

Available online at <http://www.ijims.com>

ISSN - (Print): 2519 – 7908 ; ISSN - (Electronic): 2348 – 0343

IF:4.335; Index Copernicus (IC) Value: 60.59; Peer-reviewed Journal

Migration and Marginalisation: A Study of Labour Migrants from India to Singapore

Malyashree Mandal

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Diamond Harbour Women's University; West Bengal; India

Research Scholar, Centre for the Study of Indian Diaspora (CSID); University of Hyderabad; India

Abstract

Migration and mobility has changed the people's idea of the world, they are living today and connected with through their movements and activities. In the recent trends of globalization, it is mandatory to increase the economic, political, socio-cultural enrichment among various regions of the world and making a connecting bridge with each other. This research paper will focus on the unskilled and semi-skilled labour migrants (male and female), from India to the economically developed and advanced South East Asian country Singapore, who are helping these two countries to make a relationship of socio-economic development and giving the chances to be the prestigious country. This paper is aiming that the hierarchies of social order among migrants in origin and destinations which caused marginality, de-humanizing approaches. Behind the making of these negative situations, there are acts of agencies employed by the employers like recruiting agents, and the very involvement of regime in creation and exploitation of the networks to mold the migration flows as per their preferences and requirements and how these State structures determine the working as well as personal, social and cultural conduct of the immigrants over the system of migration and their livelihoods.

Keywords: Labour, marginality, hierarchies, exploitation, State

Introduction

This paper is objectifying from two dimensions - one is migration or diaspora and other is how it's becoming marginalized in the case of Indian migration to Singapore. Apparently, the words migration and diaspora look alike but theoretically the term migration and diaspora are different. The word 'migration' is derived from the Latin word *migrare*, which means to change one's residence. Migration is a movement by human being from one place to another where nation-state relation is always not necessary, but when the term 'Diaspora' comes, there are movements of people across territorial boundaries of colonies, nations and its continuity to connect with different spatial regions, people and culture. In the present context it means a movement or scattering of people away from an established ancestral land or people settled far from their ancestral homelands, sometimes 'pushed' by the authority and sometime 'pulled' by the necessity of the native land or themselves. As Tinker (1977) said, "there is a combination of push and pull: the push of inadequate opportunity in South Asia and the pull of the better prospects in the West."¹

But these migrants are different from the actual definition. The people who are migrating to the Singapore as a semi-skilled and un-skilled labour, they are 'incipient diaspora' as Myron Weiner² said. They are defined as a relatively sizeable group of foreign workers/guest workers in industrial economics that are ethnically distinct from the host population who are allowed to remain in their host country only to work but not entitled to become citizens, also irrespective of gender they cannot bring their family members. These workers are mainly construction workers, carpenters, masons, steel-fixers, fabricators, fitters, equipment-operators, welders, painters, pluck-smothers, bar-benders, drivers, cleaners, electricians, plumbers, mechanics, air-conditioning mechanics, blacksmiths, tanners, shoemakers, goldsmiths, waiters, domestic workers and so on. In 1856, the Governor of the Straits Settlements, Edmund Augustus Blundell gave a speech about the temporality of the migrants and how they feel among themselves with this situation which is very much appropriate till date. He said, "No feeling of citizenship, no common desire to co-operate for future and general benefit, animates the mass, which like the trade, ebbs and flow bringing with it new and crude materials for the established institutions of the land, to exhaust their energies upon." There is a new

concept called 'transnational family' and 'global house-holding'. These terminologies have been developed within the periphery of migration scholarship of Asian scholarships. Particularly, for Singapore, they have earned another status which called 'transient' workers. They perform the essential '3D' (Dirty, Difficult and Dangerous) jobs and contribute to the nation-state of Singapore in many ways.

Methodology

For this paper, researcher will use both primary and secondary data along with Qualitative and Quantitative research method. To collect the primary data, interview method is used via face to face interview method and through email with a pre-decided questioner during May to July 2016. On the other hand, for the secondary data analysis of the researcher will focus on the literary works like historical documents, newspaper reports, and archival sources from both destinations. The untouchability and marginalization among the migrants to Singapore are in significant number in the nineteenth and twentieth century. These migrants are not always untouchable by caste system but on the basis of identity crisis. They are left with unanswered questions and absent in popular narratives. These data analysis of this paper will give a new idea and finding to this research topic which will be concluded with a study of Singapore migration where the migrant's everyday experiences in an overseas multi-ethnic environment will be discussed in detailed and the role of state to give them facilities for their betterment and recuing from the hazards.

