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A Process-Oriented Approach

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To my wife, Zabun Naher, and to my children
Manha Afrah, Manha Aferdita,
and Ahyan Zelman

Preface

Migration has opened up a new world of opportunity to many enterprising individuals in the global South. South–South migration can be broadly understood as large-scale movement between developing countries that has three broad attributes—it is regional in scope, temporary in duration, and single in migration category. Given the single and temporary nature of migration and its inherent links to the families and communities in the origin country, principal questions in the South–South migration literature concern why and how people migrate inter-regionally for work, and what impacts this single, temporary form of migration has for migrants and their families. These are the two broad questions that guide this book. This book approaches the field of international migration of labour in the context of South–South migration with a particular reference to Bangladeshi migration to Singapore. This research takes a process-oriented approach to migration by tracing the experiences of Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore and of their families in Bangladesh.

Under the rubric of temporary migration, low-skilled migrant workers are usually invited to stay and work in the labour-importing countries for a definite period, ranging from one to three years, with certain restrictions including repatriation after the end of the contract. Such migration has increasingly become a viable strategy to escape unemployment, poverty, and social stagnation, and enhance life chances for individual migrants, their families, and kinship members in the relatively poorer countries in the South. The temporary form of intra- and inter-regional migration in Asia is often one strategy—alongside marriage, education, and house-building—through which individual migrants and their families attempt to reconfigure their social position in their community of origin. Thus, migration is a process which affects every dimension of social existence, and which develops its own complex dynamics over time.

Research on labour migration in the last few decades has seen excessive domination by economic explanations. Econometric analysis has been such a dominant factor in studies of migration that the very language of analysis tends to marginalize the social and cultural factors causing migration and shaping outcomes. This book rejects oversimplified explanations based on push-pull models and the one-sided flows inherent in such models, instead highlighting the social and cultural

underpinnings of labour migration. Methodologically, migration research usually takes individual migrants and their families as the units of analysis. While individual and family are indeed of great importance as units of analysis, this research introduces the *bari* to migration research as another unit of analysis. *Bari*, a Bengali word, denotes a group of families sharing the same courtyard. Members of the *bari* are generally blood related and belong to the same lineage, mostly patrilineally. This book does not challenge the importance of individual migrants and their families in migration research; rather, it adds the *bari* as another significant unit for a meaningful analysis of migration behaviour, which has wider implications for countries in South Asia.

This being the first book of its kind, it is surely not free from gaps and lapses. I will seek to learn about them through the comments, reviews, and assessments of my readers, and accordingly improve in future. I hope that this book will be of use to those many inspired scholars who will carry this line of research forward.

Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam Md Mizanur Rahman
November 2016

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Surviving such an extended research experience would have been impossible without the support of my family. First of all, I thank my parents, Abdul Hamid Talukder and Monoara Hamid, who gave their unconditional love and support in every way imaginable. Everything that I have achieved in my life has been made possible by their self-sacrifice and ongoing struggle to support me. I also thank my sisters, Nargis Akter, Naznin Akter, and Nasrin Akter.

Although most of the chapters in this volume are new research, I would like to acknowledge that part of Chaps. 2 and 6 were published as book chapter and journal article. Chapter 2, 'Management of Foreign Manpower', was published in Lian Kwen Fee and Tong Chee Kiong (Eds.) (2008). Social Policy in Post-Industrial Singapore, Leiden: Brill. Chapter 6, 'Remittance as a social Process', was published in Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 19(2): 265–294. I would like to thank Brill and APMJ for granting permission to publish the revised, updated versions.

Last but not least, I am deeply indebted to my wife, Zabun Naher, our twin daughters, Manha Afrah and Manha Aferdita, and only son, Ahyan Zelman. As a family member I have not been able to give them all the time they deserved. I have missed out on a great deal of fun and games, and I hope to make up for this in full!

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November 2016

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List of Non-English (Bengali) Words

Adam Babsha	Human-trading
Adam Bapari	Business people engaged in the human migration trade
Attiyo	Relatives
Bangsho	Lineage
Baralok	Rich person: good people
Bari	Homestead, usually consisting of an inner courtyard with huts around (kin groups)
Bari Murubbi	Head of *bari*
Bhalo Kaz	Good work: work which is associated with higher status
Bhalomanush	Of high status: good people
Bidesh	Foreign country
Bideshi	Foreigner
BoroBari	Literally, large collection of households; (reputed Bari)
Chalan	Investment cost/financial cost
Chhotolok	Poor: little people/mean people
Chhotomanush	Of low status, 'little people'
Dalal	Broker/agent
Desh	Country/home
Ghor	Room
Gusthi	Patrilineage
Kacha Poisha	Easily earned/received money
Madrasa	Muslim religious school
Mandha Kaz	Bad work: work which is associated with lower status
Matobbor	Village headman
Mouza	A village, group or block of villages regarded as an administrative unit
Murubbi	Senior member of the family or community
Nichu-bangsho	Low status lineage
Paribar	Family
Rakta	Blood

Samaj	Society, community, also used for religious group
Shalish	Conciliation
Shikit Manush	Educated people
Shikit manush-ar kaz	Work of educated people: the type of work which educated people usually do
Taka	Bangladeshi currency (BDT)
Thana	Administrative unit, *upazilla*/sub-district
Ucchu-bangsho	High status lineage
Union	Local council, a Union Board
Zilla	District

Chapter 1
Migration of Labour in the Global South: An Introduction

International migration has emerged as a crucial global phenomenon, affecting an increasing number of individuals, families and communities worldwide. International migration is often discussed under the rubric of South–North migration, that is, taken to involve people from the global South migrating to the North; yet although a certain percentage of people from the global South do move North, significant migration flows also take place within the global South, generally from low-income to middle- or high-income countries.[1] A review of the various definitions of 'South' and 'North' is already available in the literature (Castles and Wise 2008; Bakewell 2009, Anich et al. 2014) and is beyond the scope of this book. Broadly speaking, South–South migration can be understood simply as migration between developing countries that has three broad attributes: it is *regional* in geographical scope, *temporary* in duration, and *single* in terms of migration category.

South–South migration has gained attention in recent years (for details, see Ratha and Shaw 2007; Castles and Wise 2008; Piper 2008; Gindling 2009; Hujo and Piper 2010; Lee 2010; Schiff 2010; Bartlett 2012; Anich et al. 2014). Susanne Melde and her colleagues note that at least two publications as early as 2007 highlighted the importance of South–South migration (Melde et al. 2014: 2–3). First, Ratha and Shaw (2007) demonstrated that migration within the South was numerically as important as that from South to North. Second, Hujo and Piper (2007) drew attention to the importance of migration within the global South and proposed that it was time to consider whether migration within the global South had developmental impacts of its own, and to study those impacts from a broader development perspective. Migration studies in the North, particularly the migration

[1]Identifying the South has been a key challenge as the term remains deeply problematic for a number of reasons, such as the "problems associated with its definition, distinctiveness, political construction and chronology" (Bakewell 2009: 2). Within the UN system, five 'developing regions' are defined as follows: Africa, Americas excluding Northern America, Caribbean, Asia excluding Japan and Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand (Bakewell 2009: 2).

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and development debate, is dominated by the perspective of Northern political elites and populist movements, which tends to reduce "the key issues to security, control of migratory flows, integration into the receiving society, and remittances" (Castles and Wise 2008: 9). In the South, meanwhile, the voices of migrants and their associations tend to get more attention, with a focus on human well-being, community and equality (Castles and Wise 2008; Battistella 2014). Thus, embracing a Southern perspective means featuring the voices of migrants and their families.

Most migration flows in the global South tend to be intra- or inter-regional. For instance, in 2013, Asia–Asia was the largest migration corridor in the world, with some 54 million international migrants born in Asia residing in another country therein (UN-DESA 2013: 1–3). During the period 2000–2010, the number of international migrants along the Asia–Asia corridor grew by an average of 1.5 million per year (UN-DESA 2013: 3). In fact, more people than ever are joining the lengthening queue of intra- and inter-regional migration in search of work. Given the new configurations of geopolitical power and global wealth, human mobility between countries in Asia is likely to continue to increase in coming years. However, the temporary form of migration is the central feature of the Asia–Asia migration corridor, and we observe limited permanent forms of migration (e.g., marriages). In such migration, selected labour-scarce countries actively recruit foreign workers to meet their labour demand. Temporary labour migration programs, also called 'foreign worker programs' or 'contract migrant worker programs', have been an inseparable part of the national labour policy of some rich economies in Asia such as Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam (for details, see Debrah 2002; Iredale et al. 2003; Ananta and Arifin 2004; Hewison and Young 2006; Ullah 2010; Rahman 2012; Lian et al. 2016).

Under temporary migration programmes, low-skilled migrant workers are usually invited to stay and work in the labour-importing countries for a definite period ranging from one to three years, with restrictions including repatriation after the end of the contract (for details, see Ruhs 2002; Piper 2008). Such migration has increasingly been a viable strategy to escape unemployment, poverty and social stagnation and enhance life chances for individual migrants, their families and kinship groups in relatively poorer countries in the South. The temporary form of intra- and inter-regional migration in Asia is often one strategy—aside from marriage, education and house-building—through which individual migrants and their families attempt to reconfigure their social positions in their community of origin. Thus, migration is a process which affects every dimension of social existence, and which develops its own complex dynamics over time (Castles and Miller 2009: 21).

In Southeast Asia, Singapore is currently home to over 1.6 million migrants who are working with skilled, semi-skilled, and managerial and professional status in nearly all sectors of the economy. Migrant workers in Singapore work on renewable contracts and are allowed to stay for up to 22 years, subject to the physical condition of the migrants and the availability of work. Singapore has devised a transparent migration control policy targeting different classes of migrants in order to meet the needs of the society in general and the economy in particular. This book approaches the field of international migration of labour in the context of South–South migration

with special reference to Bangladeshi labour migration to Singapore. Given the single (individual) and temporary nature of migration and its inherent links to the families and communities in the home country, there are pertinent questions to be raised as to why people tend to migrate inter-regionally for extended periods, leaving their families and community members behind, and what this single, temporary migration entails for the migrants and their families in the migration process. These are the two broad questions that guide this book.

More specifically, this book addresses the following questions: What are the forces that induce and perpetuate migration of labour from Bangladesh to Singapore? What are the policies that control the exit and entry of migrant workers and facilitate recruitment procedures in Singapore? Under what conditions do migrants work and live in Singapore? In other words, what is the nature of the social world which migrants create in Singapore? Apart from these issues, one of the obvious drivers of international migration is its potential for earnings—often called 'family remittances' or 'worker remittances'—which can have significant social and economic impacts on the lives of migrants, their families, and their communities of origin. This study, therefore, also addresses how migrants channel remittances to their families, how emigrant families use remittances, and the implication of these financial flows on the well-being of families in Bangladesh (Rahman and Lian 2012).

More specifically, we can identify two processes in Bangladeshi migration to Singapore: the *emigration process* and the *remittance process* (Fig. 1.1). The emigration process primarily concerns the motivations for migration, the migration policy framework under which the recruitment of labour takes place as well as the actual recruitment procedures, and the social worlds of migrants in Singapore. The

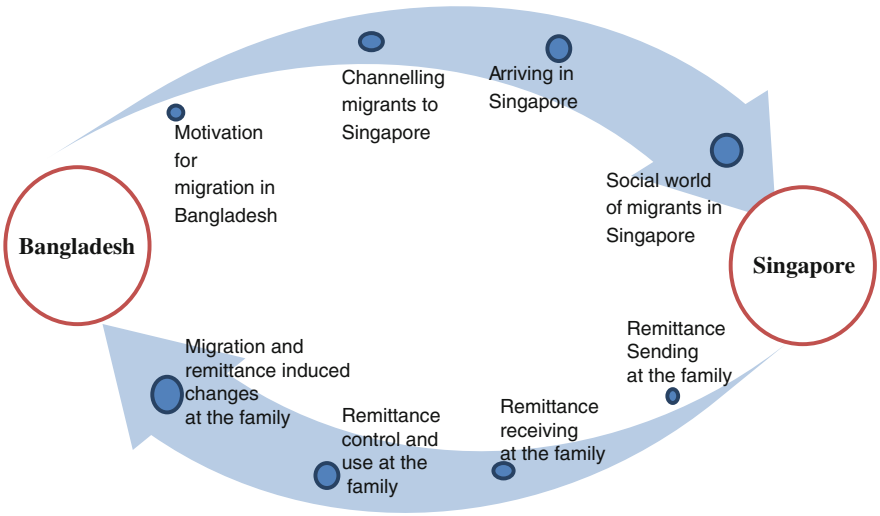

Fig. 1.1 Selected phases in the emigration and remittances processes

remittance process involves remittance sending, remittance receiving across gender lines, remittance use and control, and finally the implications of remittances on family dynamics in Bangladesh (Fig. 1.1). The migration decision is often not an expression of independent initiative but is shaped by the social and cultural environment in which migrants are brought up. This book explains how the migration decision is made at the family and *bari* level, and how social and cultural forces shape migration decisions. The potential migrants take up contractual employment in Singapore, and such contractual employment is informed by Singapore's migration policy. This migration policy sets the broader context for admitting and managing migrants in the host country, providing the legal and administrative tools to run the program. Recruitment is a selective process and involves a range of stakeholders in both sending and receiving countries. Concerning the receiving end, the book scrutinizes the major spheres of migrants' lives overseas—for example, working and living conditions, recruitment, healthcare, remittance transfers, and leisure activities. Concerning the sending end, the book describes and discusses remittance receiving, remittance use and control at the family level, and finally implications for family dynamics and development. I expand on these two processes later in this chapter.

Thus, this book takes a process-oriented approach of the Bangladeshi migration to Singapore. It argues that the South–South migration of labour takes place under certain strict rules and regulations throughout the global South, and that potential migrants become familiar with those rules and regulations either by means of collecting information from relatives and friends or by way of joining in the migration process. As we have noted, South–South migration is predominantly regional in terms of geography, temporary in duration and single in migratory category. As a result, an individual within such a migration stream is naturally compelled to form his material wealth and expand his familial affiliation in relation to his country of origin. The life of migrants in the South–South migration stream has a certain inevitable character: it starts with their joining a foreign labour market and ends the their stay being renewed, a story punctuated by back and forth travels between the home country and place of work to build up assets and family at home. This ineluctable character is the rationale for embracing a process-oriented approach to migration.

From a theoretical perspective, the recent decades' research on labour migration has been dominated by economic explanations. Indeed, econometric analysis has been so overwhelming in studies of migration that the very language of analysis tends to marginalize the social and cultural factors that cause and perpetuate migration, and which shape migration outcomes. This study seeks to debunk the myth that migration is purely the result of individual utilitarian calculations of costs and benefits; and it rejects the oversimplified explanations based on 'push-pull' models and one-sided flows that are inherent in such models. This study argues that past studies have not adequately analyzed the ways in which the migration decision is made by the participating groups, nor how it is shaped by various noneconomic forces. This research espouses the 'broad model of rational choice' (Olberg 1995; Zafirovski 1999), which conceives of rational choice in both utilitarian and

non-utilitarian terms. Rather than conceiving of migrants as purely economic actors responding to the economic benefits of overseas jobs, this research consider them to be social actors whose motivations for migration are wrought by social as well as economic goals.

The unit of analysis most often used to advance and test empirical questions and research hypotheses in migration studies is the *individual migrant*. Individual migrants are considered to be rational decision-makers, who respond to a cost–benefit analysis of moving versus not moving. Somewhat later, economists noticed that the family plays a pivotal role in agrarian/traditional societies, and argued that it is in fact the family that decides who will migrate, as a part of family strategy to diversity risk and generate capital. Thus, family is introduced as a unit of analysis for migration research, but still in economic terms (Stark 1991).

While individual and family are indeed of great importance as units of analysis, this research introduces the *bari* as another unit of analysis for micro-level research. *Bari* is a Bengali term, which denotes a group of families sharing the same courtyard. The members of the *bari* are generally blood related and belong to same lineage, mostly patrilineally. The reputation of a *bari* depends on the action, vocation and achievement of *bari* members. Members of a *bari* are mostly known to the outside world by the name of the *bari*. It is the responsibility of the families in the *bari* to support and uplift other families if any should lag behind in social and economic advancement at the *bari* level. However, this does not mean that within the *bari* there is no inter-family conflict or competition for scarce resources: there is indeed certain level of conflict and competition among the families, but this is often resolved by amicable negotiation between heads of families (Jahangir 1979; Wood 1994; Amin 1998). In analyzing migration from the *bari* perspective, this study does not challenge the significance of individual migrants and the family; rather, it seeks to add another unit in order to offer a meaningful analysis of migration behaviour in Bangladeshi society.

Linking Migration Causes to Migration Outcomes

The bulk of the research on migration has concerned itself with the question of why people migrate. As a result, the migration decision has come to be seen as nested within a broader set of social factors, family considerations, social networks, and political and economic conditions. This section appraises micro- and macro-level theories of international labour migration. The idea is not to evaluate these theories as such, but rather to observe what they say about decision-making, how they link the causes of migration to the outcomes of migration, and finally how they can be expanded to explain the complex and multifaceted nature of the contemporary migration of labour.

Migration processes are shaped by a range of interacting factors at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. At the macro-level, historical-structural approaches to labour migration describe broad patterns of movement with respect to geographic

areas and population aggregates. Historical-structural theorists link migration to the macro-organization of socioeconomic relations, the geographic division of labour, and the political mechanisms of power and domination (for details, see Piore 1979; Swanson 1979; Portes and Walton 1981). The structural school fitted migration into most of the major historical theorizations of underdevelopment, namely unequal development, dependency theory, centre-periphery theory, and world-system theory. Analysis focused either on the developmental impact of migration in the national economy, or on global theorization—the historical position of migrants in the international economy. Historical-structural theorists argue that since political power is unequally distributed across nations, the expansion of global capitalism acts to perpetuate inequalities and reinforce a stratified economic order which provokes migration (for details, see Amankwaa 1995; Skeldon 1997; Massey et al. 1998).

For example, Amin's (1974) work explores the underdevelopment of the West African interior as a consequence of a 'structural' economic orientation to the requirements of metropolitan capital. Amin (1974: 85) begins by asking why capital does not go to labour in order to establish equilibrium, material inputs permitting, and why the factors of production are poorly distributed at the outset of neoclassical analysis. In Amin's view, the coastward migration of Africans to work was an upsetting, non-equilibrating imposition on the indigenous West African economy. The argument is that, rather than experiencing an inexorable progression towards modernization, poor countries in reality are trapped by their disadvantaged position within an unequal geopolitical structure, which perpetuates their poverty and creates 'a reserve army of cheap labor'. Labour migration is viewed as detrimental for the sending countries. This line of historical-structural thinking became known as dependency theory.

The chief exponent of another line of historical-structural theory was Wallerstein (1974), who undertook a comprehensive analysis of the global expansion of the capitalist system from the sixteenth century onwards. He sought to reconstruct the historical processes by which unequal political/economic structures were created and extended throughout the world, and the mechanisms by which non-capitalist or precapitalist regions were incorporated into the global market economy. He classified countries according to the degree of their dependency on the dominant capitalist powers, which he termed 'core' nations. Peripheral nations were the most dependent, whereas 'semi-peripheral' countries were somewhat wealthier. This line of thought eventually became known as 'world systems theory' (Portes and Walton 1981).

Another conceptual framework that applies general social system theory to the phenomenon of international migration starts with the fundamental relation between power and prestige in a society (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1983). On such a view, international migration in essence constitutes an "interaction between societal systems geared to transfer tensions and thus balancing power and prestige" (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973: 11–14, cited in Faist 2000: 49) Following Hoffmann-Nowotny (1973), Thomas Faist notes that "structural tensions arise from inequalities and status inconsistencies in the emigration country" (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973: 11–14, cited

in Faist 2000: 49). Migration is seen as a result of an imbalance between power and status and people respond to structural tensions either by giving up the social position held or emigrating to a country where status aspirations can be attained. This research identifies social status factor as a cause of migration but argues that individuals choose to emigrate to enhance their absolute status or relative status in relation to some reference group in their community of origin through international migration and remittances.

There are two primary problems with structuralist theories of migration. First, these theories lose sight of migrants themselves as decision-makers who choose how to respond to these structuralist changes (Pedraza 1991: 307). Second, traditional structuralist theories do not explain the association between economies and peasant relations that may sustain the migrant flow (Radcliffe 1991: 134). The present study recognizes that structural forces have an overriding influence in determining the distribution of economic opportunities in a developing country like Bangladesh, and hence in shaping the macro patterns of migration. Village-level researches conducted in Third World contexts (Cardona and Simmons 1975; Titus 1978; Hugo 1981; Pertierra 1992; Kurien 1994) confirm that structural factors have considerable importance in causing migration. However, these studies also suggest that if one is to understand the migration process, especially the relevant motivational factors, it is important to have an appreciation of the social and cultural contexts within which these forces operate and are perceived by the people involved.

The neoclassical economic tradition has dominated migration studies for many years. The neoclassical macroeconomic model assumes that the international migration of workers is caused by differences in wage rates between countries (Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969; Todaro and Maruszko 1987; Taylor 1995; Massey et al. 1998). Associated with this neoclassical macroeconomic model is a neoclassical microeconomic model of individual choice (Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1976; Todaro and Maruszko 1987; Massey et al. 1998), which views international labour migration as an individual decision for expected income maximization. Contrary to the pure neoclassical theory, migration is determined by expected rather than actual earnings differentials. Neoclassical macro and micro theories, which are mainly concerned with permanent labour migration, do not adequately address temporary labour migration.

Target income theory makes some fresh proposals to explain aspects of temporary labour migration (Berg 1961; Hill 1987; Aly and Shields 1996; Lindstrom 1996). The theory assumes that individuals do not want to leave their places of origin, but they are forced to emigrate because of limited opportunities at home. However, they will come back as soon as their earnings reach to a particular savings targets. Thus, migrants enter a host country as target earners. When they have saved or remitted money to fulfil that target, they return to their home community (Byerlee 1974; Lindstrom and Lauster 2001). However, recent trends in international labour migration reveal that migrants are rarely inclined to return home after their initial stay (Battistella 2014).

Thus, the neoclassical economic perspective has led analysts to focus almost exclusively on economic disparities between countries, seen as being evaluated by rational actors seeking to maximize utility. The inadequacies of the explanations issuing from the major economic theories have raised concerns among migration scholars worldwide:

> Standard economic models have a difficult time explaining a variety of commonplace observations in the post-industrial world, for instance, whereas one less developed country may have a high rate of emigration its similarly underdeveloped neighbour may not; migrants do not always go to places where wages are highest; migration often ceases before wage disparities disappear; migration at times occurs in the absence of wage disparities. (Massey et al. 1998: 8)

Straubhaar (1988) criticizes the traditional neoclassical model for not addressing the additional motives that influence migrants' decision-making processes, especially concerning the economic costs of migration. The initial costs of migrating may exceed an individual's financial limits, either on his own resources or by borrowing—indeed, this is more or less the case for most migrants from Bangladesh and other countries in South Asia (Appleyard 1998). Neoclassical theory predicts that international migration should decrease when the earning differential between two countries shrinks or host country is in economic crisis. However, the movement of Bangladeshi migrants did not shrink during the Asian financial crisis of 1997, and the flow of migration did not stop over time (Abdullah and Chan 2000; Rahman 2000).

Recently, the 'new economics of labour migration' has generated fresh hypotheses to complement the neoclassical economic approach (Stark and Levhari 1982; Stark 1991). In contrast to neoclassical economic theory, the new economics of migration focuses on the family as the relevant decision-making unit and it posits migration as a response to income risk and to failures in a variety of markets, for instance, insurance, future, credit, and capital markets (Massey et al. 1993, 1998). The new economic model recognizes that in the developing countries, a variety of markets are often imperfect and in order to self-insure against risks to income, production, and property, or to gain access to capital, families send one or more members to foreign labour markets for work (for details see, Massey et al. 1993).

The 'new economics of migration' integrates migration decision-making with remittance behaviour, which has been previously treated separately in the migration literature (for details see, Massey et al. 1994). The integration of migration motivation with remittance behaviour is an important contribution of this model, although it has been done in economic term. While the hypotheses derived from the new economics of migration provide insight into the complexities of labour migration, they lag considerably behind in explaining some of the features of contemporary migration in Asia. For instance, the theorists of new economics do not sufficiently address the rising financial cost of labour migration. It has been found that potential migrants sell or mortgage cultivable land and borrow large amounts of money from moneylenders, putting their families left behind under severe risk. Although theorists of the new economics conceive labour migration as

a risk-minimizing strategy, in reality migrants commence their overseas journeys by shouldering a high risk of damaging the economic base of their families back home (Abdullah 1996; Abella 1997; Abdullah and Chan 2000; Ishida and Hassan 2000; Rahman 2003; Ullah et al. 2015).

Thus, the available micro-level studies have primarily underlined the economic motives of migration. It has been observed that regardless of risky migration procedures, the huge financial cost, the hazardous working conditions, and the low economic returns, potential migrants are motivated to emigrate for work. For such migration ventures, loans are taken on which can be repaid only at great effort, land is sold, information on the destination end is ignored, and goals are risked. This is not to deny the existence of poverty in Bangladesh, but rather to point out that poverty alone cannot convincingly account for the migration venture. To suggest that worsening economic deprivation leads automatically to increased migration, and that international migration is a response to the international wage differentials, seems simplistic. This research takes up a broader rational choice approach that views rational choice in both economic and non-economic terms, thus giving more scope to explain the complex and multifaceted nature of migration behaviour.

Conceptualizing Migration as a Social Process

My approach to Bangladeshi migration to Singapore builds on two powerful concepts in migration studies: the 'migration process' (Castles and Miller 2009) and 'becoming a migrant' (Belanger and Wang 2013). The migration process, according to Castles and Miller, "sums up the complex sets of factors and interactions which lead to international migration and influence its course" (Castles and Miller 2009: 21). Daniele Belanger and Hong-zen Wang note that the study of the migration process can enhance our understanding of various migration outcomes, primarily by reference to the receiving countries' experiences and policy environments (Belanger and Wang 2013: 33–34). On the other hand, an inquiry into migration *flows* would focus on how migrants experience emigration, including recruitment, training, and leaving one's country of origin—the process that Daniele Belanger and Hong-zen Wang refer to as 'becoming a migrant' (Belanger and Wang 2013: 33). Thus, the essential focus of the notion of 'becoming a migrant' is the pivotal role played by the process of emigration, with reference to how the process of 'becoming a migrant' in the sending country may affect the experience in the receiving country. This book embraces both concepts in order to provide a deeper understanding of Bangladeshi migration to Singapore.

This book organizes its core research themes into six broad categories, which it calls 'spheres of migration' because of their powerful role in shaping the migration experience: (i) migration policy, (ii) migration decision-making, (iii) recruitment, (iv) the social world of migrants on foreign soil, (v) remittances, and (vi) development dynamics in migrant families and *baris*. While dealing with various spheres

of labour migration, the chapters of this book attempt to bring out the complexity and the multifarious nature of labour migration in the Asia–Asia migration context.

Bangladeshi migration to Singapore is not a new phenomenon; Bangladeshis have been coming to Singapore for work since the late 1980s. However, the flow of Bangladeshi labour has increased significantly since the early 1990s. At present there might be between 90,000 and 120,000 Bangladeshi migrants working in the country. Nor is Bangladeshi migration to Singapore is a one–off event; migrant flows have remained broadly steady over the decades. Figure 1.2 presents Bangladeshi labour migration to Singapore as a process linking family-based micro-level motivations for migration and meso-level causes and constraints, and outlining how these elements are related to each other (for the sake of simplicity, however, many potential feedback linkages are omitted from the figure). The figure also shows how the potential benefits of migration in the forms of remittances are connected to their families. I have divided the conceptual discussions into three parts—factors affecting migration motivation; factors inducing migration occurrence; and actual migration. By presenting migration motivation, migration occurrence, and actual migration in three different phases, I make the point that the social, cultural, and economic forces produce more potential migrants than the actual number of migrants, and thus there is always a group of would-be emigrants waiting in the lengthening queue to emigrate, and sustaining the flows over time.

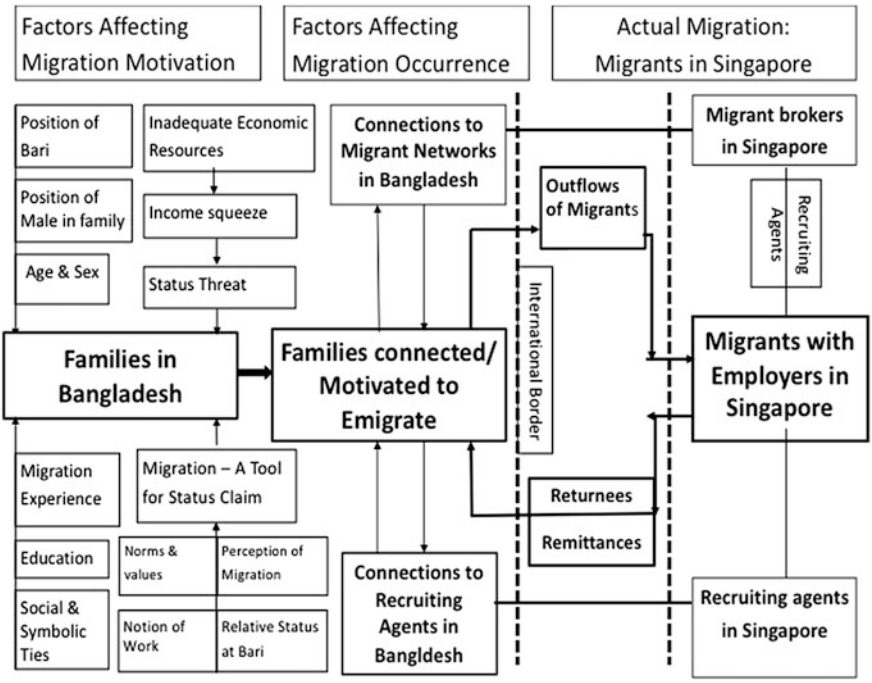

Fig. 1.2 Conceptualizing temporary migration of labour as a social process

While migration motivation, migration occurrence, and actual migration are presented in three different phases in the figure, in reality they overlap and should be seen as an integral part of the migration process. In the following discussions I provide a brief description of each of the major components of the model.

Broadly, the figure illustrates the factors that affect migration motivation. It illustrates how, on the one hand, various socio-cultural elements contribute to the perception of international migration as a highly valued tool for 'status claims',[2] and, on the other, how inadequate economic resources threaten the social status of the family. The figure shows that inadequate economic resources squeeze the family's income and thus threatens its social position. And this is not an unusual case: indeed, in many developing countries a family's social position can come under pressure from an income squeeze. The research does not predict that a 'status threat' automatically leads to the decision to migrate. Rather, the figure suggests that the motivation for migration is augmented by the socio-cultural forces that offer an avenue to reinforce social status through international migration. If a family's other characteristics favour migration, the family will finally be motivated to emigrate. Second, the figure explains how meso-level factors facilitate the family's migration motivation turning into an actual migration occurrence. Here, the migration industry[3] in both countries—Singapore and Bangladesh—comes to play a vital role in materializing the migration dreams of potential migrants. Considering the importance of migrant networks[4] and manpower recruiting agencies, the study shows the role of these two facilitators in the migration process. Finally, the figure shows the integration of migration motivation, migrants' remittance behaviour, and families' use of remittances.

Family is placed at the centre of the decision-making unit in the figure, although the role of other important social units, notably the *bari* (a collection of families), is also introduced in this research. In a traditional society, the principle 'for the sake of the family' or 'all in the family' mobilizes family members to work towards common interests. A recent development in the literature is the emphasis on family and family strategies as crucial elements in migration decisions (Wood 1981; Harbison 1981; Gardner 1995; Hugo 1998). Using family as the unit of analysis fits with anthropological literature more generally (Epstein 1973; Krokfors 1995). Hugo (1998: 143) argues that the expansion of temporary movement in developing countries cannot be explained in terms of conventional classical and neoclassical

[2]Having one's status claim accepted by others confers status honour, which is critically important not only for dignity but also for one's life chances. Status claims are generally made with statements, behaviors, or symbols that indicate to others one's position in a status hierarchy (Pellerin and Stearns 2001). Status claims are contextual in nature.

[3]The term 'migration industry' encompasses a wide range of actors; this study looks at two facilitators in particular—the migrant network and manpower 'recruiting agent'. A detailed discussion is provided in Chap. 5.

[4]Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin (Massey et al. 1993).

economic theory, but is more readily understood from the family perspective. However, in Bangladeshi society, it is not the family but the *bari* that usually represents a unit of social status. While there can be intra-*bari* competition for scarce resources (just as within extended families), there is also an enormous amount of cooperation and pride among *bari* members for social advancement and social recognition. In this emphasis on migrants, their families and *baris*, macro-level factors have not been abandoned. On the contrary, the thrust has been to study the interplay of socio-cultural structure, family strategies, and migration decision-making at the *bari* level. The literature has analyzed family strategies according to four dimensions: accessibility to land (Wood 1981), risk diversification (Stark 1984, 1991; Stark and Bloom 1985), relative deprivation and social stratification (Stark 1991), and social networks (MacDonald and Macdonald 1974; Mines 1984; Taylor 1986; Massey et al. 1987). This study focuses particularly on two major dimensions: relative status and social networks, and illustrates them from a *bari* perspective.

An individual and family's demographic and socio-cultural characteristics are differentiating factors in migration behaviour. As shown in the figure, this broad category includes age, sex, education, occupation, family's socio-political status, migration experience or knowledge about migration, kinship ties, and social and economic capital of family. These variables, some with higher and some with lower propensities to move, help to explain why certain areas have higher migration rates than others. Socio-cultural elements come to influence families at different levels. For example, 'perception of international migration' and 'village norms and values' related to migration induce migration largely at the community level, while 'relative status' and 'notion of work' influence migration predominantly at the *bari* level.

Finally, in actual migration, I present the role of recruiting agencies and migrant brokers in the migration process. Singapore promotes a favourable temporary migration environment through a well-formulated recruitment policy. This recruitment policy lays down various rules and regulations for employing foreign workers in Singapore. Bangladesh has a favourable emigration policy that encourages male citizens to emigrate for employment. While both governments create favourable environments for manpower movement, the actual work is carried out by various meso-level factors like migrant brokers and recruiting agencies in both countries. The role of recruiting agents, brokers, and migrant networks is vital: without them, few migrants would have the information or contacts needed for successful migration to Singapore. When migrants finally arrive in Singapore, they live and work for a few years under particular employers. Migrants create their own social world in Singapore; they visit their friends and kinship members, involve themselves in leisure activities, and celebrate their national and cultural festivals. Since most migrants are Muslims, many pray regularly and join in religious events, creating a social and religious world distinct from the locals and from other migrant groups.

While most migrants create their own social world during their period of sojourn, they know that their migration is temporary in nature and that there is no way to shift their status in Singapore from temporary to permanent with increased

rights and privileges. As a result, migrants identify themselves in relation to their origin countries and maintain sustained exchanges. Remittance is the most important, visible link between migrants and their families. Migrants' earnings in Singapore are saved and remitted to their families in Bangladesh. The patterns of remittances and its implications on families, especially the empowerment of family members left behind, are an integral part of the migration process. Therefore, this study connects migration decision-making to migrants' remittance behaviour and families' remittance uses. Since migration is a response to a status threat, migrants are expected to keep contact with their families in the origin community by sending remittances, and often investing in the area in order to retain and improve their family position in the home community. These are some of the implications of migration and remittances that this book addresses.

Researching Bangladeshi Migration

Over the past four decades, Bangladesh has evolved into an important country of emigration. Since the early 1970s, Bangladesh has experienced large-scale migration of mostly unskilled migrants to the oil-rich Middle East countries. In the late 1980s, the newly industrialized countries in East and Southeast Asia turned into a new migration destination for Bangladeshi migrants. Although a large number of Bangladeshi migrants have been travelling to destinations in greater Asia (the Middle East and East and Southeast Asia), many enterprising Bangladeshis also migrate to Western Europe, North America, and Oceania for permanent settlement. Bangladeshi migration to the developed countries is not recorded in the official data because such migration is not considered labour migration. As a result, official statistics does not reflect outflows of Bangladeshi migration to the West. It is assumed that there are several million people of Bangladesh origin currently living in the West.

The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET; a government body in Bangladesh) is in charge of issuing clearance for labour migration out of Bangladesh. According to BMET estimates, the total cumulative figure for Bangladeshi documented migrants overseas between 1976 and 2015 was approximately 8 million, and for Singapore alone it was over half a million.[5] On average, around 200,000 Bangladeshis have annually migrated for temporary employment overseas since the early 1990s. However, this is official data as provided by BMET. People who migrated without informing government organizations are not recorded in the system. Therefore, the actual number of migrants could be higher than the officially recorded number; and the same is true for remittances. According to

[5]This cumulative figure comes from BMET, the official body responsible for keeping records of authorized migrant workers. However, it does not keep records for returning migrants. Retrieved in May 2015. http://www.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/viewStatReport.action?reportnumber=20.

official data, Bangladesh received around US$ 91 billion as remittances from migrant populations overseas between 1976 and 2015.[6] It is believed that actual remittances could be much higher than recorded remittances, because many migrants had remitted through informal channels such as *hundi* before the penetration of markets by MTOs (money transfer operators) such as Western Union and MoneyGram in the early 2000s (Rahman and Yeoh 2008).

In what follows I review the literature on Bangladeshi labour migration. The purpose of this literature review is to locate the under-researched areas, and thus highlight the contribution that this book attempts to make to our understanding of Bangladeshi labour migration. Research on permanent migration (Carey and Shukur 1985; Gardner 1995; Knights 1996; Eade 1997; Kabeer 2000; Blackledge 2001; Khanum 2001; Dale et al. 2002; Gillan 2002; Baluja 2003; Kibria 2008), refugee migration (Khondker 1995; Abrar 2000), and trafficking (Blanchet 2002) has a produced considerable literature in recent years. However, research on temporary labour migration has remained largely inadequate. The literature on labour migration deals broadly with the consequences of migration for Bangladesh (Haque 1984; Hossain 1986; Osmani 1986; Abdul-Aziz 2001; Mahmood 1991, 1992, 1994, 1998; Ahmed 1998; Hadi 2001; Siddiqui 2001). Some research has also focused on women and migration and discussed gender-differentiated patterns of migration (Rahman and Belanger 2012; Belanger and Rahman 2013; Ullah 2013; Rahman 2013).

Haque (1984) is one of the pioneer researchers on labour migration in Bangladesh. Haque explains Bangladeshi labour migration to the Middle East from a structural perspective. He identifies the patterns of labour migration and critically examines some of the hypotheses concerning the positive implications for the labour sending society. He reports that the hypotheses of positive effects of labour export on underdeveloped countries are shown to be invalid once concrete situations are analyzed. His analysis reveals that labour migration contributes to continued exploitation. Haque links labour migration to the macro-organization of socio-economic relations, the geographic division of labour, and the political mechanisms of power and domination. Family and village-level research conducted in the Third World context (Amin 1974; Titus 1978; Cardona and Simmons 1975; Hugo 1981; Pertierra 1992) confirm that structural factors are important in causing individuals and groups to migrate. However, it must be pointed out that to understand the migration process, it is important to have an appreciation of the social and cultural contexts within which these forces work and are perceived by the people involved.

Islam examines the impact of remittance money on household expenses in Bangladesh (Islam 1988, 1991, 1995). Hossain (1986) examines the effects of labour migration on the class structure of rural Bangladesh: the higher financial cost of migration to Middle East countries led him to conclude that Middle East migration was confined to the landed classes in Bangladesh. He reports that

[6]Ibid.

migration to the Middle East was confined to those segments of the population who have education, skills, wealth, and a substantial amount of land. He shows how, through migration, the wealthier landowning class in the rural areas has consolidated and strengthened its traditional position. His findings suggest that emigration, in reality, has functioned as a mechanism to reinforce the age-old class structure of rural Bangladesh.

Other important impact studies were carried out in the late 1980s. For example, Osmani (1986) determined the economic and non-economic impact of labour migration at the micro level. Mahmood (1991) examined the impact of international labour migration at macro level, and in another work (1992) demonstrated the problems and prospects of reabsorbing the returning migrants into the national economy. Based on a sample survey on a selected number of migrants who had returned from the Middle East, the study analyzed the experiences of these migrants during the preparatory period, their stay abroad, and the nature of their readjustment and re-assimilation (economic sphere) on return. Work on permanent migration in relation to the home country was also carried out side by side with the work on labour migration. For example, Gardner's (1995) work on permanent Bangladeshi migration to London dealt with *Londonis* (Bangladeshis who live in London), their villages in Bangladesh (mainly from greater Sylhet district), and the ways in which life there has been altered.

Gardner focused on the impact of *Londoni* migration on village life in Bangladesh. Based on an ethnographical village study, she showed the increasing dominance and importance of those overseas in village life. Rather than economic changes, her focus was on the qualitative shifts in perception and outlook of local people, the ways in which social institutions have changed relationships between groups and individuals, and the new culture of migration. In subsequent work, Gardner (1992) showed that migration has not led to economic development in the sending area; instead it has prompted 'migration mania'—a situation where foreign countries are invested in and glorified to the detriment of the homeland. And in further work (1995), she illustrated the local images of home and abroad in Bangladesh. She reported that while the 'homeland' connotes spirituality and religiosity, 'abroad' is linked to material bounty and economic transformation, and local desires have become centred on travel abroad as the only route to material prosperity. Her works enrich our anthropological understanding of the effects of permanent migration on the sending region.

Although Gardner dealt with permanent migration and its impact on the village life, her work provides details about the perception of overseas migration by villagers. The concepts she developed (for example, *desh*, *bidesh*, migration mania) are relevant for understanding temporary migration as well. In the mid-1990s, clandestine Bangladeshi migration to Europe caught the attention of some European scholars. For example, Knights (1996) studied Bangladeshi migration to Italy. The background to her work was the rapidly changing geopolitical and economic context, and migration patterns in Europe. Knights explored the structure and dynamics of the Bangladeshi migratory network based on prolonged observation of the community in Rome. The first set of findings reveals emigration to be a

nationwide phenomenon, mainly affecting educated migrants who adopt unauthorized strategies to enter Italy. The second set of findings reveals a vibrant covert economy functioning independently of the Italian labour market.

