

Third Critical Studies Conference
(Kolkata, 11-12 September 2009)

Empires, States, and Migration

1. The Theme

In much of the era of twentieth century industrialism and capitalism the phenomenon of migration seemed as an exception to human societies and development. Societies and states, particularly after the Second World War, seemed to have taken on the shape of stable nation states with their defined citizenries, territories, laws, economies, and geographies. While multinational corporations (MNCs) worked in a frame of global operations, yet the structure of these operations were mostly territorially bound, and encouraging trans-national migration was not a complaint lodged against them by powers of global governance. Even if peasants were migrating, or various migrant populations were very much present on earth shaping all through the century as earlier the pattern of human settlements, yet history appeared as one of the sacred territories of the national societies. Partitions appeared as exceptions, and the reproduction of the method of partition as a way of stabilising societies and forming states notwithstanding provoking population flows and creating unclean futures was ignored. As if the sacred history of settled societies had little to do with these messy presents and pasts.

Of course migration is not something new; it is as old as human history. Indeed, a whole science had meanwhile grown up around the phenomenon of migration – geography and economics being the two most pursued disciplines of knowledge in the task of understanding migration. Settlements, wages, remittances, and several other issues have crowded the field of migration studies. Ethnography, in general anthropology and later on cultural studies have also made their distinctive marks. Of more contemporary interest however is the phenomenon of forced migration. The attention on forced migration in recent time is due to the surge in human rights movements, and thus the awareness of the need to protect the victims of forced migration. This has resulted in theories, laws, policies, and practices relating to vulnerability, care, protection, boundary making exercises, citizenship, and most importantly displacement. A great number of institutions of human rights and humanitarian work now mark the field. National, regional, and international regimes of protection have emerged. Yet this begs the question, how far can we differentiate between voluntary migration and forced migration particularly in the light of recent massive and mixed population flows?

Labour has remained through all these debates and discussions the silent other name of the figure of the migrant. When mostly this migrant labour appears as illegal, what sense shall we make of the issue of trafficked labour, who should have died with the emergence of free contract-bound labour appearing often in the juridical figure of the citizen? This complicates the scenario even more, and makes the world of settled production even more contingent on several factors including labour flows. In today's world of globalisation, many may ask, are we really far away from the nineteenth century world of indentured labour that marked entire world of production? Also, with migrant labour marking the capitalist production system what will happen to settled forms of democracy, according to some, bourgeois democracy?

Should we not study older histories of empires, which were characterised by mobility in more pronounced ways?

Empires bring the issues of globalisation of various kinds and centuries. Migrations connote borders, mobilities, and their governing. Empires govern migrations, states govern migrations. Is there any common ground between the two ways of governing? And once again significantly, do all these mean that we take border as a method of study?

The Third Critical Studies Conference proposes to discuss all these questions we have sought to assemble under the title, *Empires, States, and Migration*. Scientific disciplines will help us to understand some of the questions raised, inter-disciplinary approaches will help even more. Critical ways of interrogating and analysing will enable us to go further and allow us to raise new questions while making sense of the earlier ones.

About five years ago the Calcutta Research Group (CRG) started hosting meetings to link with various strands of critical thinking on issues of our time and having great stakes in our lives. The First Critical Studies Conference (29 –30 July 2005) deliberated on *What is Autonomy?* The Second Critical Studies Conference (20-22 September 2007) focused on *Spheres of Justice*. Research papers, discussion notes, commentaries, and volumes came out of these meets. More important, scholars and thinkers from various countries including large numbers from within India cutting across the post-colonial divides attended the two deliberations, and were able to forge links and exchanged ideas. The Second Conference had an additional programme. It was a one day workshop with Etienne Balibar – a day long exchange of ideas between a select group of conference participants and Kolkata scholars and the philosopher. For reports of these two conferences, and the workshop interested people may visit the CRG website:

<http://www.mcrq.ac.in/dg.htm>

<http://mcrq.ac.in/CS.htm>

<http://www.mcrq.ac.in/Grappi.htm>

http://www.mcrq.ac.in/Report_Etienne.htm

2. Necessary details of the Third Conference

The Third Critical Studies Conference will be held in Kolkata on 11-12 September 2009. CRG invites individual proposals for papers and desirably panels. Each panel will consist of three papers and a moderator. There will be special lectures as part of the conference.

The Conference will not be able to offer any travel assistance; there will be modest accommodation arrangements for three nights for outstation participants. Registration fee for Indian participants will be Rs. 300/ (Three hundred only) and for participants outside India the fee will be USD 100 (USD one hundred only).

Below is an indicative list of sub-themes and issues to be covered at the Conference. CRG welcomes other suggestions as well.

The last date for submitting proposals for panels and papers will be 15 April 2009, submitting abstracts 15 May 2009, and for full papers 10 August 2009. Inquiries

about themes and panels are welcome. All inquiries may be addressed (with copies) to: -

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3. Some of the probable themes and Issues

- Imperial formations and Migration (migrations in and under empires, modern empires and new slavery, plantation economies, neo-imperial formations and flows of labour, Diasporas, etc.)
- States, Nations, Migration, and Citizenship (violence, displacement, and citizenship, the right to return, sacred space of the nation, citizenship laws, autonomous flows of migration, globalisation and forced migration, trafficking, possibilities of a differently structured world factoring in mobility, etc.)
- Economies and the government of Population Flows (discussion on governmental technologies to make migration a part of the market, migration markets, migration in a police planet)
- Beyond Economics and Anthropology? Narratives of Forced Migration (gendered narratives, the multi-layered messages, partition narratives, camp lives and experiences, narrative as a method to understand forced migration and its trauma, etc.)
- The World of Humanitarianism - Institutions of Care and Protection (institutional studies, critiques of humanitarian ideologies, case studies)
- Gender and Forced Migration.
- Migrant as the abnormal (settled formations as the normal and the figure of the migrant as the abnormal – historical overviews)

**Registration Form for
The Third Critical Studies Conference
On
'Empires, States and Migration''**

**Kolkata
11-12 September 2009**

Registration fee: For local participants: 300 INR; For
Participants outside India: 100 USD

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| NAME: |
| INSTITUTION: |
| CURRENT POSITION: |
| ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NO: |
| Email ID: |
| ARE YOU PRESENTING A PAPER? (YES/ NO) |
| TITLE OF YOUR PAPER |
| ARE YOU PROPOSING A PANEL? (YES/NO) |
| THEME OF YOUR PANEL |
| <i>Each panel will consist of three papers and a moderator. The last date for submitting proposals for panels and papers will be 15 April 2009, submitting abstracts 15 May 2009, and for full papers 10 August 2009.</i> |
| FOR OUTSTATION PARTICIPANTS |
| Arrival (in Kolkata) Date and Schedule: |
| Departure Date and Schedule: |

Signature & Date

All inquiries may be addressed (with copies) to: - Sanam Roohi [sanam.roohi@gmail.com/](mailto:sanam.roohi@gmail.com)

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