Indian Migration to Singapore

India and undivided India has historical relation with the undivided Singapore since colonial era. As both the countries got their independence and started developing themselves, along with they are improving their connection through the system of migration in every sector. This paper will be dealing with only labour migration strictly. The whole Southeast Asia was, and continues to be, a major destination of mass long distance labour migrations. Singapore is an island between the two countries - Malaysia and Indonesia with 269 square miles just about 3.5 times the size of Washington D.C. and one of the smallest countries of the world. The approach to the Harbour of Singapore Island is one of the most beautiful in the world. This is a land-locked island known as 'The gateway of the East'. This country got a status in 2006 as 'Global City, World of opportunities.' Also, in the year 2009, Singapore ranked first in the world for having globalized economy and seventh in the world for social globalization.

Due to limitations and conditions of the research, the specific study of this research will only focus on Indian migrants and the States which will be studied are Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and West Bengal. These migrants are on short-term contract, they are mostly belongs to the low income family from the very rural and agricultural background. At times, they invest their own money to obtain their loan or sale their property to make their journey to the new land. History says, as a British trading colony established in 1819, most of the city's population growth until the World War II was due to immigration. Supported by a fledging colonial economy, Singapore drew in large numbers of labourers from China, India and Malay Archipelago. There were fewer millionaires and traders among them and their emigration to these territories was largely regulated by law. They were mainly convicted indentured labourer or rubber plantation workers for the Strait Settlement. Indian migration was started with the Lascar and Sepoys of the Second Battalim 20th Regiment of the Bengal Native Infantry from Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh under Hasting's charge as Governor General of India. The specific political and economic relationships between the Colonial Office in London and these territories determined recruitment patterns and influenced employment relations and working conditions. Mainly they worked in garrison, but other than this they were survived in 'bazar contingent' as domestic servants, chaiwallas, grooms and dhobis, largely lower caste Hindus and Muslims. Tamil Migrants from Coromandal Coast were in Sepoy. Immigration temporarily ceased during the Japanese Occupation of 1942 to 1945, and Singapore's road to self-governance in the 1950s and 1960s saw the passing of new ordinances that limited immigration to only those who could contribute to its socio-economic development. From this discussion, Indian migrants in Singapore could be divided into three sections – firstly, Indians who have migrated to Singapore for more than two or three generations earlier,

are belonged to 'Old Indians' community, secondly, highly skilled Indians professionals and entrepreneurs who have sought employments, residence and citizenships and the third one is migrant workers.

Historical works on the Indian diaspora in Singapore during the Japanese war have focused mainly on the development of the Indian National Army (INA). These elements comprise important components of the Indian experience, the 'voices' of subalterns affected by these developments has received less attention. Their testimonies suggest that while many were indeed saturated with a sense of mission to free India from British rule, there were also some who saw the demands imposed on them as excessive, and felt that the pan-Indian unity that was raised was not necessarily the outcome of a genuine transformation in consciousness but rather forced upon. Large numbers of Indians were forced to work on Japanese projects like the infamous Thai-Burma 'Death' Railway from which many did not return.

Stricter citizenship and immigration law were imposed following Singapore's independence from Malaysia in 1965, leading to the dwindling of the city-state's non-resident population to 2.9 percent of the total population. In 1980s when Singapore became more industrialised, the question of migration returned. The non-residential people started increasing again, beginning of a trend which continues till today. In 2016, the Singapore census categorized 237,473 Singaporeans and 110,646 permanent residents are into a number of 'dialect' groups, which includes Sikhs, who are a religious rather than a linguistic group, virtually all of whom are Punjabi, which was also captured as a separate 'dialect' category. Sikhs were 12,952 and Punjabis were 5,672 total 53.5%. Tamilians are major 54.18%, though it includes Tamils from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka (Ceylonese), other 29.68% was from Telugu and Bengali community and Hindustanis. According to Rajesh Rai (2014), the social hierarchy comprised four main groups: the educated professional elite (over 0.5% of the Indian community), mercantile groups (under 10%), the white collar middle class (5-7%) and the uneducated laborers (over 80%).

