

Gender, Labour and Migration: Situating Women Migrant Workers in Kolkata

Imran Philip¹

The present research deals with the issues of gender and labour migration in Kolkata (West Bengal). Specifically, this research deals with the position of women in Kolkata who migrated from other states of the country as well as other districts of the state of West Bengal. I want to focus on three broad areas: a) historical background of labour migration in colonial and post-colonial perspectives. b) the position and status of migrant women during the pre-Covid period, and c) the situation and position of women migrant workers during and after the covid pandemic. The special focus will be on women migrant worker's housing and employment-related issues.

The central concern of this work is to look at the ways in which the identity of migrant workers was being fashioned in the last few decades and what is the position of migrant working women within this framework. My objective in this research is to find the elements of continuity and change in the lives of women migrant workers in Kolkata. I want to show that the position and role of women migrant workers are not the same, in this case, religion, class position, patriarchy, and larger political situation played important roles.

There are numerous reports by various institutions and right-based organizations on the plight of women migrant workers. But a case study-based research would bring first-hand information on the overall status of women migrant workers during present times and particularly after the great pandemic. This study aims to explore the position of women migrant workers in Kolkata and generate qualitative-ethnographic data on migrant worker housing in Kolkata.

The research will be quantitative in nature and based on historical data. A close reading of government reports, reports of various NGOs working on issues of migrant workers, minority health, education, and housing problem, and election manifestos of different political parties will be important for my research. I will also conduct in-depth interviews to understand how the migrant women of various economic backgrounds perceive their position in the society, and to what extent they feel empowered? Moreover, newspapers will be of crucial importance to me. I will follow both primary and secondary sources.

Keywords: *gender, labour, migration, migrant worker, position of women, housing*

¹ Imran Philip, Researcher, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata.