

Title: The Constructed Bangladeshis in Assam— the Political Economy of the Narrative of Illegal Migration

Introduction

After the setting up of the two nation-states, the influx into Assam of what now became East Pakistani population continued across what remained a porous eastern border. Unlike the exchange and flow of population on the western border, where the constitutional deadline for migrants from Pakistan to claim citizenship in India was treated as final, the eastern border remained permeable for some time. Following the post-Partition riots and migration of (Hindu) minorities from East Pakistan, the Nehru-Liaquat Pact prescribed that refugees returning home by 31 December 1950 would be entitled to get back their property, effectively pushing the date beyond the Constitutional deadline. And the pact was based on what may be termed as a 'fiction' that once the stability on both sides of the border is restored, the refugees would return to their homes and resettle across the border. In 1971, in the course of the liberation war in Bangladesh, several lakhs of Bengali speaking Hindu and Muslim refugees fled to Assam. In a joint declaration on 8th February 1972, the Prime Ministers of the two countries assured 'the continuance of all possible assistance to the Government of Bangladesh in the unprecedented task of resettling the refugees and displaced persons in Bangladesh' (Baruah 1999: 119). While not all refugees returned to Bangladesh, more migrants continued to cross the border into Assam and other parts of India in search of livelihood. With Assam, the presence of large numbers of 'foreigners' instilled a sense of unease at the change in the demography, language, and access to resources, primarily land and employment, around which a powerful popular movement wove itself.

The paper focuses on the legal initiatives, undertaken by the state to delve into the immigration question in Assam, and moves further to understand the shortfalls of these when the legal and the lived comes into a relation of paradox with each other and the constructions exist beyond the legal. The paper then moved onto understand the politicisation of identities in the post colonial state, and in light of the contemporary governance that differentiates between a legal refugee and a foreign infiltrator, and hence emerges constructions of citizenship beyond its legal domain, and citizen-outsider is constructed in relations of delineation from the indigenous, and how this determines the legal and the illegal. The paper takes a turn from this juncture to emphasis on how

the narrative of illegal migration can be located in history, and how the migrants as cheap labourers have evolved over the decades. The paper concludes by understanding how the notion of cheap labour is contingent on the politics of counting and derecording, and how these labourers, who are constructed as the illegal trespassers can be positioned within the neo-liberal economy.

Legalities and Constructions

The Assam movement that erupted in 1979 was a result of a popularized anti-foreigners' sentiment in Assam, was launched by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), and was based on the logic that the ongoing influx of populations, the persisting and pre-existing mobilities from Bangladesh to Assam have caused threat to the indigenous population. It set in motion a process whereby a sub-national identity, distinct from and yet consistent, coexistent, and concurrent with an Indian nationality, was sought to be constructed. The construction of this distinct yet cohabiting sub-national identity was contingent on the construction of the figure of the 'migrant alien' as disruptive of both the Assamese ethno-space and the national political space. The 'disruptive migrant' figured, however, in different ways in the complex configuration of political forces and power relations between the Centre and the state. A six-year agitation demanding identification and deportation of illegal immigrants, witnessed the passing of the The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) (IMDT) Act in 1983, and culminated with the signing of the Assam Accord in 1985.

If the IMDT Act and the election to the state Assembly in the same year (1983), when the act was passed, manifested the tensions in the processes of nationalization of space, the 1985 Assam Accord between the Indian government and the leaders of the Assam movement and the 1986 amendment in the Citizenship Act of 1955, which inserted a category of citizenship addressed exclusively to Assam, saw the emergence of a negotiated consensus. The tenuousness of the consensus unfolded over the years, culminating in a petition by a former president of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in 2000 to the Supreme Court and the Court's subsequent scrapping of the IMDT Act in a judgment delivered several years later in July 2005.

The legislative and judicial progressions imply in its essence how the illegality/alien-ness of the migrant was central to the construction of the Assamese identity; and how the illegal migrant

through the IMDT Act, Assam Accord, Citizenship Amendment Act of 1986, the NRC and the Citizenship Amendment Bill of 2016 figured in precarious relationships of consensus and conflict, depending on the nature of political/electoral needs and contests/disputes between the central and the state governments. In the process, the 'chronosphy' of citizenship in Assam remained indeterminate and ambivalently defined, having ramifications for the manner in which the legal and philosophical contours of citizenship in India were envisaged. Moreover, while the migrant as the constituent outsider is notionally constant, the unfolding of the relationship between the migrant and the citizen shows transitions and temporal variations, so that the relationship of incongruity is sometimes precise and emphatic and, at others, opaque and blurred.

Politicization of identity

Pertinent in this context is the distinction that has been made by the government at various epochs between a legal refugee and a foreign infiltrator, the distinction being made purely on ethnic-religious grounds, with the government representing all Hindu migrants from Bangladesh as refugees from an oppressive and intolerant Islamic regime with a natural right to Indian citizenship because of religious persecution (Gillan, 2002). It is important to consider the agenda of the ruling government, through which it aims to deport Bangladeshi infiltrators while permitting Bangladeshi refugees. Although, in some instances, the government has pointed to general religious and/or political persecution as the criterion for granting refugee status, the distinction between refugee and infiltrator, the oppressed Hindus and the encroaching Muslims, regardless of individual circumstances, has been explicit within the state's discourse on migration from Bangladesh.

The persecution measures against Muslims in India have been evidenced in various epochs, carried out by both the Congress government as well as the Sangh Parivar. Delhi witnessed eviction of visible Bengali-speaking Muslims, who were identified as Bangladeshis in mid-1992 as part of the Congress Government's objective to cleanse the state of the illegal migrants from Bangladesh under its initiative of Operation Pushback (Ramachandran, 2003). Sujata Ramachandran (2003) has brought out underplay of factors behind the act. She explains that the Sangh Parivar's mandate to deport Bangladeshi migrants triggered the act on the part of the Congress government, contradictory to the latter's persistent lenience to the existence of these populations prior to this initiative.

The major focus for the action assumed the inhabitants of Delhi's slums, as those comprised the easy targets, and Delhi being the capital city, it is the locus of political, bureaucratic and financial power. The suddenness of such acts, and/or the deliberate unpreparedness of the operation have been explained by Ahmed (2000) who traces the lack of a mutual dialogue between the two countries, India and Bangladesh. Consequently, those who were deported have come to be reported as Indian refugees in Bangladesh, and have been denied rights and privileges, thus relegating this section of the population as 'hyphenated citizens' (Pandey, 2006, p. 129).

The approach of the Indian state towards migrants has dynamic determinants comprising a complex synthesis of overlapping conceptualizations of aliens that emerge from "anxieties of a post-colonial state within a historically common space, sub-national dissent, and political realism" (Chimni, 2005, p. 290). It is this sameness and commonness around which the problematic operates. However, the state does not recognize its migrant population as refugees and the legal sphere is characterized by absence of policies in favour of these transitional populations. Chimni (2005) feels the necessity for an inclusive approach within the constitution. He suggests that the ambiguity of the situation can be overcome through a concise legal recommendation. This, he foresees, would diminish political conflict to a large extent, and make identification of aliens and migrants objective, which in turn would form grounds for deporting them. However, there revolves a dialectic around the arbitrariness of the use of power by the state.

The lack of a concrete framework to categorize the Bangladeshi migrants has resulted in subjective conceptions about their identity. Identification of Bangladeshi migrants occurs on the basis of a subjective frame of reference beyond the legal discourse. This frame is constructed through a semiotic intersection of language, appearance, religion, region and nationality as discussed earlier, which provokes a critical reflection on the concepts of citizenship, residency, identity, and identifier. Universalization of concepts appears to pose potential danger in this context. In connection to the issue of deporting Bangladeshi migrants, Satadru Sen (2003) has questioned the applicability of concepts, which are western in origin. Therefore, the concept of 'illegal alien' (Sen, 2003, p. 611), or citizenship necessitates to be understood in careful consideration of the regional specificity, that comprises culture and history and it is also required

to assess whether these should be applied given the ‘peculiar’ (Ibid.) context of a South-Asian nation state.

