisation policies in the Gulf countries (Ansari, 2020). However, it is important to create a comprehensive framework for return migrants for their smooth reintegration by collaborating with state governments, which involves effective management of the skills earned by migrants in the host country and long-term financial assistance for reintegration (Rajan & Akhil, 2019, 2022; Rajan & Pattath, 2021, 2022; Rajan & Arokkiraj, 2022). However, the importance of return migration on rural life has not been studied extensively. The existing literature emphasises more on developed countries where the return of high-skilled migrants results in brain gain. The present study in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal focuses on low-skilled workers with temporary contracts and, thus, certain to return. The study focuses on the socio-economic reintegration of the Gulf return migrants and various other socio-economic problems encountered while reintegration into their own society after return from the Middle East.

## **Material and Methods**

Murshidabad district contributes to the highest proportion (according to the MOIA, 2019, 9616 ECR emigrants to the Gulf countries from the Murshidabad district) of temporary emigration and return migration from

the Gulf countries in West Bengal (Kumar, 2013; Ali, 2018). For this study, data were collected from June to November 2019 from the Murshidabad district of West Bengal. Murshidabad district has a population of 1.7 million and consists of 5 Subdivisions (Jangipur, Behrampore, Kandi, Lalbagh, and Domkal) and 26 blocks. Based on the preliminary visit to the areas and in consultation with local people, seven villages from three blocks, having a high concentration of Gulf migrants, were selected. The villages having a higher number of Gulf migrants also have a higher number of returnees. From the selected villages, in discussion with the local people, Gulf returnee households were listed and selected for this interview. Information was collected from the returnees themselves through face-to-face interviews. A structured interview schedule was used to collect the data. The respondents who had worked in any of the Middle East countries for at least two years and returned to their villages at least one year prior to the survey and had no immediate plans to migrate again at the time of the survey were considered for interview. A total of 330 Gulf returnees were personally interviewed by administering the structured interview schedules. However, no female returnees could be found at the time of the survey; hence, the analysis was limited to male returnees only. The schedule focused on the socio-economic reintegration of returnees and their coping strategies. In addition, some key informant interviews (with local leaders, head/Sarpanch of the village, bank manager, and teachers), and a few Case Studies of Gulf returnees have been conducted for a better understanding. Informed consent was taken from the Gulf returnees before conducting the interview. Bivariate analysis was used to explore the extent of returnees' preparedness, skill acquisition from abroad, and integration process in the origin society after their return.

### **Socio-demographic Characteristics of Gulf Returnees**

Table 15.1 presents the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the return migrants in the selected blocks of Murshidabad district of West Bengal. On average, the current age of return migrants was 35 years, the age at first emigration was 28 years, and the age at the time of return was 32 years. Emigrants migrated to the Gulf countries at a young age and on a contractual job which is generally valid for two to five years. Hence, the expiry of a job contract often results in migrants returning to their villages at a young age. With regard to the education level of the migrants, a higher proportion (40.4%) of returnees were illiterate or did not complete their primary level of education, while about 34.8% of respondents attained a primary level of education, and 20.6% of the respondents had a secondary level of education. Most of the respondents migrated to the Gulf countries only once (87.3%) whereas 12% of returnees migrated twice to Gulf countries. Around 91.5% of returnees reported that seeking employment in the Gulf countries was their primary reason for emigration. Further, 88.5% of returnees listed the accumulation of savings as their second reason for emigration.

