

Migrants, State and Civil Society: Question of Social Protection and Problematic of Social Citizenship

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Mobility and migration of people have been an enduring phenomenon that is perceived to be driven by a combination of economic, political, and demographic factors. We are aware that the phenomenon of migration and related experiences are quite often contentious. The continuous 'othering' of migrants by those who claim themselves as 'natives' complicates the situation. The complex nature and character of these relationships have implications for accessing welfare and social protection services for migrants. They are very inadequately covered by social security and other social protection programmes. Whether the migration is voluntary or forced, across-the-border or inter-state, we observe that the social rights and social citizenship are often restricted for the migrants. For decades, migrants' social rights and access to welfare have been critical issues within the global north and south; however, with the latest spurt of 'migration crisis', the European society and polity seem to have been utterly shaken. Though welfare provisioning in the global south is relatively minimal, the figure of migrant is still positioned as a burden on the state and its welfare and fuels societal anxiety. The rhetoric and contention of 'burden' increase manifold when one engages with the stateless, and those migrants who encounter overt statist hostility. Amid the raging pandemic, the crisis intensified with the aggressive detention of Rohingyas in Jammu, their camps getting destroyed in a fire in Delhi and rendering them homeless and more such instances. While the access to the public good and social provisioning for the refugees and urban migrants remains at the periphery of the policy agenda, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the crisis manifold. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global health emergency of unprecedented proportions. With the spread of the epidemic across the globe and its consequences on health and livelihood, the concern for public health and challenges for employment and livelihoods have become areas of vital engagement.

The proposed paper will examine how migrants are experiencing and making claims on social citizenship; and how their relationship with the state gets shaped by the evolving crisis. What has been the contestations around the responsibility and accountability of the state and its agencies? What has been the nature and character of state-civil society relationships that have implications for the urban migrants?

In the backdrop of public discourse around migrants, life and situation in camps, slums and other informal settlements, and their work, habitat, and health, we shall comprehend how epidemic/pandemic influences the nature of life, circumstances, and experiences of working-class migrants. The socio-economic and political disenfranchisement of migrants can be examined through the nexus of poverty, vulnerability, nature of work and social status of the migrant workers. Away from their source area, these migrants are often denied social provisioning that is officially tied with their identity at the source area. While there are severe implications of the crisis on migrants, the neoliberal push through labour codes brought newer insecurity and complexities for the informal urban migrants. We need to engage with political, legal, and social dynamics around the bare provisioning and (im)possibilities of social protection for the migrant works force. The policy and politics around the idea and limits of compensation, enumeration, and service provisioning allow us to see how the crisis has unfolded for the migrants and their families.