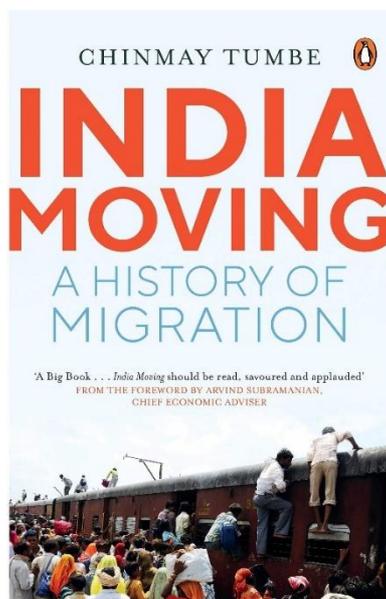




India Moving: A History of Migration by Chinmay Tumbe

Reviewed by *Swati Mantri*



INDIA MOVING: A HISTORY OF MIGRATION by Chinmay Tumbe. Penguin Random House India, 2018; pp. 304. ₹599. ISBN: 9780670089833

In the face of recent global migration and humanitarian crisis unfolding in Indian sub-continent, South America, sub-Saharan region, and beyond, Chinmay Tumbe's *India Moving: A History of Migration* is a timely reminder of treating migration as a dynamic phenomenon and not as a one-off event wherein the transformative effect of journey on the migrant is ever-lasting. Referring to migration as 'rites of passage' (p.142), the framework adopted by Tumbe gives migration a ring of adventure that the migrant undertakes as an expedition, one that is transformative in nature. The book provides a nuanced insight into various contextual cases of Indian migration—both external as well as internal—and offers a fascinating account of "cultural crossovers" (p.153) through various symbolic references ranging from popular cultural icons to everyday social practices, from inter-community relations to formation of transnational ties.

Today, the currency of the term migrant has acquired an inevitable presence in economic, political, and even social discourse. Whether as a threat or as an adventurer, the migrant is present everywhere: what are the set of social relations that influence people's movement? What is the key to understand migration? Why is migration undertaken and why has such a phenomenon been persistently growing? Who is really the beneficiary of such processes? These exploratory questions constitute some of the key concerns in Chinmay Tumbe's *India Moving: A History of Migration* that cohesively studies

several historical junctures and epochs of Indian migration history and its diasporas.

Thematically divided into six chapters, Tumbe's book is a culmination of the authors' primary research during his PhD at IIM Bangalore and his professional engagements in the field thereafter. An attempt to stitch the historical data and research findings within the larger theoretical framework of international as well as internal migration in India, affords the writer to use an intersectional analytical lens in this book. A perceptive observation of the socio-cultural and religious affinities of Indian migrants, historical particularities, and how factors like gender, class, and caste affect the migration patterns of Indians, strengthens Tumbe's argument on how "...the view of low spatial mobility in Indian history is seriously questionable. Not only has India witnessed some of the world's largest episodes of voluntary and involuntary migration, but is also unique in currently sustaining considerable immigration, internal migration and emigration – all three at the same time" (p.2).

The burgeoning research on migration studies often focuses on the single major factor of socio-economic mobility that encourages migration. Keeping in tune with the recent trends on migration studies, the methodology of analysis used by the author here includes an examination of social and cultural factors as well. Thus reminding the readers that although economic factors are crucial, they are not the only determining factors in the decision to migrate. By incorporating themes like 'displacement,' 'development,' and 'partition,' this book introduces the readers to the myriad circumstances under which migration is possibly undertaken by an individual. Tumbe's specific treatment of the subject includes citing various significant historical events in India's socio-political history, as well as tracing the trajectory of migration that Indians undertook in three distinct phases—pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary recent times—which also interact with and bind together the cross-cultural narratives emanating from various corners of the country. To this end, the book is particularly informative in exploring the links between international migration concomitant with the forming of Indian diasporas and the significant economic power exerted by diasporic remittances. Tumbe posits that this not only acted as a source of capital for the state but more importantly fostered streams of migration through consolidation of networks transnationally.

Moreover, arguing for the "Great Indian Migration" as a voluntary model of migration, Tumbe emphasises upon the "reason and du-

ration of migration” (p.34) as imperatives to understand migration patterns in India. To this end, what makes the theory presented different from other published work on similar topics, is the attention paid to the often ignored social processes such as migration of food practices, festivals, and languages, etc., that accompany the act of migration. Migration as a social factor, experienced through everyday lives, is emphasized upon through the usage of popular cultural symbols like Udupi restaurants, Karachi bakery of Hyderabad, Bollywood movies, and song lyrics. Over time, these themes have motivated writings in social-anthropology, but one might not find many such resources accessible to the uninitiated reader.

While explaining the crucial moments with ease for the layman, the author effortlessly brings together several snippets from ancient history of Indian migration as well as recently published books such as Sujatha Gidla’s *Ants among Elephants* (2017) and attempts to move beyond the sole gaze on the male migrant. One understands that a book of such nature could be inexhaustibly voluminous and could only address as much. But the question of women mobility or implications of migration on women, although raised, leaves much scholarly foray to be desired.

Insofar as the book espouses the virtues of how migration is benefitting for some, it however leaves the reader wondering about the agency of the migrant and the various locations subsuming migrant as a victim or as an opportunist. Moreover, although Tumbe’s work succinctly weaves together multiple strands of migration stories emanating from different corners of the country that have significantly shaped the Indian demography over time, the author misses the opportunity to take a comprehensive position on the rise of many new trends that push the discourse on migration to the forefront, for instance, the rise of populist movements across the world as a response to immigration policies.

The phenomenon of migration is seen to have the power to impact and shape transnational connections, international geopolitical relations, and the stability of a state. In times when emergence of new categories of visas to restrict incoming migrants and refugee crisis features in everyday news, Chinmay Tumbe’s historical and anecdotal account of migrating Indians is an informative research that revisits some old conundrums around the formation of Indian diaspora and produces new insights into what the author posits as “Indians now reside in every country of the world, barring perhaps North Korea and a few others. And with every new Indian adventure abroad, readers are

greeted with a new book describing how Indians have made that particular part of the world their home” (p.152). The multifarious perspectives presented in the book will appeal to the layman reader and scholars alike, for it brings out the consciousness of social change linked to structural functions of migration and will familiarize them with migration patterns, settlement practices and strategies that migrants resort to. The diverse sources of reference in the book are complemented by the lucid narration style of the author and shall definitely encourage its readers to delve deeper into the intersectional ties of migration, place-making, and construction of a specific identity.

