Exploring the Socio-Cultural Impact of Migration: An Ethnographic Study of Migrant Workers from Bangladesh to the Gulf States.

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Abstract:

How do we understand the mobility of people and the transformations brought by the mobility to the lives of migrants and non-migrants? Time and space determine the varied causes and types of migration, and thus the effects of migration. Most debates about the migration privilege the economic perspectives and the north-south transmigrants at the cost of social and ideological dimensions as well as the south-south migration and hardly include temporary migrant workers in the discourses. Against this backdrop, this project explores, through an ethnographic methodological approach, the increasing effects of international migration in transforming the social and cultural life of migrants and their sending communities in rural Bangladesh. It is argued that migrants could be better understood as ‘catalyst for social change’ in which actions are conceptualized as part of a broader social system based on embodied knowledge. Returned Bangladeshi temporary migrant workers from the Gulf states, migrants’ families, and communities of Bangladeshi short term workers residing in the Gulf region are at the center of this study. The subjective experiences of individual migrants and how those experiences are constructed by and in turn construct migrants’ sense and politics of identity and belonging are scrutinized. The study provides the dynamics of (re)construction processes and the role that trajectories play in altering the shape of identity as well as belongings that portray experiences of individual migrants from Bangladesh to the Gulf. Of special interest in this context is the increased significance of religion. Thus, this research expects to offer new perspectives on the ways in which migration, transformations of citizenship and political Islam are interlinked. The narratives of migrants presented in this study open up new avenues for the readers to reflect on the volatility of belonging and the issues that constitute mobility exciting for migrants. Furthermore, it provides new areas for policy and research to draw attention more strongly to the insights of socio-cultural effects of migration.

Keywords: Migration; Socio-Cultural Impacts; Identity; Belonging; Bangladeshi temporary migrant workers; Religion.