

**The In-Betweens: An enquiry into the quality of life of self-employed North-Easterns in  
Kolkata, India**

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With the advent of the globalised age, the increased mobility of goods and services across borders provides a sleek opportunity for increased migration, especially in the informal sector (Sassen 1994). This is, of course, also in addition to the fact that migration majorly takes place as a consequence of unequal development on one hand and natural disasters on the other. The discourse surrounding the governance of this migrating population is vast, and yet, there has been little to no addition to the scientific depository in terms of comprehensive policy frameworks for the same. India's diversity, both economically and culturally, has always been in the spotlight for being a hotspot for migration.

There is a clear dichotomy visible in internal migration in contemporary India. On the one hand, it has truly opened up economic opportunities for several who are at a position to utilise the neo-liberal agenda. On the other, migration has undoubtedly been both the result of and an instrument to enhance poverty and state exploitation of its subjects. With the rise of populist politics, Indian migrants in other parts of India are seen as foreigners: a direct consequence of anti-migrant, chauvinist and nativist attitudes of the people. What is important to note here is that within this migration discourse, labour and economy has played a significant role in shaping the current pattern of mobility. Another important feature to note in this context is the politics of localisation in terms of migration. With increased fluidity of labour across state borders, several Indian states have witnessed public outcry over the magnitude of the 'sons of the soil' phenomenon. The opening up of state borders to people who belong to a completely different linguistic, religious, social or cultural origin has, in a way, solidified the very sentiments against this openness.

Against this context of a different cultural identity and the unique nature of self-employment, this paper shall have the following objectives: (a) to understand the push and pull factors in North-East India and Kolkata respectively (b) To understand if there is any causality between the workers' socio-economic profile and their standards of living in Kolkata (c) To

understand the hierarchy of needs of these workers (d) To understand the state's limitations in fulfilling those needs. The ultimate objective will be to come up with a migration policy framework for North-East workers in Indian metro cities, who have a renewed responsibility of 'claiming' their citizenship in their own country, which will be steered to include this population in the overall contribution to the national output. India's exclusive character opens up an entire opportunity for scholars to delve into the matter of social security for migrant workers, juxtaposed against technological advancements, especially in the age of neo-liberal hyper-nationalism and this is exactly what this paper will seek to achieve.