

Migration and Rural Entrepreneurship: Pathways to Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide for Vikshit Bharat @2047

Harsh Vardhan Awasthi and Dr. Sarda Prasad

Doctoral Scholar and Assistant Professor
School of Extension and Development Studies
Indira Gandhi National Open University

Abstract

Bharat's rural hinterland is increasingly facing workforce shortages, not just in agriculture but across essential rural services, which is affecting overall regional development. The rural outmigration trend continues with younger generations, who often follow in their elders' footsteps in search of a better livelihood. To ensure inclusive development that reaches all sections of the society and bridges the rural-urban divide, in alignment with the vision of Vikshit Bharat @ 2047, this paper explores the interlink between the role of rural migration and rural entrepreneurship, particularly agro-processing, renewable energy and digital services, as a pathway in improving living standards in rural areas. The paper aims to emphasize rural migration not as a developmental barrier but as a potential enabler for rural entrepreneurship and local development in which migrants not only support their native places financially (tangible gain) but also by transferring knowledge and skills (intangible gain) to the younger generations enabling them to build livelihoods while remaining in their home communities. The study relies entirely on secondary qualitative and quantitative data, including case studies drawn from existing research literature. Findings suggest that return migrant entrepreneurs benefit from emotional and social security, enabling them to support both family well-being and local economic activities. It demonstrates that women-led enterprises can also thrive when male outmigration happens. The study also recommends that the regional authorities should proactively invest in developing necessary infrastructure and support systems that empower the left-behind population and reduce the compulsion for rural residents to migrate to nearby urban centers, thereby easing pressure on the urban public services. Government initiatives like the Rural Self-Employment Training Institute (RSETI), Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojna (DDYGKY), and Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) can act as key enablers when aligned with local entrepreneurial aspirations.

Keywords: Vikshit Bharat, agriculture, rural, migration, entrepreneurship, women, development.

Introduction

As India progresses toward its vision of a developed nation as outlined in the vision of *Vikshit Bharat @2047*, closing the gap between the urban and rural spaces has become one of the biggest challenges and opportunities. India's rural spaces, which accommodate nearly 65% of the nation's population, continue to grapple with age-old problems like agrarian distress, inadequate job opportunities, poor infrastructure, and restricted public service access (NITI Aayog, 2021). These have translated to long-standing rural outmigration, especially from the youth segment, who seeks livelihood opportunities in urban spaces. While migration has traditionally been viewed as an indicator of rural underdevelopment, this study presents a more positive outlook, imagining migration as a possible catalyst for rural transformation through entrepreneurship.

In India, rural-to-urban migration has kept rising in recent decades. Census 2011 reported more than 450 million Indians as internal migrants, with a large number coming from rural areas (Government of India, 2011). These migration streams are largely driven by livelihood issues, education, and socio-economic mobility (Srivastava, 2020). Migration is generally generational, with each successive generation following earlier generations to cities, perpetuating human capital structural drain from rural areas. This process has several socio-economic consequences: agrarian labor shortages and rural industries, feminization of agriculture, rural household fragmentation, and heightened pressure on urban services (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009).

Though migration imposes economic costs on rural populations, it also generates tangible and intangible value to rural regions. Migrant remittances significantly supplement rural household consumption, debt repayment, health, education, and wealth generation (Tumbe, 2018). Above all, returning migrants bring back expertise, access to technology, entrepreneurship culture, and valuable market connections. These "intangible" resources can initiate rural entrepreneurship under good institutional conditions and policy interventions (de Haan, 2011). This entrepreneurship can transform rural economies by generating local jobs, alleviating migration pressure, and enhancing the standard of living.

The Government of India has recognized such potential and has initiated a series of flagship programs for promoting rural entrepreneurship, like the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), the Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs), the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY), the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), and the SVAMITVA Scheme. These programs aim to empower rural youth and returnee migrants with the required skills, seed capital, and networking opportunities that are critical for enterprise development.