The attitudes in India towards Muslim and Hindu migrants from Bangladesh are often markedly different. As illustrated earlier, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) draws a distinction between Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh, whom it regards as ‘legitimate refugees’, and Muslim immigrants whom it views as ‘infiltrators’. Indeed, the BJP - and its political ally in Assam, the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) are inclined to view illegal immigration from Bangladesh entirely through the prism of illegal trespassing, an issue designed to destabilise Assam (and by corollary, India). Viewed in this light, illegal immigrants from Bangladesh (many of whom are Hindu) metamorphose into illegal Bengali Muslim immigrants who, in turn, morph into Bengali Muslims. The result of these mutations is that all Bengali Muslims, ‘many of whom might have been settled in Assam for over a century - suffer the indignity of constantly having to prove their bonafide’ (Borooah, 2013, p. 51).

The emergent conceptions of citizenship

Baruah (2009) suggests that legitimacy of the political system necessitates a rebuilding and this may be carried out by innovating institutions of multi-level transnational citizenship that would separate citizenship from nationality. Pertinent in this context is the notion of ‘documentary citizenship’ as explained by Kamal Sadiq (2008), wherein he adds a concrete framework to the contemporary notion, amidst the crisis that the concept encounters. It explains how paperwork, often falsely obtained, confers citizenship to illegal immigrants. It refers to the attainment of citizenship status through possession of ration cards and election identity cards often through fraudulent means. There has been consistent suspicion on the part of the judiciary around the modes of acquiring identity through documents. The process has often been interpreted as the possession of documents being made available to the migrants due to their continued residence though residence does not confer citizenship. However, there exists marked difference between the legal acceptance and popular imagination of a citizen, and it is at this juncture that Pandey’s concept of ‘hyphenated’ (Pandey, 2006, p. 129) citizenship assumes crucial significance as he notes a hierarchy of citizenship practiced by all nation-states, manifested in a distinction between its unmarked, seemingly ‘axiomatic’ (Ibid.) or ‘natural’ (Ibid.) inhabitants and its marked, hyphenated minorities. Extending Pandey’s insight, one might note that even as minorities are

conspicuously visible and marked because of their difference, they remain paradoxically invisible as citizens since their visibility would otherwise “challenge the collective amnesia about histories of exclusion on which nations are founded” (The Natural and the Naturalised, 2012). The conception of citizenship, in fact, is dictated by the burden of the colonial past, followed by the nation-building process, rooted in religious nationalism, or if promptly spoken, Hindu nationalism. The resultant phenomenon is such that though the non-Hindu population, majorly Muslims, attempt to prove allegiance and loyalty to the nation, they remain what Willem van Schendel has termed as ‘proxy citizens’ (van Schendel, 2002, p. 127). Van Schendel conflates religion and nation in explaining how one’s religious affiliation confers citizenship, moving beyond the objective paradigm and understanding how citizenship is re-defined and experienced. Thus, Hindus in Pakistan would comprise proxy citizens, similar to the status of Muslims in India. Van Schendel had conceptualized the term in the context of his study on India-Bangladesh enclaves, referring to Hindus in Pakistani and Bangladeshi enclaves and to Muslims in Indian ones. The paradox lies on the fact that states have created and institutionalized these ambiguous categories.