King and Knights (1994) argued that rather than being a result of labour-demand pull forces from Italy, Bangladeshi emigration to Italy developed as a form of migratory opportunism provoked by basic push forces. Both of these works also confirm the existence of a perception of overseas migration (as pointed by Gardner 1995) that contributes to the viability of the migration alternative. After the Gulf War, labour migration to Southeast Asian countries, especially to Malaysia, increased dramatically. In her study of Bangladeshi workers in the Malaysian textile industry, Rudnick (1996) sketches the conditions of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia in general. She reports that most of the migrants would not have come to Malaysia, if they had known earlier about the actual payments and working conditions. She concludes that negative image of immigrant workers prevalent in Malaysian society affects the well-being of the foreign workers, as they are often viewed with distrust and contempt.

Abdul-Aziz (2001) elaborates on the factors that have led to the positioning of workers from Bangladesh in Malaysia. He concludes with a set of recommendations for the authorities in Bangladesh. Other work carried out by Ishida and Hassan (2000) on Bangladeshi labour migration to Malaysia shows why temporary migrants extend their stays in Malaysia. They document that the lower real remittances fall below the expected amounts, and the lower real wages are, compared with passage and mediation fees, the more Bangladeshi workers will wish to extend their stay. The findings suggest that if future Bangladeshi migrant workers to Malaysia have correct information about income levels and living expenses in Malaysia, and mediation and passage fees become cheaper, the likelihood of their intending to extend their stays will be much lower. While these works on Malaysia provide some insights into aspects of Bangladeshi temporary migration, they neither illuminate the motivational aspect of migration, nor link the host and home country, to offer a broader understanding of Bangladeshi migration.

Involuntary migration from Bangladesh has also caught the attention of researchers. Khondker (1995) addresses this topic in detail. Khondker examines the relationship between the great November cyclone of 1970, and the subsequent civil war, which led to one of the largest (temporary) population displacements in history. He traces the history of involuntary migration in this region, resulting from political turmoil, communal violence, and civil war, and discusses the problems of the refugees. The civil war of 1971 displaced about 9 million people, who took refugee in neighbouring India. This was perhaps the largest incidence of forced migration resulting from a civil war in human history. He paid special attention to the political underpinnings of the problem of refugees in the Indian subcontinent, and his work provides a detailed politico-economic background to the crisis that led to this massive migration. Finally, he analyzed the impact of forced migration and population displacement on the political process in Bangladesh.

For the mid-1990s, we can again find some studies on Bangladeshi labour migration. For example, Islam (1988, 1995) examines the impact of international

labour migration on Bangladesh. Islam identified some of the impacts of overseas migration at both the macro and micro levels. He reports that migration affects agrarian production relations, consumerism, employment patterns, infrastructure development, late marriage, infant mortality rate, and pseudo-religious ceremonies in the Bangladeshi context. A large number of migrant workers in Asia were affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Ahmed (1998) addresses the impact of the 1997 financial crisis on Bangladeshi labour migration, offering some valuable insights relevant to macro policy issues. In the late 1990s, some scholars addressed unauthorized migration from Bangladesh. For example, Mahmood (1998) explored the process through which unauthorized migration begins and is perpetuated over time. He explains the major stages and actors involved in Bangladeshi unauthorized migration to East and Southeast Asia.

Ahmed examines legal regime for undocumented migrant workers and reports the extent to which an equitable allocation of state responsibility is feasible in the context of undocumented labour migration in the region (Ahmed 2000). Siddiqui (2001) touches some of the aspects of female labour migration from Bangladesh. However, Dannecker (2004, 2005, 2009) addresses the experience of female Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia and reviews the implications for development at the individual and family level. Blanchet's (2002) recent work on the condition of Bangladeshi female migrants in India and Middle East has been a benchmark in the documentation of women labour migration and occurrences of trafficking. Returnees' narratives constituted the richest data of the research. In all, 496 case histories of migrant women were recorded. Each of the case studies revealed a story of exploitation and vulnerability of female migrants. The study concluded by recommending that the ban on migrating unskilled women labour to the Middle East be lifted, as it neither prevented women from migrating nor protected their rights. She suggests that labour migration be accepted as a woman's right. Alongside international migration, we can see some attempts to examine internal migration as well (Faraizi 1993; Afsar 2000; Kuhn 1999, 2003). These studies deal with rural–urban migration in detail.

Recent research by the prolific migration scholar AKM Ahsan Ullah has highlighted different aspects of the experience of Bangladeshi migrants overseas (Ullah 2010, 2016; Ullah and Rahman 2012; Ullah and Panday 2007). Ullah (2010) investigated the factors that help determine the decisions of overseas migrant workers to stay on in their foreign posts despite migration outcomes that were off-tangent with their expectations. With existing migration theories, he developed an improved theoretical model of migration. While decisions to work overseas are often based on expectations and promises of better jobs, opportunities, economic gains, and, eventually, a better future, such assumptions may not always be realized. Focusing on the question of why migrants, despite not realizing their earlier aspirations, continue to remain as migrants rather than return home, Ullah provides a unified understanding of the rationalization of migration decision making (Ullah 2010). On human rights, safety, and identity, Ullah (2014) delved into longstanding historical tensions in the MENA region that contribute to the escalation of the region's refugee situation. He captured current debates about the Arab Uprising that

have had profound impacts on the lives of the refugee and migrant population. Ullah and Huque (2014) demonstrate that discrimination and stigmatization have had profound impacts on the livelihood patterns of Asian refugee and migrant population living with HIV/AIDS in North America. The extent to which they suffer and succumb to irrational and risky behaviour is largely unknown. The authors reveal the dynamics that influence the choices, behaviors, and lifestyles of the infected immigrants and refugees.

Ullah (2013) further developed a theoretical model of exposure to remittances to argue that women constitute around half of the total international migration flows in today's world; however, the amount of the remittance that they are exposed to is considerably lower than that of males. This means that although females remit a higher proportion of their income than men, they enjoy less 'exposure to remittances' than men (Ullah 2013). There has been a growing recognition of the diaspora's contribution to the economic development of their countries of origin; by remitting money, the diaspora provides an infusion of capital and external reserves which are especially needed by developing countries (Ullah 2012). Ullah further argues that as time passes the linkage erodes: the general assumption is that the diasporic community transfers less money than economic migrants (Ullah 2012). The fact that migrant workers are often powerless, unprotected by national laws, reveals new truths about migrant workers and their increased significance as economic and political players (Ullah 2015). Without doubt, this powerlessness has to do with the perilous journey they undertake in order seek opportunities, and as a result they fall victim to tragedies (such as the ongoing tragedies that take place in the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert, killing many young aspiring migrants and leaving many others struggling for their lives in African countries' hospitals) (Ullah 2008; Ullah et al. 2015).

The preceding review, which has necessarily been brief, but nevertheless can claim to be broadly comprehensive, has not revealed any studies specifically on the causes of labour migration. It is, therefore, obvious that we know little about the factors that induce labour migration at the family, *bari*, and community level. There have been hardly any attempts to incorporate migration motivation into studies of migration occurrence, and thus to offer an integrated explanation of labour migration by linking both ends—the sending and receiving countries. Although *bari* carry huge weight in Bangladeshi society, the *bari* perspective on migration research has been largely ignored. The paramount influence of social and cultural forces is often overshadowed by economic analysis. There are some impact studies; but these studies have not adequately focused on the outcome of migration for migrants and their families by using data from both ends. By focusing on Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore, their families and *baris* in Bangladesh, and viewing migration as a social process, this study attempts to fill the gap in the scholarship.

Research Methodology

Research efforts are usually confined to studying the international migration of labour either at the sending or at the receiving end. Studies confined to receiving countries look only at those who have chosen to migrate, and such studies by themselves are insufficient to explain the causes and implications of migration for migrants and their families in the sending society. Surveys limited to sending countries, on the other hand, may include migrant families and non-migrant families and their communities, but exclude those who have actually migrated. Such studies cannot by themselves explain individual migrants and their experiences in the migration process. Faced with such methodological shortcomings in the migration research, this book takes a relatively new methodological approach to the international migration of labour by pursuing mixed-methods, two-way fieldwork, multi-site fieldwork, and multi-level data-collection techniques.

Figure 1.3 presents the sources, approaches and techniques, and means of primary data collection. The sources of primary data collection are diverse and include migrants, their families, and their *baris*, non-migrant families, recruiting agencies, migrant brokers at home and abroad, and migrant organizations. Approaches to primary data collection include mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative methods), two-way fieldwork (in Singapore and Bangladesh), multi-site research (different research sites in Bangladesh and Singapore), and multi-level research (e.g., individual migrants, families, and *baris*). Research techniques involve surveys, interviews, case studies, and focus-group discussions. The means of data collection was primarily face-to-face meetings. This selective and incisive approach to migration research offers much-needed insights into Bangladeshi migration to Singapore.

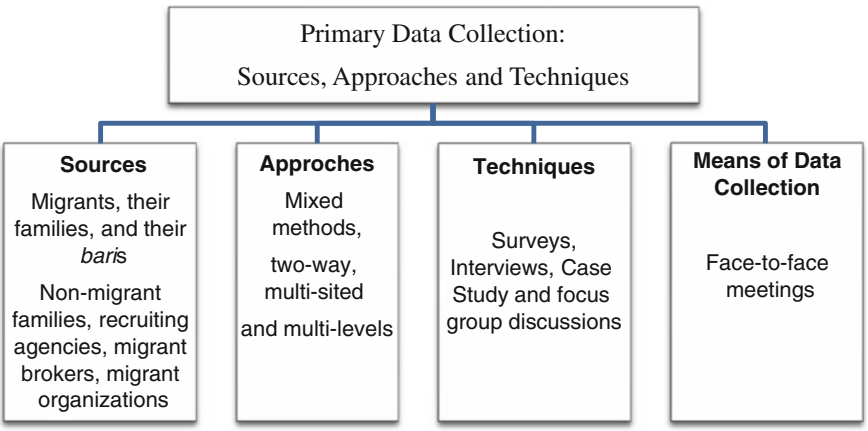

Fig. 1.3 Primary data collection strategy

This book captures the key overarching ideas that have emerged from my research on Bangladeshi migration since the late 1990s. I have been working on Bangladeshi migration to Singapore since my graduate education in the late 1990s. I have conducted a number of fieldworks on Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore and Bangladesh, and here I use key findings from the earlier fieldworks. However, I have also collected new data on Bangladesh migrants in Singapore and their families in Bangladesh between 2009 and 2010 and between 2014 and 2015. In addition to the primary data, I use survey data collected through the first ever nationally representative migrant household survey in Bangladesh by IOM and DFID in 2013. This survey included 9961 migrant households in the country.

Fieldwork in Singapore

I have conducted a number of fieldworks on Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore. In 2000, I interviewed 126 migrants to examine their socio-economic experiences. The detailed interviews were followed by a brief questionnaire survey to examine the financial costs and benefits of migration, conducted among departing migrants and those staying on between 2000 and 2004. I interviewed 259 migrants during this second phase of data collection. In 2009, I conducted a survey of 100 Bangladeshi workers with a focus on their social life and remittance behaviour in Singapore. A questionnaire with both structured and unstructured questions was constructed. The questionnaire asked for information on the socio-economic characteristics of migrants, their means of meeting the financial cost of migration, accommodation, salary, expenditures, use of time, and access to migrant networks. Each questionnaire took about half an hour to be filled out. Interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings. I used non-probability sampling—quota and purposive sampling. Furthermore, this was a cross-sectional study: interviews were carried out by visiting migrants' dormitories situated in major foreign workers' residential areas, for example, Little India, Geylang road, Joo Chiat road, Jurong West, and Boon Lay. After interviewing migrants, I interviewed selected intermediaries, money traders, and Bangladeshi shop-owners, to understand the nature of the involvement of various actors in the migration process, and their particular interests. Migrant workers were interviewed in their own language. In general, migrants came forward to divulge information of their own.

Some Bangladeshi migrants compose poetry during their stay in Singapore. The migrant poetry documents their everyday life in Singapore and captures their aspirations, emotions, and concerns in the migration process. I use the migrant poetry to illustrate some of the views of migrants in their own words. Migrant poetry is composed in their mother tongue, Bengali. Therefore, it truly represents their own feelings about their migration experiences and their aspirations revolving around their families left behind. I here use English translation of pertinent verses from selected poems to illustrate some of the social aspects of migration and shed light on its psychological aspects.

Fieldwork in Bangladesh

Labour migration involves individuals making decisions in specific cultural, economic, and social environments, and therefore is profoundly influenced not only by the constraints imposed by those environments but also by the perceptions, attitudes, opinions, and values of those individuals. Community-level information is effective for analysis of the determinants and consequences of labour migration, particularly in low-income countries like Bangladesh, as the social *effects* of behavioural decisions made by migrants or families can only be examined at the level of the community. Such meso-level data (village level) help to reduce the gulf between the micro and macro paradigms. Fieldwork in Singapore suggested that migration to Singapore was confined to several districts in Bangladesh. These migration-specific districts are mainly Tangail, Munshiganj, Comilla, Dhaka, Gazipur, and Mymensingh. At the time of participant interviews in Singapore, I gathered basic information on a few districts from the respondents.

As regards site selection in Bangladesh, I mainly visited two districts, Munshiganj and Tangail. In accordance with my research interests, I had to find two villages with high incidences of emigration to Singapore. For a variety of practical reasons, I decided to conduct research in the villages of Hoglakandi and Gurail, in Munshiganj and Tangail districts respectively. Each village had a total population of a few thousand and a migration population of several hundred. In general, Hoglakandi and Gurail have all the characteristics of a typical village in Bangladesh. Being a Bangladeshi, I also used prior knowledge about Bangladeshi villages to select the village and to build a good rapport with the villagers. The Gurail village study was designed to examine the significance of the social and cultural context in migration motivation, and Hoglakandi village was used to investigate the effects of migration on development. However, the village studies were complementary to each other. For the survey I used a questionnaire with both structured and unstructured questions. Essentially, this is a study of migration at the level of individuals and families, situated within a broader structural context. Therefore, the research placed emphasis on the interviews with individual migrants, female members (especially wives of returnees), and heads of families, as it seemed that this would provide insight into the complexities of the migration process. The quality and richness of data obtained through this approach provides analytical insights into migration motivations, the social process of migration, and the effects of migration.

In 2009, I went to Tangail to interview 50 selected migrant families. The households were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (i) they must have male migrants working in Singapore, (ii) their male migrant members must have been working in Singapore for a period of 1 year or more, and (iii) their male migrant members must have remitted to their families during this period. An interview schedule was used to interview the 50 families. The interview schedule contained questions covering a wide range of issues including socio-demographic information, remittance receipt, remittance use, and developmental potential of

remittances. The interview schedule was tested and modified after a pilot study. Recipients of the remittances were interviewed, so that the findings reflected the actual use of remittances. In addition to two-way surveys, participant observations and focus-group discussions were also rich sources of information.

I realized that while the household-level data provided much-needed insights into migration motivation and migration outcomes at the family level, it could not capture many of the migration and remittance dynamics at the *bari* level. Migrants and their families are influenced by their immediate members residing next door, who are often connected by blood. Their everyday lives are inextricably linked. When one family sends its members overseas, the other families in the same *bari* are exposed to the power of overseas jobs. Migrants share their migration experiences with other family members. It is not only migrants but also members of migrant families who present and discuss their newly found wealth with other family members in the *bari*. Migrant families are often capable of prioritizing their expenses, thanks to the migrant remittances. This exposure to migration and remittances is of great significance at the *bari* level. When I collected data between 1998 and 2009, like many other researchers, I interviewed migrants and their families for research; and, like them, I failed to realize the need for introducing the *bari* as a unit of analysis in Bangladeshi migration research (Pictures 1.1 and 1.2).

In 2014–2015 I decided to focus on the *bari* as a unit of analysis, and given my prior fieldwork experiences in Munshiganj district, I chose this district for a *bari*

Picture 1.1 A typical migrant *bari*

Picture 1.2 A migrant *bari* in Munshiganj

survey. As I mentioned earlier, Munshiganj is a major migrant source district in Bangladesh: a large number of migrants in Singapore hail from this district. One can find a Singapore-migrant family in almost every village therein. I prepared a lengthy interview schedule that contained questions related to the social and demographic profiles of families in *baris*, their economic background, migration history, and remittance use at the *bari* level. I included both migrant families and non-migrant families in the surveys so that effective comparisons between the two groups could be made. I surveyed 50 selected *baris* in this final phase of data collection. A few criteria were set to determine the *baris* to be included in the survey: (i) each *bari* must have at least three families, (ii) one family from each *bari* must have a member working in Singapore, and (iii) the migrant must have been working in Singapore for around one year. Thus, the quality and richness of data obtained through surveys, case studies, ethnographic village study, and focus-group discussions over the past 15 years provide much-needed insights into this migration phenomenon.

Structure of the Book

This book identifies and expounds upon six spheres of the international migration of labour: (i) migration policy, (ii) migration decision-making, (iii) recruitment, (iv) the social world of migrants on foreign soil, (v) remittances, and (vi) the development dynamics in migrant families and *baris*. This first chapter has provided the background to the research with a focus on South–South migration in general and Bangladeshi migration to Singapore in particular, followed by a brief

discussion of what this book aims to focus on, and what its contribution to migration scholarship might be. After delineating the specific objectives of the book, this chapter has also discussed the theoretical issues pertaining to labour migration, and pointed to the potential theoretical contribution this book can make to labour migration research. This chapter has also offered a review of Bangladeshi migration research, followed by a section on research methods used to collect data in Singapore and Bangladesh.

Chapter 2, 'Immigration and Integration Policy in Singapore', provides an overview of migration policy in Singapore with a focus on skilled and professional immigration policy, migrant labour policy, and migrant integration policy. The chapter identifies several interwoven features that underpin the edifice of migration policy in Singapore. The discussion is divided into five sections: the first section briefly explains the nature of labour migration policies, the second elaborates the administrative and legal frameworks, the third describes classes and policies of foreign worker passes, the fourth illustrates some of the salient features of low-skilled foreign worker policy, and the fifth sets out the relationship between migration policy and integration policy.

Chapter 3, 'Social Imperatives of Labour Migration', argues that it is important to appreciate the social and cultural contexts within which migration decisions are made. This research has explained that individual acquisitiveness and freedom are subordinate to family and *bari* interests. This chapter particularly focuses on social imperatives for migration by highlighting the changes in the traditional tools of social status claims, geographical imaginations, the cultural notion of work, the diminishing role of education, and the concept of relative social status. The social actors are motivated to emigrate because families in traditional societies see little prospect to retain or enhance their position in society through traditional status components such as land ownership. International migration has emerged as a powerful tool for status claims in the society of origin by transforming the meaning of marriages, education, work/occupation, and leadership in the community. This chapter argues that families and *baris* send members overseas not only to improve their social position in absolute terms, but also to enhance their social position relative to other families in the community. The likelihood of migration grows because of changes in other migrant families' social positions.

Chapter 4, 'Channelling Bangladeshi Migrants to Singapore', discusses how potential migrants actually join the international labour market with the assistance of two engines of immigration—migrant networks and migrant institutions. Several actors assist prospective migrants to move intra-regionally for work: employers who recruit prospective migrants directly, public employment services which match the local workers with foreign jobs, migrant networks which facilitate access to foreign labour market, and private recruitment agencies which serve the prospective migrants for a profit. Together they form a web of recruitment structures that facilitates the recruitment of migrant workers in Singapore. The existing studies tend to address either networks or institutions when explaining how meso-level factors facilitate the migration of labour internationally. However, labour migration in Asia has reached such a level of maturation that it is time to address both engines

of migration in any meaningful analysis of how actual migration takes place. This chapter examines labour recruitment from a holistic perspective, combining networks and institutions, to highlight both the operational and economic aspects of recruitment, so as to better understand the complexity and multiplicity of contemporary migrant recruitment. This chapter reveals how migrant networks and recruitment agencies adapt to the changing practices of recruitment to funnel Bangladeshi migrant workers to Singapore

Chapter 5, 'Social Worlds of Migrants in Singapore', explores some key issues related to the lived experiences of Bangladeshi migrants, such as working conditions, living conditions, medical care, religious life, cultural life, and organizational life. This chapter particularly addresses the conditions under which migrants work; the situations in different types of accommodation; the facilities available for medical care; the spaces offered to migrants for religious practices; the opportunity for creative exercises (e.g.. migrant poetry); and the organizational support for well-being, justice, and empowerment of migrant workers.

Chapter 6, 'Remittance as a Social Process', examines remittances as a social process by dissecting four spheres of remittances: (i) sending, (ii) receipt, (iii) use and control, and (iv) implications on migrant households. This is a relatively new methodological approach to the study of migrant remittances. In addition to remittance behaviour, I also explore the channels of remittance from Singapore to Bangladesh. In studying the remittance industry, I explore the role of both informal and formal remittance players in the markets and dynamics of migrants' use of different channels of remittances.

Chapter 7, 'Migration and Family Dynamics', goes beyond the typical works on 'impacts of migration on families' that have so far focused mostly on children and wives left behind. This chapter looks into the temporary labour migration of male members of families who may or may not be married, and thus investigates the impact of migration on changes within broader familial relations beyond spousal relations, as well as changes within the practice of family formation. From this, the following issues arise: (1) impact of this migration on returning migrants' relationships with their families (wives, fathers); (2) impact of migration on the social relations within a village, that is inside and outside of the immediate families; (3) impact of migration on education, medical care, and food consumption; (4) houses of migrant *baris*; (5) *dhadon*, a business enterprise for migrant wives; (6) impact of migration on the upward social mobility of immediate family members; and (7) impact of migration in terms of changing power relations in which parents benefit from their son's migration, for example in terms of socio-political leverage (status claims, insertion into local politics, etc.), and at the same time lose power over their sons, such as in terms of choosing a bride or controlling remittances.

Finally, Chap. 8 summarizes the main findings, reviews the theoretical and methodological contributions to the field, and identifies the areas where more research is needed.

Chapter 2
Immigration and Integration Policy in Singapore

Immigrant-receiving governments set rules to control the volume, duration of stay, skill composition, and ethnic, racial, and geographical origin of the migrants they receive (for details, see Hammar 1985; Weiner 1993; Joppke 1999; Zolberg 1999; Hollifield 2000; Debrah 2002; Koslowski 2005; Boswell 2007; Rahman and Ullah 2012). The role that receiving countries play in migration control needs to be understood in context and in all its complexity (Rahman and Ullah 2012). Theories of international migration have primarily focused on non-state actors in explaining the causes and perpetuation of international migration (Hollifield 2000). However, there is evidence that states devise rules of entry and exit for potential migrants in order to control their borders and ensure sovereignty and security. As well as devising rules revolving around issues of control and security, states also develop policies to incorporate immigrants into their society and economy. Since the 1980s, work on the politics of international migration has tended to "bring the state back in" to social-scientific analyses of migration (Hollifield 2000: 137). While the present book accentuates the importance of sociological and economic variables in the analysis of labour migration, it also acknowledges the importance of the state in migration control, and therefore elaborates on its role in regulating the volume and composition of population movements across international borders.

The study of migration policy has principally advanced in the context of Western countries (Hammar 1985; Giugni and Passy 2006; Boswell 2007; Castles and Miller 2009). Broadly, Western migration policy can be divided into a twofold classification: (i) immigration control or regulation policy (the rules and procedures governing the selection and admission of foreigners), and (ii) immigrant policy (the conditions provided to resident immigrants such as work and housing conditions, welfare provisions, and educational opportunities) (Hammar 1985: 7–9; Meyers 2000, 2002). While migration control policy is highly relevant in Asian migrant-receiving countries, immigrant policy is not a topic of much discussion in this region (Rahman and Ullah 2012). This is because Asian migration policies are informed and shaped by three basic principles: limited settlement; limited scope for citizenship; and limited scope for national culture and identity modification in

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response to external influences (Castles 2001: 197; see also Piper 2004; Chan and Abdullah 1999; Skeldon 1997; Seol and Skrentny 2009).

Given the primacy of migration control policy in Asia, this chapter principally addresses the rules and procedures governing the selection and admission of different categories of foreigners in Singapore. The discussion is divided into eight sections: (i) immigration research and analysis in Singapore, (ii) nature of migration policy, (iii) broader features of immigration policy, (iv) classes of non-resident population, (v) administrative and legal frameworks, (vi) specific policies targeting semi-skilled foreign workers, (vii) pathways of professional, skilled, and semi-skilled foreigners, and (viii) integration of immigrants and emigrants into Singapore society.

Immigration Research in Singapore

Singapore was a British trading port established by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819, gaining its independence in 1965. Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of modern Singapore, performed a miracle transforming Singapore from one of the poorest countries in the 1960s to being among the most advanced today. This visionary leader pursued a class-based migration policy to welcome immigrants of different skill levels since the 1960s. It is thanks to Lee Kuan Yew, one of the great transformational leaders of our times, and his vision that Singapore is as welcoming to immigrants today as it was 50 years ago. Brenda Yeoh, an eminent migration scholar from Singapore, notes that "the history and fortunes of Singapore have been closely intertwined with migrants and migration" (Yeoh 2007: 1). We can broadly identify two waves of immigration into Singapore: pre-independence migration, which was principally for permanent settlement, and post-independence migration, which is largely for temporary work. Broadly, Singapore's citizens and permanent residents (PR) are referred to as *residents*, while holders of various employment passes, work permits, and other categories of short- and long-term passes are referred to as *non-residents*. Table 2.1 presents the growth of the resident and non-resident populations, and Fig. 2.1 provides a detailed breakdown of non-resident population in Singapore.[1] Despite various policy measures, the share of non-resident population is increasing every year. This is because Singapore has faced two troubling trends since the 1990s: a rapidly ageing population, and an extremely low reproduction rate. As a result, immigration policy has become a key strategy to tackle the demographic challenge and ensure continued economic prosperity. Against this backdrop, this chapter examines the immigration policies that Singapore pursues to select, admit, retain, and integrate foreigners into Singapore society.

[1]The data on the distribution of the non-resident population is compiled from Population in Brief, an annual publication by the National Population and Talent Division (NPTD) that provides key updates and trends on Singapore's population landscape. See the website of the NPTD on the Singapore government portal: http://www.nptd.gov.sg/Portals/0/Homepage/Highlights/population-in-brief-2015.pdf.

Table 2.1 Total population of Singapore, as of 2015 ('000)

Categories	2004	2009	2012	2013	2014	2015
Citizens	3057.1	3200.7	3285.1	3313.5	3343	3375
Permanent Residents (PR)	356.2	533.2	533.1	531.2	527.7	527.7
Total resident population	3413.3	3733.9	3818.2	3844.8	3807.7	3902.7
Non-resident population	753.4	1253.7	1494.2	1554.4	1599.0	1632.3
Total population	4166.7	4987.6	5312.4	5399.2	5469.7	5535

Source Various Issues of Population in Brief, published by National Population and Talent Division (NPTD), Singapore

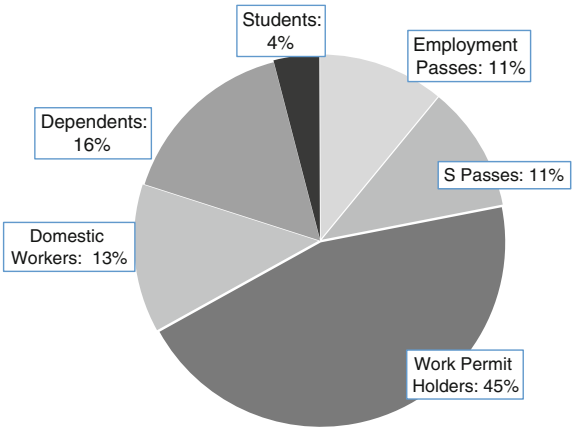

Fig. 2.1 Distribution of non-resident population in Singapore (1.63 million)

It is important to note that managing migration, as Doomernik et al. (2005) suggest, is "metaphorically akin to walking a tightrope", because the government has to try to keep the domestic population's aspirations and economic needs in balance. Singapore's government makes every effort to increase public awareness about the growing importance of immigration for Singapore's economy and society. For instance, Lee Kuan Yew, the chief architect in harnessing social cohesion and in engineering an economic miracle, commented that foreigners add dynamism to Singapore, which cannot afford to remain static in a changing and globalized world (*Straits Times*, 23 April 2007). In his National Day Rally speech in August 2006, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made it clear that Singapore needs foreign manpower for economic growth and prosperity. The reason for hiring foreign manpower should be principally seen from an economic point of view, i.e., the gap between a limited pool of local labour and a high rate of employment creation. Academic studies have also discussed the reason for hiring foreign manpower in greater detail (for details, see Pang and Lim 1982; Chew and Chew 1995; Wong 1997; Hui 1997; Low 2002). In this context, Singapore has devised a sophisticated migration policy, based on a 'demand-driven system', to allow regular circulation of foreign labour.

There is a lack of published data on certain aspects of immigration which are deemed 'confidential and politically sensitive' (Low 2002). However, there is a

"greater expression by way of policy and strategy than quantitative empirical evidence" (Low 2002: 96). In Singapore, migration has been constantly debated by academics and policy-makers, and scrutinized by local universities and different ministries in the form of delegating funds for research, workshops, and the establishment of migration clusters in the universities. The significance of, and demand for, foreign manpower, in conjunction with other pertinent issues such as immigration, foreign talent, dual citizenship, assimilation, and integration, often hogs the headlines of the *Straits Times*, the leading English daily of Singapore. All these have contributed to the development of scholarly debate on this crucial and expanding field. While it is not feasible here to offer an individual treatment of all major works that deal with migration in Singapore, I provide a brief overview of the trends in migration research and discourse in Singapore.

I begin with Pang Eng Fong, one of the pioneering migration scholars in Singapore, whose work on immigration in Singapore dates back to 1976. Pang's works have discussed migration, public policy, and social development in Singapore (Pang 1976, 1979). One of his major works on migration was published with Linda Lim in 1982, and focused largely on foreign labour and economic development in Singapore (Pang and Lim 1982). Two years later, in response to Pang and Lim's work, Stahl published detailed empirical findings pertaining to the benefits and costs of foreign labour and other migration related issues in Singapore (Stahl 1984). In the migration literature, one can identify an emphasis on cost–benefit analysis of foreign labour import, along with other broader issues, e.g., the philosophy behind immigration policy, imbalance between labour supply and employment creation, evolution of foreign labour policy, and implications of use of foreign labour (Pang 1991, 1992, 1994; Sullivan et al. 1992; Toh 1993; Low 1995; Chew and Chew 1995; Chiew 1995; Wong 1997; Hui 1997; Yap 1999, 2001).

Since the 1990s, in conjunction with all these relevant issues, research on emigration orientation and emigration of Singaporeans (Tan and Chiew 1995; Low 1995; Hui 1998; Tan 2005; Leong 2007), foreign talent (Low 2002; Hui 2002; Yeoh and Huang 2003; Koh 2003; Poon 2003), irregular migration (Sullivan et al. 1992), foreign construction workers (Ofori 1997; Ofori and Debrah 1998; Debrah and Ofori 2001), Thai labour migration (Wong 2000; Pattana 2005), and Bangladeshi labour migration (Foo 1999; Rahman 2003; Rahman and Lian 2005; Lian and Rahman 2006; Rahman and Yeoh 2008; Bal 2013), has dominated the migration scholarship in Singapore. Besides this, a variety of issues on international migration in Singapore have been discussed, such as the comparative study of migration policies (Ruppert 1999; Chan and Abdullah 1999; Ruhs 2002; Yoo et al. 2004; Seol 2005), Chinese–Malaysian transmigration (Lam and Yeoh 2004), and the relationship between foreign manpower policy and population policy (Wong 1996, 1997).

With the 'feminization of migration' in Asia in the 1990s, scholars like Brenda Yeoh, Shirlena Huang, and others have addressed the different aspects of gender migration in Singapore and beyond (Yeoh and Khoo 1998; Yeoh et al. 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004; Noor 2005). In addition, other works, which are not immediately associated with foreign manpower but are broadly linked to immigration matters, like diaspora, transnationalism, multiculturalism, national identity, nation-building,

and citizenship, have further contributed to the enrichment of our understanding of immigration in Singapore (Sandhu 1969; Hill and Lian 1995; Yeoh and Kong 1996; Kong 1999; Chua 2003; Yahya and Kaur 2010; Rai 2004, 2014; Elaine 2008, 2009).

Despite the abundance of research on the dynamics of migration, there is not a high level of academic awareness concerning foreign manpower policy in relation to its management, especially the finely tuned micro-aspects of policy. The management of foreign manpower is vital for any labour-importing country, as failure to ensure efficacy in the achievement of labour migration policies and programme goals often generates a range of unintended consequences, like xenophobia, the politicization of migration, irregular migration, and eventually cessation of labour migration programmes altogether (see Marmora 1999; Castles and Miller 1998; Lian and Rahman 2006). Therefore, this study examines foreign manpower policy and its implementation mechanisms, to highlight the importance of careful and comprehensive policy and transparent management.

Nature of Immigration Policy

Broadly, international labour migration policies can be divided into supply-driven and demand-driven systems. A supply-driven system is widely employed in the developed countries to invite foreigners (immigrants) to live and work permanently. Classic immigrant countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand) traditionally follow a supply-driven migration policy in order to attract highly skilled professionals in science, engineering, health, and information technology. This model of migration policy favours immigration of the highly skilled, usually for permanent settlement (for details, see Koslowski 2005; Yoo et al. 2004; Boeri et al. 2012). Two selective migration models that are often noted in the literature are the Canadian 'human capital' model based on a point system, and the Australian 'neo-corporatist' model based on a point system with extensive business and labour participation. These two migration policy models are basically supply-driven systems. In the supply-driven system, potential migrants introduce themselves into the host countries' screening processes on the basis of some objective criteria, and the host countries select the best-quality foreign workforce from the pool of potential immigrants. Foreigners with sufficient points are chosen to immigrate with the permits for residency and work. The supply-driven system is skills-biased, in the sense that it excludes low-skilled manpower from developing countries. Notably, this system contributes to brain-drain from developing countries.

A demand-driven system is widely followed in order to serve temporary needs for foreign manpower, and such a migration model is widely practised in developing economies. However, some form of demand-driven immigration model is also found in developed countries, including those where a supply-driven immigration model is widely employed, to hire foreign workers temporarily to fulfil short-term manpower needs, such as temporary foreign worker programmes for short stays of lower skilled migrant workers (farm workers and in-home

caregivers); in Canada and the US, for instance, there is a market-oriented, demand-driven model based primarily on employer selection of migrants (H-1B visa category). In the demand-driven system, employers from the host countries play a vital role in the overall process of introducing foreign workers, both skilled and unskilled, to the host governments for approval. In general, employers use recruiting agencies to hire the right workers from overseas. Recruiting agents contact their counterparts in emigration countries to find interested individuals.

Once recruiting agents in host countries find the right migrants with the necessary skills and experiences, they inform the original employers who engage in official procedures like visa application, air tickets, and so on, and upon approval from the government they bring in foreign workers for temporary appointment. The demand-driven system is based on "the logic that employers are in the ideal position to make the best decisions on the economic contribution of foreign labour" (Yoo et al. 2004). Singapore, as well as some other labour-importing countries, follows the demand-driven system, albeit with some variations (Rahman and Ullah 2012). Singapore's demand-driven system serves both parties—employers and migrants. On one hand, it is efficient in satisfying the needs of employers, and therefore is capable of generating higher benefits for the host country. On the other hand, it is economically beneficial for the migrants and their home countries, because it engenders remittances which are sent direct to the migrant families. More importantly, it opens up opportunities for even low-skilled migrants from developing economies to earn skills and relevant working experience in host countries and employ these skills and experience upon return.

Broader Features of Immigration Policy in Singapore

This section provides a broader overview of migration policy in Singapore. I identified seven interwoven, underlying features in migration policy in major host countries in East and Southeast Asia (Rahman 2012). They offer insights into how migration policy making is linked to other broader issues in the society. The subsections describe how these features are particularly relevant to the understanding of the edifice of migration policy in Singapore. They are as follows: (i) controlling demand for migrants, (ii) transience and disposability, (iii) development of a recruitment industry, (iv) curbing irregular migration, (v) gendered migration policy, (vi) ethnicized migration policy, and (vii) educationally channelled labour mobility. I elaborate these features of Singapore's migration policy with some examples.

(i) ***Controlling Demand: Work Permit, Quota and Levy Scheme***
The labour shortage has created a strong demand for foreign workers in Singapore. However, the demand for labour has not automatically resulted in a supply of labour, because policy-makers have put in place mechanisms to evaluate to what extent such shortages should be filled by foreign labour and

how this labour should be channelled into different sectors of the economy. Current policies categorize migrant workers into two broad groups: highly skilled and unskilled (the latter comprising semi-skilled and unskilled including domestic workers). The emphasis is on control and 'flexibility' in response to local labour market fluctuations. We find the use of three mechanisms to regulate the need for foreign semi-skilled and unskilled labour: (i) 'work permits', (ii) quotas and ceilings, and (iii) the employment stabilization fee called a 'levy' (Chan and Abdullah 1999; Martin et al. 2006; Castes and Miller 2009; Rahman and Ullah 2012).

A work permit (WP) is issued to each foreign worker with contract length, name of employer, and sector of the economy. The duration of stay or contract length is limited, usually from one to three years, and renewal is usually subject to availability of jobs and approval from the concerned authority. There is often limited opportunity for mobility across sectors and employers. Through ceilings, Singapore puts a cap on the intake and use of foreign workers. The dependency ceiling regulates the proportion of foreigners to local workers. The third control measure is the 'levy'. Employers have economic incentives to use foreign workers, who can be hired at low costs and paid lower wages than local (national) workers. This may cause unemployment and dissatisfaction at the lower rung of local labour force. To protect the jobs of low-skilled local workers, the levy is introduced. It increases the cost of employing foreign workers and, by implication, discourages employers from becoming over-dependent on foreign labour.

The control mechanisms discussed above do not apply to skilled and professional migrants, who enjoy more favourable terms and conditions. With rapid globalization and the increasing importance of the knowledge-based economy, Singapore is competing with other states to attract the best and brightest talents (Yahya and Kaur 2010). Singapore has crafted a separate set of policies on a competitive basis to tap the skilled and professional migrants from around the world such as: (i) permission to bring dependents in country, (ii) occupational mobility and better terms and conditions of employments, (iii) limited scale of permanent residence status and citizenship after a few years of residency.

(ii) ***Transience and Disposability***

In devising the admission policy for foreign labour, one important consideration is whether to prioritize temporary labour migration or permanent migration through specified migration channels that may lead to a secure residence status and permanent settlement. However, Singapore finds the solution to labour shortages in a temporary migration programme. Temporary migration policies are devised on the principle of rotation, that is, each migrant worker is invited for a short period and forced to depart once their permit expires. The doors to permanent settlement, such as marriage with locals, family reunion (bringing family members from home countries), unlimited extension of visas, sectoral mobility, and option for employer

changes, are typically closed to lower-skilled migrant workers. Although labour migration is seen as a temporary response to labour shortages, the phenomena of temporary migration or the demand for cheap and disposable labour is permanent in the country, leading to a situation of 'permanently temporary'. Given the lower costs of hiring temporary migrants and the higher benefits that such labour generates for the country, Singapore has adopted a policy of 'circular migration'. In this circular migration, migrants who earn skills in specific occupations, and comply with local rules and regulations, may stay longer after they finish their contracts—subject to availability of jobs. Migrants working for extended periods are generally allowed to take leave for home visits. The positive side of this policy measure is that the fear of permanent settlement in the receiving countries and the fear of losing nationals, skills, and remittances in the sending countries are minimal, leading to win-win situations for both parties. Migrants get jobs with higher wages compared to those in their country of origin, and an opportunity to continue a foreign job for an extended period. For instance, a migrant with multiple skills can work up to 22 years in the construction sector of Singapore.

(iii) ***The Recruitment Industry***

The recruitment industry for low-skilled labour has flourished throughout the migrant-receiving countries in Asia. Most labour recruitment takes place through the help of two key players: agencies and migrant networks. Singapore has around 1100 recruiting agencies serving the demand for male and female migrant labour in the country. Recruiting agents in both sending and receiving countries work in collaboration with each other and contribute to the placement of labour across countries. The recruitment of skilled and professional migration is conducted through channels other than through registered recruiting agencies for low-skilled foreign labour. Skilled migration is seen more as an individual-level initiative to enter the international job market. Since Singapore pursues a favourable policy towards foreign skilled and professional migrants, employers often offer privileged salary packages to encourage relocation in Singapore.

(iv) ***State Concerns and Policy Measures for Irregular Migration***

Terms such as 'illegal', 'undocumented', 'unauthorized', and 'irregular' have been used to describe migrant workers without a valid visa, WP, or other necessary documents (Battistella and Asis 2003). 'Irregular' is the current term in use by migrants' rights advocates. The term 'illegal' is generally used strictly in the legal sense, classifying migrant workers as criminals. The other terms are relatively neutral. While irregular migration is a widespread problem in other countries in the region, irregular migration in Singapore is minimal. However, this relative success should be understood in the light of policy measures undertaken to address irregular migration problem. Some of the policy measures implemented include penalties for irregular workers,

employer sanctions, security bonds, and fingerprint and biometric identification cards. When someone becomes 'irregular' for any reason, they are expected to leave the country immediately. Nonconformity to rules often meets first a financial penalty, then imprisonment, and finally deportation.

To prevent employers from employing irregular migrants, receiving countries in the region have adopted policy measures called 'employer sections'. These measures range from a heavy financial penalty, up to incarceration. When a migrant worker cannot engage in work because of his or her irregular status, the motivation for irregular stay is expected to diminish. In this sense, employer section is an effective policy measure to reduce the size of irregular migration. Additionally, Singapore has introduced a 'security bond' of SG $5000 in the form of insurance/banker's guarantee to all employers of foreign workers except those of Malaysian origin (Devasahayam 2010). The security bond is signed between the employer and the Government; the foreign worker is not required to pay the security deposit. Under the pretext of losing the security bond, employers play a proactive role in two areas: (i) taking care of the well-being of migrant workers, and (ii) ensuring their authorized repatriation after cancellation or end of WP.[2]

As a part of the latest 'migration securitization drive' (Bourbeau 2011), Singapore has introduced fingerprinting or digital photo-taking measures. This latest security measure has further limited irregular migration. The expanding bank of fingerprints and digital photos held by the immigration department can easily deter former irregular migrants when they attempt to enter the country a second time, prompting immediate action against their irregular entry. Additionally, Singapore offers ID cards that help to detect irregular migrants. Such biometric ID cards cannot be tampered with or easily forged, leading to precarious stays and even limited access to services like medical care, contributing to diminishing interests in irregular movement and stays.

(v) ***Gendered Migration Policy***

Intra-regional migration in Asia is a gendered phenomenon: both male and female migrants move across borders to join foreign labour markets. However, substantial barriers exist to regulate cross-border gendered mobility, both at the labour-receiving end through restrictive admission policies, and at the labour-sending end through the policy of selective deployment. As a result, migration is encouraged with respect to certain destinations or jobs and discouraged from others (Momsen 1999; Piper 2003). Nicola Piper argues that migration policies affect men and women differently, and for three principal reasons: the concentration of men and women based on gender-segregated labour markets; gendered socioeconomic power structures;

[2]For details, see Ministry of Manpower, Singapore government website, www.mom.gov.sg.

and socio-cultural definitions of appropriate roles in destination as well as origin countries (Piper 2006: 139). Migrant workers have differential access to legal protection depending on whether they are male or female, and this is principally attributed to the gendered segregated labour market in the host country (Yeoh and Huang 1999; Tam 1999). Male migrants have generally more access to legal mechanisms and can have more successful recourse to justice than female migrants (domestic workers), because of their easier access to other workers and legal bodies. Since male migrants engage by default in the production sector, they are protected by employment acts and are entitled to benefits like other workers. Female migrants who are working in relative seclusion in the domestic sector are not fully considered 'workers'. Therefore, they are often deprived of the benefits and privileges associated with the status of 'official worker'.

Policy towards medical surveillance is an area where the state often imposes gender-differentiated patterns. All foreign workers, including domestic workers, are required to undergo a medical examination and be certified fit by authorized medical practitioners. There are extra measures for female migrant workers which monitor whether they are in the process of procreation. While foreign male workers and locals may get away with 'transgressive acts of procreation' (Huang and Yeoh 2003), female workers (domestic workers) face severe consequences, including the loss of their jobs and repatriation. However, in spite of this negative implication of health screening, there are also some positive implications of the medical surveillance bestowed on them. Ahsan Ullah argues that females are more vulnerable to deadly and communicable diseases, and that the provision of medical surveillance can help detect these diseases and so encourage preventive measures (Ullah 2010). Recent cases of tuberculosis (TB) among domestic workers in Singapore are a case in point.[3] It is also important to note that the financial burden of medical tests is put on employers, not on the domestic workers.

The gendered nature of migration policy is also reflected in the ways in which the labour of male and female workers is valued by the receiving states. Huang and Yeoh argue that foreign workers in low-end occupations such as construction can upgrade their skills and thus switch from unskilled to a semi-skilled or even skilled category over time (Huang and Yeoh 2003). The reward for acquiring or upgrading skills is reflected not only in monthly salaries but also in the levy rates that each employer is required to pay for their foreign workers. Employers of female workers, especially domestic workers, are also required to pay a levy. However, since domestic work is seen as informal/reproductive work, the levy for a domestic worker is often at

[3]Health screening good enough?; My maid has TB and now my son and I have it too, Letter from Noorlina Senin, *The Today* (Singapore), 31 May 2010.

a flat rate. There is little scope for an official upgrading of skill status and official recognition of productivity. This hinders their bargaining power and limits salary increases in the long run.

(vi) ***Ethnicized Migration Policy***

Preferences for co-ethnic migrants residing outside national territories offer important new perspectives on nationhood, non-discriminatory norms, and trans-nationality in Asia (Skrentny et al. 2007). In East and Southeast Asia, there is clearly a preference for co-ethnics in the areas of return migration and naturalization, co-ethnic investors, students, and temporary migrants. In Singapore, there is a preference for co-ethnics in certain sectors of the economy, but the preferences are organized on the basis of country of origin rather than explicitly ethnic grounds. For example, migrants from countries such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea enjoy preferential treatment in Singapore as regards employment in certain economic sectors, compared to those from non-traditional source (NTS) countries like Indonesia, Bangladesh, and India.

(vii) ***Educationally channelled labour policy***

International education is used as a mechanism to attract skilled labour in the developed countries (for details, see OECD 2010; Liu-Farrer 2009; Gribble 2008; Birrell and Perry 2009; Brooks and Waters 2011). The most recent data show that the OECD countries received between 2 and 2.5 million international students, which corresponds to about 84% of all students studying abroad (OECD 2010: 41–24). In most OECD countries, favourable policy measures are undertaken to entice international students and retain them in their labour markets (for details, see OECD 2010). In other words, international education has emerged as a de facto channel of skilled migration in the developed world. To capture the overlapping trends of international student migration and labour mobility, Liu-Farrer even uses the term "educationally channelled international labour mobility" (Liu-Farrer 2009: 179). This is taking place largely in the context of what the OECD calls 'two-step migration', by which migrants are first invited as international students and then in a second step retained as highly skilled long-term workers (OECD 2010: 41).

Singapore is one of the top foreign student destination countries in Asia. Traditionally, Asian students who looked to English-speaking Western countries for higher education are now increasingly turning to Singapore. However, the appeal of Singapore's education has gone beyond the region and now more and more students are coming from other parts of the world. There were roughly 95,000 foreign students in 2010, and Singapore's education blueprint aims to attract 150,000 foreign students by 2015.[4] Supported

[4]Singapore scores high marks as education hub, *Weekend Mail*, 15 December 2007; Singapore attracting fewer foreign students, Sandra Davie, *Straits Times*, 11 November 2010.

by a government-led initiative to capture a slice of global student migration, Singapore has managed to woo more than 16 of the world's leading schools to set up campuses[5] and the number of foreign schools is going up every year. Singapore has devised policies to retain international graduates following the completion of their studies. Many foreign students consider education in Singapore a stepping stone to permanent residency and subsequent citizenship because of its relatively open immigration policy. Internship programmes offered by various industries in collaboration with universities for science, engineering, and business students further provide incentives to stay and facilitate the incorporation of foreigners in the local labour market. On the whole, foreign student policies in Singapore have become more of a tool in the international competition for high-level skills.

Classes of Non-resident Foreign Manpower in Singapore

As mentioned earlier, Singapore's population can broadly be grouped into the resident population and non-resident population (Table 2.1). Over one-third of the population of Singapore is classed as non-resident. Figure 2.1 provides a broad classification of the non-resident population in Singapore. Prior to September 1998, non-residents were divided into two main categories: employment pass holders, who were skilled professional and managerial workers; and work permit holders, who were low-skilled migrant workers. However, the work pass system that came into effect in 1998 provides a three-tiered migration scheme: Classes P, Q, and R. The three major classes are each divided into two sub-categories, for a total of six classification levels (i.e., P1 and P2, Q1 and Q2, and R1 and R2). However, with effect from July 2004, a new category of work pass, namely the S Pass, has been introduced to replace the Q2 pass of Q Class. Presently, major work passes consist of the Employment Pass (EP), S Pass, Personalized Employment Pass (PEP), and WP. Professionals are offered the EP and skilled and semi-skilled foreigners are offered the S pass and WPs (Table 2.2). In addition to these major groups of foreigners, there are also other groups such as trainees and students, and family members. In this section, I describe various groups of non-resident population and the specific policies that allow different groups to enter, work, stay in, or leave the country.

[5]Ibid.

Table 2.2 Major classes of foreign manpower and immigration passes in Singapore

Pass type		Eligible foreigners	Additional features
(1) Professionals	Employment Pass (EP)	Foreign professionals, managers and executives who hold acceptable degrees, professional qualifications and relevant experiences Minimum salary: candidates need to earn at least S$3300 a month Family visas: eligible for dependent visas if earn at least S$400 in a month and long-term visit visas for parents if earn at least S $8000 in a month The duration of the pass is as follows: First-time candidates: up to 2 years Renewable: up to 3 years	Eligible to apply for permanent residency and citizenship EP is granted for particular employer and prior permission is needed for the change of employer. However, PEP holder is not tied to any employer No restrictions on nationality
	EntrePass	Eligible foreign entrepreneurs wanting to start and operate a new business in Singapore. Passes for family: available for certain family members Duration of pass: up to 1 year and renewable	Company must have at least S$50,000 in paid-up-capital
	Personalized Employment Pass (PEP)	High-earning existing EP holders or overseas foreign professionals Minimum salary: For current EP holders S $12,000 a month; For overseas professionals S$18,000 a month	The PEP offers greater flexibility than an EP
(2) Skilled and semi-skilled workers	S pass	Mid-level personnel; candidates need to earn at least S$2200 a month and meet the assessment criteria. Offered for up to 2 years and renewable and eligible for dependent passes (spouse and children) if earn a fixed monthly salary of at least $4000 in a month	Employers are subject to a *quota* and *levy* for S pass employees Employers must provide medical insurance
	WP for foreign worker (WP)	Semi-skilled foreign workers in the constructive, manufacturing, marine, process or services sector. Minimum age: 18 years. WP is offered for up to	Sector requirements, including approved source countries, security bond (S $5000), quota and levy Employer must provide medical insurance

(continued)

Table 2.2 (continued)

Pass type		Eligible foreigners	Additional features
		2 years but renewable; total duration of stay in Singapore: up to 18 years if holding R1 pass and 10 years if holding R2 pass	Acceptable housing
	WP for foreign domestic worker (WP)	Foreign domestic workers to work in Singapore. Age must be between 23 and 50 years at the time of application. Minimum 8 years of formal education with a recognized certificate	Approved source countries, security bond and levy requirements Medical and personal accident insurance Every 6 monthly medical examinations
	WP for confinement nanny	Malaysian confinement nannies to work in Singapore for up to 16 weeks starting from the birth of the employer's child	Non-renewable and levy payable; the confinement nanny must be a Malaysian and between 23 and 65 years old
(3) Trainees and students	Training EP	Foreign professionals undergoing practical training. Candidates must earn at least S$3000 a month	Trainee EP for foreign students or trainees
	Work holiday programme	Students and graduates aged 18–25 who want to work and holiday in Singapore for up to 6 months	The work Holiday programme has a capacity of 2000 applicants at any one time
	Training WP	Semi-skilled foreign trainees or students undergoing practical training in Singapore for up to 6 months	Employers are subject to quota and levy
(4) Family members	Dependent's pass	Spouse and children of eligible EP or S pass holders. Spouse and unmarried children under 21 years. Dependents can work if they get a letter of consent to work in Singapore if they find a job	Fixed month salary of S $4000 If family members are not eligible for a dependent pass, they might qualify for a long-term visit pass
	Long-term visit pass	Parents, common-law spouses, step children or handicapped children of eligible EP or S pass holders	Parents only for those earning a fixed monthly salary of at least S$8000
	Letter of consent	Eligible long-term visit pass holders and dependent pass holders who want to work in Singapore	One must have a job offer from an employer

Compiled from information found on Singapore MOM website, www.mom.gov.sg

Employment Pass (EP) and Special (S) Pass for Professional and Skilled Foreign Manpower

Singapore has a relatively open door policy for skilled and professional foreign manpower (Table 2.2). EP passes are issued to foreigners who hold professional qualifications and are seeking to work in a professional, managerial, or administrative capacity. They are also issued on a case-by-case basis to investors and entrepreneurs who can contribute to the economy of Singapore, as well as to persons of exceptional ability in the arts, sciences, and business. The large gap between the EP and the WP means that it is difficult for some companies to bring in middle-level manpower, resulting in unfilled demand in some industries for such middle-level skills sets, which local manpower has not been able to meet. With the S pass, employers will have access to middle-level talent, such as specialized workers and technicians from any country. The S pass is offered foreigners whose monthly basic salary is currently at least S$2200. The S pass is issued taking into account multiple criteria, including salary, educational qualifications, skills, and job type and work experience. EP and S pass holders can apply for permanent residency. Thus, migration policy is also a component of the population policy.

Recruitment of skilled and professional foreign manpower is relatively easy and direct. Once employers find a suitable candidate, they apply to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) for an EP on behalf of the prospective employee. The passes are offered on the basis of objective criteria as discussed above. In addition to these regular work passes, there are also some special passes that fall under the EP category, e.g., the Short-Term EP, Training Visit Pass, EntrePass (EP for Entrepreneurs), Dependent Pass or Letter of Consent, and Long-Term Social Visit Pass. An EP holder is eligible to apply for Dependent Passes for his/her spouse and for unmarried or legally adopted children under 21 years of age. An EP holder may apply for Long-Term Social Visit Passes for his/her parents, parents-in-law, step children, spouse, handicapped children, and unmarried daughters aged above 21 years.

In addition to traditional employment passes, Singapore has introduced the PEP to facilitate the contributions of global talent to Singapore. Currently, the issue of an EP is tied to a specific employer. Any change of employer requires a fresh application. If an EP holder leaves his employer, his EP is cancelled and he must leave Singapore within a short time unless he finds a new job. The new PEP is not tied to any employer and is granted on the strength of an EP holder's individual merits. A PEP holder is entitled to remain in Singapore for up to six months in between jobs to seek new employment opportunities. The PEP is valid for five years and is non-renewable. EP holders are allowed to marry locals or bring their immediate 'dependents' to Singapore. Hui (1992) argues that Singapore's immigration policy towards the skilled and professional foreign manpower may be regarded as liberal. The economic motivation for this liberal policy is to "capitalise on the benefits of savings in human capital investments and to facilitate technology transfers" (Hui 1998: 208–209). The professional and managerial workers are usually referred to as

'foreign talent' in both government and public discourse (Yeoh 2004: 8), and the latest state strategy has been to make Singapore a 'talent capital' where industries can find the skills and expertise for their activities (Low 2002: 110). The International Manpower Division of MOM is engaged in attracting international talent, as well as Singaporean talent working or studying overseas, through the international network known as 'Contact Singapore'.

Most recently, there have been some changes in hiring professionals and skilled foreigners. If we compare the recruitment procedures for Singapore's foreign manpower with other immigrant countries such as Canada where citizens and PRs are given priority over foreigners, Singapore from the outset has pursued an open policy for hiring foreigners with higher professional backgrounds. As a result, local Singaporeans have faced tough competition with foreigners. Recently, however, Singapore has introduced the Fair Consideration Framework (FCF) to strengthen the Singaporean core in the workforce. Effective from 2014, employers who are hiring professional and skilled foreigners (EP application) are required to advertise their job vacancies on the jobs bank, especially on particular jobs bank websites. The advertisements need to run for at least 14 calendar days. Employers also need to put in place fair employment, hiring, and staff development practices that are open, merit-based, and non-discriminatory. However, after the advertising period, the firm can hire the most qualified candidates, regardless of nationality.[6] Thus, open job advertising in particular jobs bank benefits both Singaporean job seekers and employers. However, the recruitment of low-skilled foreigners remains unaffected since competition is minimal—such jobs are sought after by few Singaporeans.

Work Permit (WP) for Semi-skilled Foreign Manpower

Before 1968, no unskilled workers were permitted to enter Singapore to work (Low 1995). After 1968, unskilled foreign labour flowed into Singapore in significant numbers, as a result of rapidly growing wage employment opportunities (Stahl 1986: 37). Hui (1997) identifies three contributory factors for the sustained demand for low-skilled foreign manpower in Singapore: (a) tight domestic labour supply, (b) an increasingly qualified workforce (one in three hold post-secondary qualifications), and finally (c) a general aversion among Singaporeans to jobs that are considered dirty, dangerous, and demeaning. The government's policy on low-skilled workers is comparatively restrictive and has remained committed to ensuring that "low-skilled foreign manpower is managed as a temporary and controlled phenomenon" (Yeoh 2004: 19). In other words, the low-skilled foreign

[6]Retrieved from Singapore Ministry of Manpower website: see http://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/fair-consideration-framework/Pages/fair-consideration-framework.aspx#sthash.gwH4vsJL.dpuf.

workers are "relegated to the most transient of categories—subject to the 'use and discard' philosophy" (Yeoh et al. 2000: 151).

In 1981 it was announced that foreign workers would be phased out by 1991 (Hui 1992). However, it was soon realized that reliance on foreign labour was indispensable for sustained economic growth (Hui 1992). Presently, the emphasis has shifted from complete independence from foreign workers to issues like monitoring inflow, increasing productivity, and fine-tuning restrictions to moderate demand (Hui 1997). Low-skilled foreign workers who wish to work in Singapore are offered the WP. Within this category of pass, there are two subgroups: R1 and R2. R1 is issued to skilled foreign workers who possess at least a SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) qualification or its equivalent, or a National Technical Certificate Grade 3 (Practical) or other suitable qualifications. R2 is issued to unskilled foreign workers. Foreign workers are required to carry their WP cards with them for identification at all times. Foreign workers who fail to carry their WP card are liable to have their WP cancelled, and be repatriated and barred from employment in Singapore. Employers are not allowed to retain their workers' WP cards, and those who do so may be debarred from employing foreign workers (Table 2.2).

Administrative and Legal Frameworks for Managing Foreigners

Migration policy needs adequate governance through the harmonization of demands, expectations, objectives, and implementation. Marmora (1999: 238) suggests that one of the important conditions of good migration governance is 'efficacy' in the achievement of migration policies and programme goals. He suggests that three fundamental tools support efficacy: (a) awareness of the migration process, (b) setting realistic objectives, and (c) administrative efficiency. Awareness of the migration process involves analysis of migration patterns, causes, features, and consequences. Marmora maintains that realism implies harmonization between strategies, actions, norms, and available means of enforcement, while administrative efficiency ensures execution of international migration policies and programmes. Singapore has developed a transparent administration and formulated comprehensive legislation to ensure such efficacy in the management of migration.

The MOM manages foreign manpower in Singapore. It is responsible for devising and implementing foreign manpower policy in Singapore. Within MOM, there are two divisions in charge of foreign manpower issues in Singapore: the Work Pass Division and the Foreign Manpower Management Division (FMMD). The objectives of the Work Pass Division are to develop an efficient, effective, and dynamic foreign manpower admission framework which caters to the needs of the Singapore economy. It facilitates and regulates the employment of foreign nationals by administering three types of Work Passes, discussed in the next section. The

Work Pass Division comprises the WP and EP Departments. The WP Department serves low-skilled foreign manpower, while the EP Department serves highly skilled foreign manpower.

On the other hand, the FMMD is in charge of the welfare of foreign workers during their working stint in Singapore. The FMMD works closely with the other departments within the Ministry, in particular the Foreign Manpower Employment Division, Occupational Safety and Health Division, Labour Relations Division, and Corporate Communications Department. The core functions of FMMD include: (a) management and protection of foreign manpower, (b) professionalism of the employment agency industry, and (c) strengthening of enforcement capabilities. The FMMD is structured around four departments: (a) the Employment Inspectorate Department, which seeks to foster effective management of foreign manpower, through policing, in partnership with other enforcement agencies and the business community; (b) the Policy and Regulations Department, which focuses on drafting and implementing policies for the division's management of foreign manpower; (c) the Well-Being Management Department, which focuses on the management and protection of foreign manpower; and (d) the Corporate Management Department, which supports the entire division in the area of office management.

Singapore has introduced several laws for the effective management of the employment of foreign manpower over the last few decades. Some of the relevant legislation includes the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA), Immigration Act, Employment Agencies Act, Employment of Foreign Workers (levy order), Employment of Foreign Workers (Fees) regulation, WP (consolidation) notification, Employment of foreign workers (security measures at workplace) notification. The MOM has been taking various steps to moderate the inflow and raise the quality of foreign human resources in Singapore. The latest amendments to the EFMA, which took effect from 2012, enhance the government's ability to ensure the integrity of the work pass framework. The amendments bolster the efforts to create sustainable and inclusive growth and ensure Singaporeans remain at the core of the workforce, ensure employers pay for the true costs of hiring foreign workers, create a level playing field for law-abiding employers, and stem the worst abuses against foreign workers.[7] While this legislation provides the legal framework for regulating the import, management, and return of foreign manpower, the administrative structure ensures the execution of foreign worker policies and programmes. Both contribute to the efficient management of foreign manpower in Singapore.

[7]Retrieved from Singapore Ministry of Manpower website.

Specific Policies Targeting Semi-skilled Foreign Workers

Semi-skilled foreign workers constitute the bulk of the foreign population in Singapore (Fig. 2.4). I describe various micro-aspects of policies for semi-skilled foreign workers below.

(i) ***Selection of Migrant Workers***
Singapore places priority on personal traits, especially skills and age, when it hires low-skilled foreign workers including domestic workers. Singapore has always encouraged the import of skilled migrant workers, even in the bottom-rung jobs, and has therefore favoured skilled migrant workers over unskilled ones. The Basic Skills Certificate (BSC) and SEC (Skills Evaluation Certificate) schemes were implemented in 1998 to raise the skills levels of the construction workforce. The BSC and SEC are certificates issued to NTS workers who have passed the required skills tests in their home country. The scheme sets a minimum skill standard (BSC) as an entry criterion for workers from NTS countries. In the case of foreign domestic workers, they must be at least 23 (up to 50) years old. In addition, they have to produce recognized educational certificates as documentary proof that they have had a minimum of eight years of formal education. With effect from 1 April 2005, all first-time foreign domestic workers are required to pass a written test within three working days of their arrival in Singapore. Foreign domestic workers who fail to pass the test within three working days are not issued a WP and must be repatriated (Foreign Domestic Worker Entry Test). Until recently, skills upgrading was available for male unskilled workers in different sectors. However, the government has recently introduced skills upgrading opportunities for foreign domestic workers in the area of elderly care. The Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Skills Training (FAST) is conducting an elementary course on elderly care for foreign domestic workers.

(ii) ***Approved Source Countries and sectors of economy***
From 1968 until the late 1970s, unskilled foreign workers were recruited mainly from neighbouring Malaysia, which is referred to as a traditional source (TS) country for Singapore. Owing to its geopolitical location and historical and ethnic links, Singapore privileges Malaysian nationals for work. In the late 1970s it was difficult to recruit unskilled labour from Malaysia. As a result, administrative measures were taken in 1978 to facilitate the limited importation of unskilled labour from NTS countries, which are Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. In addition, Singapore hires low-skilled foreign workers from two other sources: North Asian sources (NAS), which are Hong Kong (HKSAR passport), Macau, South Korea, and Taiwan; and People's Republic of China (PRC). Presently, the four sources—TS, NTS, NAS, and PRC—provide the low-skilled labour needed by Singapore.

While low-skilled workers from Malaysia are allowed to work in construction, manufacturing, marine, process, and services sectors, the NTS workers are generally allowed to work only in the construction, shipbuilding, and harbour craft industries. In other words, they are not usually allowed to work in services and manufacturing sectors. Low-skilled migrants from NAS countries and PRC are allowed to work in construction and almost all other non-construction sectors. The preference for low-skilled workers from TS, NAS, or PRC, over NTS, is probably a cultural consideration. There exists a fear among policy-makers that the presence of a large foreign worker population, whose culture and work ethos are distinctly different from those of the local workforce, may create social problems. The approved sources for foreign domestic workers are Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh. PRC and NAS nationals are not permitted to work in the domestic service sector. The exclusion of PRC and NAS nationals is probably due to the perceived fear of family disruption.

(iii) ***Foreign Worker Levy Scheme***

In the 1980s, Singapore devised a new immigration policy to control the inflow of foreign workers using a 'levy' price mechanism (Chew and Chew 1992; Fong 1992, 1993; Chew 1995). The levy puts a price on the employment of a foreign worker. The levy is paid monthly by the employer for each foreign worker employed, including domestic workers, and it is payable for the period the temporary WP is valid. It serves to moderate demand for foreign workers and to narrow the wage gap between local and foreign workers. The levy was first introduced in 1980, when a flat rate of S $230 was imposed on non-Malaysian workers employed in the construction sector (Hui 1992). The levy scheme was enlarged in 1982 to encompass all NTS workers and Malaysian block permit construction workers (Toh 1993: 5). Singapore has imposed a two-tier levy since 1992 (Low 1994: 254). In this two-tier system, the levy for a skilled worker is lower than that of an unskilled worker, which affirms Singapore's priority for comparatively skilled workers, even in the low-skilled foreign manpower category.

(iv) ***Dependency Ceiling***

Singapore introduced a dependency ceiling as an instrument to regulate the employment of foreign workers in 1987 (Toh 1993: 6). The dependency ceiling stipulates the proportion of foreign workers a firm can hire. Currently, all sectors except domestic service have a dependency ceiling. This prevents employers from relying too heavily on foreign workers at the expense of local employment. The ceiling has varied with economic conditions. For instance, in November 1988, to discourage employers from depending too heavily on foreign workers, the government reduced the maximum percentage of foreign workers in a firm from 50 to 40% (Pang 1994). Foreign workers hired above the existing dependency ceiling pay a higher levy. The higher levy goes towards ensuring that companies make

judicious use of foreign workers, and also narrows the wage gap between local and foreign workers.

(v) ***Employment Agencies***

As discussed earlier, Singapore has adopted a demand-driven system to hire low-skilled foreign workers, in which the process of introducing foreign workers begins when employers in Singapore request permission to employ foreign workers. In accordance with the Employment Agencies Act, Singapore allows licensed employment agencies to import and manage foreign workforces on behalf of employers. In addition to residency status in Singapore and the possession of the Certificate of Employment Agencies (CEA), the applicants for licensed employment agencies must furnish a security deposit of S$20,000 in the form of a banker's guarantee and must not have any record of previous court convictions (particularly under the Women's Charter, Children and Young Persons Act, Penal Code, Employment Agencies Act, and Employment of Foreign Workers Act). These strict measures help to ensure transparency in the recruitment process. There are around 1300 licensed recruiting agents to serve employers in Singapore.

(vi) ***Man-Year Entitlements***

The Man-Year Entitlement (MYE) allocation system is a WP allocation system for construction workers from the NTS countries and the PRC. The allocation formula has been used since April 1998, and each year there have been cutbacks. The number of foreign workers permitted to work in any construction project is determined by the MYE allocation formula. In general, when a project is higher in value, the contractor can hire more foreign workers. For example, if his entitlement is 100 'man-years', then he may have 100 men on one-year contracts, or 50 men on two-year contracts. The main contractor is allocated 'man-years' for a project. He can then distribute the MYEs to his subcontractors. MYEs are then converted into one or two-year WPs. The system is designed to give the main contractors better control over the allocation of foreign workers and greater responsibilities over foreign worker management by their subcontractors.

(vii) ***Responsibility of Employers***

During a foreign worker's employment in Singapore, the employer is generally responsible for: (a) paying the foreign worker levy; (b) arranging for the worker to be certified medically fit and free from contagious diseases and drug addition by a Singapore-registered doctor, when requested by the Controller of WPs; (c) ensuring that the worker does not engage in any form of freelancing arrangements or self-employment; (d) providing basic terms and conditions of employment as stipulated in the Employment Act; (e) resolving all employment-related disputes with the worker amicably; (f) providing workman's compensation for the worker; and (g) sending the worker to a safety

orientation course, if the worker is a construction worker.[8] For a non-Malaysian worker, the employer is also responsible for (a) the upkeep, maintenance, and cost of the worker's eventual repatriation; (b) providing adequate housing; (c) putting up a S$5000 security bond; and (d) buying a personal accident insurance with a minimum coverage of S$10,000, if the worker is a foreign domestic worker. The employer should ensure the worker's welfare and interests are well looked after. These include non-statutory requirements such as proper orientation, medical care, hospitalization expenses, and providing for the worker's social and recreational needs.

(viii) ***Termination of Work permit (WP)***

Singapore follows strict rules to reduce the social and economic costs of using foreign manpower, and violation of these rules may result in the cancellation of the WP and immediate repatriation. The WP Division of MOM revokes a worker's permit when he or she violates WP provisions. The violations include: (a) changing job or engaging in occupations other than those specified in the WP; (b) engaging or participating in any business or behaving as a self-employed person; (c) deserting the workplace; (d) becoming pregnant (in the case of domestic workers), contracting venereal diseases or being certified by a Singapore registered doctor as medically unfit; (e) marrying a Singaporean without the prior approval of the Controller. The foreign worker is obliged to return his or her WP and leave Singapore within seven days of the termination of service. However, foreign workers who have pending salary or compensation claims or are required as prosecution witnesses are usually issued special passes by the Ministry for a limited period, to allow them to remain in Singapore. They are also allowed to work during this period.

(ix) ***Prevention of Irregular Migration***

Unlike other host countries in the region, Singapore is relatively free from irregular labour migrants, due to the government's strong crackdown on irregular employment. Singapore has enacted several laws to penalize irregular migrants, users (employers of irregular migrants), and human smugglers. The Employment of Foreign Workers Act came into effect in 1991 and puts a check on illegal migrants, by punishing employers caught employing foreigners illegally (Toh 1993). Under the Employment of Foreign Workers Act, any person caught employing foreigners without valid permits is liable to be charged in court. A first-time offender faces a minimum fine, equivalent to two years of the foreign worker levy, and a maximum fine of up to four years' levy for each foreign worker, or imprisonment of up to one year, or both. Besides stepping up enforcement actions, the Ministry has also intensified its efforts to educate employers and foreign workers on employment and immigration rules and regulations, so that they can play their part to minimize such offences.

[8]Retrieved from Ministry of Manpower, Singapore, on the 9th March 2015 website: www.mom.gov.sg.

Pathways of Professional, Skilled, and Semi-skilled Foreigners

Singapore's foreigner employment policy is linked to its population policy: that is, a limited number from the non-resident population is regularly offered PR status and later citizenship. However, the option for PR is not open to all categories of foreign manpower; only the professional and skilled foreigners are encouraged to apply for PR status. The criteria for offering permanent residency are not publicly known; however, it is broadly believed that potential for economic contribution, demography, duration of stay in Singapore, and cultural compatibility are considered when permanent residency is offered to a non-resident foreigner. Since the number of applications for potential permanent residency is several times higher than the numbers of new PRs that government is willing to accept annually, many applications for permanent residences are turned down, especially so in the last few years. During its peak, nearly 80,000 non-resident foreigners were offered permanent residencies in 2008. There is no annual quota for offering permanent residences and citizenships to foreigners. At present, roughly 25,000–40,000 foreigners are offered permanent residencies in a year (Fig. 2.2).

The journey from permanent residence to citizenship is even more restrictive. A few years after receiving permanent residency, PRs who are willing to take up Singaporean citizenship are encouraged to apply. There are always more applicants for citizenship than the numbers of new citizens that the government is willing to accept annually. As a result, a limited number of PRs are accepted as citizens. At present, roughly 15,000–25,000 PRs are offered citizenships in a year. Professionals and skilled foreigners who could not become PRs or do not want to be PRs are eligible to work on extensions of current EP and S passes, assuming that they have regular jobs in Singapore. If they lose their jobs they are asked to leave. Figure 2.3 provides the pathways of professionals and skilled foreigners in Singapore. On the other hand, the future of low-skilled foreigners is straightforward; they are hired to work for a definite period and upon the expiry of WPs they are to return to their country of origin (Fig. 2.4). However, they are encouraged to earn multiple skills and work in Singapore for up to 22 years. However, this extended stay is subject to the availability of jobs.

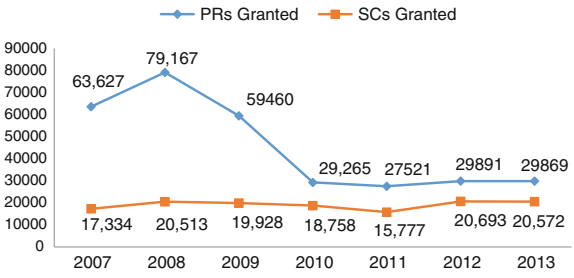

Fig. 2.2 Number of Singapore citizens and permanent residents granted, 2007–2013

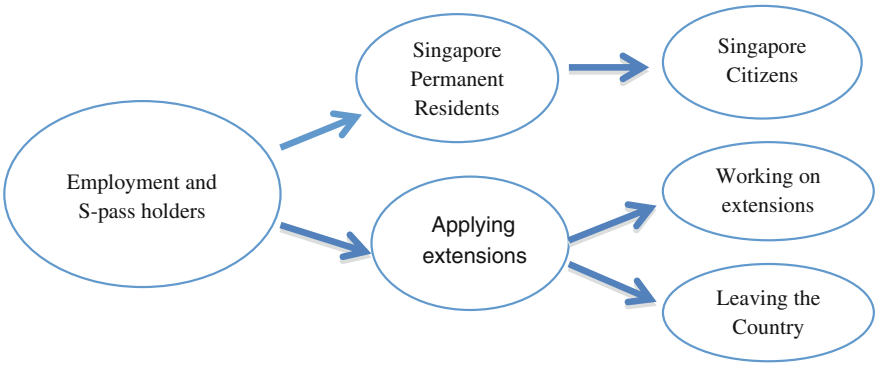

Fig. 2.3 Pathways of professional and skilled migrants in Singapore

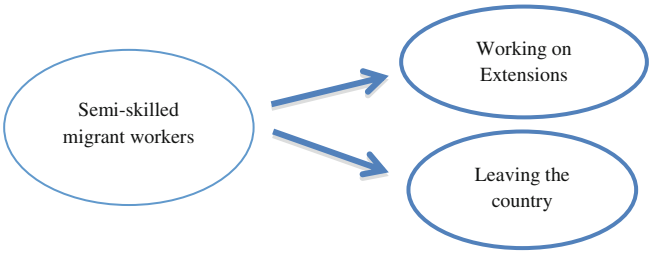

Fig. 2.4 Pathways of semi-skilled migrant workers in Singapore

Integration of Immigrants and Emigrants into the Singapore Society

In addition to the two troubling trends noted earlier—that is, a rapidly ageing population and an extremely low reproduction rate—Singapore also faces another worrying trend, which is the emigration of its nationals. According to a recent report, over 212,000 Singapore citizens or nearly 6.3% of the citizen population are living overseas and the proportion of overseas Singaporean population is increasing every year (Fig. 2.5).[9] Opening the doors to immigrants and wooing overseas Singaporeans home remain the key strategies to tackle the population challenge and ensure continued economic prosperity in the country. However, it is important to note that Singapore has also taken various strategies to encourage Singaporean couples to have more babies, and a few billion dollars are spent on pro-family and procreation programs annually—but such programmes have not produced the desired outcomes over the years. As a result, Singapore seems to have focused more

[9]Population in Brief, 2014: http://www.nptd.gov.sg/portals/0/homepage/highlights/population-in-brief-2014.pdf.

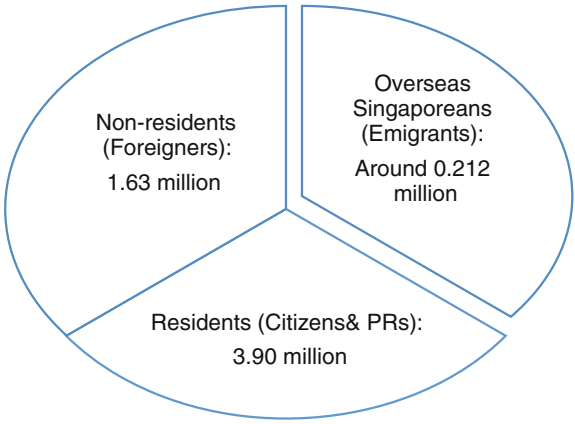

Fig. 2.5 Non-residents, residents and overseas Singaporeans

on immigration and emigration in order to find a solution to the population decline. The dependence on immigration and emigration has led to the development of sophisticated migration policies targeting migration control and migrant integration or incorporation issues. Thus far, we have discussed migration control policies, leaving aside issues related to how immigrants and emigrants are integrated into Singapore society. Considering the relevance to this present study, in this section I briefly discuss Singapore's integration policy.

In 2012, Tong Chee Kiong and myself published a paper entitled "Integration Policy in Singapore: A Transnational Inclusion Approach" in *Asian Ethnicity* journal, where we argued that the existing integration models do not adequately capture the complexities of contemporary immigration, emigration, and integration, especially in the context of growing migrant transnationalism (Rahman and Kiong 2012). The paper introduced a new concept of 'transnational inclusion' to conceptualize Singapore's initiative to embrace transnational overseas Singaporeans as well as transnational immigrants. We noted that Singapore has devised a transnational inclusion policy, due to its immigration legacy, by allowing its huge immigrant and emigrant population to remain transnational (Rahman and Kiong 2012).

We noticed that immigration is often conceptualized in terms of two dominant modes: temporary and permanent immigration. As a result, the integration of immigrants into the core of a receiving country has been explained so far by four models of integration: namely, differential exclusion, assimilation, pluralism, and trans-state spaces (for details, see Faist 1997; Entzinger 2000; Castles 2002; Joppke and Morawska 2003; Rahman and Kiong 2012). While most immigration and settlement experiences fit into one of these models and often into a combination of them, increasingly important groups such as transnational emigrants and transnational immigrants do not. Castles argues that changes brought by globalization are undermining all the modes of controlling difference premised on territoriality (Castles 2002). These changes have led to debates on the significance of transnationalism as new modes of migrant belonging. Transnational migrants are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory. They therefore present a powerful challenge to national models of integration.

While national integration models such as differential exclusion, assimilation, and multiculturalism, or 'trans-state spaces' focus on communities who are living within the container of nation states or cross-border spaces, our proposed model of 'transnational inclusion' includes both transnational emigrants and transnational immigrants, the group which is 'leaving for' and 'living in' other countries. Our transnational inclusion model is close to the 'differential exclusion' model. In the differential exclusion model, migrants are integrated temporarily into the labour market but excluded from others. In Singapore, foreign professionals and skilled migrants are allowed to marry locals or bring their immediate 'dependents' to Singapore, and allowed to become PRs and citizens over time. In fact, they are the primary source of PRs and future citizens in Singapore. Apart from this, over one million semi-skilled migrant workers who are encouraged to live and work here up for to 22 years are managed in such a way (e.g., visiting home countries, maintaining families in home countries, remitting to families, etc.) that they are simultaneously rooted in both societies, a phenomenon popularly called 'transnationalism' (Levitt and Nyberg-Soerensen 2004). In addition to the overseas Singaporeans (on account of their extraterritorial nature), the differential exclusion model does not thus adequately capture the complexities of the integration of the current transnational immigrant population in Singapore.

Singapore has devised proactive policies and programs to connect to its population overseas. Singapore has launched outreach initiatives in which citizens and residents of Singapore overseas, that is global Singaporeans or Singaporean emigrants, are contacted and encouraged to maintain strong transnational ties with Singapore. In doing so, Singapore has set up the Overseas Singapore Unit (OSU) under the Prime Minister Office (PMO) to attract global Singaporeans. The OSU is playing a key role in facilitating stays overseas and connecting global Singaporeans into Singapore society. Key initiatives to engage overseas Singaporeans include platforms such as the Overseas Singaporean Portal and overseas Singaporean clubs, as well as outreach events such as Singapore Day and the Distinguished Business Leaders Series. Singapore imposes no restriction on exit or emigration. Singapore citizens and PRs are allowed to leave the country with or without cancellation of memberships (citizenships or PR status) in Singapore. Envisioning the migration (emigration and immigration) as a transnational phenomenon rather than a once off event at the top level of policy making has made the case of Singapore different from some immigrant countries (Rahman and Kiong 2012). Singapore has also rightly realized that integrating migrants into the different spheres of society is a process rather than an end. The policy measures that have been devised to address the different groups of non-resident and resident populations are transparent and pragmatic. It is the integration of foreign and home-grown talent and the efficient management of low-skilled migrants that have allowed the country to enjoy decades of sustained economic growth. Singapore sets an example for other countries in the region and beyond.

Chapter 3
Social Imperatives of Labour Migration

The distinctive feature of contemporary intra-regional migration in Asia is that the volumes and directions of migration are relatively stable and sustained. The structural demand for migrant labour and the emergence of increasingly transnational forms of migration make labour migration an inherently dynamic, location-specific phenomenon. This is particularly true for Bangladeshi migration to Singapore. Migrants, non-migrants, and their families are linked to one another in the migration source communities, and migration stories are often central to routine everyday discussions in the *baris*. Topics such as who is leaving for which country, who will be returning soon, who is getting married to a migrant family, who is buying what with remittances, how frequently migrants call home, which school migrants' children are attending—all are recurrent topics for discussion in migration-source communities. The ability of migration to motivate individuals to undertake migration, to improve their life chances, and thus to influence ways of life in the *baris*, merit scholarly attention. This chapter focuses in particular on the social imperatives of migration, by highlighting the changes in traditional status-claim tools, the emergence of social status and relative status across migration lines, the geographical imaginations of non-migrants and migrants, the changes in the cultural notion of work, and finally the diminishing role of education vis-à-vis the power of migration.

Migration occurrence ascends from family, *bari*, and village to larger administrative areas such as *union parishad* (a collection of a number of villages ranging from four to nine or more villages, a local government body), *upazilas* (a collection of a number of *union parishads*, a basic administrative unit), or districts (a collection of a number of *upazilas*, a key administrative unit) (Table 3.1). Focusing on migrant and non-migrant families, *baris*, and villages, this chapter demonstrates that a location-specific migration research approach has the potential to offer rich insights into the social underpinnings of migration in the sending societies. Empirically, this research draws on fieldwork conducted at Gurail village in Tangail district and at Munshiganj Sadar in Munshiganj district. Both research sites are major migration source locations for Singapore; migrants from both districts started

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Table 3.1 Summary of spatial and social groupings in rural Bangladesh (ascending order)

Units	Typical size (in rural Bangladesh)	Functions (major functions as per rural Bangladesh)
Ghar (family)	2–10 individuals	Shared living space and eating unit; conjugal unit, fertility decision, land ownership, labour and income pooling
Bari (collection of families)	5–50 individuals 2–10 families/*ghars*	Social and geographic unit, usually; kin connected; social support; domestic activities; shared compound and common areas
Gusti (lineage)	Usually consists of several hundred individuals	Connected by patrilineal ties, social supports, maintains prestige and honour
Samaj (society)	Usually consists of several hundreds or even thousand individuals. Usually for several hundred families	Maintains proper behaviour, administers *salish* (village court)
Para (neighbourhood)	Usually hundred or thousand individuals; do not totally overlap with *samaj*	Physical unit; also unit of social support and identify
Gram (village)	Usually several thousand individuals and consists of usually several *paras*	Physical unit, uncertain boundaries, some social support and identity, if village is large, then para is more important identity within the village unit
Union (collection of a few villages)	Thousands of individuals and several villages	Political unit; holds elections for lowest level of government
Thana/Upazila (administrative Unit)	Consists of several unions	Arranges local government functions, tax collection, police force, college, major market, hospitals
Zila districts	Several thanas/Upazilas	Major government functions, unit of social and cultural identity for inhabitants (migrants)

Note This table is adopted from Kuhn (1999)

to join the labour market in Singapore in the early 1990s. When I first interviewed Bangladeshi migrants for my research in Singapore in the late 1990s, I noticed that a large number of them hailed from these two districts. Later, I travelled to Bangladesh to conduct fieldwork in these two districts, visiting them several times over the past two decades. However, here I focus on presenting recent findings from a village study in Tangail district and a survey of 50 migrant *baris* in Munshiganj district.

