

Documents and North-Indian labour migrants: Governing labour mobility in Manipur

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Abstract

Drawing upon in-depth interviews with labour migrants in Manipur, the use of Foucault's 'governmentality' and Scott's 'weapons of the weak', this paper argues that Inner Line Permit (ILP) and state surveillance are governing the 'conduct' of labour migrants in Manipur. Regular documents checks are performed to ensure migrants' legal status, which results in labour migrant's social, economic and psychological insecurity. Police and security personnel often conduct search operations in various localities of Manipur. Though this is the regular practice of the government to ensure security, this regular practice of the state became a means to harass, exclude, detain and extort money from labour migrants if they fail to prove their legal status. Moreover, when police personnel randomly check the documents of labour migrants with the intention to extort money, it becomes an additional financial burden. This study intends to examine the history, trajectory and significance of documents for labour migrants in the existing literature. Furthermore, the paper explores the power dynamics between state and labour migrants in Manipur that govern the 'conduct' of labour mobility through ILP and the migrants' legal status. The study also highlights the negotiation and navigation strategy of labour migrants to overcome the regular state surveillance, detention and police harassment.

Biography

Ajeet Kumar Pankaj is Assistant Professor in Department of Social Work, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Regional Campus Manipur, India. He had earned his PhD from Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai. His research interests include caste, migration, exclusion, social policy and community development. He was Co-Project Investigator and collaborated with Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Kashmir University for a joint research project funded by ICSSR, 'Migrant Workers and Urbanisation in Politically Sensitive Area: A Study in Kashmir & Manipur'. Ajeet has published several articles in national and international journals. Recently, he submitted a book manuscript titled *Dalit Migrants: Emancipation, Assertion and Social Change* to the Springer International Publication. The book, currently under review, focuses on the lives of impoverished Dalit migrants (ex-Untouchable castes) from North India. The aim of the book is to understand the everyday experiences of these migrants in their struggle to access welfare rights. The book also explores Dalit migrants' everyday emancipation, assertion and social change in the city.