Table 15.1 Socio-demographic and economic characteristics of Gulf returnees

| <i>Background Variables</i>   | <i>Percentage (%)</i> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Mean age of returnees (at the time of survey)                           | 35 years              |
| Mean age at first migration   | 28 years              |
| Mean age of respondents at the time of return                           | 32 years              |
| <b>Religion</b>   |                       |
| Hindu   | 7.3                   |
| Muslim  | 92.7                  |
| <b>Current marital status</b>   |                       |
| Unmarried   | 16.4                  |
| Married   | 82.7                  |
| Widow/divorced/separated  | 0.9                   |
| <b>Education</b>  |                       |
| Illiterate and primary not completed                                    | 40.3                  |
| Primary completed   | 34.8                  |
| Secondary completed   | 20.6                  |
| Higher secondary and above  | 4.24                  |
| <b>Reasons for emigration</b>   |                       |
| Seeking employment  | 91.5                  |
| Accumulation of savings   | 88.5                  |
| Meeting the household expenditure                                       | 39.1                  |
| Others (construction of houses, meeting the marriage cost, etc.)        | 36.7                  |
| <b>Number of emigrations abroad</b>                                     |                       |
| Once  | 87.3                  |
| Twice   | 12.1                  |
| Thrice  | 0.6                   |
| <b>Reasons for return to the villages</b>                               |                       |
| Low wages in the Middle East  | 60                    |
| Expiry of job contract  | 54.4                  |
| Feeling lonely/missed family  | 32                    |
| Poor living and working conditions                                      | 17.6                  |
| Others (accomplishment of migration goal, taking care of elderly, etc.) | 24.3                  |
| <b>Desire to emigrate again to Gulf countries</b>                       |                       |
| Yes   | 56.1                  |
| No  | 43.9                  |
| <b>Duration of working abroad</b>                                       |                       |
| 2–5 years   | 88.5                  |
| 6–9 years   | 8.5                   |
| >9 years  | 3                     |

*Source:* Primary data collected by the first author.

Around 39% of returnees stated meeting household expenses as their third most important reason for emigration to the Gulf countries. Respondents provided multiple reasons for their return. The majority of the migrants stated low wages (60%) as their primary reason for return followed by the expiry of a job contract (54.2%), feeling lonely/missed family (32%), worst living and working conditions (17.6%), and harsh behaviour of the employer (12.4%). About 88.5% of the respondents stayed for two to five years at the

place of destination, whereas about 10% stayed for more than five years in Gulf countries. More than half of the return migrants planning to migrate again (56%) to the Gulf countries, if they get an opportunity.

### *Preparedness to Return*

Around 16% of returnees were mentally prepared to return to their villages, while 84% of returnees were not prepared for their return as they encountered several difficulties during their stay (Table 15.2). The Case Studies of Gulf returnees clearly illustrate the lack of preparedness to return.

I used to work in a Saudi Arabian company, where my duty was to process the dates and pack them. They used to give me only 700 Riyal per month though it was received very irregularly. I use to do extra work for other company. But it was not allowed, one day police caught me

*Table 15.2* Readiness and preparedness for the return to India

| <i>Variables</i>  | <i>No. of respondents</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Readiness for return</b>   |                           |                   |
| Ready   | 51                        | 15.4              |
| Not ready   | 279                       | 84.6              |
| <b>Skills acquired abroad</b>   |                           |                   |
| Yes   | 89                        | 27                |
| No  | 241                       | 73                |
| <b>Type of skills acquired</b>  |                           |                   |
| Technical (OT helper)   | 6                         | 1.8               |
| Accounting  | 2                         | 0.6               |
| Carpenter   | 8                         | 2.4               |
| Housekeeping  | 2                         | 0.6               |
| Marketing/sales   | 12                        | 3.6               |
| Driving   | 11                        | 3.3               |
| Cooking   | 19                        | 5.8               |
| Construction/painter skill  | 17                        | 5.2               |
| Others (electrician, mirror work, bookkeeping, CT)  | 12                        | 3.6               |
| <b>Average amount of remittances sent per month (Rs.)</b>   | 12881                     |                   |
| <b>utilisation of remittances after return</b><br>(since there are multiple responses, the percentage is more than 100) |                           |                   |
| Buying agricultural land  | 224                       | 67.9              |
| Construction/repair building  | 301                       | 91.1              |
| For education of children   | 7                         | 2.1               |
| Marriage cost of children/ family members   | 65                        | 19.7              |
| Medical expenses of family members  | 22                        | 6.7               |
| Repayment of debts  | 24                        | 7.2               |
| To set up business  | 71                        | 21.5              |
| To meet emigration cost of family members   | 102                       | 30.9              |

*Source:* Primary data collected by the first author.

and sent me to jail for this. Within a few months, they deported me to India. It was good that I came back safely, but my migration was not at all successful. Even I could not save desired money.