Social Organizations in a Bangladeshi Village

Bangladeshi labour migration to Singapore is predominantly a rural phenomenon. For instance, a Bangladeshi worker survey in Singapore revealed that around 84% of migrants were of rural origin, while the remaining 16% hailed from small- and medium-sized cities in Bangladesh. It is thus primarily rural young people who are increasingly queuing up to migrate internationally for work. Considering the pervasiveness of migration from rural societies, I chose to look into migration source villages in order to explore the social imperatives underlying migration in Bangladeshi society. Gurail village in Tangail district is a typical migration source location. In this village study I interviewed 50 migrant families, as well as five non-migrant families; the latter was intended to help me understand the status of families who could not join the Singapore labour market.

I categorized migrant families in the village into *self-employed* or *wage-employed*. One of the characteristics of self-employed families is that such families do not usually sell their labour for money in their own community, since it is not prestigious to sell one's own labour in the local labour market. Wage-employed families, meanwhile, will indeed sell their labour for wages. The surveyed migrant households were predominantly engaged in self-employment (e.g., farming, informal economic activities, and traditional lineage occupations of their own). Around sixty-four per cent of migrant families were found to be engaged in self-employment while four per cent were engaged in wage-employment. The remaining thirty-two per cent families were not engaged in any economic activity; they had no working members in their families at the time of interview. Prior to migrating, fourteen per cent of families had no cultivable land and twenty per cent had 151–400 decimal land. A family of six to eight members needs around 400–500 decimal arable land for subsistence living in this area.[1] Thus, it is safe to assume that all migrant families were short of the quantity of land needed for subsistence living.

In the migrant families surveyed, ninety-two per cent of respondents were returnees and the remaining eight per cent were senior family members. Returnees were mainly first-time migrants who had not been able to renew their work permits in Singapore after the first contract period. Migrants usually cannot recoup their financial outlays in their first migration. Those who are able to renew their contracts stay in Singapore, and are considered relatively successful migrants from the family perspective. Around three quarters of returnees had experienced financial loss from their migration, that is, they had not made enough money to repay the debt they had incurred to undertake it. What is interesting about overseas migration in the village is that these returnees, who had not made any money from their first journey, were planning to migrate to Singapore again rather than seek work in the locality,

[1]The fertility of the land depends on geographical location. Villagers in Gurail reported that a family of six to eight members would need between 400 and 500 decimal land for subsistence living.

suggesting the presence of powerful social forces that induce not only first-time migration but also remigration.

Among the five non-migrant families identified in the village and interviewed, the first family had six daughters and no sons. The head of the family was unhappy about having so many daughters, since he could not send them to Singapore for employment. The second family intended to send members to Singapore soon. The third and fourth families were too poor to arrange the financial costs of migration. However, the fourth family had found the solution to this by marrying off the elder son for a higher dowry. The last family had had only one son after around eleven years of marriage. This son was only seventeen years old, and for emotional reasons the parents did not want to send their long-awaited child overseas.

Table 3.1 provides a summary of spatial and social groupings in Rural Bangladesh. To explain the context under which decisions to migrate are made, I briefly discuss different types of social groupings in Gurail village. This is important because the socio-cultural forces—particularly those that affect or are affected by the international migration of labour—act through these social groupings. I elaborate Gurail's social groupings because these broadly represent the social groupings of most villages in Bangladesh. Gurail's major social groups include the *paribar* (family), *gusthi* (lineage), and *samaj* (community). These parallel the physical divisions of *ghar* (home), *bari* (collection of families), and *para* (hamlet or locality) (for details about village social organization in Bangladesh, see Bertocci 1972; Arens and Beurden 1977; Aziz 1979; Rahman 1986; Jensen 1987; Rozario 1992; Wood 1994; Kuhn 1999).

The most basic grouping is the family, most often referred to in rural Bangladesh as the *ghar* (home). The family can be defined as a group that shares property and eats together from the same hearth (Rozario 1992; Amin 1998; Kuhn 2003). The family is the basic structural unit between the individual, his/her *bari*, *gusthi* (lineage) and kinship networks, and the wider *samaj* (community) (Wood 1994). In the sample, 30% of migrants were from nuclear families and the rest from extended families. The heads of families (*ghar murubbi*) exercise power and authority in family affairs. Family members traditionally follow decisions taken by the head of the family. Family heads not only decide about family affairs, but also pay for the expenses needed to effect various decisions, including migration, which eventually puts them at the centre of the decision-making process.

The second important social group is the *bari*, which usually stands for a group of families sharing the same courtyard. *Bari* in Bangladeshi society is a meso-level spatial group situated between family and village. Since inheritance is patrilineal, a male member heads a *bari* and the head of the *bari* is usually the eldest. The role of the family head is to show loyalty to the head of the *bari.* Such loyalty from members is essential if the *bari* is to enjoy respect in larger social groups such as the *para* or *samaj*. Individuals are known to the outside world as members of particular *bari* or lineage. The names of some *baris* in greater Gurail are *Mia Bari*, *Molla Bari*, *Mirdda Bari*, *Munshi Bari*, *Sikder Bari*, and *Haolader Bari*. Usually the name of the lineage is the name of the *bari*; however, sometimes members of the *bari* may substitute new names for the lineage-based names, based on members'

outstanding achievements. For example, certain *baris* in this village and neighbouring villages are known as Singapore *bari*, Malaysia *Bari*, and Saudi *Bari*. This means that someone from those *baris* must have migrated to Singapore, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia. Thus, international migration functions as a source of new identity for oneself and one's family and *bari*.

In general, *baris* are components of a larger group such as the *gusthi* or *para*. In Bangladesh, different terms are used for 'lineage,' for example, *bangsho* or *gusthi*, depending on the region. In Gurail, people use both *gusti* and *bangsho*, referring to the group of kin who trace their descent from one male ancestor. *Para* is a spatial grouping that means neighbourhood. The *para* functions as a social basis for support and for sharing lands and common resources. The notion of *kartoba* (duty) is important in the local ideology of kinship and neighbourhood, and connotes that wherever possible, support and economic help is given to *gusti* and *para* members if they are in need. Thus, within the *gusthi* and *para* a certain degree of reciprocity is common, and prospective migrants may reap the benefits when they are in need.

Claiming Social Status: From Traditional Tools to New Tools

Social status designates a position in the general institutional system, which is recognized and supported by the entire society (Homans 1961). The social status of the individual, family, and *bari* is of tremendous importance in rural Bangladesh, as the rural people take social position into account in day-to-day social interactions. Villagers are status-conscious because fundamental values of honour (*sanman*) and shame (*lazza*) can make a difference to their life chances. Competition among individuals, families, and *baris* for higher social status occurs across social divisions and within a framework of commonly shared values where honour and shame occupy the central position. Rather than being dominated solely by economic standing or hereditary rank, there are several analytically distinct measures of status, which people use according to different contexts. Landownership, birth, education, and the presence of wealthy and powerful kin are all interrelated and influence the individual's life chances and the strategies he can employ. In this section, I discuss the traditional tools for status claims in rural Bangladesh and show how migration has become a new tool for such claims in this society.

Social status in a Bangladeshi village goes beyond class in the Marxist sense. The Marxist usage of 'class' refers to the relationship to the means of production, which involves those who own and control the means of production and those who do not. In Gurail, although many villagers are landless and earn their living by working outside the family, the situation there is unlikely to give birth to a pure market situation where the buying and selling of labour as a commodity can take place. The poorer families in Gurail depend upon their richer relatives for support; and individuals from different economic classes never perceive themselves as

belonging to different class strata. This is already well documented in Bangladesh, where observers have pointed out that patronage and vertical lineage solidarity prevent class consciousness from developing (see, for example, Rozario 1992: 50; Jensen 1987: 300; Islam 1974). For all these reasons, social status in Gurail is more significant than social class.

Social actors may claim status as individuals and as members of families, lineages, communities, and other collectivities. Therefore, one's status may vary depending on personal accomplishment, family reputation, connections, resources, and the status groups of which one claims membership. Individuals' conformity to norms and their adherence to group goals or values constitute the most important bases concerning how others evaluate their social status. Status is associated with families or lineages/*bari*, and any incompatible behaviour of any member of the family or lineage endangers the status of the whole family, *bari*, and lineage. As a result, the family and *bari* have authority (traditional) to put pressure on members to comply with the traditions and practices of the *bari* or lineage. Noncompliance to this tradition and practice leads to humiliation for the individual, his family, and his *bari*. Regular meetings/conversation between the heads of the families and the head of the *bari* often end with renewing the commitment to fulfilling social responsibilities that may restore/preserve the *bari's* prestige.

Broadly, I identified three sets of social classifications. In everyday life, divisions by which the villagers identify themselves refer to distinctions based on blood. Villagers differentiate between *uccho gusthi* (high lineage) and *nicho gusthi* (low lineage). One main characteristic of *uccho gusthi* is that people of *uccho gusthi* do not work in other people's houses or on their land. However, people of *nicho gusthi* are less concerned with these restrictions. Compared to this blood-based social classification, two other kinds of social divisions are less rigid. They are *baralok* (rich) and *chhotolok* (poor), and *bhalomanush* (literally 'good people') and *chhotomanush* (literally, 'small people') (found also in other regions by Thorp 1978: 40; Rozario 1992: 61). The term *baralok* is used to refer to both persons of wealth and person of high status, while *chhotolok* is used for person of little wealth and no status.

Although social mobility is limited in Gurail, it is not impossible. A certain amount of dynamism exists because the individual's position in society is not rigidly determined by birth—contrary to what is the case among Hindus (Dumont 1980). Individuals from both *uccho gusthi* or *bhalamanush* and *nicho gusthi* or *chhotomanush* join together in overseas employment, and people have a higher esteem for those who have been employed overseas regardless of the nature of work one does there. In recent years, migration has been viewed increasingly as leverage for making status claims. With the changes in the villagers' attitude towards status, international migration has emerged as a viable avenue to achieve high status, particularly among families who would have otherwise remained invisible in the social standing. Now these individuals can find a way to consolidate their status position through migration. These changes do not, of course, mean that hereditary status is of less importance than before; however, my contention is that Gurail has

become more open to the outside world, and, for villagers, achieved status has displaced ascribed status on the centre stage.

Villagers' perceptions of and attitudes towards international migration reflects the fact that migration to Singapore has undermined other traditional means of claiming status. For example, even individuals who possess a high educational background or who hold land and businesses of their own have queued up for overseas employment.[2] Migration is viewed as a viable option which is open to all villagers, irrespective of class and traditional status boundaries. The impact of out-migration is so overwhelming that, in some cases, and as we saw above, villagers address a *bari* by a new name that stems from the destination to which individuals have migrated, rather than the traditional name based on lineage.[3] All these changes suggest that international migration for work has surfaced as a powerful status claim tool in such societies.

However, migration has not only become a status claim tool, but is also a signpost for relative status with respect to some specific reference group. Migrants were often proud of their migration experiences, procurement of overseas goods, and fulfillment of responsibilities such as marrying off sisters by spending a large amount of cash, as measured by the standards of rural Bangladesh. Migrants (returnees) tend to claim elevated status in the peer/*bari* hierarchy by referring to their achievements as migrant sons, brothers, or husbands. In formal and informal discussion with different groups, migrants' frequent references to their distinct experiences overseas (Singapore) often place them at the centre of attraction and reinforces their newly acquired migration status in the wider community.

In general, the act of migration is affected by the extent of an individual's dissatisfaction with his position in groups such as the *bari*, and with his group's position in yet large groupings (for example, inter-*bari*). Relative status propels migration in a group situation like the *bari* when the families in different groups (*bari*, *para*, lineage, inter-*bari*, or inter-*para*) fall into two subgroups: those who have access to overseas work and those who lack it. The latter strongly feel deprived of status, relative to the former. Consequently, the latter have strong motivation to gain status through migration. This is the case because international migration is itself a status symbol, and undergoing the migration experience makes a difference to one's status. Thus, the relative status argument is built first on the notion that people are engaged in interpersonal status comparisons, which are internalized, thus generating a sense of relative status. Second, viewing migration as an act of choice, the premise builds on the notion that relative status influences locational decisions at the level of the *bari*, and at inter-*bari* level.

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[2]I have found several cases where siblings of local political and economic elites have had experience of Singapore migration. Other returnees, although usually from the lowest social ladder, see them as belonging to their own category.

[3]The Malaysian *bari* at the *uttar para* is the best example of such a case. Previously this *bari* received little attention from other villagers. One of the members of this *bari* went to Malaysia and later assisted several of his cousins to migrate there. This made the *bari* unique in the village, and gradually villagers have started referring to it as the Malaysian *bari*.

For instance, there are seven families in *Noya bari* at Gurail village, and all of them have migration experiences. When I looked at the migration patterns in *Noya bari*, I found that the migration opportunity came first to Family 1, then to Family 2, and gradually to other families. Other families took advantage of the opportunity to migrate later. In-depth interviews reveal that after the migration by members of Family 1, other families felt increasing pressure to send their members overseas (as we have seen in the case of Kauser Sikder). The pressure mounted when Family 1 and Family 3 acquired noticeable status-offering goods such as refrigerators, colour televisions and Singaporean gold ornaments for their female members. All these new acquisitions shook up the long-held status positions in this *Noya bari*. Subsequently, members from other non-migrant families gradually responded to this rising status gap, actual or perceived, by migrating to various countries, a phenomenon explained further in the next section.

Relative Social Status: A Crucial Sending-End Factor

People's perceptions of overseas work have undergone radical change over the decades: we have seen shifts from short-term migration to long-term migration, from on-off migration to circular and transnational migration, migration for work to migration for business, migration for target incomes to migration for continued incomes, and finally from migration as a short-term option to migration as a permanent career. These transformations in the perceptions of migration among ordinary rural people in Bangladesh reflect the reality of the varied outcomes of migration for individual migrants and their families and *baris*. Migration has affected social and economic processes within rural societies in such a way that it is now widely accepted as a status claim tool. This section discusses how absolute and relative social status position in the social order brings about the occurrence of migration in Bangladeshi society. I argue that family members undertake migration not only to enhance the social standing of family and *bari*, but also to improve the social standing of family and *bari* with respect to some specific reference group, for instance, other migrant families and *baris*. People's desire to have higher social status through migration as well as their unequal social status vis-à-vis other migrant families and *baris* generate an ever-increasing number of potential migrants who are ready to migrate internationally for work (Picture 3.1).

In a traditional society such as Bangladesh, social status and relative social status have significant potential to explain the causes of migration, because they are of great significance in determining people's life chances. More importantly, they relate the occurrence of migration to the sending- or origin-end factor for the initiation of migration, and thus have potential to contribute to a sociological explanation of migration. For example, it offers a sociological explanation for one of the most widely observed phenomena of migration—the tendency for the process of migration to become self-perpetuating. The received sociological explanation is that once migration from a given sending community begins, there are good reasons

Picture 3.1 A migrant *bari* in Munshiganj

for it to continue because of the emergence of migrant networks that lower the transaction costs and increase the benefits of migration. Until now, sociologists have largely attributed the self-sustaining nature of migrant flows and their persistence after economic incentives have disappeared to the emergence of social networks, a tool which seeks to explain migration perpetuation through destination-end features. In fact, there has been long-standing interest in migrants' social networks and their role in migrants' labour market outcomes (e.g., access to jobs, career mobility, and social mobility) and the settlement process in the destination country (Boyd 1989; Faist 2000). Thus, there is a lack of any sociological explanation focusing on sending-end factors for the initiation of migration.

The popular economic argument is that the presence of friends and relatives at the receiving end provide information, and protect against the initial high risks associated with migration, thus giving reason to sustain the migration flow (Stark 1991). These explanations focus on the potential contributions that migration may make to the absolute income of the individual or the family. Later, an improved version of this economic explanation, given by Stark (1984, 1991), argued that family members undertake migration not necessarily to increase the family's absolute income, but rather to improve the family's position (in terms of relative deprivation) with respect to a specific reference group (Stark 1991). The basic premises of relative deprivation[4] are two-fold: (a) "given a person's own income,

[4]The relative deprivation theory has been applied to several fields in order to model social behaviour (see Crosby 1979). Stark (1991) elaborated and modified the theory for use in areas of rural–urban and international migration.

his satisfaction or deprivation is some function of income statistics other than this income and (b) migration is undertaken in order to improve a person's position in terms of the latter statistic" (Stark 1991: 135). Economic explanations hence seek to account for the sending-end of the self-perpetuating migration phenomenon.

Thus, in the received theory the tendency toward perpetuation of migration is explained by a receiving-end factor—the paucity or possession of crucial destination-specific capital, as in the sociological explanation (Da Vanzo and Morrison 1981)—or a sending-end factor—relative deprivation, as in the economic explanation (Stark 1991). While the economic explanation seeks to account for both the initiation and perpetuation of migration by highlighting the sending-end factors (e.g., incomes and relative deprivation) and the destination-end factors (e.g., information sharing, risk-minimizing), the sociological explanation primarily offers a receiving-end factor, that is, the paucity or possession of crucial destination-specific migration capital, leaving a gap in the sociological understanding of initiation of migration based on the sending-end factors. Concepts like 'social status' and 'relative social status' are expected to fill the void in the existing knowledge. I demonstrate how relative status can contribute to the initiation of migration in the following discussion by highlighting migration dynamics at the *bari* level.

We noted in the preceding sections that a village-level study provides interesting insights into the complexities of migration occurrence. However, and as already remarked, I realized in the research process that, between the village and the migrant house, there is another crucial spatial group called *bari* that merits theoretical attention in explaining migration occurrence. In the fieldwork process, I saw that some migrant *baris* in a village have more migrants than some other *baris*, and the potential migration in the village must be understood in relation to the migration occurrence at the *bari* level because the *bari* plays the central role in choosing and channelling potential migrants overseas. This is because migrant *baris* are seen as a unit for local class, status, and power claims. This section draws from interviews of 50 selected migrant *baris* in Munshiganj district. Table 3.2 presents an overview of these 50 *baris* in relation to numbers of migrant families, non-migrant families, and migrant members in the *bari*, and years and countries of their first migration. Migrant *baris* are those *baris* that have at least one member overseas. In the 50 migrant *baris* surveyed, there was at least one member from each *bari* who had been working in Singapore or returned from Singapore after working a certain period. As mentioned earlier, migrant *baris* consisted of both migrant families and non-migrant families. In total, 165 families including migrant and non-migrant families are found to live in the surveyed *baris*. On average, each migrant *bari* had 3.3 families. Of the 165 families, 104 families are migrant families and the remaining 61 are non-migrant families. In other words, nearly two-thirds of the families are migrant families in the surveyed migrant *baris*. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of socio-demographic profiles of migrant baries for further convenience (Picture 3.2).

As the village study suggests, more individuals tend to migrate from migrant *baris* than non-migrant *baris*. On average, in each surveyed migrant *bari* there were

Table 3.2 Profiles of 50 migrant *baris* in Munshiganj district

No of *Bari*	Migrant families in *Bari*	Non-migrant families in *Bari*	Total families in *Baris*	Total migrants in *Bari*	Years of first migration from *Bari*	Countries of first migration of *Bari* members
Bari-1	3	0	3	5	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2005 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2012 5th migrant 2012	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant South Korea 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia 4th migrant Singapore 5th migrant Italy
Bari-2	1	2	3	2	1st migrant 2013 2nd migrant 2014	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-3	2	1	3	3	1st migrant 2008 2nd migrant 2010 3rd migrant 2013	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-4	2	2	4	3	1st migrant 2009 2nd migrant 2010 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-5	1	2	3	1	1st migrant 2007	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-6	1	2	3	1	1st migrant 2013	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-7	1	2	3	1	1st migrant 2013	1st migration Singapore
Bari-8	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 2005 2nd migrant 2007	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-9	3	0	3	3	1st migrant 1999 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2010	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-10	3	0	3	4	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2008 3rd migrant 2010 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 3.2 (continued)

No of *Bari*	Migrant families in *Bari*	Non-migrant families in *Bari*	Total families in *Baris*	Total migrants in *Bari*	Years of first migration from *Bari*	Countries of first migration of *Bari* members
Bari-11	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 1992 2nd migrant 2008	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant South Africa
Bari-12	3	0	3	4	1st migrant 1994 2nd migrant 1996 3rd migrant 1999 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-13	3	0	3	4	1st migrant 2011 2nd migrant 2011 3rd migrant 2011 4th migrant 2013	1st migrant Maldives 2nd migrant Italy 3rd migrant Italy 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-14	1	2	3	2	1st migrant 1997 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-15	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 1994 2nd migrant 2005	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Italy
Bari-16	1	3	4	1	1st migrant 2007	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-17	3	0	3	4	1st migrant 2006 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2009 4th migrant 2012	1st migrant Malaysia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-18	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 1999 2nd migrant 2002	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-19	3	2	5	3	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2004 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-20	1	2	3	1	1st migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-21	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 2011 2nd migrant 2014	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 3.2 (continued)

No of *Bari*	Migrant families in *Bari*	Non-migrant families in *Bari*	Total families in *Baris*	Total migrants in *Bari*	Years of first migration from *Bari*	Countries of first migration of *Bari* members
Bari-22	2	3	5	4	1st migrant 2006 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2009 4th migrant 2010	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia 4th migrant Saudi Arabia
Bari-23	4	1	5	4	1st migrant 1993 2nd migrant 2003 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2012	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Saudi Arabia 3rd migrant UAE 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-24	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 2010 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant UAE
Bari-25	3	1	4	4	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2005 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2009	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant UAE 3rd migrant Malaysia 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-26	3	0	3	3	1st migrant 1991 2nd migrant 2011 3rd migrant 2013	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-27	3	0	3	3	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2009	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant South Africa 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-28	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 1994 2nd migrant 2002	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-29	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 1996 2nd migrant 2009	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-30	1	2	3	1	1st migrant 2014	1st migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 3.2 (continued)

No of *Bari*	Migrant families in *Bari*	Non-migrant families in *Bari*	Total families in *Baris*	Total migrants in *Bari*	Years of first migration from *Bari*	Countries of first migration of *Bari* members
Bari-31	4	1	5	4	1st migrant 2006 2nd migrant 2008 3rd migrant 2009 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-32	3	0	3	5	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2004 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2008 5th migrant 2013	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Saudi Arabia 5th migrant Italy
Bari-33	2	1	3	3	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2011 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant Malaysia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia
Bari-34	1	2	3	1	1st migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-35	2	1	3	4	1st migrant 2009 2nd migrant 2009 3rd migrant 2010 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant France 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant France
Bari-36	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 2007 2nd migrant 2007	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Malaysia
Bari-37	1	2	3	2	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2006	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Italy
Bari-38	2	1	3	3	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2010 3rd migrant 2011	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-39	2	2	4	2	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2005	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Italy

(continued)

Table 3.2 (continued)

No of *Bari*	Migrant families in *Bari*	Non-migrant families in *Bari*	Total families in *Baris*	Total migrants in *Bari*	Years of first migration from *Bari*	Countries of first migration of *Bari* members
Bari-40	2	1	3	4	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2011 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant South Korea 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant South Korea
Bari-41	2	2	4	2	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-42	1	2	3	2	1st migrant 1997 2nd migrant 2010	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-43	2	1	3	3	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-44	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2004	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-45	2	1	3	2	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-46	2	2	4	2	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2006	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-47	2	3	5	3	1st migrant 2007 2nd migrant 2012 3rd migrant 2013	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-48	1	2	3	1	1st migrant 2011	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-49	3	0	3	5	1st migrant 1996 2nd migrant 2002 3rd migrant 2007 4th migrant 2008 5th migrant 2010	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Italy 4th migrant Italy 5th migrant Malaysia
Bari-50	2	0	2	2	1st migrant 1999 2nd migrant 2002	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore

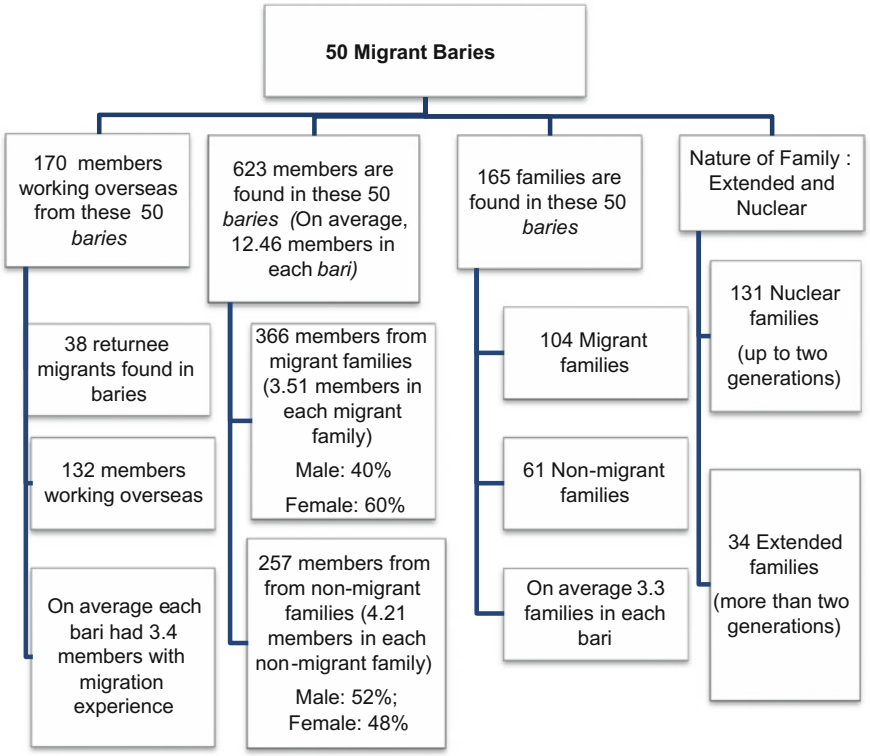

Fig. 3.1 Socio-demographic profiles of 50 surveyed migrant *baris*

2.64 members who were working overseas. In absolute numbers, 132 members from the surveyed migrant *baris* were working overseas. In other words, on average, 2.64 members of the *bari* were overseas out of an average of 12.46 members. If we zoom in only to the migrant families, 26% of members of the migrant families were working overseas, that is one quarter of family members were overseas for work. In addition to current migrant members, we found 38 returnees, migrants who have returned home after working for a certain period. I refer to these returnees to temporary returnees because they showed little interest in working back home; they were planning to migrate again. More precisely, each *bari* had 3.4 members with international migration experience, and each migrant family had 1.63 members with migration experience. This high concentration of migration in the migrant *baris* can be attributed to at least two factors. First, *bari* members are tied together by primary relationships; they are often first cousins and such close social relationships encourage cooperation in the migration process in the forms of information sharing and financial assistance—two crucial resources for migration to take place. Second, migrant *baris* enjoy special privileges in their own villages and neighbouring villages because of their access to *bidesh*, and migrant *baris* tend to

Picture 3.2 A migrant *bari* in Munshiganj

control access because of reinforcement and preservation of newly found social recognition in society, entailing a high concentration of migration occurrence in the *baris*.

One of the striking features of migrant *baris* is that once migration has happened in one *bari*, other members of the same *bari* gradually start to join in the overseas work. In the *baris* surveyed, migration first took place as early as the 1990s, the period when potential migrants first started to identify new migration destinations in the newly industrialized economies (NIEs) of East and Southeast Asia, outside the traditional migration destinations in oil-rich Middle East countries (Castles and Miller 2009; Debrah 2002, Rahman and Ullah 2012). Some members of the *baris* knew about the potential for migration to these new destinations and ventured out into the region. To kick off migration in a *bari*, someone must first emigrate to a country, and then facilitate the migration of other *bari* members. We found that thirteen migrants from nine migrant *baris* went to work overseas in the early 1990s (Table 3.2). These migrants were the pioneers. With their access to overseas work, other members of the same *baris* also started to emigrate in subsequent years. By 2014, of the 50 geographically proximate migrant *baris* studies, they were 170 international migrants. Migration of one member had created opportunities for another adult male members in the *bari*. *Baris* with three, four, and five migrants are found in 23, 13, and 3 *baris* respectively. In most cases, subsequent migration of family members took place between one year and three years later. Thus, migration of one member from a *bari* facilitated the migration of other members, suggesting a

high degree of cooperation in the migration process at the *bari* level, and indicative of the collective efforts of migrant *baris* to retain and uphold their social standing in the wider community.

In selecting migrant *baris*, I identified those from which at least one member was working in Singapore. As a result, all migrant *baris* interviewed had at least one member in Singapore. However, migration was so diverse that many migrant *baris* had members that had been working in other countries in addition to Singapore. As I argued above, migrants view migration as a status symbol as well as an occupation; as a result, they opted for destinations where they could live and work for extended periods. In our surveyed migrant *baris*, there were 27 *baris* from which individuals had migrated only to Singapore; and in total 90 migrants out of 132 chose to emigrate only to Singapore. It is important to note that migrants from other 23 *baris* sought Singapore as well as other countries for work, that is, in the same *bari* there are members working in other countries than Singapore (see Table 3.2 for details). In absolute numbers, 42 migrants out of a total of 132 had been working in other countries including Italy, France, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Malaysia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates (UAE), or even Maldives (Fig. 3.2).

Thus, the migrant *bari* experience suggests that *bari* members sought different countries for work. The diversity in migration destination at the family and *bari* level is interesting because the existing migrant network approach cannot adequately explain the diversity in destination countries. Migrant network theory posits that chain migration is created by lowering the transaction costs of migration and increasing the benefits for settlements in particular countries. In other words, while network theory can explain the volume of migration to a particular destination, it

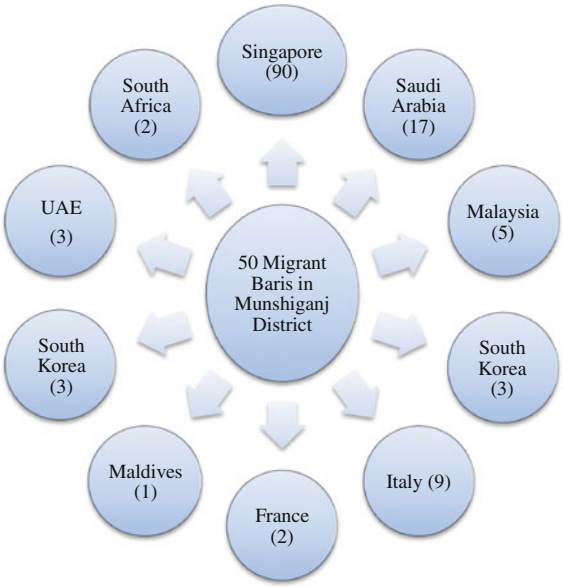

Fig. 3.2 Migrant *baris*: sources of diverse destination countries

does not sufficiently explain the directions of migration or the diversity of migration destinations, as we find in the Bangladeshi migrant *bari*s. But if we view migration as a status symbol and deem that migrants seek out new migration destinations in order to advance their social standing (relative social status) with respect to some reference group in their communities, we are then able to explain why migrants pursue different overseas locations for work. Migrants in European and East Asian destinations enjoy better treatment in socioeconomic terms and may hope for longer stays, if not indeed permanent settlement, and such relatively improved conditions in overseas work are also known to people in Bangladesh; as a result, community members tend to have higher esteem for migrants who are working in Europe or East Asia than those who are working in the Arab Gulf countries or countries in Southeast Asia. However, it is Singapore that occupies the top position among the Gulf countries, as well as among the Southeast Asian countries, and here credit must go to Singapore's transparent migration policy, efficiency in the enforcement of laws and rules related to employment of foreign manpower, social and political stability, continued economic progress, acceptance of foreigners in the mainstream society, and many other related positive images of Singapore, over and above the purely economic returns of migration.

Since migration uplifts the social status of their families and *baris*, migrants are in constant search for better, stable overseas locations for work. Migrants tend to extend their stay overseas where there exists the possibility of renewal for extended stay, or they relocate to another country, such as in Europe (e.g., Italy) or East Asia (e.g., South Korea), where they can stay for an extended period, or because of the presence of relatively liberal immigration policies. This relocation and extension of stay overseas should be also understood from the migrants' own perspective, that is as concerning how they themselves see migration for work—which is, in this case, as both occupation and status symbol, and as entailing a strategic choice between one country and another. Diversity in migration destination is not found only at the level of the *baris*; it can also be seen among the families who compose the *bari*. Generally speaking, the first migrants from a *bari* choose a country based on affordability, but over time they become able to afford better countries, meaning in this case countries with a possibility of staying longer, and with improved working conditions and a liberal immigration policy. They choose to migrate to a new country, or they facilitate the migration of other members from the *bari*, based on perceptions of these 'better countries', or of rankings in the global hierarchy of countries.

Interestingly, migrant families that send members to Europe (e.g., Italy, France) or South Korea tend to support their own *bari* members in migration to such destinations, and deny that support to members of other *baris*, in order to maintain exclusive access to such countries as best they can. Two migrants from *Bari* No. 13 and *Bari* No. 39 went to Italy while *Bari* No. 35 sent two migrants to France and *Bari* No. 40 sent two migrants to South Korea. In some other *baris*, we notice that single migrants went to these destination countries. What I am suggesting is that there exists considerable intra-*bari* cooperation for the development of *bari*-specific migration destination countries outside a primary destination country like

Singapore. Thus there is another side to the *bari* cooperation noted above; inter-*bari* competition for access to choice destination countries. Therefore, the diversity in migration destination countries should be understood in terms of social status and the relative social status of migrants, their families, and *baris* in the origin community. Since migration is considered a means to acquire status and relative social status, migration is bound to increase the destination countries both in term of numbers and diversity. However, apart from status and relative status, there is also a set of other social and cultural factors that have paved the way for migration from the rural societies in Bangladesh. I elaborate a number of such social factors in the subsequent sections.

The Geographical Imagination: Perception of *Bidesh*

'Geographical imagination' refers to a way of thinking about the world and considering the relative importance of places and the relationships between 'our' places and 'other' places (Gilley 2010). Geographical imaginations deeply shape people's views of other places and are interwoven with the knowledge of other places, even if such knowledge is imprecise or unrepresentative. With the increasing speed of travel and communication, and thus growing interconnectedness, geographical imagination has emerged as a powerful concept to explain migration. Following Alan P. Marcus's definition of geographical imagination (Marcus 2009: 481), I define the geographical imagination as the spatial knowledge—real or misleading—that allows individuals to imagine places, and I examine the concept here as a significant, noneconomic component driving migrants to join the Singapore labour market. I use the notion of geographical imagination to help bring insights into Bangladeshi migrants' understandings of place.

In Bangladesh, people use two Bengali terms to refer to geographical imagination: these are *desh* and *bidesh*; in English: 'home' and 'abroad'. The terms *bidesh* (foreign country) and *desh* (home country) were first used in reference to international Bangladeshi migration by Katy Gardner in her classic work *Global Migrants, Local Lives* (1995). Gardner undertook an ethnographic study of a village in Sylhet district, Bangladesh, from where a large number of people had migrated to London. The migrant families in Sylhet had become known as *Londoni* families. Gardner finds that the villagers' desires centre on the distant localities of foreign countries. For those who have never left the home country, it is only through overseas migration that economic power and material betterment can be achieved: a *bidesh* (foreign country) is supposed to have greener pastures. As Gardner (1995) states, the images of home and abroad refer at one level to inequality between nations. She reports that the economic dominance of families with migrant members has meant that *bidesh* is associated with success and power, which the *desh* is unable to provide. Thus, the geographical imagination acts as a powerful motivating factor in the individuals' decisions to migrate.

To the people of Sylhet, *bidesh* usually implies London, while in more general Bengali usage the term *bidesh* means any foreign country. The social construction of *bidesh* thus varies from place to place, according to whichever major migration destination country is most prevalent. If the bulk of people from a particular place migrate to a particular country, *bidesh* in that region usually refers to that particular destination country. A large number of people from Tangail have migrated to Singapore; as a result, for them *bidesh* by and large means Singapore. The common thread throughout my fieldwork interviews was the purported and embedded wish to migrate to Singapore as a means to 'fulfil a dream'. The power of *bidesh* is captured in the words of Kauser Sikder, a Singapore returnee from Gurail:

> Everyone in this area [village] talks about migration to Singapore. My cousins and friends went to Singapore a long ago. I had no brothers to talk with at my *bari*. When my cousins visited, they talked about their fantastic experiences in Singapore. My cousins worked for long time in Singapore. Three of my cousins have 'Singapuri televisions' and one of them also has a 'Singapuri refrigerator' and 'music system'. My cousins were also good students like me. But, they did not study much. It was shame not to migrate. I told my father about Singapore migration, but he did not support my idea. He wanted me to carry out my education. I was more comfortable with my mother, so I insisted to my mother. My mother was in favour of my decision. She told my cousins in Singapore to send me a work-visa. All my cousins respect my mother very much. My cousins sent my visa after few months. My mother spent around 220,000 Taka for my migration. We sold land and borrowed cash from my maternal uncle. I worked in Singapore for two years. I married off my two sisters by spending around Taka 100,000 for each. Both of my brothers-in-laws were from different districts. They did not ask for any dowry for marriage. However, in place of a dowry, they demanded my help for their migration to Singapore, as they had no other relatives in Singapore. Whatever I earned in Singapore, I spent it on my family. Now, I have no savings. We have lost a good piece of land. However, I am happy to think that I have married off my two sisters. I am proud of performing my duty as an ideal brother. My cousins could not do this for their sisters. Everyone in my *bari* likes me. I do not want to work in Bangladesh now. I told my cousins in Singapore to send me a visa soon. (Kauser Sikder, Singapore returnee, age 28)

The story of Kauser Sikder is not an isolated case; his experience resonates with most migrants' descriptions in Bangladesh. Migrants are motivated to take part in overseas work for a number of reasons, which are often interrelated, multidimensional, and complex. The account by Kauser Sikder suggests that the transformative power of *bidesh*, the relative status, filial responsibility, diminishing role of education, and easy access to resources for migration, all contributed to the occurrence of migration. The in-depth interview also implies some changes in the society, such as people from distant locations coming to the migration source villages to marry sisters of migrant brothers, while the promise of migration (providing access to foreign land) is used as a dowry in marriage, replacing traditional dowry items such as landed property, gold ornaments, or money. Kauser felt relieved because he had performed his responsibility as an ideal brother. The performance of such filial responsibility also sets an example for and puts pressure on other young men, and thus they feel obligated to join the international migration for work as well. We have seen that Kauser did not want to work in Bangladesh, because it is not

culturally compatible with his migration-induced social status, a phenomenon that I explain in the next section.

There are also references to Singapuri gadgets and gold ornaments. By Singapuri television, refrigerator, or music system, he meant specifically these were not bought from local markets but from Singapore. This is also applicable to the gold ornaments brought from Singapore. Gold or electronic products found in Singapore are regarded as pure and long-lasting by people in Gurail, and probably across the country. This is because people in Bangladesh strongly believe that products sold in Singapore markets cannot be fake, since the Singapore government would not allow companies to sell such fake products. The image of a strict, low-enforcing country that makes Singapore unparalleled has reached remote Bangladeshi villages as well. Valuable goods bought from a local market are rated with less approval among the people in the villages than those bought from a Singapore market. Along with the positive image of Singapore's products (although these products are not in fact made in Singapore), the possession as well as showcasing of Singapore products in the migrant houses also has a latent function in the wider society: it reflects families' access to foreign labour market. In other words, these goods show that members of the family are working in a foreign country such as Singapore. When an outsider visits a migrant family, their first impression about the family's social and economic position comes from the display of foreign goods, and this image spreads across the *baris*, villages, and sometimes *union parishad*.

The meaning of migration is thus constructed in such a manner that it upholds the 'culture of honour'. This notion of 'culture of honour' is further supported by local proverbs such as "without migration experience a man is not complete", or "nothing ventured, nothing gained"; all these have a huge influence on the decision to migrate, especially among younger males. Individuals feel obligated to participate in the migration process, as the observance of village norms and values results in increased recognition and respect for the individuals who have migrated and for their families and *baris*. A refusal to migrate is often considered backward and sluggish. Yet the story of Aziz Mirdda reveals some of the reality of migration for work. Aziz Mirdda, 31, was a Singapore returnee. His family once owned a modest sized parcel of land. This land plus that of his brother was sold to pay off his passage to Singapore. Arriving in Singapore with a two-year work permit, he had to come home prematurely after being victimized in a fraud case. Upon return, he found himself in huge debt. Even though they are aware of such tales, however, families in Gurail are still prepared to take on credit for similar deals.

Correspondingly, many have been repeatedly cheated. Everything is gambled for what is perceived as a golden opportunity, but which rarely proves to be the case. Families are desperate to believe in the success of their migration venture. In desperation, men are willing to sell their small patches of land or to take loans from traditional moneylenders, often with around 100% interest rates, which they can hardly repay. Some migrants are deported before they begin to earn enough to make it worthwhile. Others are cheated by unscrupulous brokers who give them false papers and then disappear. Some fall prey to cheats, not once but several times, and end up landless. This attitude, which places migration above everything else and

prompts many families to risk their livelihood in attempting to gain access to a foreign land, involves a belief that success can only be found in the foreign land, and that access to the foreign land can change a fortune overnight. Thus, the geographical imagination acts as a powerful inspirational factor in their decisions to migrate.

Migration, Remigration, and the Cultural Notion of Work

Individuals' employment choices are influenced not only by structural and human capital factors, but also by cultural expectations and family and community pressures. Therefore, an understanding of the perceptions of community values and the general context in which an individual makes decisions about work is relevant and important. Work has a special meaning to individuals, which derives from village-based norms, traditions, perceptions, expectations, and so on. Some types of work bring prestige to individuals, their families and lineages, while others bring disgrace. Family, lineage, education, and prior work specializations are noteworthy in occupational choice. Villagers in rural Bangladesh commonly divide work into *bhalo kaz* (good work) and *mandha kaz* (bad work), terms related to the notions of 'honour' and 'shame', respectively. By *bhalo kaz*, villagers generally mean those types of work that are compatible with social norms, traditions, and customs, and consistent with family or *bari* prestige. In contrast, *mandha kaz* means those types of work that are beneath one's status. Doing family- or lineage-compatible work means good work that brings social prestige, while pursuing family- or lineage-incompatible work leads to shame for the family and *bari*.