Anupama Roy brings out how the category of migrant has emerged through subsequent acts, emphasizing on the social production of a migrant through policies in the political, social and economic spheres, that eventually marginalizes the migrant from the mainstream and maintains her or his status as a ‘perpetual citizen-outsider’ (Roy, 2008, p. 245). The figure of a citizen does not refer to an autonomous and sovereign self, but entails what Anupama Roy and Ujjwal Kumar Singh explains as ‘constitutive others’ (Roy & Singh, 2009, p. 37), as an indispensable element of its own identity. These include “the inadequate or deficient citizens (such as, women, lunatics, the vagrant, the colonized), the indifferent outsiders (such as, ‘aliens’ and foreigners), and the ‘disruptive’ and subsequently ‘dangerous’ category of ‘illegal aliens/migrants’”, (Ibid.) defining citizenship in terms of borders. Roy and Singh understand ‘otherness’ (Ibid., p. 39) not in the form of opposition or exclusion, but its constitutive existence as delineations of citizenship. The category of the other, the alien, often exists in the virtual, intertwined with the objective citizen, inhabiting the citizen’s space ‘in a relationship of incongruity’ (Ibid., p. 38).

The perpetual dynamism of the concept of citizenship renders it somewhat abstract and intangible. Niraja Gopal Jayal (2013) brings out how the progressive civic ideals embodied in the

constitution have been challenged by exclusions based on social and economic inequality, and sometimes also, paradoxically undermined by its own policies of exclusion. Hence, emerges the difficulty of a universal conceptualization of citizenship as it is experienced differently by individuals. It is also tenuous to think of an alternative to the term that can grasp the dynamism. Ornit Shani (2010) has also talked in similar lines about how India holds its nationhood through multiple conceptions of citizenship. He explains that some of the most marginalised members in the Indian society found sufficient prospects for a meaningful participation within the nation through multiple interpretation and practice of citizenship that enabled the state to manage its diverse social groups and contain many of their underlying conflicts. It acts as a mechanism to maintain stability and hold the nation, characterized by differences, underlying conflicting ideologies and diversity, and for the incorporation of 'competing membership claims' (Shani, 2010, p. 149). In the process, "diverse social groups could find a viable place in the nation, without entirely compromising their various group identities" (Ibid., p. 146).

Delineation of citizenship

The statist rationale through the code of citizenship marks out the 'other', continually reproducing and re-inscribing it within the field of citizenship, in a relationship of contradictory cohabitation. This relationship is, however, not one of exclusion or opposition but one of forclusion (Spivak, 1999; Balibar 2003; Mezzadra, 2006 [cited in (Roy, 2008)] as I borrow from Anupama Roy's work on Mapping Citizenship in India, where the outsider is inextricably and constitutively woven into delineations of citizenship. The outsider is not only crucial for the identification of the citizen, but quite like a 'virtual' image, it reflects the citizen, as a constant corroborator of the citizen's authenticity, without itself becoming one. This relationship of forclusion is reproduced continually in law and through judgments, so much so that the outsider persistently cohabits and authenticates the citizen's space in an enduring relationship of incongruity.

Hence is constructed the 'image' of those delineations of the citizen, and coupled with it since Assam movement (as we come across in documented history), had its basis on the migration from Bangladesh, there was a gradual transformation of the anti-foreigners' movement to an anti-outsider's movement, and the outsiders came to be identified through these acts.

Residents, who have so far failed to establish their belonging within the legal frames, have been disenfranchised of membership in the political community of a nation. Let us take each of these in a chronological sequence. The phase of agitation witnessed the passing of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act (IMDT henceforth) in October 1983, and finally ended with the signing of the Assam Accord in August, 1985. Later, the 1955 Citizenship Act was amended in 1986, and section 6A inserted in it implied that all persons of Indian origin who had entered Assam before January 1, 1966 and had been its ordinary residents were deemed to be Indian citizens; those who came after January 1, 1966, but before March 25, 1971, were to get citizenship upon registration at the expiry of 10 years after their detection as foreigner; and those who entered after March 25, 1971, upon identification under IMDT Act, 1983, were to be deported. The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003 further brought antagonism against migrants by establishing that an individual is conferred citizenship if both the parents are citizens of India, or one is a citizen, and the other is not an illegal immigrant. The updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC henceforth) of 1951 that would include, names of those persons (or their descendants) who appear in the NRC 1951, or in any of the Electoral Rolls till the cut off date of the midnight of 24 March 1971 is yet another initiative on the part of the state. A central aspect to all of these is a clear demarcation of alienness that determines illegality.