Reasons for migrating to Singapore

For this research, researcher had taken interviews with migrants who are living in Singapore. Samples migrants were/are working as a security guard, plumber, construction workers, and domestic workers in the various places of Singapore. For the small country like Singapore is an attracted destination among migrants and it has also various reasons, like -

- First reason of migration is basically happening because of the lack of job opportunities in home country and not getting satisfied salary. The foreign companies are paying them S\$30 to S\$50 in a day, which is a very big and satisfactory amount to the workers comparing to the Indian salary.
- The second main reason for migration is better livelihood and children good education in India. The migrants are coming from the very rural and poor background, mainly agricultural. They are unable to give proper education to their children or other small members in the family. That's the reason they think if they will earn a good amount in Singapore and save something from salary which they can make a good remittances for better future. One migrant gave response, "My children said to me, father, all my friend's dad have gone to some country for work and good money. Why don't you go too? I wanted them to be proud of me, so I came here in Singapore and sending money to my family and my elder son is studying in class 10 and the younger one is in class 6. They do not have burden of earning money and I am happy of it."³ From this statement, it also denotes that now-a days, migration have become a tradition. If at least a member of a family is migrated irrespective of any country and job, it seems the family status is also increased. To maintain this status, migrants are sometimes bound to send good amount of remittances to their family and without knowing the actual conditions, migrant's family members are spending money to maintain social formalities, good health treatment, build a big multistoried house, spent huge amount in the religious purpose.
- Sometimes women or some men are migrating to earn huge money for herself or for daughters and sometimes for sister's marriage and dowry. "I used to work overtime in the store. I was so economical .I never used to spend any of my money. I thought this was the only way I could save enough money to get all of my sisters married. Till that day I won't have coffee, tea or soft drinks. I will drink only plain water"⁴.

- Female migrants are migrating themselves due to male's abnormal alcoholism; domestic violence for widow is also found in Singapore case.

Problems Faced by Migrants

The number of migration to Singapore are increasing day by day, but at the same time there are problems among them with the procedures, companies, even with their own country. Some problems are recovered and some are still going on. The problems which are founded those are mainly among the illegal migrants. If legal migrants will face a problem he/she can go to the Indian Embassy, they provide very good services to Indian migrants. On the other hand, illegal migrants cannot go to complain for the lack of proper documentations throughout the process. In many cases, it was found that, migrants are not having their original documents like passport, visas, work permits, and not even a single copy of those. Indian Government and Embassy are reluctant to seek any change in the status of migrants. They are concerned about wages and working conditions, which is stipulated by contracts and properly adhered by employers. But the Embassy is not equipped to monitor contracts not to investigate complaints.

On the other hand, Singapore is also taking steps for the benefit of migrants. Ministry of Manpower (MOM)⁵ Singapore is very reluctant to seek about the conditions of migrants. They are concerned about wages and working, which is stipulated by contracts and properly adhered by employers. Though the illegal migration towards Singapore is very difficult and ratio is very low, but sometimes it happens very carefully. The new immigration law passed on 1 April, 1989 and by May of the same year 68 illegal Indian workers had been arrested and 500 has registered for assisted repatriation with India's diplomatic mission in Singapore. Also, one newspaper reporter wrote that, "Hundreds of illegal Tamil workers clutching small bags and bedrolls have pitched camp in ... [the Indian High Commission's] sprawling grounds." (Nation, 1989) Those illegal migrants cannot get any help or permit clearance from the State and authority, so they face many problems which cannot be recovered. For Singapore scholars use the term 'irregular migration' instead of illegal migration or it can be said as 'migrant workers are in irregular statuses'.