The notion of work among Gurailians is a complex one. Several decades ago, villagers lived in a social world where the wealthiest landowners appeared not to work at all, but hired others to perform needed agricultural and domestic tasks. As a result, the people I met in Gurail saw work as a sign of low status, and working for wages as signifying the lowest status. But due to inheritance law, many children of the formerly landed class have lost considerable land, and many of them now need to engage in some kind of work to earn enough for a respectable living. In such a case, they may have to choose work that is compatible with their family or lineage prestige to claim or retain their former status. For a farmer, agricultural work may be honourable, but cycle rickshaw-pulling is not, unless the latter occupation was also pursued by other members of his family. Again, rickshaw-pulling is not considered to be bad work if it is done by individuals whose family members have also engaged in this kind of livelihood. This complex notion of work this shapes individuals' occupational pursuits.

Although doing certain types of work may not change one's hereditary status, it is considered inappropriate for certain categories of people to do particular sets of work. The nature of work pursued can, therefore, help to create and destroy the reputation of a family. The most important criterion, however, is that only *chhotomanush* ('small' people) would ever work for another descent group. If forced by

economic constraint, *bhalomanush* ('good' people) would also do it, but it would cause deep embarrassment. "If people from our lineage saw us working in another lineage's *bari* or in a public place", a poor *bhalomanush* said, "they would be furious with us, and we would feel ashamed". However, this does not mean that all members of a lineage would have sufficient wealth to avoid working for others. If one family from one *bari* is poor, then members from that family usually work within the same *bari* or lineage to conceal their poverty and retain prestige within larger social groupings.

Over time, the meaning of work has changed dramatically for the younger generation. Razzak Mirdda, aged 23, for example, is the son of a sharecropper and has a few years of schooling. He told me, "My father may work in the agricultural field; I will not engage in that type of work. I do not even want to work in this *desh*". Thus, to the young generation, work is no longer tied to conventional notions such as that the son of a farmer should become a farmer, or the son of a weaver should become a weaver.[5] Again, the notion of work changes with the acquisition of a new status. For instance, after returning from abroad, villagers expect that returnees will not engage in *mandho kaz*, or even to some extent in any paid work at all at the community level. If a returnee seeks a place in the local or national labour market, this to some extent brings shame upon him and his family. I found a large number of returnees unemployed. The reason behind this unemployment was largely due to factors associated with the norm of honouring and preserving the migration-induced social status for migrants, their families and *baris*. Migrants may return home permanently, but the cultural notion of work prevents them from working in locally available jobs, creating a group of people who are required to migrate repeatedly throughout their working years.

The Diminishing Role of Conventional Education

Universally, educational attainment is associated with attainment of social status. Education enhances the social status of individuals in two ways. First, education differentiates those who are educated from those who are not, thus dichotomizing the society. Second, education is an avenue for acquiring high-paying work and ensuring upward social mobility. However, conventional education has failed to deliver the promised success, mainly because of the discrepancy between population growth and job creation in recent decades. The situation has worsened further due to the higher expectations and cultural perceptions of education.

The story of Salim Mirdda reveals the irony of the cultural expectations associated with educational attainment. Aged 18, Salim Mirdda had completed ten years

[5]In my sample, there were few weaver and potter families, and all were Hindus. In the Hindu caste system, there is a tradition of following the occupation of the previous generation. I have found that they are unhappy with their traditional occupations.

of schooling. After the sudden death of his father, he had to start working in order for his family to survive. A road, locally called '*Bisha* Road', was under construction at one end of this village. He joined this construction work. After working for a few days, he observed that many of his co-workers were criticizing him for doing such menial work in a public place—and this was despite the fact that all his co-workers were from low-prestige *baris* or lineages, and some of them even from his own *bari*. The thing that deemed him unfit for this work, however, was that he had certified schooling which the others did not have. He found this work shameful for himself and his family, and was especially concerned about his sisters who were to be married off soon. In consideration of these issues, he left construction work and contacted relatives in Singapore to begin the process of obtaining a work visa. When I met him, he was still unemployed and waiting for a job contract to come from Singapore.

Broadly, villagers categorize work differently according to whether it is for the educated or the uneducated. Villagers do not appreciate an educated person who engages in menial work or does work which ought to be done by non-educated individuals. The Bengali term *shikit manuser kaz* (work of educated people), a widely used phrase in rural Bangladesh, carries weight in Gurail. By this term, villagers mean the work of educated individuals, generally associated with non-manual work. Thus, like the migration-induced social status that prevents returnees or migrant family and *bari* members from working in some locally available jobs, educational attainment is also a cultural barrier to engaging in certain jobs in the locality.

In the migration literature, two perspectives are conventionally adopted to explain the relationship between education and migration (Stark 1991; Caldwell 1969). The first attributes the motivation to migrate to education. Here, the argument is that the better educated youngsters who acquire non-rural human capital, and who possess more human capital than their rural counterparts, are thereby compelled to migrate. The second relates migration to the desire to obtain education. Here, argument is that the desire to acquire higher levels of education leads individuals to migrate from rural to urban areas, or abroad, where educational facilities tend to be located. However, these two perspectives are inadequate to explain why even secondary-school-educated students in Gurail choose to migrate. The Gurail experience suggests that it is not only non-rural human capital or a lack of educational institutions in the home country that prompts better-educated individuals to migrate: the prevailing rural attitude towards 'work for educated people' also has a decisive role to play. Such attitudes may contribute greatly, if not entirely determine, the phenomenon of out-migration.

Pertierra (1992) investigated overseas labour migration among students in the Philippines. Pertierra looked at the effects of schooling on the perception of opportunities and meaning in a small rural Ilocano community, and noted that such educated individuals frequently romanticized out-migration. They viewed the local community as a vestige of what is backward and undesirable, while they described life abroad in the most glowing terms. This view encourages students to seek solutions abroad. The Gurail villagers' experience also reveals the same trend.

When I spoke to returnees with higher secondary and graduate educational backgrounds, I observed that they frequently overemphasized the importance of *bidesh*, although they were aware of risks inherent in migrating. The main reason for their discomfort with working in the local economy was not only low status associated with local jobs, but also the perception of the lack of transformative power of local jobs. In a potential migrant's words, "a local job is not going to change my life; I do not want to work as an ordinary government official in my whole life". In another migrant's words, "*bidesh* can do what I always desire to achieve in my life, acquiring wealth and supporting my family and relatives". Thus, we see that, on one hand, there is a diminishing role for conventional education along with a demeaning attitude toward local jobs; and on the other, there is high esteem for overseas jobs with minimal education. In such circumstances, rather than continuing education for extended period, young people are motivated to move overseas for an early start to their careers.

Thus, this chapter has shown that international migration for work, along with other traditional status claim tools such as land and government jobs, is a powerful status claim tool for migrants, their families and *baris*. This chapter has presented profiles drawn from 50 migrant *baris* and explained how migration permeates from families to *baris* in response to absolute status as well as relative status with reference to some migrant families and *baris*. It thus attempts to contribute to sociological explanations of the sending-end factor in migration. In addition to status and relative status, this chapter identifies key social and cultural factors for migration. Access to the transformative power of *bidesh* has emerged as a central reference point for building and reinforcing social relations in the society. Society recognizes and celebrates overseas work because it gives access to the immediate, legitimate material resources of *bidesh* that have the potential to uplift migrant families and their *baris* in the social and economic order. The cultural notion of work and the diminishing role of education in shaping people's life chances have further paved the ground for migration and remigration, and contributed to the social underpinnings of migration itself.

Chapter 4
Channelling Bangladeshi Migrants to Singapore

To take our discussion forward, from the forces that underpin the motivation for migration to the forces that facilitate and perpetuate the flow of migrant labour, I focus on two important theories that explain the perpetuation of migration, namely 'migrant networks' and 'migrant institutions' (Massey et al. 1993). Migrant networks and migrant institutions are popularly called 'engines of migration' (Phillips and Massey 2000; Hernandez-Leon 2005) because they facilitate and perpetuate the transfers of migrant labour internationally. In the previous chapter I specifically elucidated the social imperatives behind the occurrence of migration, by focusing on several sending-end factors such as geographical imagination, the cultural notion of work, the diminishing role of education, and the concept of relative social status. This chapter demonstrates how migrant networks, situated within reciprocal relations and holding symbolic value, can convincingly explain why migration surges out from just a few geographical locations in Bangladesh, a phenomenon reported in the previous chapter.

Recruitment constitutes a particularly important part of the processes of contemporary labour migration. It is dominated by recruiting agencies and brokers who act as intermediaries between workers and foreign employers, and these agencies and brokers are responsible for the mobilization, recruitment, documentation, and transportation of migrants, in our case from Bangladesh to Singapore. The second section of this chapter discusses the operational aspect of recruitment with a focus on recruitment structures and the economic aspects of recruitment in the Bangladesh–Singapore migration corridor. Finally, this chapter shows the interplay between networks and institutions by highlighting the role of reciprocity in Bangladeshi migration.

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Interplay Between Networks and Institutions

Patterns of Bangladeshi migration to Singapore suggest that a few selected districts in Bangladesh send the bulk of migrants to Singapore. Macro-level economic theories of labour migration explain in general terms why there is migration from developing countries to developed countries, but such theories do not go deeper into the more crucial questions of why differential emigration rates exist within a particular region or country. Micro-level theories view individuals as well as households as homogeneous decision-making bodies, responding to income differentials between places or countries leading to the migration of labour. The problem with these micro-level theories is that they do not consider the 'social embeddedness' of potential migrants' behaviour (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993) and they cannot explain differential emigration rates between two villages or regions within the same country. Thus, dominant theories of labour migration, which focus on macro-structural imbalances of labour demand and supply or the motivations of potential migrants or households, are insufficient, in that they cannot explain why so many people migrate out of so few places, the economic conditions otherwise being equal (Faist 2000).

In order to explain the variability in the composition of migrant flows, migration theory now conceptualizes the migration decision in a contextualized manner (Massey et al. 1987). It is from this line of research that the concept of migrant networks has emerged as a critical idea for understanding the decision to move (Arango 2000). A social connection to someone with migrant experience at a particular destination represents an important resource for the potential migrant (Faist 1997, 2000). Boyd (1989) argues that the recognition of social relationships and their roles in international migration adds an important theoretical emphasis, refocusing the act of migration away from either the 'over-socialized' deterministic view of social structure or the 'under-socialized' perspective of atomized rational actors. Faist argues that networks constitute an intermediate, relational level that stands between the micro level of individual decision-making and the macro level of structural determinants (Faist 2000), thus contributing to bridging a gap. Although there are several models that can be employed to explain how social networks operate, researchers often refer to the social capital model, which assumes that actors migrate to maximize returns on their investments in human capital, and in doing so draw upon the social capital embedded in their interpersonal networks (Faist 2000; Portes 1998).

Similar to some economic models of migration, the social capital theorists assume that individuals will use their networks instrumentally as a means of gaining the highest returns on their investment in human capital. This view was probably first suggested by Douglas Massey (Massey et al. 1987) and later convincingly explained by Faist (1997, 2000), drawing on social capital theory (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993; Portes 1998). Migrant networks increase the propensity of an individual to migrate to a specific destination through three mechanisms: demonstrating feasibility, reducing the expected costs and risk, and

increasing the expected benefits (Faist 2000). This strategy works on the assumption that migrants and non-migrants are linked through networks of obligation and shared understandings of kinship and friendship. Thus migrant networks have a strong explanatory potential for our present concerns.

Some authors refer to networks, social capital, and individual human capital as the 'engines of immigration' (Phillips and Massey 2000). Migration networks have a multiplier effect, which is implicit in the formerly fashionable expression 'chain migration' (MacDonald and MacDonald 1974). Many migrants move because others with whom they are connected have migrated before. In other words, as migration experiences multiply, it is perceived that marginal risks decrease and the marginal benefits increase, thereby facilitating moves by individuals who would have been unlikely to take migration risks at earlier points in time (Massey et al. 1987). However, existing network analysis mainly focuses on the form and pattern of ties, and is most plausible when explaining the direction of migration and aspects of the dynamics of migration flows (Faist 2000). Recently, Faist (2000) has suggested that the content of ties—for example, obligations, reciprocity, and solidarity—are also tremendously important, if one seeks to examine the evolution of migrant networks and the mechanism that makes migration a self-feeding process. The contents of ties inherent in migrant networks are vital in explaining the dynamics of Bangladeshi migration.

The other key intermediaries of labour recruitment are the private recruiting agencies involved in serving prospective migrants for a fee. Recruitment agencies act as private gatekeepers, managing the modalities that condition access for individuals seeking overseas employment (Goss and Lindquist 1995; Martin 1996). A recruiting agency is a national-level contact point for a foreign recruiting agency or foreign employers. Recruiting agencies usually have control over information that allows them to negotiate with prospective migrants and their potential employers. They introduce the prospective migrants to the foreign partners (employers and other recruiters). There has been a remarkable expansion of private recruitment agencies in the past few decades: in fact, there may be as many as several thousand recruiting agencies in each major source country in South Asia and Southeast Asia (Martin et al. 2006; Baruah 2006; Lian and Rahman 2006; Lian et al. 2016). Considering their role in the recruitment process, some scholars refer to recruiting agencies as the 'other engines of migration' (Hernandez-Leon 2005: 2).

To explain the recent changes in recruitment practices, scholars have proposed certain mid-level concepts such as 'migration institutions', 'migration industry', and 'merchants of labour' (Castles and Miller 2009; Goss and Lindquist 1995; Kuptsch 2006). For instance, Jon Goss and Bruce Lindquist present the concept of the 'migrant institution', which draws on Anthony Giddens's structuration theory (Goss and Lindquist 1995). A migrant institution is conceived as "a complex institution consisting of knowledgeable individuals and the agents of organizations (from migrant associations to multinational corporations) and the other institutions from kinship to the state" (Goss and Lindquist 1995: 336). Their argument is that the institution operates to facilitate overseas migration and that these intermediaries profit from the price that potential migrants are willing to pay.

An International Labour Organization (ILO) study on migrant workers and facilitators of migration developed the concept of 'merchants of labour' to refer to public and private agents who move workers over national borders for economic rewards (Kuptsch 2006). These merchants of labour include relatives who finance a migrant's trip and provide housing and arrange for a job abroad, as well as public employment services and private recruitment agencies. Taken most broadly, it includes all intermediaries who make profit out of migrant workers. Another concept that has been in use for a while is that of the 'migration industry'; this embraces a wide range of people who earn their livelihoods by organizing migratory movements (Castles and Miller 2008: 201). Such individuals include travel agents, labour recruiters, brokers, interpreters, housing agents, immigration lawyers, human smugglers, and all others who extract fees from potential migrants for their services. One commonality between merchants of labour and actors in the migration institutions and industry is the service fees that they charge the prospective migrants. These terms thus particularly connote the presence of a formal and commodified form of labour recruitment. Although I agree that labour recruitment has been formalized and commodified over time, I also suggest that informal elements and traditional actors are also still crucial to the understanding of labour recruitment in the Bangladeshi–Singapore migration corridor.

The Migrant Network Sphere

Social Bases of Network-Assisted Migration

Strong social and symbolic ties bind Bangladeshis both at home and abroad. In the previous chapter I discussed spatial and social groupings in rural Bangladesh. In general, kinship forms one of the most important bases of migrant social organizations. In Gurail, brothers, brothers-in-law, first uncles, and cousins are particularly important within the kinship networks. However, family connections are the most secure bonds within the interpersonal relationships. Family members come first in supporting the migration process and in care for families left behind. The strongest relationships in the networks are between migrants and their brothers. Receiving many demands for assistance from friends and relatives while in Singapore, migrants naturally display a preference for their brothers. Between brothers there is a continual exchange of favours and help, which has a value that cannot be measured in terms of money alone. To a brother arriving in Singapore without prior experience of cosmopolitan living, a series of obligations is owed: a place to stay, help in getting acquainted with local disciplinary rules and regulations and work place behaviour, a loan of money, or payment for the trip are just a few examples of how sibling ties are extended and tested in the migrant context.

The next most important family tie within migrant networks is that between a migrant and his uncles or cousins or brothers-in-law, who are given preference over

other relations in the provision of assistance. There is a strong sense of family identification among them, reinforced by traditional practices of co-residence and mutual assistance at the *bari* level. These kinship connections are reinforced through frequent interactions, and kin assistance is generally extended freely and openly. Among relatives more distant than these, the strength of ties falls off rapidly and their roles in the migratory process are correspondingly less significant. Since many of the lineages in Gurail are connected through marriage, most villagers can trace kinship with each other (for details about kinship, see Inden and Nicholas 1977).

Outside kinship ties, the terms *esthanio* (from the same locality) and *attiyo* (relatives) are particularly important. People in their day-to-day life use these terms to indicate the relationship and responsibility that goes with them. The term *esthanio* implies belongingness to a particular geographic area, which may be a village, *union parishad*, *upazila*, or district (see Table 3.1), and it usually works when someone is out of a particular geographic location. However, the term *attiyo* indicates broader kin relationships. For most villagers, *attiyo* embraces thousands of people, who are seen as being 'insiders' even if they are not part of one's immediate lineage. The *attiyo* can be turned to for general help and support. Thus, there is a level of *attiyo* and *esthanio* which is very general, and does not tend to involve specific duties or support in the local context. However, when it is in the transnational space, all *attiyos* and *esthanios* trace their origins back to each other and come forward for mutual aid.

Because of its explosive growth, migration in Gurail has outgrown the social organization based solely on the limited confines of kinship, and networks have increasingly come to incorporate other close social relationships. The closest bonds outside the family are those formed between people as they grow up together. These are typically friendship ties between people of roughly the same age group. They live near one another and share formative experiences (e.g., schools, sports). When they become international migrants, these friends assist one another in a variety of ways: finding new jobs, sharing information, pooling resources, and borrowing or lending money. Findings in Singapore suggest that although initially concentrated among persons of the same age, friendships gradually extend to other generations, as migrants of several age groups are drawn together by the common experience of life in Singapore.

Important friendship bonds are formed with migrants from other communities (usually other districts) through shared experiences at work, or through living (in dormitories/worksites) in Singapore. In this way, interpersonal relationships within the migrant networks are extended and amplified beyond those possible through kinship or local friendship alone. However, the bonds of kith and kin do not lose their meaning or importance; they are simply augmented by new and diversified relationship networks that expand the range of a migrant's social resources. Thus, common origin from a particular region usually implies a series of common experiences, customs, and traditions that permit easy communication and friendship formation. As one moves up hierarchically from the local geographic unit to more

regional identities (village, *union parishad*, to *upazila* and district), one eventually arrives at another base of social organization, that is, symbolic ties.

In contrast to social ties, symbolic ties can be mobilized even in the absence of earlier direct contact. Symbolic ties are "perceived bonds to which participants attach shared meanings, memories, future expectations, and representations" (Faist 2000:6). One of the main functions of symbolic ties is to integrate an 'anonymous crowd of strangers'. Migrant workers in Singapore trace their belonging to the country in terms of districts. People from same district refer to themselves collectively as *esthanio*. And this district-based identity at some points extends further, to involve members of the same national groups. For example, thousands of Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore gather at Little India on Sundays. Depending on their country of origin, foreign workers gather at different enclaves in Singapore. Bangladeshi, Indian, and Sri Lankan workers gather at Little India; Thai workers gather at Golden Mile Complex at Beach Road; and Filipino maids at Lucky Plaza on Orchard road and the park next to Orchard MRT station. The history of Little India as a meeting place for Indian-subcontinent immigrants can be traced back to the nineteenth century. Migrants start gathering at Little India from noon and stay approximately till 11 pm at particular places and road sides. The spots chosen for gathering in Little India depend first on the workers' home districts in Bangladesh and later on *upazila*. At the first meeting with a fellow migrant worker, the question generally one hears is '*Apner desh kothay*?' (where is your country?). Here 'country' means 'district', not the country Bangladesh. Migrants have a strong sense of identification with their places of origin based on district. They have a sense of belonging to a particular district, and a tendency to favour their native district fellows over those from other districts.

Formation and Operation of Migrant Networks

In the description of Gurail village, we observed that hundreds of migrants hailed from this particular village in Tangail district. All migrants in Gurail are related to each other by certain forms of social ties, and they generally assisted each other in the migration process. Yet such extensive social networks were not created overnight: they emerged gradually as migration moved beyond a first few adventurous individuals to involve a wider cross section of the community. The first few migrants returned, and on subsequent trips brought others into the migration process. Every new migrant created a new connection to Singapore, and as more people migrated, the number of connections expanded rapidly, and the quality of the ties also improved as people adjusted to life in Singapore.

Emigration from Gurail changed from a trickle to a flood not long after the first migrations to Singapore, which took place as early as 1988. One of the early migrants from Gurail is Asor Mia. Before migrating to Singapore, he worked for several years in Libya and Iraq. Upon returning from the Middle East in 1987, he stayed in Bangladesh for several months and then moved to Singapore through the

financial support of one of his friends from a neighbouring village. In Singapore Asor Mia was employed as a crane operator. Within a few months, he developed relations with the top management of his company and was able to secure job contracts for villagers from back home. At first he assisted some of his very close relatives, including his brother and son-in-law, to come to Singapore without any fee. Later he received more requests from home and started helping relatives, friends, and villagers in return for cash. Within a few years, he had made substantial amount of money and retired from migration permanently. Thus, all that is necessary for a migrant network to develop is for one person to be in the right place at the right time and to obtain a position that allows him to distribute favours to others back home.

I identify two main actors in network migration: migrant brokers and formal recruiting agents. Both the recruiting agents and migrant networks play complementary roles in the recruitment of migrants, and their roles are well defined. While migrant networks usually arrange the job contract from Singapore, the procedures for the final permission from BMET (the Bangladesh government body which documents and issues permission for emigration) are carried out by the recruiting agents. Thus, the operation of different actors of migration industry is cooperative rather than fully competitive.

For migration to Singapore, a prospective migrant needs an IPA (In-Principle Approval) from the Ministry of Manpower, Singapore. This IPA is issued with the name and the passport number of a prospective migrant. Recruiting agents in Singapore apply for the IPAs and they are also required to present documents showing the genuine demand for foreign manpower in different companies. Migrant brokers are usually individuals who have at least a couple of years' working experience overseas. Working overseas brings them closer to recruiting agents and top management of various companies, which they later make use of for getting IPAs. Recruiting agents from Bangladesh are not in a favourable position in this regard, and few recruiting agents are enterprising enough to contact their counterparts in Singapore and arrange job contracts directly from them. Nevertheless, recruiting agents who have direct contact with their counterparts in Singapore are in position to facilitate migration regularly. Both migrant brokers and national recruiting agents employ (local) agents separately at the local level (village) to collect fees on behalf of the main agents. These local-level agents charge a fixed commission for their services. This usually ranges from 5 to 10% of the total financial cost of migration. However, migrant brokers usually request their family members or close relatives talk to the prospective migrants and even provide financial support if necessary.

Local-level agents send passports and cash to the main recruiting agents, usually located in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, or to migrant brokers in Singapore, to initiate the recruiting process. Generally, local agents or close relatives of migrant brokers overseas collect the financial cost of migration from as many prospective migrants as they can, leading to the situation in which some of the prospective migrants are exposed to exploitation. However, close relatives of migrant brokers

overseas do not behave like their counterparts (local agents). As they are usually from the same *bari* or village (community), they are more reliable and trustworthy.

Sometimes, migrant brokers who are related to the prospective migrants by strong ties do not charge the financial cost of migration in advance; it is paid during the stay in Singapore through earnings. Although some recruiting agents play a critical role in the migration process, this is not a purely 'commodified migration' in which recruitment agencies serve solely as facilitators of the migration process. Bangladeshi migration to Singapore is much more reciprocal, based on social and symbolic ties. Because of this reciprocal character, migration to Singapore has mainly emerged as a place-selective phenomenon. This reciprocal character of migration has also facilitated the migration of the landless rural poor, who regularly undertake the thousand-dollar migration venture, a phenomenon that will be explained further in the next section.

In-depth interviews with 12 principal migrants provide insights into the role of migration networks in the perpetuation of migration in the Bangladesh–Singapore migration corridor. These 12 principal migrants help us understand how personal networks work in the migration process. Table 4.1 presents some basic data on these migrants. They possess relatively better educational credentials, above the average educational level of Bangladeshi migrants working in other countries (Mahmood 1991; Rudnick 1996; Abdul-Aziz 2001). All of them were working in the construction sector and had lived in Singapore for more than four years. Altogether, these 12 selected migrants have been the source of overseas employment for 283 new migrants. Of these 283 new migrants, 101 migrants received crucial financial assistance that made migration possible for them. New migrants

Table 4.1 Contribution of 12 selected migrants to the perpetuation of migration

	Age	Martial status	Duration of stay in Singapore	Person assisted in my migration	Assisted in the placement of other migrants	
					Financial assistance	Information assistance
Case 1	27	Unmarried	4	Relative	5	11
Case 2	34	Married	9	Relative	6	15
Case 3	30	Married	7	Friend	10	18
Case 4	40	Married	9	Relative	10	21
Case 5	34	Married	8	Relative	12	20
Case 6	25	Unmarried	4	Relative	8	13
Case 7	28	Unmarried	5	Friend	7	10
Case 8	30	Unmarried	5	Relative	8	16
Case 9	35	Married	9	Friend	14	22
Case 10	32	Married	7	Relative	6	10
Case 11	26	Unmarried	4	Relative	7	12
Case 12	36	Married	8	Relative	8	14
				Total	101	182

who had benefited from financial assistance also received information about various aspects of recruitment and working life in Singapore. The remaining 182 migrants received information about working and living conditions, job opportunities, visa process, and reliable recruiting agents or migrant brokers. They were not provided with direct financial assistance.

People from the same *bari* and community are enmeshed in a web of reciprocal obligations, which potential migrants draw upon to enter Singapore. However, as the network becomes larger, the personalized character may become increasingly diluted. Even in the case of a larger number such as case no. 9, where the principal migrant became the means of jobs in Singapore for 36 new migrants, recruitment was still from within the circle of relatives and friends. Some of these principal migrant or brokers brought their relatives and friends to Singapore by paying transport cost of migration out of their own pockets. Such recipients who receive special favours are usually obligated to show similar favours for other kin and friends. Relatives and friends offer security and assurance in the migration process. The network provides the migrants with information from those who have first-hand knowledge of working conditions in Singapore. In the network-assisted placement, the person in the host country was well acquainted with the potential employer. Hence, the migrant was able to obtain better conditions, benefits, and security. Networks also provide a sense of security to the families sending the migrants overseas.

The Recruitment Sphere

The Recruitment Structure

Prospective migrants in Bangladesh use the services of four public and private institutions in the recruitment process—BMET, Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL), recruiting agencies, and migrant networks—and together they form a semi-coherent system of governance that facilitates a smooth flow of labour overseas. The Bangladeshi government's most prominent structure regulating migration is BMET, established in 1976. BMET issues and renews the licenses of recruiting agencies, grants permission to agencies to recruit, provides immigration clearances after verifying visa papers and employment contracts, looks after the welfare of Bangladeshi workers abroad, and manages many other functions related to training of workers and promotion of migration overseas. Presently, BMET is under the administrative control of the newly established Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. While BMET supervises and controls recruitment, actual recruitment takes place through three other channels: a government-run organization called BOESL, private recruiting agencies, and

migrant networks. BOESL, established in 1984, is mainly involved in the migration of high-skilled professionals overseas, but its role in skilled and professional migration is not particularly significant. Out of 179,910 professional migrants who took up overseas placements between 1976 and 2008, only 14,811 professional migrants found jobs through BOESL. The agency coordinates with Bangladeshi missions abroad in assessing the needs of labour and puts advertisements in newspapers for recruitment. BOESL is seen as a model institution in the manpower sector working in healthy competition with the private agencies.

Private recruiting agencies have emerged in response to the growing demand for labour overseas since the late 1970s, and there are currently around 1000 licensed private recruiting agents in Bangladesh. The government regulates recruiting agencies through a combination of economic leverage and bureaucratic requirements. Recruiting agencies have a guild known as the Bangladesh Association International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), formed in 1984 with the purpose of catering for the needs of the licensed recruiting agencies. The BAIRA is also involved in the welfare of migrants overseas. Through BAIRA Life Insurance Company Limited they have launched two insurance schemes: one is for workers before their departure, the other for their families left behind. BAIRA is also setting up a modern Medical Testing Centre with elaborate facilities for migrants, who need to undergo medical tests before leaving the country. Personal connections form a crucial avenue for overseas placement in Bangladesh. According to one estimate, personal connections assisted 62% (3.88 million) of a total of 6.26 million overseas job placements between 1976 and 2008 (Rahman 2012).

Migration for work though a recruiting agency proceeds as follows (see Fig. 4.2): a recruiting agency in Singapore sends a 'demand letter' to their counterpart in Bangladesh, asking for certain number of migrants for certain occupations. The recruiting agency in Bangladesh then approaches the BMET for initial clearance. Once the agency gains approval, they actively search for prospective migrants and ask them to submit passport, pictures, biographical information, work experience (including relevant certificates), and a partial payment to begin the recruitment process. At this juncture, the Bangladeshi recruiting agency contacts their counterpart in Singapore for visa processing. The potential employer will then secure the visa from the relevant authority and pass the visa to the recruiting agency in the receiving country. This foreign recruiting agency then sends the visa to the recruiting agency in Bangladesh. There may be as little as a few weeks between the time potential migrants give their passport to the agency and the time they commence work, or they may have to wait up to several months before migrating.

Although a general overview of how recruiting agencies work may seem simple, the actual recruitment procedures are much more complex and multilayered. Along with formal recruiting agents, certain informal agents located at different points throughout the system come into assist the recruitment procedures. Generally, most prospective migrants hail from villages in Bangladesh, but recruiting agencies

based in the capital city of Dhaka encounter difficulties when locating prospective migrants who might be suitable for particular jobs and who are ready to pay the required fees. As a result, the recruiting agents rely overwhelmingly on a group of middlemen called subagents, who act as mediators between prospective migrants and licensed recruiting agents. For an extra fee, these subagents help prospective migrants find jobs and help agencies find prospective workers in a timely fashion. Although the position of subagent in the official structure is marginal, they play a critical role in matching the demand for specific labour and the supply of such labour.

The subagents approach the prospective migrants and convince them to take up work in Singapore. The true hurdle of this job is the subagents' ability to earn the trust of prospective migrants. Given the fact that migration can mean costs of several thousands of dollars, a prospective migrant from a village prefers to deal with someone who embodies trust: this could be people such as rural religious, economic, and political elites, so that they have a local contact to approach in cases of fraud and exploitation. Subagents are generally based in small cities or villages and have good contacts with these elites, or may in fact be members of those elites themselves. Subagents assist prospective migrants with a wide range of activities such as paperwork, passports, bank accounts, medical checkups, and transportation to the airport. In addition to facilitating the actual migration process, they sometimes vouch to the traditional money-lenders that potential clients have already secured jobs in Singapore and therefore are eligible for credit. They can even act as guarantors for potential migrants who otherwise could not secure loans for migration, transgressing the subagent's core role of simple matching (Fig. 4.1).

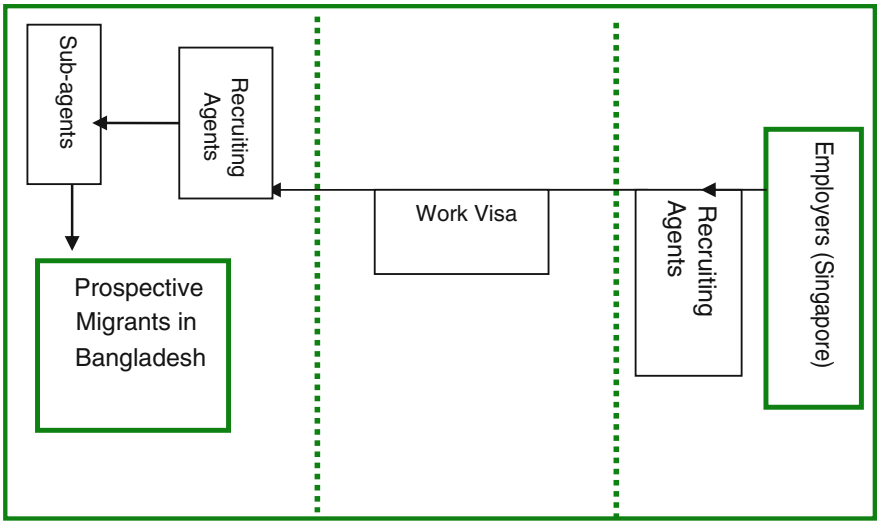

Fig. 4.1 Recruitment of Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore

The Economic Aspect of Recruitment

The economic aspect of recruitment involves two important terms, 'recruitment fees' and 'economic costs of recruitment', that call for conceptual clarification. Though both recruitment fees and economic costs of recruitment denote the expenses that migrants incur in the recruitment process, they vary depending on the mode of payment in the migration process. The term 'economic costs of recruitment' is widely used in some predominantly male-migrant-sending countries in South Asia such as Bangladesh and India. Since male migrants are usually required to pay the expenses for recruitment out of their own pockets prior to arriving at the destination country, the economic costs of recruitment usually refer to the expenses that male migrants incur in the recruitment process (Fig. 4.2). Meanwhile, female migrants in Asia often do not need to pay the expenses for recruitment out of their own pockets prior to migration. This is due to the fact that sponsor-employers often pay for women's migration—especially in domestic worker migration—and deduct the advanced payment from the monthly salary of female workers when they start working in the destination country (Fig. 4.3). In some predominantly female-migrant-sending countries (such as the Philippines and Indonesia), the term 'recruitment fees' or 'placement fees' are therefore used as a substitute for the

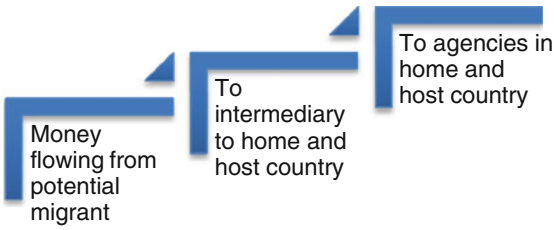

Fig. 4.2 Flow of capital in economic cost of migration

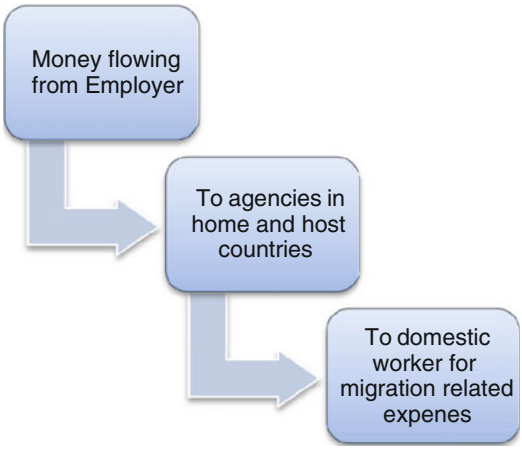

Fig. 4.3 Flow of capital in recruitment fees of migration

economic costs of migration (Jones 2000; Wee and Sim 2004; Rahman and Lian 2009; Lindquist 2010; Wilcke 2011).

A key difference between the recruitment of men and women to Singapore is that men must pay a fee to the recruitment agency prior to departure, while women usually do not. Recently, Johan Lindquist has elaborated the gender-differentiated patterns of recruitment by showing that while capital flows 'down' in the migration of women, for the migration of men capital flows 'up', from the migrant to the recruitment agency and sponsor (Lindquist 2010). South Asian male migrants usually enjoy the privileges of active expenses in the recruitment process, by choosing service providers themselves and paying them upfront. This characteristic of choosing the service providers and paying the incurred expenses upfront justifies calling the payment for recruitment an 'economic cost of recruitment' or 'economic cost of migration' (Fig. 4.2), rather than the seemingly binding 'recruitment fees'. However, the terms 'economic cost' and 'financial cost' of migration are used interchangeably throughout the book.

Securing overseas employment is a costly venture for a potential migrant, as he is required to spend a considerable amount of money to complete the full range of migration procedures. The expenses incurred vary depending on skill levels, access to information, nature of ties with migrant brokers and local agents, presence of relatives in Singapore, prior migration experiences, and so on. This study considers not only the actual financial costs of migration but also the embedded costs, that is, the sources of arranging the financial cost of migration and their potential impact on family economics. To secure a job in Singapore, a potential migrant is required to pay part of the financial costs to the middlemen/sub-agents in advance, a fee which ranges from one-fourth to one-half of the total cost. The remaining amount is usually paid in several instalments depending on the progress of the visa application. Normally all dues are payable before a prospective migrant flies to Singapore; however, in migrant-broker-initiated recruitment some fees may be waived, especially when prospective migrants are close relatives of migrant brokers.

In the case of Asian migration to the Gulf countries, wages have fallen and the financial costs of migration have risen (Gardner 2010: 60). However, in the case of Singapore, the financial cost of migration has increased over the years in tandem with the wages of migrants. This section analyses the financial costs of migration as found in various surveys starting from 2003. In a survey of 100 migrants in Singapore conducted in 2003, it was found that most migrants spent between US$3600 and US$5000 in order to migrate to Singapore (Table 4.2). This includes all administrative fees, airfare, training, medical tests, and other relevant expenses. This was a huge financial cost for a rural family in Bangladesh. As a result, they had to raise funds for migration from different sources. In descending order based on frequency of use, the major sources of finance for migration are as follows: relatives (in Bangladesh), relatives (who had been working abroad), family savings, money-lenders, and land property. On average, nearly 34 and 20% of the financial costs for a migrant came from relatives in Bangladesh and abroad respectively. The role of money-lenders is also noteworthy as a fourth contributor: on average a migrant received around 10% of financial cost of migration from money-lenders.

Table 4.2 Financial cost of migration: a survey of 100 migrants in Singapore, 2003

Financial cost of migration (in US$)	Percent (%)	Sources of collection of financial cost of migration	Frequency	Contribution of different sources to total cost of migration	Percent (%)
Below US$3000	18	Family and personal savings	37	Family and personal savings	18
3000–3600	17	Selling or mortgaging land	21	Selling or mortgaging land	10
3600–4400	32	Borrowing from money-lenders	23	Money-lenders	10
4400–5000	29	Relatives in Bangladesh	43	Relatives in Bangladesh	20
Above US$5000	4	Relatives in abroad	42	Relatives in abroad	34
		Miscellaneous sources	18	Miscellaneous	8

Note Currency conversion rate in 2000/2001; US$1 = BDT50; SG$1 = BDT30

A survey conducted in 2009 of 100 Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore revealed that the financial cost of migration ranged from a minimum of BDT 50,000 (nearly US$700) to a maximum of BDT 400,000 (nearly US$5700) and above. Around 63% of respondents spent between US$3000 and US$5700 or more. A small percentage of respondents (11%) spent below US$1500, these respondents having prior migration experience in Singapore. The average cost of migration for the sample population was BDT 287,100, which is around US$ 4250 as of 2009 (exchange rate US$ 1 = BDT69). As I mentioned earlier, it is not only the financial cost of migration that can offer the actual economic cost of migration, since potential migrants and their families must often dispose of valuable family assets. I refer to this phenomenon as 'the hidden cost of migration' because borrowing money from money-lenders and selling off valuable family property like arable land or livestock entails heavy economic pressure on the migrant families, reducing the flows of family incomes in the long term.

A detailed inquiry into the sources of funds raised for migration revealed that family savings, personal savings, loans, and sale of land and family valuables (e.g., gold ornaments) contributed to the financial cost of migration for respondents. As per the frequency of occurrence, most migrants found the solution to the costly migration venture first in family savings (95%), followed by loans or gifts from relatives and friends (62%), and dispossession of land and family valuables (31%). As mentioned earlier, social and symbolic ties are valuable assets for people in Bangladesh. *Bari* members come forward to help during the time of migration. Since it is a matter of obligation, reciprocity, and solidarity for the *bari*, members are generous in providing interest-free loans to their nearest relatives. Data reveals that 62% of migrant families in Bangladesh borrowed money from relatives. It is

Table 4.3 Financial cost of migration: a survey of 100 migrants in Singapore, 2009

Financial cost of migration (in US$)	Percent (%)	Sources of collection of financial cost of migration	Frequency
Below US$1500	11	Family savings	95
1500–3000	26	Relatives and friends overseas	62
3000–4500	27	Selling or mortgaging of land and family valuables	33
4500–5700	28	Personal savings	21
Above US$5700	8	Loan with interests	9
		Miscellaneous	6

Note Exchange rate US$1 = BDT69 in October 2009

obvious that remittances (in the form of loans from relatives abroad) should also play a vital role in meeting the costs of migration, since kinship acts as social insurance in Bangladeshi society (Kuhn 1999; Rahman 2003) (Table 4.3).

A survey of 50 migrant *baris* provides insights into the financial cost of migration for their members. This involves not only Singapore but also other countries where a *bari* sent their members out for work. Table 4.4 presents data on years of migration, financial cost of migration, and names of countries for all migrant members of the surveyed *baris*. There are 27 *baris* from where individuals migrated only to Singapore, and in total 90 migrants out of 170 chose to migrate to Singapore. Migrants from the remaining 23 *baris* sought Singapore as well as other countries for work. In total, 80 migrants out of total 170 were working in other countries including Italy, France, South Korea, Malaysia, South Africa, and some oil-rich Gulf countries. We observe a general trend in the rise of economic costs of migration over the past two decades. The economic cost of migration to Singapore ranged roughly between US$5000 and US$9000 when migration took place in years between 2008 and 2014, between US$4000 and US$7000 in the years between 2001 and 2007, and between US$2000 and US$5000 in the years before 2001.

