

A two day teachers' workshop on

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# **Research Methodology & Syllabus Making in Migration & Forced Migration Studies**

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**ORGANISED BY THE**

**CALCUTTA RESEARCH GROUP**

**IN COLLABORATION WITH**

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### **Pre-conference roundtable on “Teaching Migration in South Asia”**

At the very outset of the conference, Prof. Paula Banerjee outlined the theme of the workshop which is teaching migration in universities and colleges in different countries in South Asia. She identified some shifts in migration studies in South Asia to name a few labour Migration, environmental migration, the recent question of public health and returning migrants workers during the lockdown in different countries of the region. This workshop is about how to study these shifts. In other words, this conference will provide new orientations that a researcher should have to understand the myriad dimensions of mixed population flow in the context of South Asia, especially during the present pandemic situation.

#### **Name of the Panellists:**

1. Indralal De Silva, University of Colombo & RCSS, Sri Lanka
2. Noor Sanauddin, University of Peshawar, Pakistan
3. Amena Mohsin, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
4. Mujib Ahmad Azizi, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Afghanistan
5. Anita Ghimire, Nepal Institute of Social and Environmental Research, Nepal
6. Arjun Kharel, Social Science Baha, Nepal

#### **Key Points from the Presentations:**

- Prof. De Silva highlighted the fact that in various universities in Sri Lanka forced migration is being taught at both Undergraduate and Postgraduate level. Nonetheless, different subjects focus on different dimensions of the study. In the present time, in Sri Lanka apart from the universities various research organisations also offering courses on migration studies. However, there is a lack of governmental data on the returned migrants. The private research organisations also do not have adequate therefore one has to rely either on the Foreign Employment Bureau (FEB) or own endeavour to gather primary data from the field.
- Prof. Sanauddin talked about the types and salient features of migration in Pakistan. On two occasions the UNHCR declared the importance of migration studies in Pakistan, not a single university in the country is offering any course on the same. However, at present migration studies are taught as a subtopic under Population Studies but no full time course in migration is available in Pakistan.
- In her discussion, Prof. Mohsin talked about the ‘two pillars of the economy’ of Bangladesh; migrant workers’ remittance and women workers in the readymade garment sector. She highlighted the role of religion behind the migration of Bangladeshi workers to Middle East countries. During the present pandemic situation, these workers are returning homes and facing stigmatisation when they are being put in quarantine centres. The women garment workers also shared the same fate. Apart from this, there is also a trans-border population flow between Bangladesh and India. All these three types of migrants are also known as *Remittance Joddha* (Fighter) of Bangladesh. Prof. Mohsin also observed that trans-border population flows have changed the orthodox definition of the border which traditional International Relations hardly studies. According to her here lies the justification of migration studies in the context of South Asia.
- Prof. Kharel in his discussion paid close attention to the relation between migration and socio-economic condition of the household in Nepal. However, there is a lack of

discourses in the media. He has observed that remittance flow is not much decreased because most of the workers working in construction sites are not affected by the pandemic. While reflecting on the need for migration studies he said that although some universities have migration studies in their syllabus, migration centres are missing in Nepal.

- In her discussion, Prof. Ghimire observed that the problem of migration in Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh is very much class and gender-based. Nonetheless, while studying migration there has always been a tendency of looking at migration from a development perspective which is inadequate. The social impact of migration like the gender-based issues, problems of adolescent children should also be studied. Nonetheless, in recent times the issue of trafficking is increasing. Special attention is to be paid on how it is related to migration. The condition of the trafficked women in the destination countries always remains less emphasised in foreign relations and diplomatic relations should be taken into account.
- Mr Azizi observed that the importance of teaching migration in Afghanistan lies in the fact that on the one hand since last decade there is an increasing tendency of outward migration from the country on the other the government is not finding any way out to solve the problem and busy in the peace process and setting up ministries without prioritising the migrants in the first place. He concluded his presentation by giving some recommendations that should be given special attention by the government, NGOs, UNHCR and other international agencies.