Problems faced by migrants are discussed below

With the Companies:

- The domination system to the deprived it is continuing in Singapore from the pre-colonial time. British East India Company started slavery process to the indentured convict laborers. People are migrating for high wages but sarcastically it is true that from history to present the low wage or unsatisfied wage issue is one of the main problems among the migrants. Salaries are often not paid and sometimes not paid at all for several months towards the end of the contractual period, resulting in workers being repatriated without full payment of their dues. This is a common factor for a domestic worker also. Still in some point Indian labors are in a better position than the other laborers from other countries. One shopkeeper said⁶, "If you see, most of the Indians in their positions, it is because of hard work and dedication. Otherwise, it is impossible. Because, always preference would be given to the other nationals. Indians can do sacrifice a lot. I know few people like this, or else they won't be here."
- Employers or Ministry of Manpower sponsoring agreements and visas for labor sometimes do not receive them on arrival and leave them to fend for themselves.
- Work permit fees are deducted from their combined salaries.
- Working hours are usually much longer than the generally recognized eight hours work in a day sometimes without any holiday (though Sunday is a holiday for whole country). In an interview session, construction workers said, "We are working daily. There is no such thing as leave. If we take a day off, they will cut our wages. So because of that we have no desire to go anywhere. Room to work and room to work that's all."
- Singapore government provides health, education, medical and housing facilities to the migrants. They usually stay in a small dormitory room/mass-housing with 20 members or more than that, but there is no option to go anywhere.

Sometimes these houses are situated in a very dirty place, which is very unhealthy. Living room crisis is also present here like the Gulf countries. Workers get the dormitories which are aided by the Singaporean Government under Housing and Development Board (HDB), but the beds are not sufficient according to the number of migrant workers. They are using the same bed in a shifting sleeping process which could bring the health issues, questions of privacy. 200 thousand workers are housed in 43 large dormitories building, in the large dormitories can accommodate 3000 to 25000 workers and these are designed for communal living, with common recreational facilities, mini grocery stores and remittances services and managed by operators which is regulated by MOM under the Foreign Employment Dormitory Act, (FEDA) 2015. These dormitories are divided into three types. First type is 'large dormitories' which often purposely built and looks like a barracks. These houses are accommodating at least 1000 people per site. Second type called as 'medium dormitories', it is a typically housing for a few hundred residents per site often converted from industrial buildings. Third types of residential complexes or 'temporary dormitories' are company quarter, the crisis is also there. These rooms are often related minimally by occupations or caste backgrounds. The idea of making these rooms are not new, it was started from the colonial era among the old migrants. It was known as 'Kepala'. The first homes were made in Serangoon road. These were set up and run by patron bosses. This tied in with the dominant system of employment whereby employers personally selected their workers from their own villages. This meant that the group that lives together often shared similar village backgrounds and the boss himself usually had important village connections and status. Thus was instituted a system that borrowed from village rules – binding employees to paternal authority that included overseeing the men's daily living needs. Often food was cooked on the premises in the communal kitchen, although cooked food stalls were also utilized.

Due to excessive dependency on migrant workers, state cannot maintain the proper arrangements sometimes, 20 people stay in 960 square feet room. In 2015, HOME⁷ surveyed on the dormitories under their social work scheme and they had stated,

“Migrant workers who approach HOME for assistance often live in conditions which are crowded, dirty and full of pests such as cockroaches, bed bugs and rats. It is ironic that migrant workers are housed in such appalling conditions while building luxury apartments and bungalows for Singapore.”

After the report given by HOME, Ministry of Manpower also made a surprise inspection in the dorms. They had also found cockroaches, damaged lights and fixtures, faulty shower taps, corroded railings and stair cases. After looking at these conditions Ministry had charged the Directors of the dormitories. A Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner and an Assistant Commissioner for Foreign Employee Dorm are responsible to maintain rules and if there is any punishable offence, the punishment is very hard; it could be charges as fine from SGD 50,000 to be in jail up to 12 months. As a result of this strict rules and punishments migrants are always afraid, they cannot open their mouth, they become voiceless and marginalized. Guardian, reported on 16th May 2020 an interview of a migrant, where he said,

“Migrant workers are invisible community and their voices are also unheard in Singapore. Their dorms are located on the outskirts of the city and on their rest days, they congregate in districts like Little India and Chinatown, where ethnic food shops and money remittances are located. Due to fear of losing their jobs, many do not complain about their living and working conditions.”

On the other hand, the living room crisis is not common for the female domestic workers. All the apartment and house of Singapore are having a separate room or quarter for their servants. The migrant who stays for 24*7 services, they are staying at their separate, private rooms.