This research paper aims to analyze the intersection of rural migration and rural entrepreneurship within the holistic framework of *Vikshit Bharat @2047*. Following the analysis of sectoral opportunities, gendered impacts, government programs, and case studies, the research argues that return migration, if properly managed, can be a powerful driver of rural enterprise development. Migration does not necessarily need to be seen as a sign of rural decline; rather, it

can be a means of constructing resilience, innovation, and sustainable growth in the central regions of India.

Migration Trends in Rural India

Migration in India is a complex and deeply embedded socio-economic phenomenon, particularly prominent in rural regions where livelihood opportunities remain limited and unevenly distributed. Internal migration—especially from rural to urban areas—has become a critical feature of the Indian development landscape. According to the Census of India (2011), approximately 37% of the populations were internal migrants, and among them, a significant portion migrated due to employment, education, marriage, and family-related reasons (Government of India, 2011). In rural areas, economic migration dominates, driven by declining agricultural profitability, underemployment, lack of industrial diversification, and poor infrastructure (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009).

Migration is not uniform across India; it exhibits regional, caste-based, gendered, and seasonal variations. High outmigration states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh have seen millions of workers move seasonally or permanently to cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Surat, and Bangalore in search of employment in construction, textiles, hospitality, and informal sectors (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009; Srivastava, 2011; ILO, 2021). These workers are predominantly male, young, and from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. Migration becomes not just an individual but a household strategy, wherein families collectively invest in one or more members' movement to diversify income sources and reduce economic risks (Stark & Bloom, 1985).

Seasonal or circular migration is particularly prevalent among landless laborers and smallholder farmers. In many tribal and semi-arid districts of central India, migration occurs annually during the agricultural lean season. Migrants typically work in urban construction or brick kilns and return after several months. This cyclical pattern results in social dislocation, educational disruption for children, and increased vulnerability to exploitation. At the same time, such migration facilitates remittance flows that support rural household consumption, health, and children's education.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought the vulnerabilities of rural-urban migration into sharp focus. The reverse migration of over 10 million workers back to rural areas exposed systemic gaps in social protection, housing, and labor rights for migrants (ILO, 2020). However, it also offered a unique opportunity to reimagine rural economies as potential centers of production and entrepreneurship, especially if returnees are supported with skill development and enterprise incubation.

Gendered migration trends reveal additional dimensions. While male migration dominates labor-related movement, women increasingly migrate post-marriage or to join families. However, in states where male outmigration is high, women are emerging as de facto heads of households, assuming responsibilities in agriculture and income generation. This shift opens

possibilities for empowering women through entrepreneurship, especially with institutional support via SHGs and schemes like the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (Desai & Banerji, 2008; FAO, 2011; UN Women, 2018; Ministry of Rural Development, 2020).

Overall, rural migration in India is a multi-causal, dynamic process influenced by socio-economic conditions, demographic pressures, and structural inequities. While it reflects developmental deficits, it also presents significant opportunities for transforming rural landscapes through targeted entrepreneurial interventions.

Migration as a Development Enabler

While rural migration is frequently perceived as a response to poverty and a symptom of rural underdevelopment, it also holds transformative potential when linked with broader development strategies. Recent development literature has emphasized the need to shift the narrative from "managing migration" to "maximizing its development potential" (de Haan, 2011; UNESCO, 2022). Migration, when viewed through this lens, becomes a process through which individuals and communities access resources, build capacities, and engage in upward socio-economic mobility.

A key developmental dividend of migration is remittance inflow. In India, remittances from internal migrants often account for a significant portion of rural household income. These funds are primarily used for basic consumption, debt repayment, and social obligations, but in many cases, they are also invested in land improvement, housing, and children's education (Tumbe, 2018). Over time, these financial inflows help stabilize rural livelihoods and reduce income vulnerability.

Beyond the tangible financial benefits, migration results in critical "intangible" transfers. Migrants acquire knowledge, new perspectives, and technical and managerial skills during their urban work experiences. Upon return, they bring back an enhanced understanding of work discipline, quality control, consumer expectations, and exposure to diverse sectors (de Haas, 2010; Deshingkar & Grimm, 2005). These skills can be pivotal in launching and sustaining rural enterprises—whether it's running a grocery store, setting up a tailoring unit, or operating an agro-processing venture.

