

Guest Editor's Note

There is something very appealing in the idea that all our ancestors were migrants. The relevance of this shared history is melded with extensive scholarship on 19th, 20th and 21st century migrations with the impact of politics, economics and culture. In literature, we look at how society represents itself through narratives, studying texts constructed through signs, what is said and what is unsaid, recovering unacknowledged memories and amnesia from silences. It is a bit like being a detective using theoretically informed tools of investigation. The common factor is the desire to imagine a just, fair and an equal world. The study of cultural practices in migration is significant in this direction as a postcolonial state reconfigures subject positions and recovers the lives lived in exclusion from the footnotes, and often silences of history.

The papers collected in this volume speak to three distinct themes on the culture of migration: identity formation, resistance and changing gender dynamics. Sruti Manjula Devprakash looks at Dalit autobiographies to understand how Dalits negotiate with life and struggles in the city. She does this by examining the narratives in Daya Pawar's *Baluta*, Om Praksh Valmiki's *Joothan* and Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste* among others. The author argues that migrating from caste-ridden society in the village to a perceived caste-less society in the city is always incomplete. The transition from the rural to the urban and from the village to the city is always uncertain for different generations of migrants. The autobiographies of Dalits aptly illustrate this incomplete and uncertain migration and the experiences associated with it. The oppressed identity of Dalits acquires agency in the paper by Ajeet Kumar Pankaj who discusses how symbols and religious practices are used by Dalit migrants to create a counter-hegemonic assertion in Mumbai. The celebrations around Ambedkar Jayanti, Ravidas Jayanti and huge gatherings of Dalits in Chaitya Bhumi and Golden Pakoda help them get assimilated into the community life of native Dalits. Thus, symbols create conditions for ideological solidarity and provide a space for creating a counter-hegemonic space in an alienating city like Mumbai.

Identity formation and its interface with place are crucial to the experiential lives of migrants. Aishee Bhattacharjee sheds light on the linkage between belonging and identity and their relation with place by locating her study in Pandu, Guwahati. She suggests that place making is central to identity formation of migrants where memory, identity, and belonging play crucial roles in creating a realm of inbetweenness. Jabeen Yasmeeen shows how the relation between the indigenous population of Assam and Bengali

migrants is fraught with conflict and the antipathy that exists towards Bengali language. She specifically highlights the Muslim identity of the migrant workers in Assam and how an identity based on religion enhances hostility between the natives and the migrants.

Nandini Paliyath's analysis unravels conflicting impact of migration on women in Kerala. She contends that the impact of migration on women has been mixed. While the women who migrated to the Gulf and other regions have been empowered, and it reflects in their consumption patterns, those who were left behind wrestle with structures of patriarchy without productive recourse to earn their own living. In the recent years, folksongs have been used in literature on migration to articulate subjective experiences of migrants. Asha Singh's paper makes a significant contribution in this regard. She makes the argument that Bhojpuri folksongs sung by left-behind women articulate their perceptions and dilemmas about male out-migrants.

Studies in migration is a critical process of understanding the social, political, economic and cultural needs of human individuals and communities in their places of origin and the communities into which migrants are assimilated. These identities are not shaped by difference but hybridity, producing and reproducing through transformation and as Stuart Hall affirms 'subject to a continuous play of history, culture and power'. At the conclusion of *India Moving*, Chinmay Tumbbe states 'If the major ideological battle of the twentieth century was between capitalism and communism, in the twenty-first century it is likely to be between cosmopolitanism and nativism.' Migration is likely to play a significant role in a dynamic thrust toward wisdom in envisioning a peaceful, plural, global, democratic order. Studying Migration is an act of making a difference to the fashioning of that order.

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