- In Singapore, domestic workers are not protected under labour laws as their employment is within private domestic sphere, and thus conceived of as beyond the jurisdiction of the State. Singapore is a region of 'maid-trade'. Sometimes female migrants are facing the human trafficking. Being in a poor family and less educated, they are not

aware about the reality and crime. People take this weakness as their own benefit. Agents or illegal recruiters sometimes give them the false ideas of achievements and wrong way to earn money. If these female migrants are trapped in this way, either they will be sold by the agents or they have to work as sex workers.

- To control the human trafficking, MOM has given charges to some agents, particularly for recruiting female migrants as domestic workers. Most of these maid/ domestic workers recruitment agencies make video recording of maids who has been registered with them. For the most cases, the maids talk about themselves, usually in broken English or some of them use their mother tongue, particularly for the house which speaks or originate from her native place. For a few minutes they explain their reasons for wanting to work as maid in the overseas. These recordings are shown to the employers to help them to select their maids. During the time of applying, the women are asked to give their preferences according to choices like household work, looking after children, taking care of invalids or the aged. There is another story of domestic worker's recruitment. In the few cases it shows that employers want to recruit a maid from their own mother tongue community, so that they could easily communicate with their maids. Also, they want maid from their own religion. In these cases, employers are always afraid of when they will not be in the home, maids may want to impose her religious customs and habits to children and this is very sentimental issue. This mentally also saves racial problems. On the basis of this, the statistic of migration says, Indian maids are working in Indian houses and it is same for other countries.

Natives:

- As a minor community, Indian labour migrants faced problem of nativism from the colonial period. It was well known to the other communities that a high proportion of crimes among Indian laborers were committed for the reason of sex. In community where men were outnumbered than women and marriage became a flimsy institution. Marital identity, enticement of marital women and prostitution became frequent. The officers of the Labor Department took up with the Government the possibility of a system of registration for Hindu marriages solemnized in Malaya (the undivided Singapore). They were supported by the planters, whose General Labor Committee of 1920 had recommended such a scheme, so the Hindu Marriage Registration Act was passed in 1924, providing for voluntary registration of marriages among Hindus.
- In the present context problem with the natives are not stick in one field, it became complicated. Unskilled or semi-skilled labor cannot participate in local programs as well as in their own religious rituals also with the skilled labors and their family. They feel identity crisis and cultural displacement. Also working as a labour or low-wage worker make them feel insecure among the own countrymen, so they cannot associate with the other people who is also coming from India.
- The natives or other nationals are becoming educated in English and technical knowledges is the another reason of clash. Local people are trying to get into job in their own country from lower level to upper level. Because of this, job crisis started for the migrants. And in very recent Singapore Government had started the anti-foreign policy which will affect these transit migrants as well.
- Language problem is also another issue. Major used and official language of Singapore is English. People faced this problem sometimes for their own negligence. They cannot communicate with others. This situation becomes harassing for the migrant.

At Home:

Migrants are moving themselves to a new country for the betterment of family, but they are facing problems at home also.

- Children are neglected by the parental care (either father or mother migrated, sometime both are migrated). This gap cannot be fulfilled by any other member of the family. For a growing child it become a psychological issue.

- For female member migration male has to maintain all the household duties. There will be a question of 'family values' and 'tradition'. The migrant family constitutes the first social area where 'gender', 'mobility' and 'tradition' get defined. The existence of 'ethnic enclaves' in society where these traditional models are encouraged and perpetuated gives members a sense of security.
- For male migration female has to maintain all the household duties. For many cases female member is ill-treated by the others whether it is aged or young. And then there will not be any question of ethics and traditions. This is simply said as women's work. After receiving the money from husband or other male migrant at regular intervals through banking channels, then the second cycle of important interactions for the woman starts. These new financial agreements consists of dealing with the institutions of the society have been started which she could not do until the date.
- So many divorce cases and extra marital affairs can be seen in the migrant's family. Both husband and wife are not loyal to their relationship. They do not come back for a long time or starts a new relationship in the foreign land as well as in the hometown.
- Gender discrimination is also very prominent. If an unmarried girl will migrate to earn, some time she will be addressed as 'impure' while coming back to homeland. And when an unmarried boy migrates he will not be addressed with anything. He will get a good recommendation in the marriage market, and unfortunately, with this he is eligible to get more dowries.