This return migration dynamic can also foster local innovation. Migrants often identify unmet needs or service gaps in their home communities based on what they have seen in urban contexts. This allows them to introduce new business models, services, or technologies that may not previously have existed in rural settings. For example, a migrant who worked in an e-commerce warehouse may return and establish a rural logistics aggregation service or digital service center, thus improving local service delivery while generating income.

The emotional and social capital that returnees possess is another underexplored development enabler. Strong community ties, familial responsibilities, and a desire to improve social standing in one's native village often motivate return migrants to invest in local ventures (Ellis, 2003). In

many instances, these entrepreneurs become role models, inspiring others to pursue self-employment or skill development rather than outmigration.

Moreover, migration also contributes to gender empowerment when the outmigration of men increases women's agency in rural areas. Women, in the absence of male family members, take on leadership roles in farm and non-farm activities and increasingly participate in self-help groups (SHGs). These groups act as platforms for microfinance access, peer support, and enterprise formation (Agarwal, 2003; Holvoet, 2005; Puhazhendhi & Badatya, 2002; Ministry of Rural Development, 2020).

For migration to serve as a development enabler, however, institutional support is essential. Return migrants often face barriers like a lack of credit, bureaucratic delays, or insufficient infrastructure. Government programs such as the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), and SVAMITVA scheme provides critical support for translating migration benefits into sustainable entrepreneurship.

Thus, migration should not merely be seen as a symptom of rural failure but rather as a lever for catalyzing local development, one that brings both resources and renewal to rural India.

Rural Entrepreneurship: Potential and Practice

Rural entrepreneurship is increasingly emerging as a successful strategy to generate local jobs, decrease reliance on urban migration, and enhance self-sustained village economies. Broadly defined, rural entrepreneurship is business operations conducted in the countryside that employ local resources, labor, and skills to make products or offer services. Rural entrepreneurship includes both farm and non-farm ventures and involves such sectors as agro-processing, animal husbandry, rural tourism, renewable energy, crafts, digital services, and trade (Saxena, 2012).

The development of rural entrepreneurship is especially important in today's Indian scenario, where the agricultural sector, though it employs close to half the labor force, contributes less than 20% to the GDP (NITI Aayog, 2021). Rural non-farm enterprises provide an alternative route for economic diversification, particularly for landless families and return migrants. These enterprises help in poverty alleviation, income smoothing, and enhanced social status, while facilitating value addition to local resources and access to broader markets.

There are a number of reasons why rural entrepreneurship is on the rise. First, migration remittances provide seed capital for new businesses. Second, physical and digital connectivity in rural areas has increased with initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and BharatNet, enabling entrepreneurs to reach markets and e-commerce platforms (World Bank, 2020; Ministry of Rural Development, 2021; Department of Telecommunications, 2020). Third, awareness of government schemes and financial inclusion programs has increased the entrepreneurial capabilities of youth and women.

But future rural entrepreneurs are confronted with several challenges. Credit access is still a perennial problem, especially for non-property holders and unregistered individuals. Women are

more acutely hit by this, as patriarchal inheritance systems tend to bar women from property rights (Agarwal, 1994; NABARD, 2018; UN Women, 2018). Skill gaps, poor business training, and poor supply chains also restrain the development of micro-enterprises. Rural markets are also plagued by information asymmetries, fluctuations in seasonal demand, and poor customer loyalty due to competition from urban retail outlets.

Government intervention has played a pivotal role in resolving these limitations. Initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) provide capital subsidy for establishing micro-units, while the Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) entail on-the-job, trade-based training. Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) under DAY-NRLM seeks to foster entrepreneurship among the members of self-help groups (SHGs) through capacity building, business planning, and mentorship (World Bank, 2020).

Rural entrepreneurship also has a revolutionary socio-cultural function. It fosters the dignity of labor, induces innovation, and facilitates the inclusive involvement of marginalized groups like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women. In this regard, successful rural entrepreneurs tend to become local leaders, motivating others to innovate and take initiative.

Overall, rural entrepreneurship is not just a tool of livelihood creation but also a means of rural renewal. With proper guidance, infrastructure investment, and financial empowerment, it can be a foundation for realizing Vikshit Bharat @2047.

