

# Indian TV show highlights Arab abuse of migrants

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By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

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Catholic Online ([www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org))

**Show puts light on the mistreatment of Indian migrant workers in the Arab Gulf states.**

An Indian TV show focusing on the plight of missing migrant workers is gaining popularity throughout that part of the world.

Migrant Indian workers face many difficulties and turned to one another for support in the Gulf countries.

Highlights

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NEW DELHI, INDIA (Catholic Online) - Pravasi Lokam is an Indian TV show that is part "Unsolved Mysteries," and part India's "Most Wanted" -- without the criminal element. The show is produced by Rafeek Ravuther, an Indian film entrepreneur who took an interest in the subject after one of his cousins committed suicide in Oman, and another went missing for four months. He has now produced the show for 11 years and it has become one of the region's most popular.

The show, Pravasi Lokan, tries to reunite migrant workers with their families. These migrants have left India and gone missing, sometimes for decades. Nearly all of them have left for the promise of work in the Arab Gulf states.

Unfortunately, after being lured overseas from India, they commonly face new difficulties which can include a bait and switch of the job offer, criminal issues, and expired visas. The result is that many of these migrant workers go missing every year. The number is believed to range well into the thousands.

This is where Ravuther and his TV crew pick up the case. They travel to the Gulf states, and work with contacts throughout the region to try to find some of these missing workers. Today, they have searched for over 1,300 people, and they have reunited about 300 with their families -- in some cases after periods as long as 30 years.

Unfortunately, the problem is more common than most would like to say. Facing poor job prospects in India, workers answer ads and purchase one-way tickets to the Gulf states. Once there, unscrupulous employers may offer them a different job than the one they originally promised, always at a much lower rate of pay. Many, without the means to fund a return trip to India are left with little choice but to accept the work.

Once working, they are at the mercy of their employers who are responsible for keeping their visas current and paying the fees to do so. Some employers do not pay these fees despite deducting them from the worker's wages, and the visas are left to expire. That leaves stranded workers without valid visas who are either caught and arrested where they are taken to jail to serve a sentence, or they are forced even further underground where they simply work to survive.

Ravuther's show has cast a spotlight on this problem for over a decade. Unfortunately, the issues and concerns that he continues to highlight are not being addressed by anyone. The only good news is that the show has managed to reunite some of the missing with their families. Beyond that, there is little else to do except pray.