The economic cost of migration was in some cases markedly lower than the approximate figures provided above, because some migrants had been working in Singapore for long time, leading to higher levels of human capital (skill formation in Singapore) and lower economic costs of migration in subsequent contracts. In the survey, migrants and their families were asked to state the economic cost of migration in their own currency, that is, in Bangladeshi Taka (BDT). Later, the figure was converted into US$. The Bangladeshi currency fluctuated with the US$ roughly from US$ 1 = BDT 50 in 2000 and US$1 = BDT 65 in 2007, to US$ 1 = BDT 80 in 2015. The Singapore currency exchange rate with the US dollar did not change much over those years, remaining within the range US$1 = SG$1.25–1.60. The Bangladeshi currency exchange rate fluctuation is seen as one of the major causes for the rising financial cost of migration to Singapore. Another reason for the rising cost pertains to the supply side, since there are more individuals who desire to migrate than there are available jobs in Singapore, leading to competition among potential

Table 4.4 Financial cost of migration: a survey of 50 Singapore-migrant *Baris* in Munshiganj, 2014–2015

No of Bari	Total migrants in Bari	Years of first migration from the Bari	Financial costs[a] of migration (approximate figures in US$)	Host countries (migrants are presently working in these countries)
Bari-1	5	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2005 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2012 5th migrant 2012	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 13,000 3rd migrant 3000 4th migrant 6000 5th migrant 21,000	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant South Korea 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia 4th migrant Singapore 5th migrant Italy
Bari-2	2	1st migrant 2013 2nd migrant 2014	1st migrant 8000 2nd migrant 6000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-3	3	1st migrant 2008 2nd migrant 2010 3rd migrant 2013	1st migrant: 5000 2nd migrant 5000 3rd migrant 7500	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-4	3	1st migrant 2009 2nd migrant 2010 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant 6000 2nd migrant 5000 3rd migrant 6000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-5	1	1st migrant 2007	1st migrant 5000	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-6	1	1st migrant 2013	1st migrant: 6000	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-7	1	1st migrant 2013	1st migrant: 9000	1st migration Singapore
Bari-8	2	1st migrant 2005 2nd migrant 2007	1st migrant: 5000 2nd migrant 4000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-9	3	1st migrant 1999 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2010	1st migrant 2000 2nd migrant 5000 3rd migrant 6000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-10	4	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2008 3rd migrant 2010 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant: 2500 2nd migrant 5500 3rd migrant 6000 4th migrant 7000	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 4.4 (continued)

No of Bari	Total migrants in Bari	Years of first migration from the Bari	Financial costs[a] of migration (approximate figures in US$)	Host countries (migrants are presently working in these countries)
Bari-11	2	1st migrant 1992 2nd migrant 2008	1st migrant: 3000 2nd migrant 5000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant South Africa
Bari-12	4	1st migrant 1994 2nd migrant 1996 3rd migrant 1999 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant: 2000 2nd migrant 2000 3rd migrant 2500 4th migrant 7000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-13	4	1st migrant 2011 2nd migrant 2011 3rd migrant 2011 4th migrant 2013	1st migrant 2500 2nd migrant 14,000 3rd migrant 10,000 4th migrant 7000	1st migrant Maldives 2nd migrant Italy 3rd migrant Italy 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-14	2	1st migrant 1997 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant 2000 2nd migrant 5000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-15	2	1st migrant 1994 2nd migrant 2005	1st migrant 4000 2nd migrant 20,000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Italy
Bari-16	1	1st migrant 2007	1st migrant: 4000	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-17	4	1st migrant 2006 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2009 4th migrant 2012	1st migrant 6000 2nd migrant 3000 3rd migrant 7500 4th migrant 9000	1st migrant Malaysia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-18	2	1st migrant 1999 2nd migrant 2002	1st migrant 1000 2nd migrant 1500	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-19	3	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2004 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant 4000 2nd migrant 10,000 3rd migrant 10,000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-20	1	1st migrant 2011	1st migrant: 7000	1st migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 4.4 (continued)

No of Bari	Total migrants in Bari	Years of first migration from the Bari	Financial costs[a] of migration (approximate figures in US$)	Host countries (migrants are presently working in these countries)
Bari-21	2	1st migrant 2011 2nd migrant 2014	1st migrant: 7000 2nd migrant 8000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-22	4	1st migrant 2006 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2009 4th migrant 2010	1st migrant: 4000 2nd migrant 4000 3rd migrant 9500 4th migrant 9500	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia 4th migrant Saudi Arabia
Bari-23	4	1st migrant 1993 2nd migrant 2003 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2012	1st migrant: 7500 2nd migrant 2000 3rd migrant 2500 4th migrant 7500	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Saudi Arabia 3rd migrant UAE 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-24	2	1st migrant 2010 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant 4000 2nd migrant 5000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant UAE
Bari-25	4	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2005 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2009	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 2000 3rd migrant 2000 4th migrant 9000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant UAE 3rd migrant Malaysia 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-26	3	1st migrant 1991 2nd migrant 2011 3rd migrant 2013	1st migrant 6000 2nd migrant 5500 3rd migrant 4000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-27	3	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2009	1st migrant 2500 2nd migrant 5500 3rd migrant 5000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant South Africa 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-28	2	1st migrant 1994 2nd migrant 2002	1st migrant 5000 2nd migrant 3000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-29	2	1st migrant 1996 2nd migrant 2009	1st migrant 1200 2nd migrant 5000	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 4.4 (continued)

No of Bari	Total migrants in Bari	Years of first migration from the Bari	Financial costs[a] of migration (approximate figures in US$)	Host countries (migrants are presently working in these countries)
Bari-30	1	1st migrant 2014	1st migrant 9000	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-31	4	1st migrant 2006 2nd migrant 2008 3rd migrant 2009 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 3500 3rd migrant 6000 4th migrant 10,000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Singapore
Bari-32	5	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2004 3rd migrant 2006 4th migrant 2008 5th migrant 2013	1st migrant 2500 2nd migrant 3000 3rd migrant 5000 4th migrant 5000 5th migrant 16,000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant Saudi Arabia 5th migrant Italy
Bari-33	3	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2011 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 6000 3rd migrant 4000	1st migrant Malaysia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Saudi Arabia
Bari-34	1	1st migrant 2011	1st migrant 6000	1st migrant Singapore
Bari-35	4	1st migrant 2009 2nd migrant 2009 3rd migrant 2010 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant 7000 2nd migrant 12,500 3rd migrant 7000 4th migrant 12,500	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant France 3rd migrant SG 4th migrant France
Bari-36	2	1st migrant 2007 2nd migrant 2007	1st migrant 2500 2nd migrant 4000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Malaysia
Bari-37	2	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2006	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 13,500	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Italy
Bari-38	3	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2010 3rd migrant 2011	1st migrant 2500 2nd migrant 7000 3rd migrant 7500	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 4.4 (continued)

No of Bari	Total migrants in Bari	Years of first migration from the Bari	Financial costs[a] of migration (approximate figures in US$)	Host countries (migrants are presently working in these countries)
Bari-39	2	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2005	1st migrant: 2000 2nd migrant 10,000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Italy
Bari-40	4	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2011 4th migrant 2011	1st migrant 10,000 2nd migrant 5000 3rd migrant 6000 4th migrant 14,000	1st migrant South Korea 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore 4th migrant South Korea
Bari-41	2	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 6000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-42	2	1st migrant 1997 2nd migrant 2010	1st migrant 2000 2nd migrant 5000	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-43	3	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2007 3rd migrant 2012	1st migrant 2500 2nd migrant 4000 3rd migrant 3500	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-44	2	1st migrant 2003 2nd migrant 2004	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 2500	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-45	2	1st migrant 2004 2nd migrant 2011	1st migrant 3000 2nd migrant 7000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-46	2	1st migrant 2002 2nd migrant 2006	1st migrant 2000 2nd migrant 7500	1st migrant Saudi Arabia 2nd migrant Singapore
Bari-47	3	1st migrant 2007 2nd migrant 2012 3rd migrant 2013	1st migrant 5000 2nd migrant 6000 3rd migrant 10,000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Singapore
Bari-48	1	1st migrant 2011	1st migrant 6000	1st migrant Singapore

(continued)

Table 4.4 (continued)

No of Bari	Total migrants in Bari	Years of first migration from the Bari	Financial costs[a] of migration (approximate figures in US$)	Host countries (migrants are presently working in these countries)
Bari-49	5	1st migrant 1996 2nd migrant 2002 3rd migrant 2007 4th migrant 2008 5th migrant 2010	1st migrant 2000 2nd migrant 3000 3rd migrant 11,000 4th migrant 12,000 5th migrant 6000	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore 3rd migrant Italy 4th migrant Italy 5th migrant Malaysia
Bari-50	2	1st migrant 1999 2nd migrant 2002	1st migrant 1000 2nd migrant 1200	1st migrant Singapore 2nd migrant Singapore

[a]Financial cost of migration represents approximate figures and converted from BDT to USD as per exchange rate of 2014–2015; US$1 = BDT78 in 2014–2015. The conversion of financial cost of migration from Bangladeshi Taka to the US Dollar is provided on the basis of exchange rate in 2014–2015. However, migration took places in different years before 2014–2015; therefore, the exchange rate of the years 2014–2015 is expected to vary slightly

migrants for scarce Singapore jobs. Labour brokers are aware of the gap in the demand and supply and tend to charge higher fees to potential migrants who are not connected by strong social ties.

If we compare the economic costs of migration to Singapore with that to other countries, we can draw some interesting conclusions. Migrants did not have to pay more than US$5000 in order to migrate to six countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE, and Oman, except in a few cases. It is noteworthy that the cost of migration depends largely on the ability of brokers and recruiting agents to extract the amount that they wish, leading to variations in the economic costs of migration. The Government of Bangladesh set BDT 84,000 (US$1230) as the maximum recruiting fee for migrants going to the Gulf countries (Rahman 2015: 212). However, it is apparent from the data that such a maximum recruiting fee is not strictly followed by recruiting agents, nor by potential migrants, because of the disparity between the unending demand for overseas jobs and the limited supply of such jobs.

There is no such maximum recruiting fee in the case of Bangladesh migration to Singapore. It is apparent from the data that the cost of migration for Singapore is higher than that of other major labour-importing countries in the GCC and Southeast Asia. However, the potential economic benefits of migration, especially wages and other fringe benefits, are also higher and more transparent in Singapore than in the GCC and Southeast Asia (Table 4.4). The financial cost of migration depends largely on wages and the prospects of future settlement. The findings suggest that the economic cost of migration to Europe and East Asia is higher than that of Singapore, and this is probably due to the possibility of higher wages and permanent settlement in Europe and East Asia (South Korea and Japan).

Reciprocity and Migration

Reciprocity suggests actions that are contingent on rewards from others, and which cease when these expected reactions are not forthcoming (Blau 1974: 6). Reciprocity exists when one party receives something from the other which he is required to return. In general, reciprocity refers to exchanges of approximately equivalent value in which the actions of each party depend on prior actions by the others, in such a way that good is returned for good and bad for bad (Keohane 1986: 8). Reciprocity is a social norm when at least two sub-norms are adhered to: persons help those who have helped them; and persons should not harm those who have helped them before (Faist 2000). Faist argues that the norm of reciprocity helps to maintain, renew, or forge fresh social and symbolic ties and is usually a prerequisite for the formation of kinship, friendship, and community-centred migrant networks (Faist 2000).

Faist (2000) has identified five characteristics in reciprocity: the balance of accounts (specific and generalized reciprocity), the temporal sequence of transactions, the kind of service exchanged, benefactor–contributor relations, and power

relations. An example is given below to illustrate these characteristics of reciprocity in the context of Bangladeshi migration to Singapore. We imagine that someone from Gurail in Bangladesh who has migrated to Singapore turns up on the doorstep of a fellow-villager to ask for better accommodation in Singapore. That villager, who has been helped by the earlier migrant, may not return the favour specifically to the individual, but to other newcomers from the same village who arrive later on, and this time not in finding accommodation but in job referral. This is an instance of generalized as opposed to specific reciprocity. In addition, there is no simultaneous reciprocity, since months or perhaps years may elapse between favour and counterfavour. The services exchanged may not be the same: the first migrant helped his fellow-villager to provide better accommodation, the second responded with help in finding a job, and the benefactor in the second case was not the original migrant but a new one from the same village in Bangladesh.

The empirical evidence from Bangladesh is overwhelming: networks established by earlier migrants act as conduits to channel later migrants to the same destinations in an atmosphere of relative security. Migrant networks facilitate the transfer of labour from Bangladesh to Singapore, and remittances from Singapore to Bangladesh. In-depth interviews reveal that migrants are not alone in Singapore; they have close relatives there as well. Since many of the members migrate from one *bari*, lineage, or village and are linked to each other by social and symbolic ties, they see it as a social and moral responsibility to assist other prospective migrants. The fulfilment of the responsibility ensures conformity to the norms and values of society which, in turn, enhances social status in the society of origin in relation to non-migrant and new/prospective migrant families who are not in a position to offer such assistance in the migration process.

Some migrants spoke proudly of the fulfilment of their social responsibilities. The statement of an informant who helped with the migration of his relatives is worth citing here:

> When I first came to Singapore, I was alone from my *bari*. Now I am not alone. I brought nine relatives including two in-laws. I have spent time and money for their migration process. Some of them have not even paid back the money that I spent on their migration. No problem, villagers know who helped and who did not. I did a good work for my relatives and I know I will be rewarded in this world and hereafter.

Thus, it is clear that the motivation for bringing in new/prospective migrants extends beyond the immediate economic reward. Migrants are aware of the possible social benefits, in this world as well as in the life hereafter, and were gratified to provide financial assistance and information to prospective migrants.

The contribution of earlier migrants to new/prospective migrants can be understood in terms of the norm of reciprocity. In the migrant journey, two important resources are required: cash to pay for migration-related expenses (e.g., airfare, medical tests, passport, and so on); and information on working and living conditions and other related issues in Singapore. Therefore, a potential migrant seeks assistance in terms of cash and information about the migration process. Data indicates that 50% of migrant workers received financial assistance from earlier

Table 4.5 The role of reciprocity in the migration process: a survey of 126 migrants in Singapore

Categories	Percent (%)	Categories	Percent (%)
Did you receive financial assistance at the time of your migration? Yes No	50 50	Did you receive information assistance at the time of your migration? Yes No	67 33
Did you offer financial assistance to the migration of others? Yes No	49 51	Did you offer information assistance to the migration of others? Yes No	64 36
Do you intend to offer financial assistance to some prospective migrants? Yes No Do not know yet	70 28 2	Do you intend to offer information assistance to some prospective migrants? Yes No	73 36

migrants when they first came to Singapore, and 67% received information assistance (Table 4.5). Once migrants are in Singapore, they do not neglect their social obligations: approximately 49% of these workers aided prospective migrants in Bangladesh through financial means, and 63% assisted prospective migrants through providing information. Migrants who could not meet their social responsibilities had a clear intention to help others in future. Around 70 and 73% of migrants showed intentions to help prospective migrants through financial means and information respectively in the near future.

It is obvious that remittance (in the form of borrowing from relatives abroad) plays a vital role in meeting the cost of migration. In Bangladeshi society, *bari* and kinship act as social insurance. As a result, it is not surprising that migrant relatives shoulder part of the financial cost of new migrants in the migration process. In the literature there is abundant evidence that current migrants' cost of passage is financed by previous emigrants (Appleyard 1998; Mahmood 1991, 1992; Rudinick 1996). Such evidence clearly indicates that past emigration encourages current emigration, something which is sometimes also called 'path dependence' (Hatton and Williamson 1998: 14). The earlier migrants and new/prospective migrants are tied into a bond of responsibility and obligation in the Bangladeshi *bari*. It is the responsibility of the earlier migrants to assist new/prospective migrants from the same *bari*, kinship, and villages, while it is in turn the obligation of the new migrants to do the same for prospective migrants with whom they share social and symbolic ties. As a result, a landless villager in Bangladesh may be poor in financial capital, but he is often rich in the social resources (social capital) inherent in such social and symbolic ties. The crucial feature of social relations is that they are convertible into other forms of capital such as financial capital or access to overseas

employment. The actual merit of social and symbolic ties is that they increase the affordability of migration for those in the social stratum who might not otherwise envision undertaking such a costly venture. Thus, the role of reciprocity in the migration process is of great significance. However, it has a downside.

The Other Side of Social Capital

Individuals as social actors are enmeshed in webs of social and symbolic ties that provide access to the resources of others, including improved information about migration prospects in desired countries. In the case of migration, it is observed that potential migrants and their families arrange the financial cost of migration through their social and symbolic ties to families, extended families, and larger spatial groups such as districts. It is also observed that when today's potential migrants become tomorrow's real migrants, they are obliged to assist each other depending on previous experiences. This flow of assistance, ranging from financial capital to physical or informational assistance in the migration process, spreads across the networks of social and symbolic ties, giving rise to the phenomenon of location-specific migration. This reciprocal obligation of assisting other would-be emigrants is embedded in the social, cultural, and religious institutions in Bangladeshi society. The phenomenon of using social capital while emigrating and returning after emigration is not a unique phenomenon, and can be observed in many resource-poor emigrant societies (Faist 2016). We can find many instances in resource-poor societies where people rely on the principal of taking and giving; in other words, individuals' livelihood strategy is based on social relations. Migration is just one example of these practices in this regard.

The principle of social sanction for refusing to provide a favour, and of social reward otherwise, guarantee the maintenance and storage of social capital for these people in traditional societies. As a result, the use of social and symbolic ties for migration is not free from social cost; it entails heavy repayments of social capital (favours in the form of financial assistance and others) in the migration process, which often outweigh the actual amount of social capital expended. Given the inherent problem associated with social capital—that is, that social capital increases as long as one is able to distribute it, whereas financial capital increases in so far as one accumulates it—migrants and their families become embedded in a social, cultural, and religious context that encourages and indeed compels them to value the accumulation of social capital at the expense of the distribution of economic capital. Migrants and their extended families are obligated to share their newly found economic prosperity through migration by assisting in the migration and other economic ventures of those with shared social and symbolic ties. Remittance literature suggests that migrants and their families tend to spend their remittances by financing the migration of other family members, offering gifts at events marking rites of passage such as weddings, birthdays, funerals, and many other gift-giving

occasions, individual and collective, ceremonial and non-ceremonial, horizontal and vertical. Such spending behaviour remains largely unexplained in the current literature.

The economic literature on migration often accuses migrants of being spendthrift, unproductive agents, while the sociological literature on remittances tends to explain their behaviour from a broader social development perspective. This book attributes the reason why remittances and other types of migration capital are spent in areas other than individuals' immediate economic gains, to the tendency to build social capital for migrants themselves, for their families and extended families, and even for their regions. We will later see this for the case of Bangladeshi migrants belonging to spatial groups such as districts. The role of social capital in perpetuating poverty, even among dynamic populations in resource-poor societies, is actually the other side of social capital, a side that is often overlooked in the migration literature. The present research identifies this other side of social capital as the reason why migrants tend to remain poor despite their higher incomes in relation to local income opportunity in home countries. While social capital furnishes international migrants with resources beyond their individual reach—creating social connections and support for migration—it also limits their possibilities of long-term success because of the very obligations inherent in social capital. If these expectations and obligations become too demanding, they can limit not only individual autonomy but also economic prosperity. Thus while one side of social capital is that it promotes cooperation and underpins migration, the other side is that it often debars migrants from prospering. This dark side of social capital merits further inquiry.

Chapter 5
Social Worlds of Migrants in Singapore

The circumstances in which foreign workers work and live in the global South have not been adequately investigated by migration scholars. Such research demands fieldwork in the host country for a considerable period of time, and the absence of this leaves us insufficiently informed about the social worlds of migrants on foreign soil. Some host countries do not allow such fieldwork because they fear reports of the miserable conditions under which migrant workers often live and work, the gross violations of human rights, and sometimes also of social and cultural insensitivity; as a result, we are virtually ignorant about migrants' socio-cultural and economic experiences in host countries. However, some countries in East and Southeast Asia have achieved remarkable success in offering pleasant and memorable experiences to their foreign workers, consistently making special efforts to improve their situations. Singapore is a case in point. Here, given the growing dependence on foreign workers, a whole range of support structures has evolved to make migrants' stays pleasant and rewarding. This chapter addresses the social worlds of migrants in Singapore.

It is particularly important to understand migrants' experiences in relation to a host of issues surrounding their economic, social, and cultural lives. These experiences are shaped by a number of specific issues, including working and living conditions, medical care, religious freedom, cultural activities, and organizational involvement. This chapter particularly addresses conditions for Bangladeshi migrants, and looks at different types of accommodation; the facilities available for medical care when required; the spaces offered for religious practices; opportunities for creative exercises (e.g., migrant poetry); and organizational support for well-being, justice, and empowerment. This is expected to provide much-needed insights into the social worlds of migrants overseas.

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Working Conditions

Bangladeshi migrants are, in the main, allowed to work in three key sectors: construction, marine, and processing, and this section discusses the working conditions found there. Most Bangladeshi migrants work in the construction sector, taking part in a wide range of activities such as bricklaying, welding, making aluminium windows and doors, joinery, pipe fitting, plastering, plumbing, glazing, steel reinforcement, structural steel fitting, thermal insulation, tiling, timber formwork, and waterproofing; significant numbers are also involved in installing cladding, ducting, electrical wiring, fibrous plasterboard ceilings, interior drywalls, and timber doors and flooring. Bangladeshi migrants must be between 18 and 50 years old to apply for a work permit; however, once they are in Singapore, they can work up to the age of 60. Bangladeshi migrants with basic skills certificates (R2 work permit holders) can work for up to 10 years, and those with higher skills certificates (R1 work permit holders) up to 22 years, subject to the availability of work. The basic skilled migrants hold Skills Evaluation Certificates (SEC) awarded by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA), an agency of the Singaporean Ministry of National Development. The BCA champions the development of an excellent built environment, covering buildings, structures, and infrastructure. It offers the SEC through overseas test centres in Bangladesh, and in similar testing centres in other countries such as India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, China, and Thailand. Conducting tests in countries of origin ensures that potential migrants are trained and prepared in advance to work in the construction sector in Singapore.

Among the migrant workers hired on work permits, there are two types of workers and two types of permits: those with basic skills are offered R2 work permits, and higher skilled migrants are offered R1 permits. Higher skilled migrants in the construction sector require a minimum of four years' construction experience in Singapore plus one of the following technical qualifications: construction registration of tradesmen (CoreTrade); trade certification recognized by the BCA; or multi-skilling. The multi-skilling scheme complements the CoreTrade scheme, whose two key requirements are skills and experience. The aim is to build a pool of workers competent in multiple construction trades, who can carry out more than one type of task on site. The multi-skilling scheme involves two conditions: a minimum of four years' construction experience in Singapore, and more than one SEC in a construction trade. The higher skilled migrants are required to attend continuing education and training to continuously upgrade their skills and to support improvements in productivity, quality, and safety. Workplace safety in the construction sector is a priority for the government; therefore, migrants are required to attend relevant safety courses from time to time throughout their working period in Singapore.

The marine sector also employs a large number of Bangladeshi migrants. This involves a wide range of activities such as the building and repair of ships, tankers, and other ocean-going vessels; the manufacture and repair of marine engines and ship parts; and the building and repair of pleasure crafts, lighters, and boats. This

sector also has a maximum period of employment for Bangladeshi migrants, which varies from 10 to 22 years depending on the level of skill and the availability of work. Migrant workers are only allowed to work within a shipyard's premises. They are required to pass a Skills Evaluation Test (SET), conducted by the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), to upgrade their skills and to gain various privileges and benefits including up to 22 years of employment. They need to take courses in shipyard safety, and workplace health and safety in marine work; and they are required to retake and pass the safety course regularly throughout the working period.

There are also a small number of migrants working in the processing sector. This includes plants manufacturing petroleum, petrochemicals, specialty chemicals, and pharmaceutical products. The production processes involve specialized equipment and machinery requiring niche skills and expertise. Bangladeshi migrants usually perform tasks related to the construction and maintenance of plant equipment. However, they are not allowed to be involved in the plant's operations or in peripheral services such as grass cutting, office cleaning, road maintenance, or waste disposal. As in the construction and marine sectors, Bangladeshi processing workers can work for between 10 and 22 years depending on their level of skill. Migrants are required to undertake an SET to enjoy various benefits and privileges in the course of their employment in Singapore. They must also pass an oil/petroleum safety orientation course and a construction safety orientation course from time to time throughout their working life.

Migrants are required to wear protective clothing, and sometimes work-friendly dress, when at work. Despite the various safety courses in the construction, marine, and processing sectors, migrants sometimes suffer workplace injuries, and the Workmen's Compensation Act provides compensation for those affected. Working hours vary by sector depending on the nature of work, but are typically between 8 am and 5 pm. Migrants enjoy a lunch break and two to three tea breaks daily, and a weekly holiday on Sunday. If there is a demand for extra working hours, they are paid for overtime work.

Living Situations

Employers in Singapore are required to ensure acceptable housing for all foreign workers. This means that housing must meet certain standards: proper land use as defined by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), Housing Development Board (HDB), or Jurong Town Corporation (JTC); building structural safety standards of the BCA; fire and safety standards of the Singapore Civil Defense Force (SCDF); environmental health requirements of the National Environment Agency (NEA); and drainage, sanitary, and sewage system standards set by the Public Utilities Board (PUB). Employers risk prosecution if they do not ensure that their workers have acceptable housing.

There are three kinds of housing facilities for foreign workers. They may live in apartments, in dormitories, or at worksites (mainly construction worksites). Employers usually rent old HDB apartments to house their foreign employees; however, sometimes migrants group together to rent these apartments for a more comfortable standard of living. It is generally longer term migrants who seek such private accommodation; it is costly, and it is mainly those with higher wages, such as foremen of construction companies or supervisors of block cleaners, who can afford to live independently. Although migrant workers cannot bring their wives to Singapore on dependent passes, they can bring them on tourist visas which can be extended up to three months. Foremen and supervisors, who usually draw higher wages than other migrant workers, bring their spouses to Singapore on tourist visas once a year, and also take advantage of their annual leave privileges to visit their families back home. Thus, within the low-skilled migrant population, there is a group of experienced migrants with relevant work experience and managerial skills who enjoy privileged treatment and find it worthwhile to stay in the country for extended periods.

The predominant housing arrangement for foreign workers in Singapore is the 'worker dormitory'. These are specially constructed, with basic amenities, to house foreign workers. They are often large; some can accommodate several thousand migrants. The government takes an interest in the comfort of these dormitories, and has introduced a licensing system: if a dormitory can house 1000 or more foreign workers, potential operators are required to apply to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) for a license. The government has introduced strict standards for these dormitories, and licensed operators need to comply with rules on physical and structural safety, fire safety, land use, hygiene, and cleanliness. After a thorough inspection of the dormitory, such as a facility inspection, a license may be offered for up to three years. Licensees need to submit quarterly management reports to the MOM. These contain a wide range of information on dormitory occupancy (e.g., occupancy rate, room take-up rate, vacancies, etc.); rental rates; use of amenities and facilities; transport, cleaning, and security arrangements; feedback from residents including grievances received and actions taken by the licensee; security-related incidents; and outstanding rental arrears. This reporting ensures sustained maintenance of standards of living.

Dormitories are equipped with common dining facilities, a grocery shop, an entertainment room, prayer places, and sports and other relevant facilities. Rooms are equipped with double and triple bed facilities, with several migrants sharing a room. Migrants do not usually pay rent; it is the employer who bears the expense of accommodation. Dormitories are found across the country, usually in convenient locations so that migrants can commute to worksites by public transport. Migrants who live in dormitories or HDB apartments generally rise early in the morning, between 5.30 and 6.30 am. They usually go to work by public transport or on lorries arranged by their employers. The normal working day starts at 8 am. and ends at 5 pm., with a one-hour lunch break and two to three tea breaks of around 30 min each.

Since most Bangladeshi migrants find jobs in the construction industry, a large number of them are offered accommodation at their worksites, and sites such as building and subway construction sites have a few temporary rooms with basic amenities. Each construction site accommodates its own labourers. This worksite accommodation is cheaper and more convenient for both employers and employees. Employers save money on housing and transport, and since workers are living at the sites, they are available for overtime work and can guard the sites against unauthorized intrusion. As for the migrants, they do not need to waste time commuting to worksites. Commuting time varies depending on worksite and location of housing; however, it generally takes from two to four hours each way. Migrants can save this commuting time and use it to make extra money by working overtime, and they often look for this advantage when they join a company. Unlike accommodation at HDB flats or in some dormitories, worksite accommodation is entirely free of cost for migrants, and it often offers more living space than apartment and dormitories.

Migrants who live at HDB flats or worksites usually cook their own food. They cook at night and the leftover food is eaten for lunch the next day. They usually eat bread in the mornings, but the food customs of their home country dictate that they have rice at lunchtime. Depending on numbers, they form groups of five to ten members and take turns to cook. With each member cooking on average once a week, the others have free time which they might spend on working overtime. For reasons of economy, they usually buy groceries in bulk on Sundays, keeping frozen items in refrigerators, and visit nearby supermarkets for everyday items. Cooking food for themselves means they have more choice of curries to have with rice. The monthly expenditure for food is generally between SG$100 and SG$250 per person, depending on the choices they make.

In contrast, migrants living in dormitories are usually not allowed to cook food in their rooms, but have to dine in the common dining room or canteen. Arrangements for common dining are simple and straightforward: to eat at the dormitories, migrants need to buy food coupons. These can cover a period of one or two weeks or even a month, and come in various types depending on the variety of curry they can buy. There are low-cost coupons for basic curry items, and mid-range ones with more choice. Since the food here is prepared for thousands of people, the price is much lower than on the open market, usually between SG$125 and SG$250 a month. Rice is served abundantly, and migrants can have as much as they want. Food is served at a scheduled time, after which the canteen will be closed and food will no longer be available. However, if a migrant cannot eat in the canteen during opening hours, their friends can collect food on their behalf and keep it in their room. Migrants can eat outside of the dormitory for a week or more. Such arrangements provide flexibility and allow for variations in taste.

Medical Care

Singapore has institutionalized two-tiered medical screening procedures for the acceptance of foreign workers into the country. Potential migrants are required to undergo a medical examination in their home countries, and another upon arrival in Singapore, before they can be issued with a work permit. If they have not passed an examination by a Singapore-registered doctor within two weeks of arrival, their permit will be declined and they will be sent home. They undergo work fitness tests and are screened for four infectious diseases: tuberculosis, HIV, syphilis, and malaria. These medical examinations, at home and in Singapore, ensure that foreign workers are medically fit. Once a worker passes the medical examination phase, he or she enters the second phase: medical support while they are in Singapore.

After the medical examination, employers are responsible for medical insurance coverage of at least SG$15,000 per year for each foreign worker, and are required to submit the insurance details online before the work permit is issued. The insurance usually covers inpatient care and day surgery, including hospital bills for conditions that may not be work related. The cost of medical insurance cannot be passed on to the foreign workers; it must be borne by their respective employers. Employers also need to submit medical insurance details online before they can renew work permits for their foreign workers; no employer can evade the medical insurance requirement for foreign workers in Singapore.

Moreover, if a foreign worker's medical expenses exceed the insurance limit, a worker does not have to bear part of the cost of medical treatment if there is no explicit co-payment arrangement. When there is such an agreement, employers must ensure that the foreign worker only covers costs in excess of the minimum medical insurance requirement, which is SG$15,000. In addition, the amount the worker pays should not exceed ten percent of his or her monthly salary. The co-payment arrangement should be made with the foreign worker's agreement and be stated explicitly in the employment contract. Employers are not allowed to deduct medical expenses from foreign workers' salaries without permission from the Commissioner of Labour. They are also required to bear the cost of dental treatment as long as it is deemed necessary for health; this applies regardless of whether the condition is work related. Migrant workers are entitled to paid out-patient and hospitalization sick leave if they have worked for an employer for at least three months. In practice, sick leave and salary benefits for semi-skilled migrant workers are not uniform; and some migrants may not receive a salary while on medical leave as per the requirement, especially if they work for an agency. However, migrants are encouraged to complain about such irregularities to a special desk at the MOM.

Religious Life

Bangladeshi migrants are predominantly Muslim; a few Bangladeshi Hindu migrants come to Singapore for work, but they are very small in number—perhaps one Hindu in a hundred Muslims at most. Muslim and Hindu migrants live in the dormitories or worksites together. Muslim workers in Singapore observe the three key religious practices of *salaat*, Eid prayers, and Ramadan. *Salaat*—the second pillar of Islam—is prayer; a prescribed liturgy performed five times a day. Islamic law requires all Muslims to pray five times a day, but in reality few Muslims do this regularly. If we observe the mosque-goers in cities and villages in Bangladesh, we notice that it is only a small section of the population, mainly older people, who tend to observe this. Most migrants working in Singapore are between 20 and 40 years of age, and this is the age group that tends to observe *salaat* less regularly.

To cater for the religious needs of the Muslim migrant population, employers and dormitory operators often offer prayer places, and those living in worksites and private accommodation make private arrangements for daily prayer. Interestingly, in many dormitories migrants themselves arrange *salaat* in *jamaat* (collective prayer) during selected prayer times, especially the sunset (*maghrib*) and nightfall (*isha*) prayers. They choose their own *Imam* from the migrant group and perform prayers in *jamaat*, particularly in the dormitories. Muslims are required to perform *jumu'ah salaat* (Friday prayer) at the mosques, and many migrants come to mosques on Fridays for *juma'ah*. In the last two decades, many local mosques have been renovated and expanded to accommodate *juma'ah salaat* for the growing Muslim migrant population; despite this, they are still overcrowded on Fridays.

In the holy month of Ramadan, migrants get a chance to come closer to one another. The arrangements for the *iftar* party at community and organizational levels are noteworthy. Migrants invite each other to break the fast together, and they are invited to a grand *iftar* party organized by the Bangladeshi local association. For Muslim migrants, *eid-al-fitr* and *eid-al-adha* are two important religious events requiring *jamaat*. Singapore is a multicultural country, with substantial citizen populations of four major religions—Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. As such, it celebrates religious diversity and observes a public holiday for each religion's major festivals, including *eid-al-fitr* and *eid-al-adha*. This gives Muslim migrants the chance to celebrate both occasions with full religious and cultural spirit.

In both *eid-al-fitr* and *eid-al-adha*, the day begins with prayers at the mosque, and this constitutes the central part of the celebrations. Migrants come to pray at selected mosques from different parts of the city in the early morning. While all mosques often offer *eid-al-fitr* and *eid-al-adha* prayers, there are seven mosques where *jamaat* are held with the *khutbah* translated into Bengali. The *khutbah* ('sermon' or 'oration'), the address delivered in the mosque at Friday prayer and at annual rituals such as *eid-al-fitr* and *eid-al-adha*, serves as the primary formal occasion for public preaching in the Islamic tradition. On such special occasions the *khutbah* contains features relevant to the celebration; for example, on *eid-al-fitr* the

Imam has a duty to instruct the faithful congregation on the *zakaat* or alms-giving, and on *eid-al-adha* he specifies the rules for sacrifice. In addition to the religious dimension, the *khutbah*s touch upon contemporary issues of interest to the Muslim world, such as world peace and prosperity.

In Singapore, the MUIS (the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore) provides the common theme of the *khutbah* on each religious occasion, and the same *khutbah* is given in all mosques across the island. There are eight mosques where *eid jamaat*s are organized by the Bangladeshi community. They are the Angullia, Assyakirin, Assyafaah, Darussalam, Hasanah, Khadijah, and Darul Amam Mosques. The *khutbah* is given in Bengali and English by Bangladeshi Imams who live in Singapore, often permanently. Listening to the *khutbah* in Bengali and praying with other Bangladeshi migrants on *eid jamaat* carry special meaning to all migrants on this foreign soil. In addition to the spiritual component, these religious events reinforce community sentiment and create a home from home among migrants, whether low-skilled or professional, residing in the country.

Bangladeshi Hindu migrants also actively attend religious festivals. For Bangladeshi and Bengali-speaking Hindus from West Bengal in India, the most important of these is the *durga puja*. This is an annual Hindu event to worship the goddess Durga, who represents the Divine Mother. The *durga puja* celebrates the triumph of truth over untruth, good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. Hymns are uttered in mass prayer for universal peace, prosperity, and unity, and those who live abroad return to their homes to celebrate the *puja* with their families. There are a substantial number of Bengali Hindu professionals who have made permanent homes in Singapore, and newly settled migrants celebrate *durga puja* with them. The Bengali Sarbojonin Society in Singapore organizes a *sarbojonin* (public) *durga puja* every year, and Bangladeshi Hindu migrants come to celebrate the Durga with their Muslim friends; here they too find a home from home.

The Tablighi Jamaat and militant political activism are two important trends among Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore that merit clarification here. Since the early 1990s, there has been an increasing tendency for Bangladeshi Muslim migrants to join the Tablighi Jamaat. This is an itinerant movement that aims not to convert non-Muslims, but to convert what they call non-practicing Muslims into believing and practicing Muslims. Membership of the group is difficult to define, as it claims not to be an organization. The group often presents a beautiful living image of Islam to the world in an attempt to attract ordinary Muslims to peaceful practice of Islam. The group particularly promotes this life as *temporary*, gifted by Almighty Allah for a fixed time span in preparation for a perpetually fully satisfying reward or for never-ending punishment in an everlasting afterlife.

The Tablighi Jamaat adheres to six principles that are considered crucial to the success of the group worldwide. They are as follows: *kalimah* (believing in the oneness of Allah); *salaat* (five daily prayers); *ilm* and *dhikr* (gaining knowledge and remembrance of Allah); *ikram-i-muslim* (the treatment of fellow Muslims with honour and deference); *ikhlas-i-niyat* (reforming one's life in supplication to Allah by performing every human action for the sake of Allah and thus towards the goal of self-transformation); and finally *tafrigh-i-waqt* (to spare time for this work,

especially following in the footsteps of the Prophet and taking His message door-to-door for the sake of faith) (Noor 2013; Pieri 2015). Interestingly, the Tablighi Jamaat asserts an avowedly apolitical stance, which makes it acceptable to all Muslim migrants regardless of their political leanings.

The group works at a grassroots level, reaching out to migrants in different sectors including the construction, marine, and processing sectors. The Singapore Markaz (the centre for all of the Tabligh's activities) is the Anngullia Mosque at Ferrer Park, and they are also active in other mosques including: Masjid Al Mukminin in Jurong East, AlKhair at Chua Chu Kang, Masjid Tentara Diraja at Clementi, Masjid Darussalam at Clementi, and Jamiyah Ar-Rabitah at Redhill. Almost all mosques in Singapore welcome the Tabligh's presence, with a few exceptions such as the Sulaiman Mosque near the NUS Business School. The Bangladeshi migrant worker community is the main driving force of the Tablighi Jamaat in Singapore. Professionals generally prefer not to join groups consisting mainly of migrant workers, and one such worker is usually appointed as leader. Followers and potential followers of the Tablighi Jamaat gather in mosques weekly; for example, hundreds of Tabligh followers gather at the Angullia Mosque every Thursday night. They meet at the Darussalam Mosque at Clementi and the AlKhair Mosque at Chua Chu Kang on Sundays, and at the Mosjid Tenrara at Clementi on Saturdays.

Followers are encouraged to go out and spread the ideology of Tablighi Jamaat on three days a month. This usually takes place over a weekend—Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, or for two days if their employer does not grant three days off. A group of seven to fifteen members go on these trips from mosque to mosque, but on long holidays, especially on the Chinese New Year's Eve, the group will be bigger. On these two- or three-day trips to the mosques around Singapore, they are not allowed contact with their friends or relatives. They cook their own food, eat together, and sleep in the mosque. While the group is primarily interested in matters of personal piety and spiritual self-renewal, followers may be vulnerable to radical Islamic networks because of the transformative nature of the learning and practicing of Islam, and because of the excessive focus on *ikram-i-muslim*, *ikhlas-i-niyat* and the glorification of heaven in the afterlife.

Some grassroots level, political activists in Bangladesh left the country after the fall of the government of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its allies such as the Jamaat-e-Islami in 2007. Because of their involvement in antisocial as well as militant activities at the grassroots level, it was difficult to stay unnoticed by the law enforcement authority, especially when the Awami League (AL), a secular democratic party, came to power with a landslide victory in 2009. As a result, these militant political activists from the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami had to flee in order to avoid incarceration. The change in government and the subsequent pursuit of labour migration to evade detention add a new dimension in Bangladeshi migration research and analysis that merits scholarly attention; however, this is beyond the scope of the present research. These militant political activists could not seek political asylum in the West because of strict policy measures for refugee status, including background checks imposed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Apart from this, they were not also qualified to apply to the Western countries for other types of

visas such as tourist visa, student visa or business visa. Many of these political activists, therefore, sought to depart the country in the guise of migrant workers to the global South. While many chose to migrate to the oil-rich Gulf countries, a small number also moved to Malaysia and Singapore on work visas.

Recently, these migrants have been organizing to plot violent acts against the government in Bangladesh. While Malaysia has remained somewhat ambivalent about such militant political migrants, Singapore has started to identity them among mainstream labour migrants. In fact, under the Internal Security Act, Singapore has recently detained nearly a hundred migrants found to be planning terrorist activities in Bangladesh, and even planning to join the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria. Although it is widely believed that these militant political activist-cum-migrant workers are not presently targeting Singapore for a terrorist attack, they may, however, gradually degenerate into local terrorist cells. They may target political opponents from Bangladesh on short visits to the island, and they may even target the Westerners whom such militant groups often consider the ultimate enemy. More importantly, they may permeate the sphere of professional Muslim immigrants from South Asia who have set down roots in the country in recent decades. Therefore, Singapore should remain vigilant about the potential security threat that this group poses in the long run.

Migrant Poetry: A Reflection on Migrant Life

Some Bangladeshi migrant workers write down their thoughts on life away from home. Migrants' feelings and emotions about their everyday life in Singapore, and their loved ones in Bangladesh, surface in such poetry. This reveals their working and living conditions, their feelings for families back home, their reasons for migrating, and their strategies for the future. As well as Bangladeshis, other migrant groups in Singapore, such as Indonesians, Chinese, and Filipinos are actively involved in writing about their feelings and experiences. Migrant poetry has been so popular among foreign workers and locals in Singapore that the *Banglar Kantha*, a newspaper for the Bangladeshi community in Singapore, along with some local organizations, introduced a migrant worker poetry competition in 2014. AKM Mohsin, the editor-in-chief of *Banglar Kantha*, is the man behind this competition. In the 2015, there were 74 submissions, up from 45 in 2014; these included submissions from 25 Filipinos, 23 Indonesians, and five Chinese workers. Drawing on selected Bangladeshi migrant poetry, this section sheds light on migrants' life in Singapore.

Lamp Post, written by Mohor Khan, 34, was shortlisted in the 2015 Migrant Worker Poetry Competition. Its theme is the common view of migrants as sources of incomes and hope for their families; like a lamp post, they provide light, as Mohor Khan expresses: "I am not only a migrant worker/I am the lamp post of a family" (lines 39–40). Like most Bangladeshi migrants in Singapore, Mohor Khan works in the construction sector, which demands hard work throughout the day. He is in love with Singapore because he is one of the thousands of migrants who built

the city-state in the last few decades: "Every day, with the perfect touch of the bottomless love of my heart/this city, mother Singapore, has turned into the chariot of the world riding on the extravagance of youth/Day after day I labour/Layers of this city are infused with the salty smell of my sweat" (lines 7–10). What is perennial and close to the hearts of all migrants is their longing for family when they are away from home, and Mohor Khan brings this to light with the example of his young son who has been growing up without him: "I am as lonely as a sodium lamp post/Slowly in the dim light of my dreams enters the miserable cry of my son/In my loneliness I can hear him say: Father, when will I go to Prince *Bazaar* holding your hand?/ …. I have learnt to walk, run/Father, I have grown up" (lines 25–28, 33–34). In temporary migration, a migrant, whether male or female, is not allowed to bring their family with them, resulting in a widening gap between migrant fathers and non-migrating children, a phenomenon affecting millions of migrants and their children.