Paying Respect to the Migrants by the Singapore Authority

The above discussed sections are giving a pictorial view of problems faced by the labour migrants. They are becoming xenophobic, marginalized, living life in exile in the homeland, host land and even at their homes. But every bad thing has a good impact. Singapore Government has already started realizing that they cannot survive as a best globally developed country without the help and sacrifice of the migrants. Indian nationals are among the largest foreign working labour-intensive industries. They are praising about the contribution of migrants labours in every field like, building construction, shipyards, marine, domestic services and all. In the open International platform the Government and the Governing body are also paying respect and saluting their hard works to develop and making a pride about Singapore in front of the Global world. On International Migrant's Day in 2016, the Ministry of Manpower shared an album to its Facebook page entitled 'Unsung City Makers', a tribute to "Foreign Workers who left their homes to help build ours", "Migrants who literary built the Singapore of today", "They built our Nation". In 2018, also MOM featured a very different campaign which involves a group of youth who helped to paint a wall with the picture of migrant's dormitories to know their life style and a process to understand their 'mutual appreciation, trust, tolerance and respect.' On this year migrants were also got another respect from the intellectual world. In the Global Migrant festival, 2018 had a weekend discussion performed with a film screening organized by a travel writer Shibaji Das, where Singaporeans and migrants are referring each other as 'brothers' and 'sisters'.⁸

Findings and Suggestions

There are few major protective programs had taken by the Government of India and had already been implemented, but the problems are there till now. As a researcher during field work in various places in India and Singapore, it was found there are few gaps in the policies. Migrants are mainly coming from the extreme rural village, so the awareness programs which are conducted by the respective authority they are always not reachable for all the migrants. There is a rule that migrants have to be present physically during the issue of visa or emigration clearance, but many times they are relying on the recruiting agents or middle man. Though, Singapore labour migrants are coming through the Employment Pass by Ministry of Manpower (MOM) of Singapore. For the case of Singapore the victimized migrants do not go to complain to Embassy, they go directly to MOM office. Here, Embassy works for Indian Diaspora and Permanent Residents.

Briefly, it can be said that there should be some restrictions and changes in their policies, like:

- Effective measures should be instituted by the Ministry of Labor to prevent Malpractices by recruiting agents in India.
- State Government should set up appropriate agencies, even at the district level, to advise prospective Indian workers about their rights and obligations.
- Government should negotiate a ‘Standard Labor Export Agreement’ with all countries taking migrant labours prescribing such things as a minimum wage, free housing, medicine, a weekly day off, a limit on daily working hours, overtime allowance rates, return air tickets and compensation for on the job death / injury.
- Ensuring regulatory compliance.
- Providing services to the migrant workers at destination.
- Introduction to the E-Recruitment process.
- More policies to build the capacity of migrant workers. Such as, Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) etc.
- The practice of employers taking into their custody the passports of their employees immediately on their arrival should be discontinued. This practice renders our workers helpless. An alternative system which meets the requirements of the local laws should also be explored.
- In the pre-departure orientation program there has to be a class on the legal rules and regulations of the host country. So that, the migrant should not face any problem or legal issues, harassments in their daily life. Such as for the migrants who will go to Singapore they should learn the country’s regulation on not to smoke publicly, not to eat in the public vehicle etc.
- ILO⁹ recommends avoiding the use of unregulated and un-licensed sub-agents.
- Employers must have ensured that they are dealing only with fair, ethical and complaint recruitment agencies that do not charge workers and monitor their activities.

