

Gender Dimensions in labor migration: The Case of Migrant Women from distant places of West Bengal to the metropolis Kolkata.

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Module D

In my research I am bringing in the perspective of migration and for that I am using feminist methodology for my research. Women, who used to live in distant places of West Bengal and were forced to migrate to our City Kolkata due to various reasons, mainly be due to economic needs, to escape social / family pressure, political persecution, natural calamity. As a whole those who were victims of forced migration.

But I would like to perceive them not as victims but as subjects. From an Andro-centric point of view women are generally perceived as compelled subjects in the flow of population, mere victims of flesh trade or the voiceless followers of the migrant male head of the family. Sometimes they take independent decisions to migrate. But generally in the studies of migrations, women remain the shadowy followers. From this general perception I would like to shift my view point into a feminist methodology. Several document citations have described women who indeed take part in decision making during migration. If men insinuate in a vague way towards poverty, communal discrimination, inadequate educational opportunities for their children as reasons for migration women often connote ecological disasters along with the insecurities of their girl children , whom they wanted to marry off safely and hence decided to migrate to safer area. Women with certain education tend to let their children have better education. They think it will offer their children more choices. So we can easily find a sharp contrast in the perception of immigrant men and women which is worth researching. Very few literatures actually reveal any decision making power of women or speak of emancipation of women from patriarchal gender norms. The impetus of rural to urban migration cannot be overlooked when looking at the rapid pace of urbanization taking place in our society. We are living in a global village, in a world of media coverage. The rapid usage of television even in remote villages have created an illusion of a utopian world present somewhere out there which has always attracted people towards city life. Along with these attractions the necessary pressure and persecutions acted as push and pull factors behind large scale immigration.

My research will narrowly focus on women who belong to the marginalized socio-economic section of the society who were forced to migrate to this city at some point of their lives. The research is roughly based on three key questions:

- What are the possible reasons that forced these women to decide to migrate from their ancestral homeland into this unknown city?
- How do migrant women empower themselves and enhance their capacity building?
- How far this migration acted, on part of these women, as a combination of 'a definite survival strategy' as well as 'a strategy to gain autonomy'?