Migrant poetry expresses their deepest feelings, emotions, cares, and dreams, in their own words. A migrant does not migrate to change his own fortune only; his brothers, sisters, parents, and if married, his spouse and children all are part of his strategy. In other words, a migrant always dreams of uplifting those who are connected to him by strong social ties. This strong sense of collective welfare based on family and *bari* is reflected in some migrants' poems. For instance, M. A. Sabur's poem *In this Sojourn* illustrates his migration dream and how he is planning to contribute to the socio-economic advancement of his family and *bari*: "One day, I flew to this country with a dream/Worked hard tirelessly hours after hours as day labourer/Got wet in the rain and bathed in sweat during work/Endless poverty in the family back home and I am the one to uplift them/Father's pocket money, younger brothers' education, and, younger sister's wish list to buy this and that …" (lines 1, 3, 4–5).

Although migrants are sources of income and hope for families, the usefulness of migration and migrant life is called into question when they fail to deliver the desired benefits. This feeling is also reflected in Md Sharif Uddin's poem *Five-Cent Coin*, in which he compares his life with a five-cent coin: "Time passes in uncertainty at the land of perpetual spring/Like a five-cent coin, sometimes useful, sometimes not/Sometimes valuable, sometimes not" (lines 1–2). He realized that he had little prospect for material success—a phenomenon common among new migrants in Singapore: "Life is passing by, pushing me into the depths of darkness/What once was dream, has become a nightmare/Like I am a five-cent coin, sometimes useful, sometimes not" (lines 17–19). A similar tone is penned by Sromik Monir in his poem *Worker*, which sheds light on how an ordinary worker's life has no place in history: "The earth of rainbow will glitter ignoring your blood-sweat/In the bosom of your earth with no tomb/In the diary of heaven winners/You will be a history, an unread history" (lines 26–28). In all three of these poems, the word 'dream' is repeatedly used to refer to 'material success', and they all suggest that migrants start their migrant life with boundless hopes and dreams. However, when they come to Singapore, some of them find that the migrant life is not always a bed of roses.

Migration involves separation from loved ones and loneliness on foreign soil. Such emotional distress is integral to migrant experiences throughout the world. Loneliness and separation have been key themes in the writings of some Bangladeshi migrants. For instance, in the poem *A Foreigner's Pain*, Kazi Shihab Uddin Liton depicts how the pain of separation, loneliness, and misunderstandings with his family hurts him every day. He was upset because he could not see his child growing up: "I desired to give my family a comfortable life, so I came to his foreign land/It has been fourteen years, I have lived as a foreigner/My children have always been deprived of my love as I have been deprived of hearing them call me 'father'/They have grown up without my affection and I have also learned to live with the pain of separation" (lines 1–3). The human cost of migration goes further and deeper when migrants and their families stand between life and death. A migrant who took up overseas work as a strategy to uplift his family and to give a good life to his parents may suddenly find that his parents have passed away, as happened in the case of Kazi Shihab Uddin Liton. He could not be at his mother's bedside when she died: "My mother died while I was away in this foreign land/I could not even see her for the last time/I cried a lot on the streets of this foreign land" (lines 4–6). The loneliness, painful separation from family, and death of a loved one are key themes of Md Shahidul Islam's poem *Agony*. The poem equally and emphatically sheds light on migrants' everyday experiences in Singapore, their longing for home, their desire to see their mothers: "Will anyone ever understand my heart's agony?/O mother, why is my life such an uphill struggle?/With so many desired in my heart, I had set off for this foreign land/Now all I have is the memory of your picture, O mother/When will I return to you, find solace in your embrace/It has been so long since I have seen you, O mother" (lines 1–2, 4–7).

Purchasing land by remittance is a common goal of almost all migrants and their family members; they hope to purchase land for themselves and thus ensure a secure life upon return. Land purchase and house-building as a principal migration strategy have been reported extensively in labour migration literature (Hugo 2003; Ullah 2010). The temporary orientation to migration makes sense of why migrants in the region plan to spend a substantial amount of their remittances on land purchasing and house-building. Land is seen as an asset with the potential to generate incomes indefinitely, while house-building ensures safety and quality of life. For young couples, house-building involves a huge investment, and a local income is often not sufficient to build a good house to live in. In *A Small Piece of Land bought by a Foreigner*, Syedur Rahman Liton expresses his desire for a small piece of land: "The foreigner has a lot of debts/Still wishes from abroad to buy a small piece of land/Will draw my dreams into an abode of happiness/where our children and grandchildren will fly and gather together in happiness" (lines 1–4).

However, Syedur Rahman's poem also highlights how migrants can be cheated by local thugs when they try to buy land or other valuable assets *in absentia*: "The land beside the road was up for sale and the news came on the mobile phone/I had no choice/My wife insisted, we had to make a house on that land/Buying land is a lot of hassle, the deed a terrible puzzle/I ask when the deed will be ready?/I have already paid the due/But I am told I won't be given the land, I should just stay

abroad/The money is lost, the foreigner has been cheated" (lines 5–8). It is important to note that most migrants intend to buy land, often called 'migrant land', in migration source districts. The migrants themselves do not live in their home villages and it is often their wives or families who are left to deal with monetary exchanges with land sellers; this leaves them vulnerable to cheating. Local thugs attempt to appropriate migrant land or forcefully occupy it, especially when families are purchasing land from distant relatives or outsiders. Migrant poetry has been a powerful means of portraying such experiences in their own words. It documents their everyday life overseas and captures their aspirations, emotions, and concerns about the migration process. As these examples have shown, migrant poetry has the potential to be a valuable source for migration research.

Migrant-Focused Organizations

The key issues and concerns for foreign workers revolve mainly around workplace grievances which can largely be grouped into two themes: employment-related; and welfare, occupational health, and safety issues (Piper 2005). Employment-related issues are mainly about non-payment, late payment, or under-payment of wages and unauthorized deductions. Issues associated with welfare, and occupational health and safety pertain to accommodation, long working hours, and workplace hazards (e.g., work-related injuries and accidents, physical or sexual abuse etc.). Within the MOM there is a separate division, the Foreign Manpower Management Division (FMMD), to oversee various issues related to workplace grievances and facilitate the well-being of foreign workers during their stints in Singapore. Its core activities include managing and protecting foreign manpower, raising professionalism within the employment agency industry, and strengthening enforcement capabilities.

The FMMD has five departments that deal with various aspects of foreign workers' well-being. First, the Employment Inspection Department, which ensures effective management of foreign manpower through policing—especially illegal employment, illegal deployment, and other violations of the MOM's foreign manpower regulations. Second, the Well-being Department addresses the management and protection of foreign manpower in the areas of accommodation, working conditions, physical well-being, and abandonment or runaways. Third, the Planning and Organization Development Department educates and raises awareness of foreign manpower management department policies among employers, foreign workers, and the public. Fourth, the Customer Management Department supports the division in the areas of office management, logistics, finance, administration, customer responsiveness, and managing prosecution witnesses. Fifth, the Intelligence Department strengthens the foreign manpower enforcement framework, capabilities, and the policy-making process.

Along with the FMMD's various initiatives, Singapore also allows some migrant organizations to complement the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being of foreign workers. Of the several migrant-focused organizations in

Singapore,[1] the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME), Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2), and the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) are particularly noteworthy. In addition, there are a few Bangladeshi migrant-focused organizations such as Dibashram and the Singapore Bangladesh Society (SBS), which primarily focus on the Bangladeshi temporary and permanent communities. This section discusses some of the activities of the migrant-focused organizations based in Singapore.

Registered as a society and as a charity in 2004, the HOME is dedicated to upholding the rights of migrant workers and works for the well-being, justice, and empowerment of migrant workers and trafficking victims in Singapore. Its activities can be broadly divided into four categories: advocacy and awareness, migrant services, research, and the HOME academy. HOME raises awareness among the Singaporean pubic about the rights of migrant workers and advocates for change by publicizing their plight, writing to the press, and taking part in dialogue sessions with government agencies and other stakeholders. HOME's campaign for regular days-off for domestic workers was a huge success. The organization provides a number of specific services to migrants, such as help desks and help lines, legal aid, shelter, skills training, a women's health centre and program, a dental clinic, and a volunteer service. Bangladeshi migrants can call a toll-free helpline number to seek counselling and employment advice whenever they experience injustice or abuse.

HOME's help desk seeks to ensure that existing laws are enforced to uphold the dignity and rights of aggrieved workers. *Pro bono* lawyers provide legal advice and litigation services to migrant workers on issues related to salary arrears, family law, criminal law, contractual law, compensations, and the enforcement of court orders. Free accommodation for victimized migrants is a key service of the organization. Migrants who have experienced abuse or exploitation, or who have suffered injuries in the workplace, are required to stay in Singapore for ongoing investigations, and their employers do not provide them with food and lodging during this time. HOME provides free accommodation and food to those migrants referred to them by authorities such as the police, the Ministries of Manpower or Immigration, and the Checkpoints Authority (ICA). They may stay for periods of one month and even up to a year, depending on how long it takes for investigations to conclude. Many Bangladeshi migrant victims have benefited from HOME's free accommodation services.

TWC2, founded in 2003, is dedicated to improving conditions for low-wage migrant workers in Singapore. TWC2 promotes fair treatment for migrant workers by extending assistance to those in need, and thus seeks to ensure fair resolution of their cases, dignity in work and living conditions, access to medical care, and protection of rightful autonomy. They offer a number of services to migrants, such as advocacy and awareness, social worker assistance, the Cuff Road food

[1]I compile some relevant information on various non-governmental organizations from their websites: http://www.home.org.sg; http://twc2.org.sg; http://www.mwc.org.sg; https://sb-society.org.

programme, care fund projects, and Discover Singapore. TWC2 believes that a systematic improvement of the situation for migrant workers can only be achieved through advocacy. It engages with policy-makers to highlight gaps in policies and implementations, and suggests solutions. To raise awareness among the public about the plight of migrant workers, TWC2 uses digital communications and social media, publishes newsletters and sends email alerts, maintains close relationships with media organizations, organizes public talks, conducts outreach to schools, participates in events such as fairs and exhibitions, and engages with employers and businesses. The social worker assistance program is designed to provide victimized migrants with information, referrals, and intervention.

The Cuff Road food program is TWC2's signature project, offering direct services to migrant workers. Those who are in dispute with their employers, or who are injured, often cannot feed themselves. TWC2 operates a food program in Little India, in which a free breakfast and a simple dinner is served every weekday and a lunch on Saturday. On average, according to their website, the TWC2 serves between 200 and 400 migrant workers a day. TWC2's volunteers are stationed at the food point so that the workers have someone to talk to and consult about their problems. These volunteers give advice on what rights and options they may have and how they can pursue their cases if necessary. The TWC2 also offers assistance in other areas of need. The three most important, called the Compassion and Relief for Emergencies (CARE) fund, are Road to Recovery/medical subsidies, FareGo, and Project Roof. Under the Road to Recovery or medical subsidies programme, the organization pays for any medical and dental treatment that is badly needed, or provides advances for surgery, diagnostic procedures, or other treatments. With the MOM's help, the worker should eventually be able to get reimbursement from his employer to pay back these expenses. The organization also operates a FareGo program, offering topped-up EZ-Link cards to enable workers to take the bus or metro. These cards are provided to those migrants who have no income opportunities or who are suffering from medical complications or accidents, and whose employers are not willing to pay for local transport facilities. Project Roof helps subsidize rents for selected injured or victimized migrants to allow them to stay in Singapore until their cases are finalized.

The MWC is a bipartite initiative of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the Singapore National Employers' Federation (SNEF). Its mission is to champion fair employment practices and the well-being of migrant workers. The MWC is particularly involved in promoting equitable employment practices and awareness of employment rights; providing interim humanitarian assistance and aid for distressed migrant workers; facilitating social integration through support networks and structures; and advocating for fair resolutions and assertion of migrant workers' rights. Like HOME and TWC2, MWC provides shelter and food to victimized migrant workers, as well as advice and assistance to remedy unfair employment practices. They also run a Help Kiosk to provide information on employment-related issues.

Set up in 2011, Dibashram is a self-help organization run by Mr. Abdul Khaeer Mohammed Mohsin. Mr. Mohsin is also the editor of the monthly Bengali paper *Banglar Kantha*, and he uses the paper's profits to pay for Dibashram's rent and utilities. Dibashram aims to promote friendship and mutual understanding between the migrant and resident communities. It primarily provides space for migrant workers to gather, rest, seek advice, play music, rehearse for dramas, and so on. The organization operates a range of free programmes for and by the migrant workers, such as celebrations, dramas, workshops, seminars, clinics, and classes. Some activities that the organization has recently hosted are as follows: educational workshops and seminars (e.g., computer lessons and lectures from visiting professors); cultural and artistic programs (e.g., theatre performances, literary evenings, poetry readings, story-telling, and South Asian film screenings); and some everyday drop-in activities (e.g., quiet naps, recuperation, meeting friends, watching television, and reading in the in-house library). In addition to enriching the cultural life of migrants, Dibashram's free medical screening for injured, out-of-work migrants has recently become popular.

Migrants from Bangladesh who came to Singapore in the 1970s, mostly middle-class professionals, set up the SBS in the early 1980s (Khondker 2008). Dr. M.A. Aziz, a Bangladeshi engineering professor at the National University of Singapore who served as President of the SBS for several terms, was the main force behind the setting up of this organization. The SBS is primarily run by professional Bangladeshis resident in Singapore. Some of its key objectives are to promote mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of Singapore and Bangladesh; to present Bangladeshi and Singaporean cultures and traditions to its members; to support social, cultural, and recreational activities amongst members and their families; to celebrate occasions of national importance to Bangladesh and Singapore; and to sponsor other related activities of interest. Although the organization is mainly run by the Bangladeshi resident population, it encourages low-skilled Bangladeshi migrants to participate in its various activities such as the Blood Donation Drive, the Singapore National Day celebration, the Bangladesh Independence Day celebration, the Eftar (the fasting break in the month of Ramadan) party, the Pohela Boishakh Celebration (Bengali new year celebration), cricket matches against other countries, and concerts by Bangladeshi artists. A large number of low-skilled Bangladeshi migrants take part in these events regularly, enjoying them alongside the Bangladeshi resident community. For both groups, these events create a feeling of home from home.

In summary, this chapter has addressed some key issues related to the lived experiences of Bangladeshi migrants such as working conditions, living conditions, medical care, and religious, cultural, and organizational life. Migrants working in the construction, marine, and processing sectors are discussed in relation to working environment, working hours, workplace safety, and the Workmen's Compensation Act. This chapter has reported that migrants' safety in the workplace is a priority and that migrant workers are protected by the Workmen's Compensation Act. It has offered insights into migrants' living conditions, showing how they live in public apartments, workers' dormitories, and worksites, and it has delineated the

government's commitment to providing healthy and hygienic living conditions for all foreign workers in Singapore. Migrant workers in Singapore enjoy the benefits of compulsory medical insurance paid for by employers, and have the freedom to perform key religious practices. However, a few militant political-activist-cum-migrants misuse this religious freedom and pose a security threat for the country, and this needs to be dealt with sternly. A few migrants are involved in creative writing; they compose poetry that depicts their experiences, emotions, separation from family, and plans for the future. Finally, this chapter has described the activities of government organizations and of some migrant-focused organizations, and the contribution that they are making to the well-being, justice, and empowerment of migrants in Singapore.

Chapter 6
Remittance as a Social Process

The remarkable growth in remittances has drawn the attention of states, international organizations, and financial institutions worldwide. Research on remittances has gained momentum in recent years, resulting in a burgeoning scientific literature on the phenomenon in different parts of the world (for a review, see Adams et al. 2009; Rahman et al. 2014). Broadly, existing studies on remittances are concerned with seeking ways to reduce poverty by leveraging remittances and migrant capital for development in rural areas of developing countries. In addition to reducing transfer costs and developing institutional partnerships, they also aim to improve banking services for rural populations, promote innovative remittances and financial services, and enhance productive rural investment in the migrants' countries of origin. The questions that appear in the current literature thus centre on how to facilitate remittance transfers and leverage the development potential of remittances. To answer these questions, the literature tends to focus on either the sending or the receiving side of remittances. Breaking with this established pattern, the present chapter demonstrates that research which links the remittance-sending and the remittance-receiving contexts is far more capable of capturing the complexity of remittances. At root, the chapter proposes a new conceptual framework for studying migrant remittances as a social process. Focusing on the Singapore–Bangladesh remittance corridor, this chapter uses the process conception to examine the links between the sending of remittances, and their receipt, control, and use in the home country.

The size of remittances is influenced by the context of sending, that is, earnings, savings, and remitting behaviour in the remittance-sending countries. Meanwhile, the receipt and use of remittances has developmental implications in the remittance-receiving countries. Yet while knowledge about remittance transfers at the sending or receiving end is helpful for increasing the inflows of remittances and leveraging their development potential, it misses the crucial deeper layer of understanding that is provided by the social process conception. What is missing in existing research on remittances is a dynamic understanding of the link between the remittance-sending and remittance-receiving contexts; only such an understanding

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can capture the complexity of the remittance process, and document that processes in a way that retains its human face.

The characteristics of migrant remittances and their implications for development can be seen to vary greatly as we switch our focus from temporary to permanent migration, from unskilled to skilled, and South–South to South–North (Portes 2009). Broadly, we must attend to the differences between what Portes and Borocz call the 'context of exit' and 'context of reception' (Portes and Borocz 1989). For example, a general analysis of remittances without reference to specific contexts and processes may mislead us, since the motivations for remittances from labour-receiving countries in Southeast Asia may differ from remittances from the West, where the predominant form of migration is permanent settlement; and the implications of such remittances for the home country may also vary. Notably, Southeast Asian countries are generally considered within the context of 'South–South' labour migration. Any research on remittances should make clear the context in which it deems the migration to be embedded.

There are two strands of the literature that explore migrants' remittance behaviour (Rahman and Lian 2012; Rahman et al. 2014; Ullah 2016). One strand emphasizes migrant behaviour in the areas of earnings, savings, and remitting in the remittance-sending areas; the other focuses on the impact of remittances, using data from remittance-receiving households or macro-level data. However, the sending and receiving contexts demand equal attention in any interpretation of remittances which seeks to be truly explanatory. Relevant issues related to contexts of *sending* include recruitment, expenses incurred in the migration process (a major financial cost associated with the migration project), earnings, living expenses for living, savings, and the social experiences of migrants overseas. These issues are interrelated and exert considerable mutual influence: for instance, the recruitment and financial costs of migration influence the uses of remittances such as in debt repayments, while earnings, local expenses, and savings affect the quantity and frequency of remittances.

Thus, a whole range of issues in the remittance-sending country influence migrants' capacity to remit cash to their families, and this is particularly relevant in the context of temporary labour migration in Asia where migrant workers are invited under specific labour migration programs and policies are designed to ensure that unskilled migrant workers return to their home countries—e.g., no family reunification, tying them to a single employer, not allowing them to marry citizens, and enforcing other restrictions on their rights and movements (Asis and Piper 2008; Rahman and Ullah 2012). Without the option of family reunification, families live under 'transnationally split' conditions, where nonmigrating family members are 'left behind' (Yeoh et al. 2002). A truly illuminating study on remittances would take this reality into consideration.

Relevant issues related to the remittance-receiving context include the gender of recipients, remittance control, uses of remittances, and the implications of such usage for dynamics in the households. Research on such issues has the potential to clarify certain contentious issues related to the debate on migration and development. The relationship between migration and development has been a focus of

migration research since the 1970s (see Appleyard 1989; Papademetriou and Martin 1991; Hammar et al. 1997; Faist 2008), and a new wave of research into the migration-development nexus in the context of Asian labour migration has recently been emerging (Hugo 2003; Moses 2009). In the context of use of remittances, investment behaviour is an important area of investigation for economic development. Much of the literature on remittances and development has focused on whether remittances are used for productive investment or consumption. The dominant assumption on migrant remittances is that they are mostly used as income for recurrent family expenses, and for 'consumption' (de Haas 2005). However, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the conceptual division into 'productive' and 'nonproductive' use of remittances (Piper 2009), and this dissatisfaction has led some scholars to use the terms 'physical capital' and 'human capital' instead (Piper 2009), based on the guiding principle both contribute to the development of capital at the household level, albeit that the nature of capital formation varies.

The effects of remittances can be understood better when the process is placed within the household context, since what may prove to be advantageous at the national level may prove to be detrimental to a household or community, and vice versa. Although macro-level approaches to migration outcomes reveal national patterns and outcomes, they cannot capture what remittances mean for migrant families. Since remittances are private money, a household/family perspective to remittances is important. An understanding of micro-level impacts of remittances, especially the underlying factors contributing to or impeding the development potential of remittances at the micro-level, would help formulate and implement policies and programs to harness the development potential of remittances. Figure 6.1 illustrates the remittance process, beginning with the earnings of migrants, expenses and savings, remittance-sending, remittance-receiving and finally, its use and impact on family dynamics. Figure 6.1 is adapted and expanded from Ullah and Panday (2007:125) and Rahman and Lian (2009: 107). While Ullah and Panday indicate the channels of remittance transfers and Rahman and Lian suggest gender dimensions of remittances, I extend this to include four important sites of remittances: sending, receiving, use and control, and development

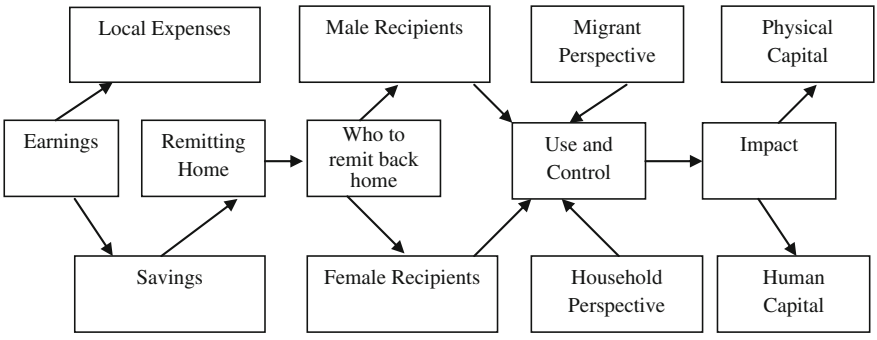

Fig. 6.1 Conceptualizing remittances as a social process

implications of remittances. This is a scheme which underscores the analysis of remittances as a social process.

This chapter elaborates on four sites of remittances: sending, receipt, use and control, and implications for development dynamics in migrant households.

Data Sources

Empirically, this chapter draws from a survey of 100 Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore and 50 migrant households in Bangladesh. It is important to note that I have discussed remittances and its implications in the next chapter by providing the most recent migrant *bari* survey data conducted in the 2014–2015 and illustrating the implications of remittances on the *bari* level. The questionnaire for the migrant worker survey contained both structured and unstructured questions. A purposive sampling technique of data collection was employed, partly because of the lack of information about the world of the Bangladeshi population in the city-state. Overall, approximately three quarters of the respondents fell within the age group of 25–30 years, and 58% were unmarried. Seventy-seven percent of respondents had completed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC), including 7% who had graduated from degree colleges in Bangladesh. Compared to a previous survey conducted in 2000, this study found higher educational credentials among recent migrants in Singapore (Rahman and Lian 2005: 68). Prior to migration to Singapore, almost half of the respondents were students. Almost all the respondents (92%) lived in an extended family arrangement (i.e., two generations sharing a house). The average number of family members left behind was 6.4. Most respondents were working in the construction sector in Singapore—hardly surprising since the construction sector in Singapore is dominated by migrant workers from South Asia. Almost half of the respondents had been working in Singapore for a period of 4–10 years or more.

In general, migrant household and worker surveys on remittances include questions on the amounts and uses of remittances. Researchers who collect such data are often confronted with discrepancies between the actual amount of remittances used and the amount reported to the interviewers. Naturally, households may be uncomfortable reporting the amounts and uses of remittances to outsiders. Reporting inflated or inaccurate amounts is common as most households do not maintain daily records of use. Given the sensitivity of questions and potential for biased responses, we employed an alternative way of collecting information on remittance use. Since we are primarily interested in pinpointing preferential expenditures so that trends can be captured and used as a baseline, we identified *areas* of remittance use, especially where expenditures are recurrent, even when the amount is negligible such as in everyday necessities. The respondents were asked to

reveal up to five major areas of remittance use in the 'near past' and 'near future'.[1] Documenting priorities and timelines in remittance use can capture the dynamics of remittance use under conditions of temporary migration. This alternative method of collecting information on use of remittances is expected to generate more accurate data.

Fieldwork in Bangladesh involved interviewing selected households who had a family member working in Singapore. These households were not matched with the migrants interviewed in Singapore, but eligible households were those with a male family member working in Singapore for at least a year, where the migrant had been remitting to his household of origin for at least a year. The fieldwork was carried out in the district of Tangail, north of the capital Dhaka, an area from where many Singapore-bound migrants hail. An interview schedule comprising both structured and unstructured questions was used for the survey among 50 selected migrant households. The respondents in the selected households were chosen on the basis of their remittance-recipient status. In other words, recipients of the remittances were interviewed in the household survey so that the findings reflected the actual use of remittances across gender lines.

Twenty-eight percent of respondents were fathers and 20% brothers, compared to 12% being mothers and 8% wives. In total, 56% of respondents were females and 44% males. Sixty percent of the respondents were over the age of 30. The majority of the migrants overseas (62%) were married. The majority of the families (38%) consisted of 5–6 members. Farming is the main source of income for Bangladeshi rural households but 70% of the migrant households in the sample did not possess sufficient land for subsistence living. A good number of migrant families had no earning members engaged in the local economy. Fifty-two percent of families had one earning member while 36% of families had none. In 62% of the households, migrant members had been working in Singapore for four years or more.

Remittance Transfer Channels

Brenda Yeoh and I wrote a paper that addresses both formal and informal mechanisms for remittance transfers (Rahman and Yeoh 2008). We argued that after long being neglected as a field of scholarly inquiry, there has in recent years been renewed interest in remittance transfers. An increasing number of international organizations are addressing today's challenges in the remittance market, with a particular focus on rural areas and rural financing linkages. Systematic research on remittance transfer mechanisms has mainly focused on three main issues: (i) the typology of the transfer

[1]In major labour-receiving countries in Asia, migrant workers are usually issued work permits for two years with an option for renewal subject to the availability of a job. In the sample, migrants who were working in Singapore for at least one year were interviewed. I refer to the 'near past' use of remittances as the first year of the stay (or slightly more, depending on the period of contract and the length of stay in Singapore), and 'near future' as the remainder of the contract or stay.

mechanisms, (ii) the comparative cost of transfers through different transfer channels, and (iii) the choice of the transfer means and evolution of money transfer markets (Straubhaar and Vadean 2005: 20). We can identify two main types of funds transfer channels used by migrants globally, namely *formal* and *informal* channels (Rahman and Yeoh 2008). Within formal channels, the institutions involved in money transfers are supervised by government agencies and laws that determine their creation, characteristics, operations, and closure (APEC 2003: 3). In general, formal systems include banks, postal services, money transfer operators (MTOs), and other wire transfer services and card-based money transfers (credit and debit cards). In recent years, money transfer operators (MTOs) and credit unions have been playing an important role in global money transfers.

The money transfer operators (MTOs) provide the fastest service in formal money transfer systems. They transfer money from one part of the world to another within minutes. Because of this service, they are gradually establishing firm roots in the remittance market, beating the formal banking system. However, they charge higher fees. Western Union and MoneyGram are examples of two major MTOs; they first started operations in North America and now covers almost every country in the world. Western Union transfers money for payments using money orders and other electronic systems. Consumers can quickly and easily transfer money to more than 345,000 Western Union agents located in over 200 countries and territories worldwide, the largest network of its kind. MoneyGram operates in 190 countries and territories worldwide and has a network of 180,000 local agents. These MTOs penetrated the Asian remittance market at the end of the last decade and presently operate in almost all receiving and sending countries in Asia.

Debit and credit cards are used to draw cash from automatic teller machines (ATM) in many remittance-recipient countries. Every time cash is withdrawn using such cards, a small fee is charged. Debit and credit card companies have started to service the remittance market in Latin America (Orozco 2013). Immigrants in North America are also increasingly using the faster and comparatively cheaper debit and credit cards for remittance; however, these have yet to reach migrant workers in Asia, where the use of such cards (credit or debit) is still limited to skilled migrant workers who are on authorized status. Furthermore, the majority of low-skilled migrant workers do not have access to the banking services in either their host or home countries. The transfer mechanisms developed by banks, MTOs, postal services, and credit unions have the particularity that the remittance sender opens an account or provides detailed information about remitters, sometimes even work permit information, to the respective formal institution in Singapore. In Bangladesh, recipients of remittances are required to produce some sort of documentary proof (voter ID, passport, etc.) to withdraw cash from MTOs.

In contrast, the informal funds transfer channel "exists and operates outside of (or parallel to) conventional regulated banking and financial channels" (Buencamino and Gorbunov 2002: 1). Informal funds transfer systems have long been in existence (Udovitch 1970). Initially used as part of trade and commerce, they were also used by early migrants to transfer savings (Hicks 1993). Today, informal systems exist in different names and forms in many countries, for example,

hawala (India, Pakistan, and the Middle East), *hundi* (Pakistan and Bangladesh), *fei-ch'ien* (China and Southeast Asia), *chit* (China), *chop* (China), *hui kuan* (Hong Kong), *padala* and *paabot* (the Philippines), *phei kwan* (Thailand), *chuyen tien tay ba* (Vietnam), *kyeyo* money (Uganda), and *mali a mbeleko* (Zambia) (for details, see Passas 1999; APEC 2003, Rahman and Yeoh 2008).

To serve the migrant workers' remittance transfer needs, Singapore has pursued a liberal policy which allows healthy competition in the remittance market. In Singapore, remittance services are provided by domestic banks, local branches of foreign banks, and licensed remittance companies. On the receiving end, Bangladesh has also taken several measures to facilitate remittance transfers from overseas Bangladeshis. Bangladesh Bank, the central bank, has established drawing arrangements with foreign banks and exchange houses for the facilitation of remittance by Bangladeshi nationals abroad. Some banks that have drawing arrangements with foreign banks and exchange houses in East and Southeast Asia are Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, National Bank, Agrani Bank, Islami Bank, and United Commercial Bank.

A shift in remittance services along the Singapore–Bangladesh remittance corridor was observed in the 1990s with the launch of several exchange houses such as Agrani Exchange House, Mustafa Foreign Exchange, Ameertech Remittance Services, and Balaka Exchange. These exchange houses have drawing arrangements and remittance facilities with Agrani Bank, United Commercial Bank, BRAC Bank, and National Bank respectively. One can remit any amount from these exchange houses in Singapore to any bank in Bangladesh. Although there are variations in the officially proclaimed time needed for remittance transfers, the usual time is short, only a few days when migrants remit directly to their own banks in Bangladesh. However, when they remit to banks in Bangladesh in which they do not hold accounts, it can take between a few days and a few weeks. Some exchange houses also offer services like opening bank accounts in Bangladesh for Bangladeshi nationals in Singapore, and this innovative approach to banking for the unbanked has not only facilitated the use of formal remittance channels but also contributed to the development of a long-time relationship with banks in Bangladesh. Along with these exchange houses, traditional remittance service providers such as local and foreign banks and post offices also serve the migrants, although they usually charge higher fees than exchange houses.

The MTOs, mainly Western Union and MoneyGram, also have a strong presence in the Singapore-Bangladesh remittance corridor. On the sending side, they have extensive networks of local agents comprising banks, exchange houses, and post offices to collect cash from potential remitters. On the distribution or receiving side, they are also linked to post offices and leading banks. In addition, they are also increasingly using NGOs to reach remote places in Bangladesh. For instance, Western Union operates through a network of several agents such as Singapore Post, American Express, HBZ International Exchange, JC Money exchange, and RHB Bank, and they cover virtually all of Singapore. Western Union has an

extensive distribution network in Bangladesh. It is linked to 18 local banks, four NGOs, and the post office in Bangladesh. The Western Union money transfer service is available at agent locations in all 64 districts and in 485 of the 494 *upazila*s (local-level administrative unit) in the country.

MoneyGram services are available at the branches of Ameertech Remittance and Exchange, Moneyworld, and BKK Forex, which are situated in major foreign worker hangouts in Singapore. MoneyGram has been operating in Bangladesh for almost 10 years and works through a network of 12 local agent banks and a big non-governmental organization in Bangladesh. A potential recipient can receive remittance from branches of Agrani Bank, the City Bank, Eastern Bank, IFIC Bank, Islami Bank, Jamuna Bank, Mutual Trust Bank, Al-Arafah Islamic Bank, NCC Bank, Premier Bank, Standard Bank, and Uttara Bank. These banks have hundreds of branches across the country. In addition to banks, a leading NGO namely Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) has teamed up with an agent of MoneyGram to serve rural migrant households.

In the Singapore remittance marketplace, informal money transfers occur in remittance corridors to India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, where an estimated 70% of total remittances go through channels commonly known as *hawala* and *hundi* (ADB 2006: 43). Of informal fund transfers, *hundi* is a popular informal funds transfer system among Bangladeshi migrant workers in East and Southeast Asia. Informal remittance services like *hundi* dominated the Singapore–Bangladesh remittance corridor until the 9/11 terrorist attack (Rahman and Yeoh 2008). In the literature, the term *hundi* is often used in relation to the *hawala* system found in the Middle East and South Asia (Passas 1999). Rahman and Yeoh (2008) demonstrate that the operations and characteristics of *hundi* as found in East and Southeast Asia are different in many respects from those of the *hawala* or other forms of informal funds transfer methods found globally. They argue that central to the *hundi* system is the operator, known as the *hundiwala*. In the migration literature, similar types of individuals—such as the *mulas* in the case of US–Cuba remittance systems (Orozco 2013)—are also to be found. The *mulas* tend to be carriers only of funds and American goods to Cuba, and provide limited services to migrants and their families. In contrast, Rahman and Yeoh note that the services that *hundiwalas* offer are more comprehensive, going beyond the economic transaction of funds. The *hundi* is informal but highly organized, and reliability, credibility, and efficiency are essential ingredients in *hundi* business. In addition to the *hundi*, hand-carry services provided by friends and relatives also exist in this remittance corridor (for details, see Rahman and Yeoh 2008).

A survey of 126 Bangladeshi migrant workers in Singapore in 2003 revealed that 95% of migrant workers remitted money through the *hundi* system while the remaining 5% remitted using formal channels (Rahman 2009). Informal remittances account for 20% of the total amount of remittances in Bangladesh (Puri and Ritzema 1999: 8). An ILO study of remittances in Bangladesh found that 10 out of 100 remittance-receiving families faced problems with the *hundi*, whereas 19

encountered problems with official transfer methods (van Doorn 2002/4: 50). It is thus obvious that a large amount of remittances enters the country informally. Informal remittance is often linked with drug dealing and terrorist financing. It is not risk-free; *hundi* operators sometimes do not disburse the cash to the migrant households and there exists minimal legal protection for migrant households in such a situation. It is also disadvantageous for national economies. In recent years, the functioning of the *hundi* system has been severely affected by the remittance securitization drive (for details, see Rahman and Yeoh 2008).

Remittance Prices

The cost of transferring money varies greatly from country to country and according to the method of transfer. In informal funds transfers, there is almost no fee for remittances. In general, the formal system is plagued by high transaction costs, long delays in remittance transfers, exchange loss (due to official foreign exchange conversion rate), and overly bureaucratic procedures (APEC 2003; El Qorchi et al. 2003). For example, the World Bank estimates that the average cost of transferring remittances in the formal system is about 13% and sometimes exceeds 20% of the amount remitted (Maimbo et al. 2005: 5). In fact, any reduction in remittance transfer charges would result in more money going to migrant families in the developing countries. According to the World Bank's Remittance Prices Worldwide, if the cost of sending remittances could be reduced by 5 percentage points, remittance recipients in developing countries would receive over US$15 billion dollars more each year than they do now and the added remittances could provide remittance recipient households an increased opportunity for financial security.

The World Bank's Remittance Prices Worldwide is involved in listing remittance prices in 134 country corridors: 14 major remittance-sending countries to 72 receiving countries, representing around 60% of total remittances to developing countries. Therefore, this study reports the World Bank's estimation of remittance prices in the Singapore–Bangladesh remittance corridor. According to the World Bank Remittance Prices, the average cost of a remittance for US$500 is 1.94% of the amount sent, that is US$9.70. The average price of remittance transfers through banks in Bangladesh is much lower than through MTOs. What is noteworthy is that according to the World Bank Remittance Prices, the remittance price in the Singapore–Bangladesh remittance corridor is much lower than other Singapore remittance corridors such as Singapore–India (3.16% or US$15.80 for US$500), Singapore–Indonesia (3.96% or US$19.80 for US$500), and Singapore–Pakistan (8.72% or US$43.60 for US$500). The remittance prices in the Singapore–Bangladesh remittance corridor are also much lower than other average Southeast Asian remittance prices.

Context of Remittance-Sending

The majority of the migrants work under a daily wage scheme in which they are offered a fixed basic wage, usually paid fortnightly. There is also another category of migrants who are employed under a monthly payment scheme paid a fixed income every month. Most migrants are usually interested in working beyond their scheduled times, which is called overtime or 'OT'. Overtime payment per hour is usually 1.5 times the normal basic rate. Work on Sundays and public holidays is considered overtime and paid as such. Table 6.1 presents monthly earnings, savings, and remittance amounts in the last transfer. The average monthly earnings for each migrant was SG$1001 (US$ US$712). Besides overtime work, migrants' skill level and position in the company contributes to the differences in wages.

The average monthly incomes of Bangladeshi migrants (SG$1001) reflects a substantial increase in wages over time. In a survey on Bangladeshi migrant workers conducted in 2000, the average monthly wage of a migrant was approximately SG$712 (Rahman and Lian 2005: 73). Lee Hung Tong Henry's study (1999) of Singapore's foreign workers reports that the majority of workers from non-traditional sources (India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) earn between SG$500 and $600 per month. Moreover, when the monthly wage is seen from the perspective of the home country, Bangladesh, which has undergone a remarkable currency devaluation over the last few years (SG$1 = BDT27 in 1995, and approximately BDT50 in 2009 and BDT65 in 2015), migrants can realize a substantial increase in income over time.

Bangladeshi migrants may be termed 'target savers', in that they try to save as much money as possible from their monthly wages. Almost three quarters (76%) of respondents saved between SG$500 and SG$1500 in a month. The average savings

Table 6.1 Patterns of earnings, savings, and remitting by migrants in Singapore

Monthly earnings (SG$)	Percents (%)	Monthly savings (SG$)	Percents (%)	Amount remitted, last transfer (SG$)	Percent (%)
300–500	1	100–300	2	300–500	30
500–700	23	300–500	24	500–700	31
700–900	28	500–700	36	700–900	20
900–1100	23	700–900	18	900–1100	4
1100–1300	10	900–1100	7	1100–1300	6
1300–1500	7	1100–1300	6	1300–1500	7
Above 1500	8	1300–1500	5	Above 1500	2
–	–	Above 1500	2	–	–
Mean: SG$1001 US$712 (US$1 = SG$1.40)	100	Mean: SG$754 US$537 75.32% of incomes	100	Mean: SG$759 US$540 75.82% of incomes	100

in a month is SG$754 (US$537), meaning that they saved around 75.32% of their monthly income (Table 6.1). With regard to remittances, 51 % of migrants remitted between SG$500 to $900, with 17% remitting above and 30% remitting below this amount. The average remittance per transfer is SG$759 (US$540). This means that migrants remitted around 76% of their monthly income in the last transfer.

In the study sample, average earnings, savings, and remittances are SG$1001, SG$754, and SG$759, respectively (Table 6.1). On average, Bangladeshi migrants saved 75.32% and remitted 75.82% of their earnings, with a minor but noticeable inconsistency in average savings and remittances. This is not surprising, however, because migrants sometimes borrow from friends if they are required to remit more than their savings for some urgent matters such as wedding, medical treatment, education, and so on. In addition, most migrants do not remit monthly. Therefore, this study looks at how many times a migrant remitted in the three months prior to the fieldwork. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents had remitted twice in the three months while 36% had remitted thrice—that is, they had remitted every month. In total, 94% of migrants had remitted twice or thrice in the last three months. Given the frequency of remittance, it is clear that migrants maintain regular economic contact with families left behind.

Context of Remittance Receiving

Recipients of Remittances

As recipients are usually trusted to manage the remittances, determining the gender of recipients is crucial to understanding remittances and family dynamics. Different members of the family were the recipients of remittances, and sometimes the recipient was not even an immediate family member. In the household survey, the largest group receiving remittances were not immediate family members (Table 6.2), while the second and third largest groups were fathers and mothers

Table 6.2 Recipients of remittances in Bangladesh by gender: migrant survey in Singapore and migrant household survey in Bangladesh

Recipients of remittances	Migrant worker survey (%)	Household survey (%)	Combining both surveys (%)
Parents (father and mothers)	83	41	62
Spouse (wives)	14	8	11
Brother/sisters	–	20	10
Others	3	31	17
Sex of recipients			
Male	86	66	76
Female	14	34	24

(41%) and brothers and sisters (20%), respectively. Although 62% of the migrants were married, only 8 % of remittance recipients were wives. According to the household survey, 66% of remittance recipients were male. Findings from the migrant worker survey revealed a somewhat different picture; most migrants remitted to their parents. Parents were the largest group of remittance recipients (83%), followed by wives (14%). While 42% of the migrants were married, only 14% of remittance recipients were wives.

Based on the migrant worker survey, 86% of recipients were male while 14% were females (Table 6.2). Based on both surveys, on average 62% of recipients of remittances were parents, 11% wives, and 17% others who were not part of the immediate family. Combining household and worker surveys, 76% of recipients were males. Remittance receiving was skewed to males, a reflection of the patriarchal family system in Bangladesh, although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss patriarchal family and gender relations in Bangladeshi society. The findings from this study echo what previous studies have observed: male senior family members exercise control over daily finances and have a decisive voice in any expenditure or borrowing of capital in rural Bangladeshi households (Rozario 1992; Rahman 2003).