(31 years old Gulf returnee)

Very few (27%) returnees had acquired some skills while working abroad. Returnees gained skills in various sectors like carpentry (2.42%) construction (5.15%), driver (3.33%), salesman (3.63%), cooking (5.75%), etc.

My employer provided me with training in carving wooden furniture, and within a few weeks, I was able to manage this work. In the beginning, I made variety of stools, other small wooden things. I worked for eight long years in this field. Over time, I learned to carve a bed, dining table, windows and all other wooden stuff. I learned this skill very well. After my return, I opened up my business of wooden furniture in the village.

(Gulf returnee – worked as a carpenter in Dubai)

Returnees invested their remittances in various purposes like buying agricultural lands and vehicles, constructing buildings, investing in children's education, and health, setting up a business, and repayment of their debt. On average, migrants used to send around Rs. 12,881 per month to their families. It was observed that the remittances were mainly invested in constructing or repairing houses (91%). About 67% of returnees mentioned that they invested their money in buying agricultural land, while around 31% of migrants invested their savings in their family member's/son's emigration process.

I worked for four years in Saudi Arabia. It was a good decision to emigrate to the Gulf. We were five sisters and three brothers. I took the responsibility for meeting the entire cost of my sisters' marriage. All these things were possible only because of my income. After I returned from Saudi Arabia, I bought a land, and leased a pond. Now I have started a business to sell fish in the market. I used to send the remittances to my mother which she utilized to build a good house. Now we have everything and lead a decent life. I am thankful to God.

(Gulf returnee – aged 35 years)

### *Socio-economic Status of Returnees before Emigration and after Return*

Nearly half of the returnees felt that they have enough savings to sustain their life in a better way. Participation in community activities after the return has increased by around 26%. The percentage of return migrants who donate for social work (72.7%) and provide monetary help to others (60.3%) has also increased tremendously after the return. About 23.9% of returnees reported that they had limited contact with friends and family after the return. More than half of the returnees (55.8%) said that they felt unwanted and valueless

in their own family after the return. Further, it was observed that more number of returnees were self-employed (22.3%) after return in comparison to before emigration. At the same time, the share of investment in land (55.4%) and construction of houses (90.9%) have increased after the return (Table 15.3). Around 82% of returnees stated that they cleared their emigration debt after emigration. Approximately two-thirds of the Gulf returnees achieved moderate economic gain (63.9%) and social (63.0%) status. Around 13.3% and 19.4% of returnees had a low social and economic status. Further, about 22.7% and 17.6% of returnees achieved a better level of economic and social status. In every aspect, the level of involvement has increased after return in comparison to before emigration.

*Satisfaction and Challenges Faced by Returnees in Reintegration to Their Village Society*

Table 15.4 presents the experiences of returnees. About 46% of returnees reported that they were satisfied and happy with their return decision.

*Table 15.3* Socio-economic conditions of returnees before emigration and after return: comparative analysis

| <i>Factors</i>                           | <i>Before Emigration</i>    |                   | <i>After Return</i>       |                   |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
|  | <i>Frequency</i>            | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Frequency</i>          | <i>Percentage</i> |
| <b>Social involvement</b>                |                             |                   |                           |                   |
| Participation in community activities    | 8                           | 2.42              | 87                        | 26.36             |
| Political/religion participation         | 6                           | 1.82              | 16                        | 4.85              |
| Feel unwanted in family                  | 104                         | 31.52             | 184                       | 55.76             |
| Lesser contact with friends/relatives    | 25                          | 7.58              | 79                        | 23.94             |
| Helping others monetarily                | 13                          | 3.94              | 199                       | 60.3              |
| Donate money for social purposes         | 31                          | 9.39              | 240                       | 72.73             |
| <b>Economic condition</b>                |                             |                   |                           |                   |
| Unemployed                               | 89                          | 26.9              | 45                        | 13.6              |
| Self-employed                            | 7                           | 2.12              | 65                        | 22.34             |
| Invested in land                         | 0                           |                   | 183                       | 55.45             |
| Housing type (pucca)                     | 3                           | 0.91              | 300                       | 90.91             |
| Have savings                             | 2                           | 0.61              | 172                       | 52.12             |
| Repaid emigration cost                   | –                           | –                 | 272                       | 82.42             |
| <b>Level of involvement after return</b> | <b>Economic Integration</b> |                   | <b>Social Integration</b> |                   |
| Lower                                    | 44                          | 13.33             | 64                        | 19.39             |
| Moderate                                 | 211                         | 63.94             | 208                       | 63.03             |
| Higher                                   | 75                          | 22.73             | 58                        | 17.58             |

*Source:* Primary data collected by the first author.

