

Book Review

LABOUR MIGRATION IN THE POST LIBERALIZATION ERA.

Denzil Fernandes and P.O. Martin (Eds.). Bangalore, CISRS & New Delhi, ISPCK, 2019. ISBN: 978-93-88945-03-5, pp.xviii+253, Price: Rs.540

The volume *Labour Migration in the Post Liberalization Era* is the publication of the proceedings of the national seminar on labour migration held in New Delhi on 18th and 19th of August 2018, organised by the Indian Social Institute, to highlight the issues of labour migrants in India. The book is comprised of 15 articles contributed by academicians and research scholars on various issues related to migration in India.

The objectives of the national seminar as well as the themes of all the articles are briefly presented in the introductory chapter and provide an overview of the issues of migrations in India. The first article “Impact of Globalization on Urban Slum Dwellers - Migrants from Rural Areas: A Social Case Study of Barasat Town, North 24-Parganas District West Bengal” by Kar provides an overview of migration and analyses the causes and effects of migration in the village of Barasat Town. Globalisation has harmed the rural economy of West Bengal, with rural to urban migration leading to an increase in slums in urban areas. Talukdar and Malakar analyse the multiple problems faced by the daily wage *Dalit workers* in the State offices in Guwahati in the article “Workers, Identity, Politics and their Position in the Urban Space.” Even though migration to the urban centres had slightly enhanced their income, the situation of backwardness and deprivation remain the same due to the lack of inclusive governmental policies. The article by Kakoti and Saikia, “Negotiations in Urban space: Rural to Urban Migration of Labour,” is an analysis of the impact of migration on the lifestyle of the migrant labourers in the urban spaces along with a description of the negotiation processes they undergo with the various societal systems in the urban space. The article titled “Cityscape for Young Migrant Women: A Reflection on Intra Domestic Workers in Bangalore” by Gonsalves is a narrative of the situation of migrant women employed as domestic work force. The paper captures the fluid state of intra migrant women’s identity through an exhaustive analysis of their life in Bangalore city. The chapter, “Socio-legal Dynamics of Migrant Workers in India,” by Sharma and

Kashyap elaborates upon the legal provisions that grant benefits to the migrant workers.

The article titled “Vulnerabilities of Interstate Migrants in India: A Case Study of Waste Pickers and Manual Scavengers in Delhi” by Goyal is an in-depth analysis of the multiple vulnerabilities encountered by around 100,000 Rag-pickers in Delhi. The majority are migrants from rural and tribal areas of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The proactive policy directives to protect the rights of the waste pickers with an integrated waste management system to ensure decent livelihoods for the Rag-pickers is the way forward to minimise the vulnerabilities in the sector. The deteriorating situation of the migrant tea garden workers in West Bengal is the theme of the article by Roy titled “Income Generation, Livelihood and Statelessness: An Analysis of the Current Situation of Tea Garden Workers of North Bengal, India.” D’Souza, in his article “The Making and Unmaking of the Migrant Labourers of the Marginal Caste”, analyses the underpinning of caste-occupation relations prevalent in the city of Ahmedabad, indicating that instead of secularising the caste-occupation relations, urbanisation has reinforced them but also strengthened the case economy (p.113). The chapter, “An Analysis of the Livelihood Determinants and Vulnerability of Seasonal Migration in Khohar Village, Rajasthan, India” by Radakrishan et al. is an empirical study examining the livelihood vulnerability of the migrant and the non- migrant, analysing the determinants responsible for decision making on seasonal migration. The finding of the study reveals that a lack of crop diversification, less livelihood options, uncertain climatic conditions, poor market linkages, depleting groundwater tables and exploitation by middlemen all affect their livelihood and influences their migration decisions.

The problems and challenges faced by labour migrants in South India are explained by Martin and Philip in their article “Vulnerabilities of Distress Labour Migrant from North and North Eastern States in South India.” The situation of inter-state migrants calls for reforms in existing labour legislations to ensure the rights of migrants to a dignified human life in the host States of India. The article titled “Migrant Workers in Sanitation Work: Vulnerabilities of Inter State Migrants in India” by Katulkar and D’Souza is an outcome of the empirical study of the migrant workers engaged in sanitation work in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The paper focuses on the inter-state migration and the vulnerabilities deriving from their stoi-

cal status. It highlights the need for policy changes in order to reduce the vulnerabilities of inter-state migrants, especially those engaged in sanitation work across States. The article “Status of Rural Migrant Workers in Ranchi City” by Sweta, based on an empirical study conducted at the Mazdoor Bazar in Ranchi, has brought out the socio-economic status of the migrant workers. Blurred identity as labourers, job insecurity, low wages, lack of access to social security benefits, poor sanitation and accommodation facilities, and safety and security apprehensions of women workers are the dominant problems encountered by the labour migrants in Ranchi.

The article titled “Politics of Spatial Governmentalities: Migrants and their Right to the City” by Anil elaborates on the reality of migrants trying to occupy urban space officially and to assert their citizenship rights in resettlement colonies. Bhoi and Lakra have explored how migration has shifted Dalits from agrarian rural occupations to the informal sector occupations in the urban cities outside their village, city and state in the article titled, “Post liberalisation, Dalits and Large scale industry: Experiences of Labour who migrated from Coastal Odisha to other parts of India.” The liberalisation-propelled migration has moved a section of the Dalit communities in Odisha from their traditional occupations and livelihoods which has severely affected their personal, social and cultural life. The article titled “Graveyard of Interstate migrant workers on Gujarat’s Alang Beach: An Inquiry into How Migrant Workers Constitute a Community of Fate” by Krishna narrates the journey of migrant workers from villages in Uttar Pradesh to the ship-breaking yards of Alang Beach, Gujarat. The inflow of migrants to the locality is escalating despite the dangerous and hazardous nature of the job, indicating the plight of migrant workers in the sector. “The narratives of the migrant workers point out that there is a growing tendency among them to naturalise these abnormal and inhumane living and working conditions as if this is the new normal which is going to be their fate for all time to come” (p. 246).

The articles in the volume have brought out the manifold problems related to the rural to urban migration, the challenges faced by the migrants in urban centres, and the manner in which they negotiate their citizenship rights in urban spaces. A large portion of the urban migrant workers belongs to Dalits, other backward communities and religious minorities. The empirical studies and narratives have presented the depths of deprivation experienced by the labour migrants in different regions of urban India.

The migrant workers need to be organised to fight for their legal entitlements, with decent pay, housing and social protection to ensure their dignity and worth as full citizens of India.

Joseph M.K
emkay@rajagiri.edu