

Abstract

Tentative Title: Migrants and Families: Everyday Contact and Strategies of Care

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Migrants, particularly those in informal labour settings, lead precarious lives in Urban India. Their lives revolve around negotiations linked to insecurities associated with working and living conditions, exploitative wages, and health vulnerabilities. Alongside their own lived concerns, an important part of their everyday lives is the concern for their families, particularly for those migrants who leave behind families at source areas. Representative of such concerns, mobile phones have become essential communication links to stay in touch with the families. Money transfers through formal and informal means, for many migrants, are the only ways to secure the economic conditions of their families. Such an everyday existence, of being in the family while staying away from it, is the focus of this paper. This existence involves not only practices to stay in contact, but also strategies to deal with concerns linked to household decision making, parenthood, medical exigencies particularly for the elderly, resolution of family quarrels, etc. Linked to such practices, concerns and strategies, the paper is an attempt to understand the complex everyday lives of migrants and their families. The key questions asked by the paper is, What are the ways in which migrants continue to be a part of their families? And How do migrants and their families deal with the experience(s) of migration? For the paper, data is collected in the form of interviews from migrant workers in/from Kashmir and Ladakh regions. Data is also supplemented with case studies with family members.