*Table 15.4* Satisfied with decision to return and challenges faced for reintegration after return

| <i>Variables</i>                                    | <i>No. of respondents</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Satisfied with return decision</b>               |                           |                   |
| Yes   | 153                       | 46.4              |
| No  | 177                       | 53.6              |
| <b>Reasons for happiness</b>                        |                           |                   |
| Earned enough                                       | 26                        | 17.0              |
| United with family                                  | 16                        | 10.5              |
| Set up their business/ job                          | 37                        | 24.2              |
| Able to take care of family members                 | 17                        | 11.1              |
| Happy to back in the village                        | 57                        | 37.2              |
| <b>Challenged faced for reintegration at origin</b> |                           |                   |
| Loss of income /lack of job                         | 117                       | 66.1              |
| Loss of networks/ friendships                       | 4                         | 2.3               |
| Family is not happy on my return                    | 43                        | 24.3              |
| Deteriorating in standard of living                 | 13                        | 7.3               |

*Source:* Primary data collected by the first author.

Among various reasons for happiness, about 17% of returnees felt that they had earned the desired money from abroad, 10% of returnees wanted to unite with their family, whereas 11% wanted to take care of their elderly. About 24% of returnees had set up their own business at the place of origin, while 37.2% of returnees felt happy to return to their villages. On the other hand, 54% of returnees stated that they were not happy or satisfied with their return as they confronted several difficulties after their return. Around 66% of returnees stated about the loss of job/income after the return, while 24.3% stated that their family is not happy. Approximately 7% of returnees felt that their standard of living got deteriorated after the return, while 2.3% reported a loss of networks/friendships (2.3%) as the main challenge for their reintegration after the return.

### *Challenges Faced in Economic Reintegration*

Returnees faced many financial challenges that hindered their reintegration process in their origin society. Sizeable proportions were unemployed (27%) before emigration, but this percentage has reduced to 13.6% after the return, because, firstly, the unemployment situation is more common in the origin place (Table 15.5) and, secondly, the most important reason was the changing attitudes and aspirations of returnees. They considered their previous job as a low-status occupation and hesitated to do the same job after returning. Many returnees aspire to improve their socio-economic status after the return. They believe that if they do the same job after returning, it would be very shameful. They would be considered a failure by others. This kind of attitude was more common among the young returnees. Simultaneously



Table 15.5 Occupations before emigration and after return from the Middle East

| Before Emigration After Return from the Middle East |             |              |               |               |             |              |             |            |
|---|-------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Sectors   | Manufacture | Construction | Self-employed | Agriculture   | Daily Wage  | Unemployed   | Driver      | Total      |
| Manufacturing                                       | 0           | 0            | 2             | 0             | 0           | 0            | 0           | 2 (0.6)    |
| Construction  | 0           | 15           | 2             | 3             | 0           | 1            | 0           | 21 (6.4)   |
| Self-employed                                       | 0           | 1            | 6             | 0             | 0           | 0            | 0           | 7 (2.1)    |
| Agriculture   | 0           | 17           | 27            | 117           | 5           | 10           | 10          | 186 (56.4) |
| Daily wage  | 0           | 2            | 4             | 9             | 3           | 4            | 1           | 23 (7.0)   |
| Unemployed  | 1           | 10           | 22            | 13            | 2           | 30           | 11          | 89 (27.0)  |
| Driver  | 0           | 1            | 1             | 0             | 0           | 0            | 0           | 2 (0.6)    |
| Total   | 1<br>(0.3)  | 46<br>(13.9) | 64<br>(19.4)  | 142<br>(43.0) | 10<br>(3.0) | 45<br>(13.6) | 22<br>(6.7) | 330        |

Source: Primary data collected by the first author.

due to their low educational attainments, most of them were engaged as unskilled/semi-skilled workers abroad (70%). After returning, they were bound to work in the agricultural field (43%) and earned very little to maintain a good standard of living (around 60% of them earned less than Rs. 15,000 per month after their return).

The study found that return migrants faced challenges related to utilisation of acquired skills in their villages. As one of the return migrants stated:

I was engaged as a salesman in a shopping mall in Dubai. I always used to dress in a good manner and earned quite good money. After my return, I was unable to find any suitable job hence now I am a jobless person. I am planning to migrate again within 2–3 years. Dubai is far better than my village.

(30-year-old Gulf returnee)

Low job opportunity in the place of origin was the main problem in the economic reintegration. Many returnees were planning to emigrate again in order to earn more. About 35% of returnees achieved upward mobility in their occupation after their return. While most (46%) had no change in their occupation status, about 19% of the returnees had experienced downward occupational mobility after their return.

I paid Rs 50,000 to the recruiting agent for getting a work visa in the Gulf country. I used to work as an electrician in Saudi Arabia. I joined my company as a trainer, and over the time, I had acquired the required skills. I used to earn 1500 Riyals every month. After eight years, I returned to my village. With my earnings, I renovated my old house and bought some agricultural land. But now, I could not find any electrician job in my village. For the past two years, I am working as a farmer. Though the savings from Saudi Arabia made a lot of development in our household, I have forgotten all my skills (electrical work).

(45-year-old Gulf return migrant)

The noticeable feature of the activity status among the Gulf returnees was self-employment. Before emigration, only 2% of them were engaged in any self-employed work. Returnees invest their money in small enterprises. It resulted in a sizeable increase in self-employment (20%) among the returnees (Table 15.5). A few returnees, who were earlier unemployed, also started their own business. To maintain a good lifestyle, they run their small business (grocery shops, betel stalls, chicken firms, packaged water supply, etc.). The low level of literacy among returnees acts as a hindrance to get a better-skilled job. But, no one among the returnee was a prominent entrepreneur nor had a sufficient amount of money to start a small industrial unit where they could also employ others.

Further access to start-up loans for returnees was also a significant economic reintegration challenge in this study. Many returnees wanted to start their own small business, but they had no significant savings, or even some of them did not prefer to invest all of their savings in the business. Many returnees could not start their own business and wait for some suitable job after their return. A key informant (KI – an employee at State Bank of India, Beldanga Block) stated that returnees could not access loans with their minimum savings and income. On the other hand, the interest amount is also very high, and many of them could not re-pay it. In this situation, they are not allowed to get loans.

### *Challenges Faced in Social Reintegration upon Return*

When migrants return, they are welcomed based on their contributions and remittances towards family. However, it becomes a challenge when the family members expect more contributions. When returnees cannot fulfil the demands of their family members, then it will lead to conflict and unhappiness.

When I returned home after working 14 years in Saudi Arabia, I felt that my wife and sons were really not happy to see me. When I used to send remittances, then I was more respected in my family. I felt very bad when they asked me when I am emigrating again. Now I want to settle down here (village), but they wanted me to migrate again.

(41-year-old Gulf returnee)

Peer pressure also plays a vital role in terms of social integration. When returnees saw their friends and relatives who were still abroad and sending a fair amount of remittances to their family, returnees were under pressure, and to overcome this situation, they plan to re-migrate again. It was observed that around 54% of return migrants planned to re-emigrate to the Gulf countries again.

My migration journey was not successful. I used to work in a farmhouse there (Saudi Arabia). I felt so frustrated, and somehow, I managed to return to my village. The whole period was a nightmare for me. After return also, I was feeling upset seeing others (my friends, relatives) doing well. I was not able to support my family. I have to migrate again, anyhow.

(Unsuccessful Gulf returnee, aged 27 years)

Villagers have a misconception about the Gulf returnees. They think that returnees have a fair amount of money and then they return to the origin place. Gulf migrants were more affluent than other non-migrants. Villagers expect a lot from the Gulf returnees in case of providing monetary support in

the construction of the Mandir, Mosque, etc. Although many of the returnees contribute (60%) in this aspect and help others monetarily (72.3%), all returnees were not capable of doing so, which is a significant challenge in social integration.