Sectoral Focus Areas for Rural Enterprises

Indian rural entrepreneurship flourishes in a wide range of sectors, most of which are aligned with the availability of local resources, the needs of the community, and emerging market demands. Of these, agro-processing, renewable energy, and digital services have been high-impact areas providing scalable livelihoods and inclusive growth opportunities. These sectors have high potential for employment of return migrants, women's empowerment, and decentralized economic growth.

1 Agro-Processing and Agripreneurship

Agro-processing is one of the sectors most likely to succeed in rural entrepreneurship since it increases value to raw agricultural commodities, improves shelf life, minimizes post-harvest losses, and creates local jobs. Entrepreneurship in milling, fruit canning, cold-pressed oil, spice packaging and dairy is usually based on farmers or migrant groups with savings and urban experience (FAO, 2021). Government schemes like the PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme facilitate these enterprises by providing funding, branding promotion, and capacity development (Ministry of Food Processing Industries, 2022).

Additionally, return migrants draw upon their knowledge of consumer demand and supply chain dynamics from urban areas to establish effective agro-based businesses in their villages of origin. For instance, returnees in Maharashtra and Punjab have established direct-to-consumer delivery channels for organic agricultural products through digital platforms. Not only do these businesses generate employment, but they also establish rural resilience by linking farmers to broader value chains.

2 Renewable Energy and Sustainable Enterprise

Access to energy is still a key limitation in most rural regions, but it also offers a channel for green enterprise. Returnees from urban industries with technical training or vocational skills usually establish solar installation and service enterprises. The Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM) initiative encourages solar water pumps and stand-alone solar installations, which allow entrepreneurs to cater to farm and home energy requirements (Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, 2022).

In Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh, among other states, social enterprises are also developing around biogas plants, solar cold storage, and solar microgrids. These projects make rural areas less dependent on irregular grid supply and increase climate resilience. Women-owned energy businesses—especially in cooking energy retail and solar lanterns—are becoming more popular through initiatives such as the UNDP-backed DREEM program.

3 Rural E-Commerce and Digital Services

With growing internet connectivity and the development of BharatNet, online services have turned into a significant channel for rural entrepreneurship. Common Service Centres (CSCs), educational digital hubs, and fintech kiosks are being managed by digitally equipped returnees who earlier worked in urban service economies. These enterprisers facilitate document services, telemedicine, bill payments, and Aadhaar-related assistance at the village level (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2020).

Online marketplaces such as Amazon, Saheli, and Flipkart Samarth are also giving rural artisans, SHGs, and women entrepreneurs access to national and international markets. For example, in Tamil Nadu and Odisha, return migrants have established logistics services that link rural producers to these marketplaces, improving market access and rural income.

In all these industries, convergence with government support schemes, local skills availability, and market linkages is essential. Rural businesses have to be embedded in a greater support ecosystem for sustainability, scalability, and linkage with the Vikshit Bharat development agenda.

Women Entrepreneurs and Migration

Migration, particularly male outmigration from rural regions, has led to a large-scale reorganization of gender roles and economic responsibilities in Indian villages. While men migrate to urban centers for improved jobs, women are left behind to run households, farms, and even small businesses. Such "feminization of responsibility" has brought both opportunities and challenges. On the one side, women have increased work burdens and restricted mobility; on the other side, they have decision-making authority and leadership positions in local economic endeavors (Desai & Banerji, 2008; Kabeer, 2012).

In the majority of the states, like Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha, the unavailability of male family members has provided a favorable platform for women's entrepreneurship. These women, frequently grouped in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), are entering the profession of entrepreneurs in agro-processing, tailoring, poultry farming, and food services. The SHG system provides access to microfinance, skill development, joint procurement, and peer support, hence breaking the constraints normally experienced by women in enterprise.

Return migration can also spur women's enterprise development. Men migrants return with money, expertise, and experience of urban consumer markets. Where women have started small-scale enterprises already, returning migrants become collaborators or catalysts. For example, in Jharkhand's Gumla district, women-owned papad-making units scaled up after men returned with improved packaging solutions and knowledge of digital payments. These collective family enterprises show a forward-looking change toward even more gender-friendly models of entrepreneurship.

