

Abstract

Working Title: 'Rethinking Diaspora: Refugee as Subaltern Migrant'

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In the neoliberal world order, migration often becomes imperative and involuntary. It represents an aspiration to survive, re-work the material conditions of existence, and re-spin the threads of belonging in new contexts. Compared to this diasporic group of migrants, there is a sizeable number of migrants everywhere whose journeys happen beneath the surface and in “broken” ways, migrants who exist in the new world in a way where rehabilitation remains far. Apart from economic and cultural subordination, there is a subalternity about their existence as migrants/immigrants. I identify them as the subaltern migrant in my study. The objective of my study is to understand the problems of settlement and their experience of displacement. I contend that it is these subaltern migrants, not the successful diasporic community, who get branded as the dreaded stranger in the wake of indigenous nationalisms which neoliberal economies have come to embody today. Often, these democracies become totalitarian political states, sounding nationalist rhetoric of economic growth and military might. The current administration in the United States has been staunchly voicing ‘American state interests’ recommending refugee reinstatement in homelands, and withdraw cooperation for alleviating global humanitarian crises. During the ongoing COVID 19, India has seriously undermined the basic rights of both its labor diaspora from west Asia and its domestic migrants to travel in respectable conditions, while it continued to show concern for its settled diaspora abroad which is not forced to return. The Rohingyas tortured and thrown out from Myanmar, their homeland, denied asylum by Bangladesh, and deemed illegal by India are having a horrendous experience to narrate.

My research probes the trajectories of subaltern migrations in the Global South (India) and North (US) to initiate a critique of ‘diaspora’ as a concept. I consider an intersectional investigation of ongoing policy debates to formulate an empathetic, but also a politically acute, sense of the destitute “immigrant”. I contend that the key objective of policy development should aim at a regime of strategic protection for vulnerable migrants.

Keywords: refugee, subaltern, neoliberalism, diaspora, COVID