Abstract

Gendered Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Migrant Labour and Contesting Citizenship

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Covid 19 has emanated as a social and health emergency in India, prompting uprooting, loss of jobs, institutional double-crossings, and state viciousness. The government initiated unanticipated nation- wide lockdown since March 22, has witnessed mayhem throughout the country which had a severe impact on the poor and marginalised section of the country that are mostly disenfranchised internal migrants, and according to World Bank's estimation nearly 40 million of them were affected deeply due to sudden loss of livelihood. But there was an abrupt shift in the state of affairs when speculations on the possible origin of the illness gave rise to projected violence towards the internal migrants from specific communities of the country, especially towards the female migrants, who comprised of an enormous section of the internal migrants. Now, the initiative towards the management of the entire situation on part of the government gives rise to certain issues which calls for critical evaluation. The normative vision of the citizenship fixed to the nation-state (Hage, 1998) relies on the protection and the projection of an imagined community which is actualised through the performance of citizen / non-citizen and the model victim in need of state protection. The conditions and the circumstances of citizenship for different groups are constantly re-imagined based on the hetero-normative aspects of gendered ideology. Therefore, saliency of needs to retain forms of political marginality has given rise to a peculiar contestation of political citizenship among those who are citizens and those who are supposed to be non-citizens, based on the standardised model. Hence, in order to shape an understanding of the nature of the situation calls for a critical engagement. The question is while overcoming the pandemic conflict; to what extent the formation of solidarity is influenced due to possible strife between the politically marginalised developing a new political subjectivity and those who desire to retain their privilege intact?