Government programs have also helped to build the ecosystem for women entrepreneurs in rural India. The Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) has empowered millions of women with agriculture-based livelihoods. At the same time, digital programs such as Mahila E-Haat provide a platform for women producers and artisans to sell their products nationally, avoiding conventional middlemen (MoRD, 2022). Financial literacy drives and the Stand-Up India program have also facilitated access to loans for many women to establish small and medium-sized businesses.

Despite this, there are still challenges. Women entrepreneurs are denied access to formal land ownership, which limits their capacity to access collateral-based credit (Agarwal, 2021). Social norms also constrain their mobility, limiting market participation, training, and trade fair participation. Time poverty, due to care work and the absence of domestic support, also limits their capacity to expand businesses.

Overcoming these limitations demands specific policy interventions: titling of land in women's names under the SVAMITVA scheme, working women's crèche facilities, gender-responsive training modules, and mobile-based market information services. Community awareness programs can also facilitate a change in cultural attitudes towards women's work and entrepreneurship.

In total, male migration has inadvertently created new economic spaces for rural women. With proper institutional support, gender-sensitive planning, and inclusive finance, women-driven enterprises can make a significant contribution to the rebirth of rural economies and work towards the vision of Vikshit Bharat @2047.

Role of Government Policies and Schemes

Acknowledging the potential for rural entrepreneurship in transformation to fill the rural-urban gap, the Government of India has instituted various policy schemes and initiatives aimed at promoting enterprise creation, skills enhancement, and the reintegration of return migrants. These schemes play a vital role in turning migration from compulsion to opportunity, particularly within the framework of Vikshit Bharat @2047.

1 Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)

Operated by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), PMEGP is a flagship program that extends financial support to micro-enterprises in rural and urban regions. First-generation entrepreneurs are eligible to receive loans up to ₹25 lakh with subsidy rates between 15% and 35%, based on place and social category (KVIC, 2023). The scheme has played a major role in sponsoring migrant returnees who utilize their savings as margin money and leverage PMEGP loans to start enterprises in the manufacturing, service, and trade sectors.

2 Rural Self-Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs)

RSETIs, which have been set up by public sector banks in association with the Ministry of Rural Development, provide short-term residential training courses in trades like tailoring, plumbing, food processing, and mobile repair. Training is usually linked to local economic opportunities, and trainees are assisted in establishing their enterprises after training (MoRD, 2021). RSETIs serve a key function in re-skilling return migrants and rural unemployed youth by providing them with vocational, income-generating skills.

3 Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)

SVEP, as rolled out under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), has the goal of developing entrepreneurial capabilities of rural SHG

members by way of offering financing, handholding, and mentorship. SVEP empowers CRPs-EP as community-based Business Support Service Providers to mentor entrepreneurs in planning their business, registering their enterprise, and obtaining market linkages. It has achieved the milestone of developing more than 1.5 lakh micro-enterprises in pilot blocks, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha (World Bank, 2020).

4 SVAMITVA Scheme

Formal property titles and land ownership are requirements for institutional credit access. The Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA) scheme uses drones to map residential villages in rural India and provides legal ownership records (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2022). This scheme allows potential entrepreneurs, especially women and returnee landless individuals, to leverage their property as collateral for business loans.

5 National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP)

NRETP supplements the implementation of NRLM through encouragement of clusters for economic development, producer associations, and cooperative enterprises. NRETP aids rural entrepreneurs in connecting with markets, embracing new technology, and increasing productivity. The project prioritizes women-owned producer collectives in agriculture, dairy, and handicrafts and aligns with the goals of financial inclusion and digital empowerment (World Bank, 2021).

Together, these programs act as institutional pillars buttressing the nexus of migration-entrepreneurship. There are still gaps in outreach, coordination, and building capacity. More convergence at the local level, greater coverage of credit, and incorporating migrant-special modules can contribute to making these programs more effective.