Conclusion

At the end of this research paper, here in this concluding section the scenario of the migrants are related to the word ‘Subaltern’. The word comes from the British militancy, where a person works with lower grade or subordinate to the officers, referred as ‘Subaltern’. This term has become famous in the Postcolonial time, mainly in the academic sphere. It was first used by Antonio Gramsci, in his book *Prison Notebook* (1971). In this research, the term ‘Subaltern Diaspora’ from title of this research refers to those migrant labourers who are sacrificing their lives in the making of modern ‘state’ and society from the colonial period to till date. Though, they are voiceless but these ‘Subaltern can speak’. In the present scenario, they are raising their voices for every equal right and struggling for existence against the capital power and structure, utilitarian society and de-humanizing approaches. Though this study is based on a small sample and secondary sources that offers limited basis for generalisation, the everyday experiences of the respondents do exemplify the socio-economic reality faced by low-waged migrant workers in Singapore. They are in a “double whammy” situation as they receive the lowest wage economically, and at the same time are made abject, excluded and denied of dignity socially. The de-humanising aspect of work is what Marx identifies as one of the forms of alienation. It “mutilates the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil.”¹⁰ Marx’s conceptualization of the worker as instrument and their own description of themselves as “machine” effectively encapsulate the ways in which workers’ bodily mobilities and organized. He also argued that a free labour system was imperative for industrial capitalism’s growth and productive operation, as was the free movement of labour. This meant that the removal of obstacles to the free flow of labour was an economic imperative. The diversion of the population from agriculture is expressed in the growth towns, factories and commercial and industrial townships, as well as in non-agricultural migration. All processes are necessary components of capitalist development and

are profoundly progressive when compared to the old forms of feudalism. Also, migrants created a consumer's market for industrial products through the destruction of self-reliant rural industries.

This paper has revealed an incongruent reality faced by the low-waged migrant men and women who occupy the lowest socio-economic position themselves while they are raising the "global" position of host country. By involving the migrants in this study, it has repositioned their visibility. Despite facing various types of social injustice such as exploitation and marginalisation, these people are simply not victims but rather resilient "scale-makers" who shape the physical fabric of these countries and leave their imprint all over these global countries.

References

- Arasaratnam, Sinnappah, *Indians in Malaysia and Singapore*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Brown, M. Judith, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora*, New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Hall, Stuart, *Thinking the Diaspora: Home-Thoughts from Abroad*, 1999, *Small Axe* 6, September, ISSN 0799-0537, pp. 1-18.
- Moors, A, *Migrant Domestic Workers: Debating Transnationalism, Identity Politics and Family Relations*, A Review Essay: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 2003, Vol.45, no-2, pp. 386-394. Cambridge University Press.
- Murfett, H. Malcolm; Miksic N. John (eds) *Between Two Oceans: A Military History of Singapore from 1275-1971*; Singapore, Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2011.
- Rai, Rajesh, *Indians in Singapore: 1819-1945: Diaspora in the Colonial Port City*; Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Sandhu, K. S. 'Indian Immigration and Settlement in Singapore' in Sandhu, K.S. and A. Mani (eds) *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Singapore Times Academic Press, 1993.
- Sheffer, Gabriel, *Transnationalism and Ethnonational Diasporism*, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Volume 15, Number 1, Spring, pp. 121-145; University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Singapore Indian Association, *Passage of Indians*. Singapore, 2003.
- Tarling, Nicholas, *Studying Singapore's Past: C. M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*. Singapore, NUS Press, 2012.
- Tinker, Hugh, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920*; London, Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Yeoh, B and Huang, S. *Maids and Ma'am in Singapore: Constructing Gender and Nationality in the Transnationalism of Paid Domestic Work*; In: *Geography Research Forum*, 18, 1998: 21-48.

¹ Tinker, H., *The Banyan Tree: Overseas emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977.

² Weiner, Myron. *International Migration and Development: Indians in the Persian Gulf*. In Prakash C. Jain (ed.) *Indian Diaspora in West Asia; A Reader*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers. 2007. Pp. no. 45-46.

³ Interview was taken at NUS from a construction worker who was involved of making new academic building, June, 2016.

⁴ Interviewed in Singapore, June, 2016.

⁵ Ministry of Manpower works under Government of Singapore. This ministry is responsible for the formulation and implementation of the labour policies related to workforce in Singapore. It was known as Ministry of Labour until 1988.

⁶ Interview was taken in June, 2016.

⁷ Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economies.

⁸ Kwek, Theophilus, *Love, Labour and Loss: Decoding the 'Migrant Workers'*. *Singapore Policy Journal*, Feb, 20, 2019.

⁹ International Labour Organisation.

¹⁰ Marx, K., *Capital*. Chicago, Charles H. Kerr and Co. 1906.