Many villagers, especially the Gulf returnees, donate a good amount of money in building Madrasa, Masjid and other social activities. I also donated a little amount of money to install a water connection in the village masjid. But they expected more from me. I could not donate big amount. If Allah wants, he will again send me abroad and make me donate more.

(Gulf returnee, aged 41 – Sahajadpur Block)

When returnees could not fulfil the demand of their family members and villagers, they got frustrated and isolated, including from their own relatives. To overcome this situation, they tried hard to emigrate again to Gulf countries, though not with success.

Whenever I saw my elder brother living his life happily with his family after return, the feeling of jealousy would enfold me always. I always felt, what wrong I did, how would I manage my family? I have two daughters; I have to arrange their marriage. How will all this be accomplished? I was angry with myself every time and used to spend sleepless nights. I felt worthless in my own home.

(Gulf returnee, aged 37 years, – Kandi Block)

## Discussions and Conclusions

The study examined the socio-economic reintegration of the Gulf return migrants in their own villages. Based on the findings, the majority of the migrants returned to Murshidabad district were unprepared with no significant accumulation of savings to facilitate their readjustment process. Very few returnees acquired some skills from abroad, like carpenter, driver, sales boy, cooking, construction work, etc. The study revealed that returnees encountered unemployment or lack of suitable jobs at their place of origin, which was one of the major hurdles for their economic reintegration. To maintain a good lifestyle, they need to earn a good amount of income. In this situation, remittances play a vital role in uplifting the socio-economic status of the migrants. They invested their remittances in purchasing lands, assets, constructing buildings, and other purposes. Few returnees also invested in the education of their children, while few invested a good amount of money in sending their son or relatives to the Gulf countries. Even those who started small businesses/enterprises after returning to their villages are not very successful in making them profitable. It is expected that good members of these

ventures will likely fail. Not only returnees faced economic challenges but also encountered many social isolations. However, most studies discussed only the positive impact of return migration on village society (Hao et al., 2019; Lin & Li, 2020; Yang et al., 2020), ignoring the negative impacts. Returnees financially contributed towards the construction of worship places and other social activities in their villages. They helped fellow villagers monetarily and also influenced them to take part in community activities. The socio-economic integration index revealed that approximately two-thirds of the Gulf returnees achieved a moderate level of economic and social integration. Less than half of the returnees reported that they were satisfied and happy with their return decision as some of them earned enough money or wanted to be united with their family and take care of elderly parents. However, half of the return migrants interviewed stated that they were not happy and not satisfied with their return as they faced several difficulties in their place of origin. Lack of a job, low income, feeling useless, and peer pressure were the main challenges for readjustment after return. These challenges have an impact on their ability to readjust to their own communities. In this study, we found that the returnee's inability to successful readjustment triggers further emigration.

Effective reintegration of Gulf returnees needs collaboration and cooperation of government institutions and communities. However, the findings of the qualitative analysis illustrate that the Gulf returnees in the study villages could not avail such kind of rehabilitation and reintegration schemes. Lack of awareness and skills of returnees are the main barriers to their successful socio-economic reintegration in the villages. There is a need to focus on the right policies in the home country for the encouragement of returnees to invest their savings and skills in a productive way (Rajan & Akhil, 2019). Providing useful information related to the job market is a crucial factor for successful reintegration. However, the provision of vocational training adapted to employment prospects can also play an important role in the smooth reintegration and rehabilitation process of return migrants. Lack of economic opportunities coupled with changing aspirations for higher social status results in a situation in which most Gulf returnees find it difficult to adjust. They are also concerned with whether their own family members and village at large consider them as a "failure" in comparison to other "successful" Gulf returnees. The only way to escape from this situation is to re-emigrate again, though there is no assurance that they will be "successful" in the future.

Emigration was goal-oriented to attain economic gains, but a lack of savings and unwise spending led to a depletion of economic assets over the years. The desire to gain social status after the return was also not possible due to lower education, skills, and lack of jobs. Even those who started self-employment ventures were affected by a lack of entrepreneurship. Most Gulf returnees are caught in a "trap" of higher aspirations on the one hand and

inadequate earnings on the other, and, unfortunately, they have no concrete plans to overcome this desperate situation.

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