Policy Recommendations

In order to realize the full potential of rural entrepreneurship driven by migration in the pursuit of Vikshit Bharat @2047, a convergent and inclusive policy landscape is necessary. Although current schemes have provided a robust foundation, various policy gaps exist in the domains of data, infrastructure, financial access, gender parity, and local self-governance. The following are key policy suggestions to enhance the migration–entrepreneurship interface:

1 Institutionalize Migration-Sensitive Development Planning

A key initial step is to integrate migration into rural development planning at the national, state, and district levels formally. This involves setting up migration observatories and data platforms

that gather real-time data on the number, profile, and return flows of migrants. These data will help develop responsive skilling, financial inclusion, and rehabilitation strategies. The Kerala government's NORKA Roots program is an effective model for monitoring and reintegrating migrants with welfare scheme.

2 Intensify Local Institutions and Convergence Framework

Strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to function as local enterprise coordination entities is of critical importance. Gram Panchayats must be enabled to develop local resource mapping, detect local entrepreneurs (including returnees), and bring PMEGP, SVEP, NRLM, and MGNREGA assets in convergence. The combined planning strategy allows physical infrastructure, credit outlets, and skilling initiatives to harmonize with each other.

3 Form Rural Enterprise Zones (REZs)

The setup of Rural Enterprise Zones in high outmigration areas can trigger entrepreneurship by offering shared facilities like storage, working space, internet, and logistics. These zones must be supported with incubators, mentoring groups, and access to markets. Like the One District One Product (ODOP) program, REZs can target specific local strengths like textiles, agro-products, or crafts.

4 Increase Access to Credit and Insurance

Access to credit is a primary stumbling block for rural entrepreneurs, especially women and landless returnees. First-generation entrepreneurs need the financial products to be specifically designed for them—small ticket size financing, flexible repayment schedules, and low collateral. The Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) needs to be made applicable to return migrant entrepreneurs. In addition, micro-insurance products can offer protection against risks to enterprises.

5 Facilitate Gender-Sensitive Enterprise Support

Since women are participating more in rural entrepreneurship, policies need to cater to gender-specific limitations. These are limited mobility, time poverty, and lack of legal titles to land. Gender audits of enterprise schemes and the integration of childcare facilities, transport allowances, and modules on financial literacy will provide access on an equal basis. Joint land titling under the SVAMITVA scheme needs to be given high priority to facilitate women entrepreneurs.

6 Encourage Entrepreneurial Attitudes

Introducing entrepreneurial mindsets from a young age is crucial. Rural colleges and schools must introduce entrepreneurship courses, vocational exposure, and community-based business challenges. Young people's innovation schemes, local startup competitions, and rural business fairs can generate aspiration and peer-learning networks.

By following these suggestions, migration can be redirected as a development strategy instead of a distress response, allowing India's rural citizens to become the dynamo for inclusive growth.

Conclusion

As India progresses towards the vision of Vikshit Bharat @2047, tapping internal migration as a development opportunity becomes more and more critical. Rather than being a symptom of rural distress, migration—especially return migration—provides a fertile ground for rural entrepreneurship, economic diversification, and community resilience. Return migrants carry not just financial capital but also urban work experience, technical skills, and wider worldviews that can trigger innovation and self-employment in their home areas.

Rural entrepreneurship, particularly in areas such as agro-processing, renewable energy, and information and communication technologies, is a sustainable way of overcoming underemployment and the strain on urban infrastructure. Greater agency for rural women entrepreneurs, usually stimulated by male outmigration, has further consolidated the socio-economic integration of rural societies.

Government initiatives like PMEGP, SVEP, RSETIs, and SVAMITVA have set the foundation for this shift. Yet to realize their complete potential, there needs to be more convergence, inclusive access, localized planning, and gender-sensitive implementation. Policy innovation also has to ensure that credit, infrastructure, training, and market support become customized to meet the specific requirements of return migrants and aspiring entrepreneurs.

This paper highlights the importance of a paradigm shift, transcending the perception of migration as a developmental issue to understanding it as a strategic opportunity. Rural regions, with proper institutional support, can become thriving centers of entrepreneurship, reversing centuries-long patterns of economic marginalization. By tapping into the entrepreneurial potential of its citizens, especially women and returnees, India can create a more inclusive and self-sustaining rural economy and, in doing so, narrow the rural-urban divide and further the vision of a developed nation by 2047.

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