The statist rationale in the legal arena interacts with the lived everyday and determines and is determined by cultural constructs, which have their underpinnings in a consensus, a majority belief, what in phenomenological terms maybe understood as 'common sense'. This finds expressions not only among the plebeian but also at instances of execution of responsibilities by the bureaucracy itself, in reference to the discretionary power at the levels of bureaucratic agents at the grass root as well as meso level that determines whom to record. This largely talks about the subjective impulses that guide one's discretion and is evident in intrastate contention and divergent recording outcomes. In an interview, a participant working in the bureaucracy defines these interpretations as 'quasi-judicial powers' and how what he terms as 'perceptions about illegality with certain populations' determines careful scrutiny of lineage documents, submitted by those populations to document their names in the NRC.

In fact, as Anupama Roy cites, during the judicial judgment, scrapping the IMDT Act in 2005, while declaring the IMDT Act as unconstitutional, the court described migration not only as

'illegal' entry into foreign territory, but as an act of aggression, arguing within a discursive framework that makes for a bounded notion of citizenship, with the policing of boundaries and the determination of citizenship construed as a significant manifestation of state sovereignty. Moreover, the judges marked out the migrant not only on account of being an alien, but also on the count of being a Muslim, the latter inevitably associated with Islamic fundamentalism and construed as a threat to the demographic profile of the country (read Hindu) and to national security. Manifesting the political-ideological contexts of the period, the judgment discussed the demographic shifts in Assam, not in terms of the linguistic profile, as was the case earlier, but in terms of the religious profile of the state, emphasizing the increase in the Muslim population and the threat it posed not just to Assam but to the whole of India. The judgment may be read as being embedded in the dominant frameworks of nationalism which cast a web of suspicion around all Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam and the rest of the country. It may also be seen as a consummation of institutional and state practices that had been unfolding from the 1990s and manifested in the vicious cycle of dispossession, dislocation, disenfranchisement, and violence against Muslim residents of Delhi slums on the assumption that they were illegal migrants.

Contribution to Labour and its Historicity

Vani Kant Borooah notes the historicity of population mobility to Assam. According to him, Assam witnessed the mobility of labour migrants, who were employed into jobs that the 'indigenous population either did not wish to, or could not, do' (2013, p. 48). He notes that migration occurred from the erstwhile East Bengal in various phases. The first wave of migration followed the British annexation of Assam in 1826. Migrant labourers from Bihar were imported from Bihar to the tea gardens (Weiner, 1983), and were employed there as the natives, who were the land owners were unwilling to work. One observes a feudal mode of transaction at this juncture. The second wave witnessed migration of Bengali Hindus with the dismantling of the administrative service of the Ahom kings, with the later coming to occupy the administrative positions. The Bengali Hindus took positions as clerks, judges, and revenue collectors. The native inhabitants were not employed since they lacked the skills needed for such jobs, especially their lack of English education. The consequence became such that 'by the beginning of the 20th century, practically all of Assam's doctors, lawyers, teachers and journalists were migrant Bengali Hindus (Gosselink, 1994 [cited in Borooah, 2013]). The British were persuaded by their

Bengali administrators that Assamese was but a dialect of Bengali with the consequence that, much to the chagrin of the Assamese, Bengali was established as the sole official language of Assam and remained so till 1947 when Assamese was also elevated to this status (ibid). The third and fourth waves of migration to Assam were of Bengali Muslims from East Bengal. The first exodus happened around 1914, and continuing to flow into Assam for the next 30 years, followed by a second tranche of Muslims migrating in 1942 with the encouragement of the Muslim League government headed by Saadulla. These last two waves involved farmers who migrated to take advantage of available land. In response to this inflow, ‘the proportion of Muslims in Assam's population increased from 16% in 1911, to 23% in 1931, and to 25% in 1951’ (Ibid.). As the Census Superintendent in Assam observed in 1931:

“Where there is wasteland, thither flock the Mymensinghis. In fact, the way they have seized upon the vacant areas in Assam seems al most uncanny. Without fuss, without tumult, without undue trouble to the district revenue staff, a population which must amount to over half a million has transported itself from Bengal into the Assam Valley in the last twenty five years.” (cited in Borooah, 2013)

The point is that this occupation occurred in 1931, when East Bengal was a part of undivided India, not in 1971. Thus, these waves of population flow illustrates the demand for certain skills that motivated import of people, who had expertise in those. The demand is fulfilled through the narrative of illegal migration that makes the labour cheap. This happened post partition, especially post 1971.