### **Q&A Session**

Q) What is the condition of women migrant workers to Middle Eastern countries and the issue of their safety

Prof. Mohsin: Female migrants in Middle East countries particularly in Saudi Arabia are facing violence. Not only physical violence but kept in captivity for months. These cannot be treated as isolated events. Because now this is becoming a pattern. Although the media and civil society are quite vocal on this issue there is an absence of effecting legal regimes. In this context, we have to ask where does the state's sovereignty end? How to make them responsible because these tortured women are legal migrants with proper documents. There has to be some deterrence to this. We have to rethink how international laws could address this domestic issue. Because the refugee and other migration laws do not apply to them.

Apart from this many other questions were asked during the session like the question of minority migrants from Pakistan, the definition of reverse migration and the role of NGOs in Afghanistan.

The online conference ended with a vote of thanks by Kusumika Ghosh, CRG.

## **Day 1**

### **Welcome note and Introductory Comments**

Prof. Byasdeb Dasgupta, University of Kalyani & President, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata at the very beginning of the Day 1 titled as 'Critical Methods in Migration and Forced Migration Studies' welcome all and outlined the theme of the two-day workshop and provided a background of CRG and its collaboration with universities and colleges in the different part of the world to promote the study of migration and forced migration. Then he introduced Prof. Nasreen Chowdhory, University of Delhi, Delhi & Vice-President, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata. Then Prof. Chowdhory congratulated all and made a brief observation of the contemporary relevance of the workshop.

### **Session I**

#### **On Feminist Methods in Migration and Forced Migration Studies**

In her introductory remark, Prof. Banerjee observed two goals of the session: first, drafting a syllabus, and second converting feminist methods in migration into pedagogy. She views feminist methodology in the study of forced migration as emancipatory politics. And to achieve this we have to be egalitarian. To create a feminist methodology, we have to challenge hierarchies, norms of the society thereby 'disloyal' to civilisation. Only applying quantitative methods will not generate desirable results because we have to delve deep into the memories of the women migrants. Empathy and understanding are two useful qualities that a researcher should possess.

- Moderator and Introductory note: Paula Banerjee, University of Calcutta and Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata
- Discussant: Gurmeet Kaur, Punjab University, Chandigarh

#### **Name of the Panellists**

- Samata Biswas, The Sanskrit College and University & Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata
- Ruchira Goswamy, National University of Juridical Sciences & Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata

#### **Key points from the presentations**

- Prof. Biswas in her presentation stressed the need to understand the textual meaning of the forgotten text. To apply feminist methodology what a researcher must do is to learn problematise the category of literature. To illustrate her argument in a better way, she had her presentation on the novel *Oroonoko: or the Royal Slave. A True History* (1688) by Aphra Behn (1640–1689). The novel complicates the issue of gender, violence, slavery. However, it is very astonishing that the novel did not draw very much attention even it was written before Robinson Crusoe. One of the reasons behind it she observed that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was a popular belief that 'a female writing for money was like doing sex for money'. Nonetheless in India, the novel

started to catch limelight only in the late 2000s. The eponymous hero is an African prince from Coramantien who is tricked into slavery and sold to European colonists in Surinam where he meets the narrator. Behn's text is a first-person account of his life, love, rebellion, and execution. Prof. Biswas maintained that by applying feminist methodology one could explore the categories like the race, class, gender, and body are present in the novel.

- Prof. Goswamy started her presentation by discussing the integration of gender studies and migration studies in 1970. Then she points out the difference between studying women and studying gender; the latter one is the study of power asymmetry. Gender asymmetry can also be found within a migrant family. For instance, migrant men's networks offer jobs only for men while women's networks provide jobs for both man and woman. Sometimes married women need to migrate not for a financial reason but for searching autonomy. So, we can observe the multi-layered marginality of a migrant woman and to study this one need to utilise the tools of feminist methodology. Apart from that the issue of growing sex trafficking should also be brought under the purview of said methodology and ask how global and supranational law could be applied for women.
- In her discussion, Prof. Kaur discussed the perennial issue of male predominance whether it is within the family or in the cultural sphere or recognition in the society. She gave the examples of Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor. She argued that the time has come to take a different strand from that of male-centric discourse and knowledge.