The constructed ‘Bangladeshis’ and cheap labour

‘The Miyas are hardworking. I had appointed two Assamese labourers. But they were immensely unpunctual and lacked commitment. So we always rely upon the Miyas when it comes to construction work or if we have to do any cleaning work’. The narrative was shared by an AGP party member. The AGP, which has always been vocal about their anti-Bangladeshi stance, and the student wing of it, the AASU being famous for carrying out demonstration against the ‘visible’ Bengali speaking Muslims, who are constructed as the Bangladeshis. The narrative of illegal migration percolates through the electoral interests of the stakeholders. Illegality patronises the persistence of cheap labour owing to the demand, large scale contingency of people on the informal economy. Informal economy is barred from accountability which is otherwise applicable to recognised citizen of the welfare state, and here lay the reason behind a

deliberate non-recognition or uncounting on the part of the state, and to maintain the undocumentedness of the migrants, or the identified citizen outsider (which shall be taken up in the subsequent section). It is important to recognise how a citizen outsider is constructed in everyday through the semiotic intersection of language, religion, appearance, region, and nationality, whereby a person speaking in the Bengali dialect, resembling the appearance of a 'visible' Muslim wearing lungi and tupi, and having beards, residing in certain locales, being subjected to the territorial stigma is rendered as a Bangladeshi. And these identified mass come to comprise the major sources of labour. A participant in Silchar shares,

“My sister had a maid at her place, who had fled from her place. She was a Muslim. She used to put bindi, and all these (Hindu markers of a married woman) so that she could get to work. Now I am never going to say that she is a bad element, and she is going to do something here..”

The excerpt establishes how individuals are comfortable with accommodating people insofar as they keep contributing as labourers, cheaper than those who are the perceived legitimate inhabitants and hence are the citizens, as opposed to a citizen outsider. The participant when asked if she would recruit a Muslim as a maid, says,

“I think no. But as long as cleaning is concerned, I would not mind; if the person is cleaning, the priority is cleanliness..”

This shows that certain professions are restricted to people of certain religions. The state of uncertainty of existence in India, and the construction of these populations through the prism of illegality make determines their availability at the whims of the demands, and are potential contributors to the economy. The dependence of people on the people who have reached India through surreptitious means may be illustrated in the following narrative,

“Even the Muslims are scared of the Koibartas here. They are extremely fierce. P1: They are a do or die entity. They have been thrown out from there, and they have to live here somehow. Now the jobs that had been done by the Muslims like stitching, plumbing, are being done by the Kaibartas. They work as labourers. P2: The domestic helps, 'maashis' whom we employ are all Kaibartas. They work here, educate their children, and then they buy lands and property here, and settle here.”

Therefore, what exists in the present scenario, may be understood as a 'regulated informality' (Mahapatra, 2016). The justification and demand for the Bengal origin Muslims, popularly referred to as the 'Miyas' finds expression in the words of a person, in his 70s, who shares,

“Ours is a big family and there used to be many wedding ceremonies at our place. Once, in one of those wedding ceremonies, one of my relatives appointed two Bengali (Hindu) labourers. They were so slow, they took 5 mins to shift two chairs, and would want rest in every 30 mins. I made them work that day, paid them, and told them to discontinue. I told my relative to go and find put ‘Miya manush’ as they can be relied upon when you have massive amount of work to be accomplished. In fact, you will find, people who engaged in Assam movement, would employ miyas when it came to employing domestic help or people as labourers for miscellaneous activities, in private and public spaces..”