### **Interactive Session**

During the interaction session, some broad themes came up and were thoroughly discussed by the participants and the panellists. The gist of the discussion presented below.

- Feminist methods are informed by feminist theory, in other words, by the politics and philosophy of feminism. It uses the ideology and principles of feminism to critique the 'men-centric' language of society, politics, text and literature. This mode of inquiry thought seeks to analyse and understand how society portrays the narrative of male domination by exploring the economic, social, political, and psychological forces that shaped our thought processes.
- After her demise in 1689, Behn's literary works were marginalised and often dismissed outright, notwithstanding the 1700 publication of her *Histories, Novels, and Translations* which helped to preserve her monumental works for future re-discovery. Until the mid-20th century, Behn was often dismissed as a morally depraved minor writer. Of Behn's considerable literary works only *Oroonoko* was seriously considered by literary scholars.
- Prof. Iman Mitra raised a very intriguing question of does feminist methodology considers the articulation by Ronald Barthes in his seminal essay *The Death of the Author*. In his essay, Ronald Barthes argued against the method of reading and criticism that relies on aspects of an author's identity to distil meaning from the author's work. In this type of criticism against which he argues, the experiences and biases of the author serve as a definitive "explanation" of the text. For Barthes, however, this method of reading may be tidy and convenient but is sloppy and flawed: "To give a text an author" and assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it "is to

impose a limit on that text." In essence, Barthes argued that writing and creator are unrelated. However, the feminist researcher argues that the Death of the Author does not mean nobody has written the text. And this is an ongoing debate.

After the discussion, Prof. Banerjee concluded the session.

## **Session II**

### **Bringing Archive to life and living Archive**

Professor Biswajit Mohanty moderated the session. He initiated the session by giving the definition of archive. He talked about how an archive can be made by a researcher by the contextual extrapolation of research material. He focussed on the 'unambiguous' researches which are always aware of unequivocal data, false spaces of liberty of thoughts etc. He stressed on the deconstructionist definition of archive which is proposed by Derrida. He mentioned ordering archival sources by the power. He mentioned Paul Ricour and Walter Benjamin while defining the idea of archive in the context of social science.

The main speaker of this session was Professor Pradip Bose. He talked about the idea of the Archive told by Michel Foucault in a lecture. He quoted Foucault,

'The idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place this whole idea belongs to our modernity.'

He said that Foucault told this in an issue of Diacritics. Professor Bose is considering what Foucault said that the written archive is in the hands of power. Therefore, it is sorted and selected by the will of power. The dominant power selects everything in terms of their own notion of power. Professor Bose said that a living archive can unearth the living components of the archive. It can examine the past irrespective of the traces of power.

To Professor Bose, the very notion of archive is to reveal the past. In contrast to this fact, archaeological sites and written archives always try to hide things from us. So, there is a continuous process of inclusion and exclusion of data and information.

Professor Bose proposed, living archive is not an organised one, but it is helpful for researchers. It organizes the researcher in a different way.

Utsa Sarmin and Kusumika: Talked about participatory archive and the balance of it. They talked about the digital use of information such as the media clips and new channels sites, but there are some kinds of threat to be misguided by the propagandist nature of power-politics. So, both of them methodologically made the participants be careful before using these data.

### **V Ramaswamy**

Being an activist, V Ramaswamy is much keener towards the 'living archive'. To him, living archive can be seen in various ways. He talked about popular archive. He said that along with people's memory, personally collected pamphlets, posters, newspapers by individuals and the memory of movements of the activists are important in this context.

Rajat Kanti Sur

In the domain of cultural anthropology, Rajat suggests that it is important to locate an archive for a researcher. Rajat Kanti talked about the history of 'Sang', the band of singers and dancers in disguise in Bengal in the context of cultural history of Bengal. He talked about why the 'Sang' troops were banned in the nineteenth century for the reasons of obscenity. He traced how this lower caste-class culture was never accepted by the western educated elites in colonial Bengal. Later on, these elites of Bengal had been using the 'Sang' performances for their political propaganda during anti-colonial struggle. Rajat also talked about the 'nautanki' another form of singing and dancing performances in Hindi hinterland of India.

The discussant Ibrahim Wany talked about the travelling archive. In the context of forced migration, he tried to say that, how far an archive is necessary to preserve. He also thought about the necessity of oral historical memory. He considered the will of an individual/community, whether the individual or the community want to be a subject/object of the forced migration research. He wonderfully summed up the session by connecting all the discourses and discussions.

### **Session III**

#### **Use of Statistics for Critical Research on Migration and Forced Migration, Census, NSS and Uses of Big Data**

While the previous sessions deal with more qualitative research methodology, this particular session section was devoted to understanding and learning the quantitative research methodology and the relevance of statistics in migration and forced migration studies. Without lingering it further Prof. Mitra introduced the speakers.

- Moderator: Iman K Mitra, Shiv Nadar University, Noida & Calcutta Research
- Group, Kolkata
- Discussant: Udai Kumar Shaw, Banarhat Kartik Oraon Hindi Government College, North Bengal
- Introductory note: Ned Rossiter, Western Sydney University, Australia

#### **Name of the Panellists**

- Sabir Ahamed, Pratichi Trust & Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata
- Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay, Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, Mohali

#### **Key points from the presentations**

- Prof. Rossiter discussed the importance of quantitative data in migration studies. He also gave a brief talk on how one can study labour migration by using quantitative data. In the contemporary world, any talk on data will remain incomplete if one dodges the discussion on the infrastructure or materiality of data. In other words, we have to study how the big data centres are in making that inevitably leads us to think of the interrelated issues of connectivity, big data centres and the making of territory. In this context from a theoretical standpoint, he asked a very intriguing question of where we should place those workers who are working at the big data centres? What

about their class consciousness? Then he took a Foucauldian standpoint and questioned how the big data is helping the regimes to be a surveillant to the migrants.

- Mr Ahmed talked about the fact that in the present digital age we have become the generator of data but not the user. Then presented a typology of data that is collective data and administrative data. He paid special attention to the fact that the lack of data on the migrants is becoming a perennial problem. Nonetheless, the government is not judging it as a serious problem as a result there is a delay in releasing data on the migrants.
- Mr Bandyopadhyay in his paper studied the history of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). He discussed how the NSSO was incepted to develop a criterion of measurement that suits the third world reality. He also outlined the good points and bad points of NSSO especially the challenges that it faced in the initial stages. Then he proceeded to discuss the contribution of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis followed by a discussion on the arrival of computers in ISI.
- During the discussion, Prof. Shaw observed that the panel has covered different layers of Data related issues and how it could be incorporated or deal with in the study of migration especially in the context of South Asia. Nonetheless, he also observed that sometimes there are differences between governmental data and ground-level reality. This stressed the need for relying more on data collected from field studies.

### **Interactive Session**

During the interaction session, some broad themes came up and were thoroughly discussed by the participants and the panellists. The gist of the discussion presented below.

- There is a lack of data on partition refugees in different states in India. Apart from the states of Punjab and West Bengal that were bifurcated during the partition in 1947 and witnessed the largest transborder population flow as recorded by UNHCR, there is lack of data on the same in the other Indian states. This is the problem that a researcher faces when she/he wants to undertake an in-depth study on the partition.
- Raw data also called primary data are collected directly related to the object of study. In other words, when some information is collected randomly and presented, it is called raw data. In contrast to it, there is secondary data. If the data have already been aggregated and, therefore, no longer contain all of the information of the original research. In essence, raw data is gathered for a research study before that information has been analysed or transformed in any way.
- There is a growing need to sensitise the people about data in the present digital age when by using the data of the population, regimes want to monitor thereby control our biological life. This is the part and parcel of neoliberal governmentality when statistics become essential to power dynamics.

### **Session IV**

#### **Innovative Methods of Research**

The moderator Lydia Potts initiated the session.