The narrative throws light upon not only the transfer of certain skills, but also its exclusivity owing to the kind of hard work needed for such works, often involving whole lot of exploitation. They, being perceived at the ‘ubiquitous’ are the victims of an ‘indigenous-foreigner-minority’ syndrome. It also makes us intervene into the already existing integrated labour market between the erstwhile East Bengal and Assam, and the sustenance of the transactions. This shifts our attention from a communal understanding of the population mobility, and stresses on a more secular nature of the phenomenon.

The politics of counting and uncounting

The exploitation of labour from people who are constructed as the illegal, is determined by the politics of counting, or documenting or sustaining the undocumentedness. Counting individuals as citizens will make them liable to the privileges of a welfare state, and would make the state accountable to them. Barak Kalir and Williem van Schendel (Kalir & van Schendel, 2017) explain how individuals negotiate and strive against the vigilance of state agencies, as well as how and why the state opts for a deliberate ‘non-recording’ (Ibid. p. 1) of its subjects. They contend that there persists a ‘state-produced oblivion’ (Ibid.). The authors see non-recording as intentional and not as a failure of the state machinery. The ‘derecording’ (Ibid., p. 2) facilitates ‘disregard, outsource, desert, expel, sanction, exploit, or victimize nonrecorded subjects’ (Ibid.). They perceive the state practices towards non-recording the subjects as strategic, selective and episodic rather than being systematic, pervasive and continuous. The attempt towards nonrecording persists at the local, national, and international level.

The authors identify that recording and nonrecording have four dimensions. Firstly, Recording is a two-directional process rather than being imposition as it is contingent upon the interaction between recording agencies and the subjects to be recorded. The agency involved at all levels as well as the power relations that structure encounters between the recording agencies and the to-

be-recorded subjects are of pertinence in this context. Secondly, documenting or recording of subjects impose accountability on the part of the subjects, which the state attempts to evade. Documenting subjects creates 'counterintuitive constellations' (Ibid.) as the already documented subjects if are decided to be discarded off from the records, would strive against such an agenda. Thirdly, discretionary power at the levels of bureaucratic agents at the grass root as well as meso level determines whom to record. This largely talks about the subjective impulses that guide one's discretion and is evident in intrastate contention and divergent recording outcomes. The decision of the bureaucrats is directed by policy makers and their subordinates. These are however, theoretical, that might encounter contradiction and/or variation in its implementation. Fourthly, the documenting and surveillance practices of states are influenced by other states and this is motivated by interstate power differences.

The recording and nonrecording discourses find difference at the local and national levels. Kalir and van Schendel view this as a strategy on the part of the state to disown populations that the state perceives as 'undeserving, undesired, and unproductive' (Ibid., p. 7).

Another innovative work is credited to Barak Kalir, Malini Sur and Williem van Schendel (2012) who unfold the concept of state 'as a political organisation keen to regulate existing or emergent patterns of mobility' (Ibid., p. 11). They explain how states exist through lived reality characterized by the 'ubiquity of multiple authorities that complement or compete with the regulatory authority of states' (Ibid., p. 13). This is in opposition to the formal model of a state which bestows monopoly of authority to formal machinery. The 'real life' (Ibid., p. 11) state stands in contrast to the model state that we come across in political theoretical knowledge since there are 'implementation deficiencies'.

Conclusion

The paper thus illustrates how the narrative of illegal migration determines the availability of the perceived illegal migrants as the cheap labourers. The perception is contingent not only on the theocratic nature of history that has led to a communal understanding of migration experiences, but it has also culminated into the economic logic of persistence of the perceived migrants as the cheap labourers. However, it is important to reflect on the way forward from this juncture in light of the neo-liberal economy. The questions that need to be further posed are: how shall these

constructed illegal migrants occupy as potential stakeholders in the neo-liberal economy. Are they mere anonymous occupants of the system, who are invisibilised in order to malign the benefits that a recognised labourer is eligible to get?

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