Mezzadra makes four points—



1— the notion of border is often concerned as imagined in border as method— the notion of border as imagined is challenged. The border is a privileged epistemic view on global processes. Some scholars thought that globalization was reducing the relevance of borders, and challenging the very existence. But according to Mezzadra—the opposite is true. Globalization and global processes are linked to borders. There are struggles around the topic of mobility and borders.

2.— It is important to analyze the multiplication of borders on the frame of global processes. Critical border studies argue that we need to go beyond a unilateral concept to understand these issues.

3.— In critical border studies, over the last twenty years, the main approaches emphasize the importance of legal and political concepts in understanding borders. Borders in their heterogeneity, shape capitalism. Borders play paramount roles in the matter of labor power.

4— Border as a method, strategically alters existing notions and argues the need to see as a migrant— use the migrant gaze in order to look at borders, in order to grasp the complexity of borders. Espouses prioritizing movement when looking at borders. Seeing as a migrant is an extremely crucial methodological point and has immense theoretical and political implications.

Giorgio Grappi tried to unfold the nexus between militant research and migration studies. What Grappi said, precisely is,

What is the position of migrants in the world and how can we understand this? To Grappi, the thought of migrants as the modern proletariat. Migration is a problem of working and living in a world of precarity, including fighting against racism and discrimination. They work in positions where their labour is extremely exploited— since they especially work in assembly lines, or production. The logistics have to deal with mobility, and the logic of contemporary capitalism. The focus on how migrants are moved and how they can move is important. This will contribute to the understanding of labour policies on a global scale. What will add to different dimensions is looking at how migrant workers develop their own logistics and infrastructures, how border regimes are shaped by these logistics and techniques taken from logistics, and how these are related to changes in the mobility paradigm, which itself is shaping the transformation of work today. He also emphasizes understanding institutional racism and systemic racism in migration. He ends by raising that what is the cause that militant research should focus on.

Ayşe Çağlar

She is situating migrants in the spaces of the cities. She talked about the cities are the important space where the migrants gather, and the cities dispossess the migrant labour. The interrelation and repositioning of city is important. In the neoliberal spaces, city require labour. The migration by force from one place to another, supplies the labour in a cheaper way. To Çağlar, the students are also migrants. Thus, she finds in west, the migrants are not always hold the position of victim only. They also enjoys some rights, like they demonstrates, screams or protest when they feel that they are not treated in a proper manner. She says, the accumulation of capital is restructuring the city space. In this context, the migrants play the role of the actors, who are ‘making and remaking of the city’. They are the components which

also changes the structure, the social contour of a city. The habitation of these people who are forcefully migrated and living in a city for their livelihood reevaluates the city.

Saima Farhad the discussant of this session summed up very nicely. She told that, in the countries like India, the migrants are not always allowed to protest against the sub-human condition of their lives. They are often fell into the push and pull factors, which they can hardly surpass in their lifetime.

## **Day 2**

### **Introductory comments on the draft syllabus by Samata Biswas, The Sanskrit College and University & Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata**

Prof. Samata Biswas in her comments introduced the theme of the day 2 of the workshop. She had also briefed the audience of how since the 1960s Turkish people in Germany have produced a range of literature. Their work became widely available from the late 1970s onwards, when Turkish-origin writers began to gain sponsorships by German institutions and major publishing houses. Their works are part of Migrant literature and German present literature. She also talked of *The Penguin Book of Migration Literature: Departures, Arrivals, Generations, Returns* published in 2019, a valuable work on migration literature. However, the book has not covered many South Asian texts, she added.

## **Session V**

### **The Impossibility of Politics –Itinerant Situations in Arts and Literature (Public Session)**

- Moderator: Atig Ghosh, Visvabharati University, Shantiniketan & Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata
- Discussant: Subarna Mondal, The Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata
- Introductory note: Ranabir Samaddar, Distinguished Chair on Migration and Forced Migration Studies, Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata

### **Panellists:**

- Subhoranjan Dasgupta on “Mother Courage and Her Children”, Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata
- Oishik Sircar on “Toba Tek Singh”, Jindal Global University, Sonapat
- Brett Neilson on photographs, Western Sydney University, Australia

### **Key Points from the Presentations**

- Prof. Samaddar presented on how certain migration situations, the way the politics understand, have become impossible. Politics is incapable of addressing it. He said that during war, famine, riot and humanitarian disasters, politics does not bother to understand and address what happens to the marginal sections of society. The itinerant migrant condition to understand by politics is impossible. The materiality of those situations defies political language. The critique of politics is achieved through

literature. Prof. Samaddar also reflected on the concept of political spirituality which seeks a new way to establish a regime of truth and a regime of self-governance, each by and through the other. By following this line of argument, he argued that *Mother Courage* which is one of the greatest plays of the 20th century is the story of counter conduct. He also talked of *Toba Tek Singh* by Sadat Hossain Manto. These literary works show us the construction of a situation is like moments of life deliberately put together in a design to show that politics; here of war and in the earlier case the politics of rational governance of a territory has completely colonised life to the point of closing it.

- Prof. Dasgupta discussed the primary characteristics of *Mother Courage* and her Children. The novel depicts the story of forced migration owing to a prolonged war. The play is set in the 17th century in Europe during the Thirty Years' War. The Recruiting Officer and Sergeant are introduced, both complaining about the difficulty of recruiting soldiers to the war. Anna Fierling (*Mother Courage*) enters pulling a cart containing provisions for sale to soldiers, and introduces her children Eilif, Katrin, and Schweizerkas ("Swiss Cheese"). The sergeant negotiates a deal with *Mother Courage* while Eilif is conscripted by the Recruiting Officer.
- Prof. Sircar emphasised the point of how polysemic text like *Toba Tek Singh* offers challenges to the practices of reading. The text could be read in two ways; major key and minor key. Nonetheless, there are many translations of the text. Bhut he preferred Tahira Naqvi Manoa's translation over other. He also pointed out why the text is considered as a clue to a historical time and one of the foremost literary works on partition literature.
- Prof. Nielson had his presentation on the death picture of Alan Kurdi and how it affected politics, society and the conscience of the society. More precisely the death of Kurdi and reports that his family had been trying to ultimately reach Canada had an immediate impact on domestic Canadian politics. He also pondered into the question of visual media in the last 10 years and the contemporary era of 'deep fake' which is currently used by anti-immigrant campaigners. The picture of the child tells us the unheard things of forced migration.
- Prof. Mondal showed her excellence in summarising the papers. And invited questions.

## **Session VI Global Times and world Literature: Can Migrant and Refugee Literature be National**

The speaker of this session Imran Ayata is originally Turkish but migrated to Germany as refugee. He was exploring the literary history of Germany in the 1990s which was reorganised in this decade as the intelligentsia recognised that immigration politics was one of the most significant things in literature. The idea of 'Gastarbeiter', literally means 'guest worker' has a singularity in German literature by this time, as Ayata argues, because it reflected the immigrant literature and politics in literary works in the German language. This idea, Ayata said, also modified the state control over the immigrants in Germany. He said that the concept of guest worker imported an intellectual category, which created an emphasis on less surveillance over the immigration writing than before.

Mohammed Shafeeq talked about the migrants' literature. He talked about one of the most famous Malayalam writer Benyamin's *Goat Days*. He pointed out the anxiety and the pain in a migrant when he goes for work in a foreign country to earn his livelihood. Shafeeq extrapolating the idea of cosmopolitanism from Franco Moretti. He is taking the idea of Moretti and said that the idea of cosmopolitanism is about the local. The localised form of literature can travel through geographic boundaries and produces the literary ideas which is often found in migrant's literature.

This session was moderated by Kaustavmani Sengupta. He concluded this session nicely.

## **Session VII**

### **Nineteenth Century as the Colonial Century of Migration**

- Moderator: Indira Chakaraborty Bhattacharya, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata
- Discussant: Babita Verma, Laxmibai College, University of Delhi, Delhi

### **Panellists**

- Samata Biswas on "Sea of Poppies", The Sanskrit College and University & Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata
- Samita Sen on "Kuli Kahini", University of Cambridge, UK & Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata

### **Key Points from the Presentations**

- Samata Biswas talked on the *Sea of Poppies*, a novel by Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh. It is the first volume of the Ibis trilogy. The Ibis trilogy is Ghosh's most vehement indictment of the source of imperialism and colonialism. It also tells the story of indentured labours. She argued that the novel throws light on the contentious issue of sexuality. The book tells the story of how different sections of the migrant population united against the oppressors. The story is set prior to the First Opium War, on the banks of the holy river Ganges and in Calcutta. The author compares the Ganges to the Nile, the lifeline of the Egyptian civilization, attributing the provenance and growth of these civilizations to these selfless, ever-flowing bodies. He portrays the characters as poppy seeds emanating in large numbers from the field to form a sea, where every single seed is uncertain about its future. The ship is also an expression of oppression. The inclusivity of marginal identities forms another part of the novel. The speaker brilliantly showed how the agency of women in the boat was determined by their sexuality.
- Samita Sen discussed the British policy of exploitation of migrant Indian labourers especially women migrant labourers in the tea gardens in Assam. She also mentioned the contributions of Dwarkanath Ganguly who wrote about the conditions of the coolies in the tea gardens of Assam. Nonetheless, a large section of her discussion was devoted to the writings of Ramkumar Vidyaratna who also wrote about the conditions of the tea gardens' labourers in his *Satyasrabar Assam Bhraman* and *Kuli Kahini* (1888).
- Prof. Verma found a linkage between the papers for both depicting colonial history, identity, gender, migration and oppression.

## **Interactive session**

- The hardships and discrimination faced by the Indian community in places like South Africa, Trinidad, Mauritius, Fiji and several others have been documented by several historians, sociologists and writers of popular literature such as Amitav Gosh and Nathacha Appanah.
- The origins of the movement to end the indenture labour system lay in fact, not in the concern for the labourers, but rather for the discrimination faced by wealthier Indians, particularly from Gujarat, Bombay and Madras who moved to these colonies later to make a fortune as traders. The biggest proponent in this regard was Mahatma Gandhi whose 1906 satyagraha campaign in South Africa marked the beginning of the struggle against British rule in India.
- Although after the said act came into play shipping the indentured labourers over sea saw a downfall but it did not affect the condition of migrant women to Assam.

## **Session VIII**

### **Refugee Literature (s), Histories, Identities**

KevayanAllahyari was the first speaker of this session. Allahyari spoke about the eminent Human right activist and Journalist BehrouzBoochani's book 'No Friend But the Mountain'. He talked about the writing of Boochani in which he depicted the life of people including himself in the days in Manus Island.

To give a precise introduction about Behrouz Boochani to the reader, it has to be noted that Behrouz Boochani was a Kurdish-Iranian Journalist who went to Manus island, Australia. In Manus, he was caught by police and security forces due to illegal immigration issues and detained for several years. His case of detention was criticised all over the world. In 2017, Boochani was released and became the 'Voice of Manus Island'.

In this session Kevayantalked about the Boochani's life and his deeds in Manus Island. He spoke about the responsibility of the media and the journalist, who are the basic source of information. He discussed Boochani's book and his concern for detained people in Manus and the immigrants' psychological position which has been never taken care of by the state and its control mechanism.

In the second half of this session, Anwesha Sengupta talked about the caste issues among the lower caste migrants from Bangladesh and India. Anwesha is an eminent researcher in migration related issues. She discussed how the narratives are showing that the migrants from Bangladesh who have faced caste violence in terms of physically and psychologically, after they took refuge in Bengal. The partition diaries, memories and the memoirs of people from the lower caste/ class people showed, as Anwesha argued, that it has still not come out of the story of violation and violence.

This session was moderated by Atig Ghosh. He initiated and ended the session with a minute summary of the speakers' arguments. He raised a question about the historiographical

situation of memories, books and other writings, written by the immigrants and the forced migrants.