In the household survey, the amount of remittances in the last transfer was investigated to discern the trends of remittance inflows to households. The amount of cash received as remittances by migrant households was similar to the findings in the migrant worker survey in Singapore. Most migrant households received small amounts of cash—BDT 10,000–20,000 (SG$200–400 or US$145–290) in the last remittance. However, 60% of households received a sum almost equal to one month's savings by migrants in Singapore (SG$754, approximately BDT 40,000; or US$537). Both migrant worker and migrant household surveys revealed that migrant households received remittances regularly, and that the amount of cash received in each remittance was more than sufficient for household expenses in Bangladesh.

Remittance Control

In the patriarchal family structures commonly found in the developing world, the persons who earn may not have the sole authority over spending their earnings, and different traditional actors will intervene in family resource allocations. Therefore, this study examined who controlled remittances, whose wishes were prioritized, and what role remittances played for the recipients of remittances in the decision-making process. According to the migrant workers, 97% of migrants reported having decided the areas of uses of remittances in Bangladesh (Table 6.3). However, when asked whether the households disregarded their wishes, 30% of migrants responded in the affirmative. Only 37% of migrants had had their decision considered final in instances of disagreement over use of remittances. Thus, it is obvious that a good number of migrants did not enjoy their rightful privilege of

Table 6.3 Control over remittances: migrant workers' perspective

Control over remittances	Percent (%)
Do you decide how the money will be used in Bangladesh?	
Yes	97
No	3
Is there any case where your wishes were ignored by your family member?	
Yes	30
No	70
If there is a disagreement between you and your family as to how to spend the money, whose decision is final?	
Mine (migrants' decision)	37
Family members	63

Table 6.4 Control over remittances: household's perspective

Control over remittances	Percent (%)
If your male migrant member wishes money to be spent in certain way, do you follow his wishes?	
a. Follow his wishes all the time	32
b. Follow his wishes most of the time	36
c. Follow his wishes some of the time	30
d. Never follow his wishes	2
As a recipient of remittances, do you presently have more influence on decisions made in the family?	
a. More influence	29
b. No change in influence	71

decision-making as income-earners of the families, despite their important contribution to the family.

From the household perspective, 32% of households followed the wishes of migrants regarding the use of remittances while 66% refused in various degrees (Table 6.4). Interestingly, 29% of recipients of remittances, mostly females, enjoyed more influence in the family decision-making after becoming the recipients of remittances. They also enjoyed a higher status through their new role as 'remittance manager'. In the husband–wife remittance route, husbands overseas have become more dependent on their wives left behind to make wise decisions on the use of remittances. Management of social relations, deployment of remittances, and juggling between competing goals dominate the regular telecommunications between remitters and recipients. In short, this study affirms that remittances influence traditional authority and power relations in Bangladeshi migrant households, although the extent of this remains debatable. More in-depth research is needed on power and authority structures in the migrant community.

Table 6.5 Use of remittances: migrant and household surveys

Areas of use of remittances in Bangladesh	Migrant survey, *n* 100		Household survey, *n* 50	
	Near past use (%)	Near future use (%)	Near past use (%)	Near future use (%)
Savings	55	78	44	54
Housing	60	19	50	60
Education	51	55	0	10
Land-purchasing	0	64	20	60
Business	0	72	0	28
Debt repayment	24	0	36	0
Family maintenance	17	0	74	32
Medical	–	–	18	0

Use of Remittances: The Migrant Worker's Perspective

As we saw in the previous discussion, migrants sending remittances from overseas may not have direct control over their use at the household level. I therefore attempt to identity the potential use of remittances from both the migrants' perspective and the migrant households' perspective. Migrant workers and recipients of remittances were asked to list up to five areas in which they had used remittances so far, and up to five areas in which they would probably use remittances in the near future. These questions were investigated to document the trends in use of remittances at the household level. Table 6.5 presents the uses of remittances from the migrant worker's perspective. The areas of past uses of remittances in order of frequency were as follows: home building (60%), savings (55%), education (51%), debt repayment (24%), and family maintenance (basic necessities such as food or clothes) (17%). The potential or planned uses of remittances in the near future were as follows: savings (78%), businesses (72%), land purchase (64%), education (55%), and home building (19%).

In comparing past and future (potential) uses of remittances, some trends in remittance use emerge. First, family maintenance (basic necessities) is no longer the key area in either past or near future uses of remittances, contrary to what was reported in previous studies on the Singapore–Bangladesh remittance corridor (Rahman and Lian 2005: 76). This is mainly due to Bangladeshis' long participation in international migration: for instance, 50% had been working in Singapore for more than four years, and thus had probably developed local bases of earning for their families, as reported in other studies on the Bangladesh–Singapore migration corridor (Rahman 2003). Second, after home building, savings take the second position in past uses, while it occupies the first position in near future uses, suggesting that migrant households had moved from the consumption phase to the savings phase. Third, education remained a major area of use of remittances. Finally, the investment component of remittance use also appeared in second (e.g., business) and third position (land purchase) in the future uses of remittances,

indicating the fact that once migrant households had managed to cope with initial households expenses (e.g., homebuilding, debt repayment, education), they looked forward to investing in income-generating activities (e.g., businesses).

Use of Remittances: The Household's Perspective

In the migrant household survey, six major areas of uses of remittances in the past and near future were investigated (Table 6.5). With the exception of medical expenses, all other components (family maintenance, home building, savings, debt repayment, land purchase) were similar to the observations from the migrant worker survey. In terms of past uses of remittances, the rankings are as follows: family maintenance (74%), home building (50%), savings (44%), debt repayment (36%), and medical (18%). In the potential uses of remittances, the following emerged: homebuilding and land purchase (60% each), savings (54%), family maintenance (32%), business (28%), and education (10%).

Comparing past and future uses a revealed that family maintenance, which was a major use in the past, has slipped to fourth position as an item for potential use of remittances. In other words, dependence on remittances for basic consumption may be expected to decline for most families. Home building moved from second position for past use to first position in future use, suggesting that migrant households aim to consolidate their position in society after their basic consumption needs were fulfilled. It is important to note that the house in a rural setting is more than a place to reside; a house has enormous social significance in the class and status structure of the rural community (Rahman 2003). Savings ranked third in both past and future uses of remittances. Currently, many agrarian households have yet to meet their basic needs, hence at this point they cannot afford to save. As regards the past and future uses of remittances for investment, the use of remittances to purchase land and/or as capital for businesses reveals the use of remittances to enhance the household's capacity to generate income in the near future. Finally, the use of remittances for medical care and education suggests that remittances contribute to human capital formation in migrant households.

From the 'social development' perspective (Piper 2009, 2010), all the aforementioned uses of remittances contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of migrant families. However, there is a widely acknowledged need for better management of the remittance-investment process. The use of remittances for family maintenance and savings has received considerable policy attention. According to some scholars, the use of remittances for family maintenance can lead to 'passive and dangerous dependency' on remittances (see de Haas 2005). This study found that a major portion of remittances does indeed go to family. Forty-four percent of migrants were the principal earners for their households (54% in the household survey and 30% in the migrant worker survey). A more detailed investigation into the economic condition of the migrant families revealed that most lacked resources to meet their basic necessities (food, clothes). Since these

households hailed from rural areas, an inquiry was made into the size of land holdings. Approximately 70% of migrant households reported that they did not possess sufficient land to support their families. Given their precarious economic situation, it is not surprising to find many households relying on migrants' remittances.

This study found that while remittances make a substantial contribution toward savings, what is done with savings is another matter. Policies to channel remittances into productive areas of investment have not met with tremendous success (Russell 1986). For example, Saith (1989) found a high failure rate for self-employment schemes by the governments of labour-sending countries in Asia which aimed to convert returning migrants into small entrepreneurs. In academic and policy circles, migrants are seen as appropriate agents for undertaking investment out of remittances; they are also assumed to be *latent entrepreneurs* (Brown and Ahlburg 1999). Saith (1989), among others, has questioned the wisdom of adopting policies to convert migrant-savers into migrant-investors. This study finds that the majority of recipients were saver-rentiers, that is, living on interest from savings, and a few were saver-investors; again, patterns of investment vary along gender lines: female recipients of remittances show less interest in investments, especially productive assets. A sense of fear and uncertainty among the migrant workers and their families is noticed in relation to investing in business ventures.

Therefore, this study holds the view that it would make better sense for policy to be geared more towards encouraging migrant workers and their families to become more active in domestic capital markets as saver-rentiers. It has not been possible to assess policy and responsiveness to policy interventions involving saver-investors and saver-rentiers, due mainly to the lack of research on this issue in Bangladesh. However, given the crucial role of remittances for household subsistence, it is perhaps safe to assume that a generation of saver-rentiers will promote longer term income security of migrant workers and their families.

Chapter 7
Migration and Family Dynamics

Temporary migration tends to affect family economies in at least two ways: the outflow of indispensable family resources to meet the expenses incurred in the migration process, referred to as the 'economic cost of migration', and the transfer in cash or kind from migrants to their non-migrating families, known as 'migrant remittances'. Given the rising cost of migration, debt has been critical to labour migration: where else can aspiring migrants from a developing country find the thousands of dollars they need to secure a work visa for Singapore? Potential migrant families often borrow cash from money lenders and relatives, pawn family assets, and sell or mortgage family farmland to raise the money to migrate. This reduces regular family incomes and damages the economic base of the family. The outflow of family resources from relatively impoverished sections of society has been thoroughly discussed in Chap. 4. Chapter 6 addressed the inflow of remittances to migrant families as a social process and highlighted four spheres of remittances—transfer, receipt, control, and use. This chapter addresses the impacts of migration and remittances on migrant and non-migrant families with special reference to family development dynamics.

The existing literature on the impact of migration on the family is fairly robust (Islam 1991; Zlotnik 1995; Erman 1998; Asis 2000; Hugo 2002; Bever 2002; Pflegerl et al. 2003; Emilio et al. 2005; Semyonov and Anastasia 2005). Asis (2003: 105) maintains that the migration of individuals in the developing word is part and parcel of family strategies for survival or mobility. She emphasizes the impact of migration on Asian families in sending and receiving countries. Yeoh and her colleagues also highlight that the principle of 'for the sake of the family' or 'all in the family'—a principle which mobilizes family members to work towards common interests. Also, one of the mainstays of the ideology of Asian familialism—is clearly embedded in the Asian migration process (Yeoh et al. 2002). As Grasmuck and Pessar (1991: 15) argue, it is not individuals but households that mobilize resources and support, receive and allocate remittances, and make decisions about members' production, consumption, and distribution activities. Given the emphasis

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on the impact of migration on families in the migrant-sending communities, this chapter considers it imperative to focus on families to understand the developmental potential of migration.

To broadly summarize some significant implications of migration for families, the following have been observed: moderate changes in headships and gender roles within families; a medium for upward social mobility; families adjusting well in the absence of male or female migrants; improved education, health care, and quality of life for migrant families; the women left behind taking on the roles previously assumed by men; left-behind children learning to be more independent in the migration process; and so on (Table 7.1). We also find negative implications, such as misuse of remittances, broken families, and a lack of parenting for children (Gunatilleke 1992; Gamburd 2000; Zachariah et al. 2001). Broadly, these studies enhance our understanding of the impact of migration on families. However, they rarely address the impact of migration on family development dynamics.

This chapter goes beyond the typical works on 'impacts on families', which have so far focused mostly on children and wives left behind. I look at the temporary labour migration of men who may or may not be married, and thus I investigate the impact of migration on broader familial relations beyond spousal ones, and changes within the practice of family formation. From this, the following issues arise: (1) the impact on returning migrants' relationships with their families (wives, fathers); (2) the impact on the social relations within a village, within and beyond immediate families; (3) the impact on education, medical care, and food consumption; (4) the homes in migrant *baris*; (5) *dhadon*, a business enterprise for migrant wives; (6) the impact on the upward social mobility of immediate family members; and (7) the role of migration in changing power relations in which parents benefit from sons' migration, for example in terms of sociopolitical leverage (status, entering local politics), and loss of power, for example in choosing brides for their sons or controlling the remittances. This research draws from a survey of 50 migrant *baris* in the Munshiganj district and two fieldwork studies conducted over five years in the village of Gurail in the Tangail district.

Impacts of Migration on Demographic Structure

Migrant *bari*s are defined as those with at least one member working overseas, in this case in Singapore. In the 50 surveyed migrant *bari*s, at least one member was working in Singapore or had returned after a period of work there. As mentioned earlier, migrant *baris* consisted of both migrant and non-migrant families. In the 50 migrant *baris* surveyed, there were 165 migrant and non-migrant families, containing 3.3 families on average. Of the 165 families, 104 were migrant families. In total, there were 131 nuclear families (with two generations living together), and 34 extended families (with more than two generations). Of the 104 migrant families, we found that 78 were nuclear families and 26 were extended families. Of the 61 non-migrant families, 53 were nuclear and eight were extended. It is obvious from

Table 7.1 Conclusions of studies on migration and family: sending countries

Study	Country of study	Impacts on family
Arif (2004)	Pakistan	Significant positive economic benefits for households. Positive effects on child schooling, leading to expansion of private schools across the country; improvement of social status, health care and local investment
Asis (1995, 2003)	Philippines	Positive: Upward social mobility; spending on food, housing, and education; change in the forms and functions of families with the departure of some family members; headship, parenting, and care-giving patterns have become more varied in migrant communities Negative: Community members talked of drug addiction, philandering husbands, unfaithful wives, spoiled children, and teenage pregnancies as afflicting migrant families, but it is difficult to establish whether these were unique to those families or problems in the communities
Asis (2000)	(East and Southeast Asia)	Among the notable changes in Asian families in the past thirty years are the shift towards smaller families, the shift towards longer family life course, and the emerging transnational configuration of families
Battistella and Conaco (1998)	Philippines	The impact of mothers' migration on families is different from that of male migration. A study among elementary school children suggested that mothers' migration seems to have more adverse consequences—particularly in terms of lower academic performance and social adjustment—than when it is the fathers who migrate
Bever (2002)	Yucatan (Mexico)	There may be obvious transformations in gender roles. Gender ideology continues to be strongly defended by both men and women as a result of temporary male out-migration
Bock and Johnson (2002)	Botswana	Migrant fathers have less time available for their children but greater resources in the form of cash. There is no effect of male migratory labour on children's school attendance
Dannecker (2004, 2005)	Bangladesh (in Malaysia)	Transformation and renegotiation of gender relations have taken place in the transnational space, and have influenced the local context
Faeamani (1995)	Tonga	The extent and uses of remittances in four quite different Tongan villages is examined. In three of them, remittances constituted more than 50% of all income. Remittances play a crucial role in raising consumption and welfare levels. They are primarily sent for religious donations, food purchases, and housing amenities, including investment in housing; a proportion is also invested in the small business sector

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Study	Country of study	Impacts on family
Gamburd (1995, 2000)	Sri Lanka	Left-behind men have not taken over childcare and household tasks. Unemployed husbands reassert their masculinity in the face of their wives' new role as breadwinner. The values of the drinking community stand in implicit opposition to values of channelling family resources towards 'getting developed', the dominant village idiom for successful migration. In cases where women's work has bettered their family's economic standing in the village, they and their husbands and fathers enjoy new social privileges and authority. Contrary to many predictions, long-term research revealed that migration brought a slow but persistent improvement, even to the most 'hopeless' of cases. Extended family played a crucial role in facilitating migration by providing childcare, financing agency fees, funding jobs overseas and seeing the family through crises at home. Migration has led to shifts in local gender roles, caste hierarchies, and class relations
Hadi (1999)	Bangladesh	Remittances not only contribute to increasing economic well-being, but can also modify the behaviour of the sending communities. The inflow of remittances has led to some positive changes in terms of a better standard of living. Aspects of migration, including duration of exposure, intensity of effect, and the nature of exposure, are shown to be major predictors of influence on those left behind. The predictor variables explaining most of the indicators of well-being are shown to be statistically significant
Hoodfar (1997)	Egypt	Male migration has had a diverse impact on the renegotiation of money management and the position of women in their households. All women in this research group had, to varying degrees, gained more access to their husbands' income and a bigger role in general household decision-making. Many wives felt that although migration allowed them a higher level of consumption, it adversely affected their position within their households. They observed that migration had reinstated the hierarchical structure of family relations and reaffirmed traditional gender roles
Hugo (1981, 1998, 2002, 2003)	Indonesia	Migration tends to have a very positive economic impact on the family, though the status of women migrants does not typically increase, and at times their role in the family degenerates. Extended families function as information and resource networks that facilitate permanent relocation by decreasing financial hardship and culture shock. Migration and the family are in a very dynamic situation and there are important two-way

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Study	Country of study	Impacts on family
		relationships between them. International migration has both positive and negative influences on families. Remittances have provided a source of income to families, and in some situations migration has resulted in an improvement in the situation of women within families and communities. It is also clear that migration can be disempowering for women
Jones et al. (2004)	Trinidad and Tobago	Children separated from parents because of migration were more than twice as likely to have emotional problems, although their economic status was improved
Kadioglu (1994)	Turkey	A comparison of migrant women and non-migrant control groups showed differences in gender roles attributable to migration experiences, with migrant women being more independent, individualistic, and willing to take risks; however, no significant differences were seen in family division of labour. Migration has been the cause of many structural and psychological changes in gender roles; however, these changes did not have a lasting effect, and they disappeared when the husbands returned
Kanaiaupuni and Donato (1999)	Mexico	The health impacts of migration shift over the course and development of migration. As migration matures, most infants show marked improvements in health
Khaled (1995)	Jordan	Husbands' migration increased economic contributions and improved social status and relationships for wives. On the other hand, domestic and social duties increased because wives became, as one respondent put it, the 'man of the house': her two major concerns were to perform her husband's tasks well, especially those relating to the family's financial affairs, and ensure the success of her children's education
Koc and Isil (2004)	Turkey	Migration has a positive impact on the welfare of left-behind households; those receiving remittances are found to be better off than non-remitting households. Access to better nutrition and allocation of more resources to education are without question forms of productive investment
Sana and Massey (2005)	Mexico, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Costa Rica	In general, remittances act as a means of family maintenance or income supplement based on household need. In Mexico, remittances seem to be associated with the patriarchal traditional family, but in the Dominical Republic the opposite was true. In Mexico, the cohesive patriarchal family ensures the flow of remittances as part of a household strategy of risk diversification. Dominican remittances seem to be mostly determined by lack of opportunities and household need

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Study	Country of study	Impacts on family
Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2005)	Philippines	Gender inequality in the global economy has significant consequences for economic inequality among local households
Smit (2001)	South Africa	The migrant labour system continues to have an extensive effect on African family life. Left-behind families use cultural values and survival strategies to ensure that the oscillating nature of the immigrant labour system does not completely uproot them from their traditional way of life
Thieme and Wyss (2005)	Nepal	International migration often contributes to sustainable livelihoods. The main outcomes are increased financial capital, education of children, migration-specific knowledge, and increased social capital
Walker and Brown (1995)	South Pacific	Remittances are not used exclusively for consumption; they play an important role in contributing to both savings and investment in migrant-sending countries. Remittances have contributed to raising the standard of living in migrant families
Zachariah et al. (2001)	Kerala, India	Migration has resulted in nearly a million married women in Kerala living away from their husbands. Their gains in autonomy, status, management skills, and experience in dealing with the world outside their homes were developed the hard way, and would remain with them for the rest of their lives, benefiting their families and society. In the long term, the transformation of these women will have contributed more to the development of Keralan society than all the temporary benefits of remittances and modern gadgetry

this that extended families are more prevalent in migrant families than in non-migrant families. This is probably because extended families are more capable of financing migration and providing support to family after migration has taken place.

To understand the demographic structure of migrant families, I investigated family members in each of the *baris* under study. In the surveyed migrant *baris*, there were 366 members of migrant families (excluding those currently overseas) and 257 members of non-migrant families (Table 3.1). In total, there were 623 people in the surveyed 50 migrant *baris*. The average migrant *bari* had 12.46 members, and the average family 3.77 members. To sketch the family structure across the migration experience, I examined the sizes of migrant and non-migrant families. On average, there were 3.51 members in each migrant family and 4.21 in each non-migrant family. I further investigated the sex ratio in migrant families and non-migrant families within the *baris*. On average, migrant families were made up of 40% males and 60% females, while non-migrant families had 52% males and

48% females (Table 3.1). This sex imbalance is due to the migration of males to Singapore. As I mentioned earlier, Bangladeshi migration to Singapore is exclusively a male phenomenon, therefore there are no female migrants in the *bari* survey.

Impacts of Migration on Economic Conditions

The surveyed migrant *baris* are located in several villages in Munshiganj Sadar in the Munshiganj district. This is unlike any other rural district in Bangladesh. As with most rural areas in Munshiganj, the unparalleled natural beauty hides the harsh reality of the political economy. Paradoxically, nature is at the same time both bountiful and punishing. Most of the arable land in rural Munshiganj remains under water from May to November each year. Most of the rural mud roads are submerged, and villagers use wooden boats to go from one *bari* to another. This is a problem throughout the rural Munshiganj. Water is everywhere, yet there are hardly any fish, so fishing has not evolved as a secondary source of income, and villagers remain unemployed from May to November. The following photographs, taken in October 2016, show the severity of waterlogging in the region. Potatoes are the only crop, and villagers engage primarily in their production during the winter season. This provides the income for most agricultural families (Pictures 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3).

Although Munshiganj is famous for its potato production, working in the potato fields as waged workers is not a reliable or sufficient source of income for most villagers, especially those who lack sufficient land to generate an income all year round. Table 7.2 presents the patterns of land holding by migration status. Of the

Picture 7.1 Village roads affected by waterlogging in August 2016

Picture 7.2 Village homes affected by waterlogging in August 2016

Picture 7.3 Boats become the main form of transport in the period of waterlogging between May and October each year

165 families in the 50 surveyed migrant *baris*, 107 possessed arable land that could not generate a subsistence income; these families required other sources of income to survive. Migrant families' land-holding dynamics revealed that some migrant families (21%) gained land while others (11%) lost theirs. Some families sell their land at the time of migration and later buy it back with their remittances, and

Table 7.2 Land-holding of families by migration status: a case of 50 selected migrant *baris*

Status of families in the *baris*	Does your land holding provide subsistence living at present?	Did you have subsistence living from lands before migration?	Do you have any increase in land holding after migration?	Do you have any decrease in land holding after migration?
Migrant families in *baris* (104)	Yes 41 No 63	Yes 46 No 58	Yes 21 No 83	Yes 11 No 93
Non-migrant families in *baris* (61)	Yes 17 No 44	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable

migrant families who lose land today are expected to gain it back over time. Land is transferred as a source of cash, and migrants are determined to regain the same land, or acquire better land, in the migration process. In a comparison of migrant and non-migrant families, we notice that in each there is a substantial number of families who lacked sufficient land for subsistence living. Thus, this data reveals that migrants are not necessarily from better-off families; they are like most rural families in the village. When one family gets access to foreign land for work, it upsets the income equality at *bari* level; this phenomenon is discussed in Chap.3 and is highlighted later in this chapter.

The economic conditions in migrant families compared to non-migrant families show a clear change after migration. An overwhelming number of surveyed migrant families reported improved economic conditions after migration (Table 7.3). Nearly all migrant families felt certain of greater economic resources in near future; there was doubt in only one case, and this was because the migrant had not kept in contact with the family or sent regular remittances—it was remarked that some migrants do not remit regularly, instead wasting their savings by buying luxury

Table 7.3 Economic conditions in migrant families: a case of 50 surveyed migrant *baris*

Economic conditions after migration	Number of cases of migrant families	Do you think that migration will improve economic resources in your family in the near future?	No of cases for migrant families	If the flow of remittances to families stopped for the next three months, could your family maintain its living standard?	No of cases for migrant families
Improved	102	Yes	103	Yes	23
Same	1	No	0	No	81
Deteriorated	1	Don't know	1	Don't know	0
Total migrant families	104	Total migrant families	104	Total migrant families	104

products and enjoying the night life in the destination country. Yet while it was promising to see improvements in the economic conditions of almost all migrant families, the sustainability of such improvements remains to be seen. The data reveal that nearly three-quarters of migrant families cannot survive without remittances for a period of three months consecutively; these families relied on remittances in such an unsustainable way that they were unable to maintain a standard of living without them. Thus, remittances create dependency, a phenomenon discussed in detail later.

Migrant baris are divided not only in terms of demographic structure, land-holding patterns, and economic conditions, but in terms of many other factors such as the number of local income earners and families' key sources of incomes (Table 7.4). This research investigates the involvement in local economic activities for income generation across the migration line. Local income earners are those involved in the local economy to generate incomes for their families in Bangladesh. It studies 104 migrant families with a total of 366 members, excluding migrants overseas. Only 30 people from 24 families were earning money locally, leaving 80 families with no local earning members. These 80 families represent 77% of migrant families relying entirely on their migrant members overseas (Table 7.4). Conversely, in the non-migrant families we found high levels of involvement in local economic activities. There were 61 of these in the study, with a total of 257 members. Of these, 61 were earning locally, from 57 families. Only four non-migrant families had no local earning members, but they were looking for work, both in Bangladesh and overseas. It is obvious that migrant families were overwhelmingly disengaged from local economic activities and relied primarily on overseas incomes, while non-migrant families were predominantly engaged in local economic activities. However, this disconnectedness of migrant families from local

Table 7.4 Local earning members in the families across the migration line: a case of 50 surveyed migrant *baris*

Items/categories	No of cases	Items/categories	No of cases
Earning members of *migrant* families (excluding migrants overseas)	30	Total members in *migrant* families (excluding migrants overseas)	366
Migrant families with no earning members at all	80	Total *migrant* families in the surveyed *baris*	104
Earning members of *non-migrant* families	61	Total members of *non-migrant* families	257
Non-migrant families with no earning members at all	4	Total *non-migrant* families in the surveyed *baris*	61
Total earning members of both migrant and non-migrant families	91	Total members of migrant and non-migrant families	623
Total migrant and non-migrant families with no earning members	84	Total migrant and non-migrant families in the surveyed *baris*	165

Table 7.5 Sources of income by migration status: a case of 50 surveyed migrant *baris*

Key contributor to family incomes of migrant families (first source of incomes for migrant family maintenance)	No of cases in all *baris*	Key contributor to family incomes of non-migrant families (first sources of incomes for non-migrant family maintenance)	No of cases in all *baris*
Remittances	93	Agriculture	24
Agriculture	3	Small Businesses	17
Small Businesses	5	Employment	15
Employment	1	Rents of houses	
Rents of houses		Rents of shops	1
Rents of shops	2	Remittances (financial assistance from migrant relatives overseas)	4
Total cases of migrant families	104	Total cases of non-migrant families	61

economic activity should be understood from the migrant family perspective, which I will now explain further.

Sources of incomes vary across the migration line. Migrant remittances constitute the main source of income for 93 of the 104 migrant families studied and a secondary source for seven, with only four families reporting no important role (Table 7.5). While remittances remain almost the sole source of income for migrant families, non-migrant families rely on diverse sources of incomes such as agriculture, business, and formal employment. Agriculture is the main source of income for non-migrant families, followed by small businesses and employment (Table 7.5). Living in the same *bari* brings families together, and some families share their economic fortune with others, as we see in the case of four non-migrant families here. Migrant remittances constitute a key contributor to family incomes for these non-migrant families.

We can observe that migration generates income that provides a lifeline for families. It is often argued that migrant remittances create a dangerous dependency within families, and our findings confirm this. However, this dependence needs to be seen from the perspective of the family. As the findings suggest, these migrant families are generally poor people who lack subsistence land to generate income. Migration is a family-funded project involving the pooling of family resources, and this reduces the family's ability to finance basic necessities; therefore, remittances are a critical source of income for them. Since migrants can earn more abroad than at home, remittances increase households' ability to pay for basic necessities and other secondary requirements. Migration is seen as an alternative to working in the *desh* or home country, and the money generated from it is considered an ordinary income meant to serve the family's needs. However, migrant remittances have a dual function: (i) they are a source of family income like any other; and (ii) since they are earned in *bidesh* (abroad), they are also a source of transformative power. This is discussed in Chap. 3 and will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Impacts of Migration on Education, Medical Care, and Food Consumption

The sheer magnitude of migration and the flow of remittances suggest that there could be a pronounced and identifiable effect on the quality and quantity of household medical care, food consumption, and educational opportunity. This research attempts to identity these impacts. Of the 104 migrant families, 100, or over 96%, reported improved medical care facilities as a result of the inflow of remittances (Table 7.6). It is important to note that the public healthcare system in Bangladesh is not adequate to meet the rising demand from the rapidly growing population. Also, the quality of public health care is much poorer than that of private health care. The concept of medical insurance is alien to most Bangladeshis; it is available only to a privileged few in the big cities, and the bulk of the population has no form of medical insurance coverage. Since migrant families have access to disposable resources, many of them can now afford the better treatment offered by private health care.

Food insecurity and malnutrition are prevalent in Bangladesh, though there have been some improvements in recent decades. In the previous discussion, it has been argued that migrant and non-migrant families had insufficient local income opportunities to maintain a subsistence living. Their nutrition and food security were at stake, and educational opportunity was limited. Migrant remittance flows have placed substantial resources into the hands of households, raising the possibility of improved food consumption and educational opportunity for the left-behind members. This study finds 100 of 104 migrant families (over 96%) reporting improved food consumption after their family members migrated overseas. It also finds that in 57 of 59 cases, or over 96% of the families, educational opportunities were improved after family members migrated to Singapore. In-depth interviews suggest the lack of educational facilities as being the primary motive for some migrant families to settle in the city of Munshaganj Sadar. This points to the important but generally neglected impact of international migration on education. The study also found that migrants' children were better educated and exhibited higher school enrolment rates than children from non-migrant families.

Table 7.6 Status of medical care, education and food intake in migrant families: A case of 50 selected migrant *baris*

No of migrant families in 50 *baris*	Medical care	No of cases	Food intake	No of cases	Educational opportunity	No of cases*
104	Improved	100	Improved	100	Improved	57
	Same	4	Same	4	Same	2
	Deteriorated	0	Deteriorated	0	Deteriorated	0
	Total	104	Total	104	Total	59

*Some migrant families had no school-going children, therefore educational opportunity was not applicable to them

Homes in Migrant *Baris*: Cultural Consumption and Status Display

It is important to study the relationship between emigration and housing conditions, because housing is important to the well-being of family members (Liang and Zhang 2004; Lopez 2010). It is the custom in rural Bangladesh for men to build a house to start a new life before or immediately after marriage. However, building a modern house from local incomes has proved impossible for most rural young men, who often struggle to make a subsistence living. It has generally only been the rural landed classes, with external incomes such as from formal employment in government services, who were able to build houses for their young male members.

Most researchers lament the migrants' priority to build or renovate houses. Both scholars and policy-makers accuse migrants of 'exaggerated' house-building and an 'irrational' use of money (de Haas 2007: 15–16). A migrant's home has become a material expression of achievement and upward social mobility, and building new houses and renovating or modernizing existing ones are among migrants' main priorities. As I argued earlier, migration is not only gain-oriented but also status-oriented, with the *baris* being the places where they display consumption and status. The reasons given for building houses in migration-source villages are often family prestige and competition between families. In rural Bangladeshi society, where income and family wealth are the only criteria for judging individuals, migrant homes become an expression of social success and an opportunity for ostentatious displays of wealth (Picture 7.4).

Migration and consumption are linked, and we observe the rising influence of the consumer culture that gives birth to aspirations beyond migrants' primary needs

Picture 7.4 Migrant homes in a migrant bari in Munshiganj

(Jacob 2015). Modern furniture and family appliances, electronic gadgets (mobile phones, cameras, iPads, computers, music systems, etc.), gold ornaments, and souvenirs from Singapore have been part of the lives of migrant-sending communities. The penetration of consumer culture in migration-source villages is particularly evident in these homes. Here, size, decoration, and furnishings are symbolic, as instruments of differentiation used to display migrants' new status. Cultural consumption is used to assert new social identities: migrants present themselves as winners (Jacob 2015: 310): modern and global as opposed to sedentary people anchored in tradition (Jacob 2015: 310).

Through an empirical analysis of the impact of migration on housing conditions in the surveyed *baris*, I provide some initial support for the argument that labour migration improves housing conditions. The survey of the 50 migrant *baris* provides fascinating information: of the 104 migrant families, 64, or 61%, have already built or renovated houses (Table 7.7), and some migrant families who could not build or renovate satisfactorily are planning to do so in the near future. A high number of these families—51, or over 49%—plan to work on their houses. International migration exposes migrants and their families to many modern appliances, and migrants tend to acquire these to provide a comfortable standard of living. Over 64% of the families surveyed had acquired such modern family appliances. This is consistent with other studies done in different parts of the world (Taylor et al. 1996; Liang and Zhang 2004; Jacob 2015). Sons of the landed classes and holders of high educational credentials employed in lucrative private or public sectors continue to play an important role in gaining access to modern homes in rural or urban areas; however, this study suggests that labour migration has begun to change this. A young man from a subsistence family can improve his family's housing conditions if he can work abroad. Thus this study shows that labour migration provides a way to achieve success, undermining the existing order of social stratification in rural Bangladesh.

Of the 61 non-migrant families, 17, or 27%, reported building or renovating their homes, and over 32% were planning to build or renovate in the near future (Table 7.7). Over 45% of non-migrant families had also acquired modern, valuable household appliances. This tendency among non-migrant families may seem surprising, but as mentioned above, migrant *baris* are seen as a unit of status in the wider community; it is not good for the *bari's* reputation if one house is well-built while others are dilapidated. Old houses are perceived as 'a source of shame' for migrant *baris*. Since *bari* families are connected by strong social relations, migrant families assist non-migrant ones to improve their social position in many ways, including lending money to build or renovate.

The study of housing in migrant-sending communities is crucial because of its links to future migration trends. I have shown in the previous chapters how relative status promotes out-migration from *baris* in migration-source villages. Not only does the building of an attractive house in a migrant *bari* mean an improvement in the standard of living for that particular family; it also signals that a migrant has achieved economic success overseas, and this in turn boosts the relative status of

Table 7.7 Housing and household appliances by migration status: A case of 50 selected migrant *baris*

Housing and valuable household appliances in migrant families			
Total migrant families	Changes in housing (renovated/built)	Plans for change in housing (renovating/building)	Possession of modern household appliances
104	Yes 64 No 40	Yes 51 No 53	Yes 68 No 36
	Total cases 104	Total cases 104	Total cases 104
Housing and valuable household appliances in non-migrant families			
Total non-migrant families	Changes in housing (renovated/built)	Plans for change in housing (renovating/building)	Possession of modern household appliances
61	Yes 17 No changes 44	Yes 20 No 41	Yes 28 No 33
	Total cases 61	Total cases 61	Total cases 61

the family and sets up a role model for others to follow. Thus, the connection between housing and future migration trends warrants further research.

Dhadon: A Business Enterprise for Migrant Wives

While male family members may invest remittances in a wide range of ventures within the village and beyond, cultural barriers make it difficult for a migrant's wife to establish contact with the world outside the home and family. As a result, the scope of investment of remittances varies by the gender of the person making the investments. To make lucrative investments locally without violating cultural gender norms, most migrants' wives invest in a type of business popularly known as '*dhadon*'. The *dhadon* is a money-lending business where one lends money for profit, and the whole operation is run from home, thereby requiring minimal contact with the outside world; thus it is appropriate for women. *Dhadon* generally serves the rural population whose credit needs are not met by the formal credit institutions. Theoretically, Muslims should not engage in *dhadon* or money-lending because Islam prohibits *riba*—the taking of interest. But in spite of formal religious prohibition, *dhadon* is a commonly accepted practice in rural Bangladesh.

The inadequate institutional response to the huge unmet credit needs of the rural population has partly contributed to the rise of many well-known microcredit organizations such as the Grameen Bank and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). Most microcredit organizations offer credit to targeted groups, such as the poorest of the poor (Hashemi and Morshed 1997). However, the amount of credit is very low, and this option demands so-called 'group formation' as 'social collateral' for the recovery of loans (see Johnson and Rogaly 1997). This places borrowing out of the reach a vast section of the status-conscious rural population,

and *dhadon* fills the gap. Operating in line with social networks, it requires hardly any 'collateral' or so-called 'social collateral', but sometimes calls for 'individual guarantors', in which an individual rather than a group takes responsibility for defaults in payment, allowing the borrower's social standing to be unaffected at community level. There is a huge demand for *dhadon* in migration-source villages, with an increasing number of people seeking loans to finance migration costing between US$4000 and US$6000 for each potential migrant. In general, potential migrants meet these costs by selling off valuable resources including arable land and other household resources, and this leaves the family with financial constraints. As a result, families left behind also require loans to meet their day-to-day expenses during the early phase of their members' migration.

Villagers take up credit from migrants' wives for a myriad of purposes, and the interest rates vary depending on the purposes of borrowing—usually up to 100% per annum. If money is borrowed for normal expenses like food, weddings, or agricultural investment, interest rates will be low; if the loan is for international migration, it will be high in anticipation that overseas employment will yield higher rewards for the borrower. In Gurail and many other migration-source villages, *dhadon* has become increasingly known as a migrant wives' business. Interestingly, a good portion of borrowers are also women, who often take out a loan for personal business ventures such as small poultry farms, vegetable gardening, and so on. This contributes not only to the empowerment of individual migrants' wives, but also to rural women in general, as women borrow from other women. On the community level, this credit arrangement binds them in reciprocal relations. *Dhadon* has the social impact of a sense of obligation on the part of the beneficiaries or prospective beneficiaries and for left-behind wives, contributing to improved social and familial relationships.

A gender division of labour is clearly present in migrant *baris*: household chores and childcare are exclusively carried out by women, while outside activities, for example economic and social activities, are largely performed and maintained by men. There are some specific tasks within the family that are often performed by both parties, such as the care of livestock and traditional family businesses like weaving. However, women often take on heavier and complicated tasks, for example storing rice straw, traditional rice-processing, managing the vegetation around the home area, preparing cow-dung cake, calf-rearing, and cleaning of cowsheds. In the case of nuclear families, most wives assume the tasks formerly carried out by their husbands. Migrants' wives, especially those who are family heads, are loaded with extra work, assuming their husbands' roles inside and outside the home as well as fulfilling their normal tasks. Sometimes these wives accept the help of other women in the village, usually in exchange for non-monetary payments such as food, clothes, or other trivial things. Most of the wives interviewed did not view their workload as negative, and conveyed a feeling of being successful de facto family heads while their husbands remained formal household heads.

In the *bari* survey, we found more female than male recipients of remittances (Table 7.8); of the 104 migrant families, 62 had female recipients, with remittances

Table 7.8 Recipients of remittances and channels of remittances: a case of 50 selected migrant *baris*

Total migrant families	Sex of recipients	No. of cases	Methods of transfer	No. of cases
104	Male	42	Formal	22
	Female	62	Informal	82

coming through predominantly informal channels. Almost three quarters of recipients used informal transfer channels, and this can account for the high proportion of female recipients. *Hundi* is the most predominant form of informal remittance transfer in Bangladesh. The *hundiwala* (hundi operator) visits recipients in person and delivers the cash from the migrant in Singapore. The recipient does not need to visit a bank to draw cash; it is delivered to his or her doorstep, making it easier and more culturally convenient for female recipients to receive money at home. As recipients of remittances, most migrants' wives have a clear role in family decision-making. Given their access to remittances and authority over their management, wives of migrants enjoy considerable leverage in the division of labour and decision-making in their families compared to their non-migrant counterparts.

Outward and Upward Social Mobility

Migration does not only relate to movement from one society to another, but it can also entail a change in social class and status. Piore (1979) commented that migration is not just a 'step out', but also a 'step up'. Migration and mobility are usually studied from the immigrant country's perspective; however, recent literature suggests that it can induce upward social mobility for families in countries of origin (Asis 1995). In the Bangladeshi context, Leen Boer reported as early as 1981 that rural–urban migration produced a more rigid social structure, in which the opportunities for upward mobility for the village poor increased and the risks of downward mobility for the village rich decreased (Boer 1981: 28). Focusing on a Bangladeshi source village of migrants to London, Gardner (1995) has shown the increasing presence and importance of overseas migration in village life. As Gardner (1992, 1995) illustrated, while the 'homeland' in Bangladesh refers to spirituality and religiosity, the idea of 'abroad' is linked to material bounty and economic transformation, and local desire has become focused on work abroad as the only route to material prosperity. I found that international migration is considered 'a status symbol', and that migrant families envisage migration as a key strategy—along with marriage, education, house-building, and economic prosperity—to reposition themselves in the rural class/caste hierarchy (Rahman 2003).

Although a male migrant worker moves overseas as an individual, he views his trip as not just for his own well-being but also for the well-being of his family and other close groups like the *bari*. The *bari's* reputation depends upon the actions,

occupations, and achievements of its members. They have a moral and social responsibility to uphold the *bari* tradition over individual interests, and failure is met with shame (Wood 1994). Therefore, migration benefits are customarily shared with the family and with the *bari*. This family orientation has far-reaching implications for social mobility beyond the individual. To examine the role that migration plays in social mobility, I looked into migrant families' status in relation to 'standard of living', 'incomes', and 'wedding opportunities' in 2001 and 2006.

I use 'wedding opportunity' as an indicator of social mobility because, in the context of rural Bangladesh, marriage is not simply a union of two individuals; it is also a merger of two *baris* and their broader social networks. Marriage opens up opportunities for both parties to expand and share the previously inaccessible resources embedded in social networks (Comaroff 1980). In the rural context, migration increases the opportunity of marriage for migrant family members because of their valuable migration-specific social capital. The marriage ceremony is also a showcase for economic success: who can spend what for the community feast and other wedding arrangements is always a hot topic among villagers and bridegrooms. Migrants, or brides with brothers, parents, or other close relatives overseas, are often considered the most eligible partners. During the 2001 survey, migrant families reported downward social mobility in all three indicators. However, over time they consolidated their social standing, showing that longer stays overseas have a clear bearing on upward social mobility. All migrant families in the 2006 survey reported better conditions in terms of standard of living, incomes, and wedding opportunities. Access to foreign labour markets and the resulting migration-specific social capital have led to a number of migrant families experiencing substantial upward social mobility over time.

We noticed similar trends in the surveyed migrant *baris*. This is illustrated by the instances of weddings among migrant and non-migrant families. In the 50 surveyed migrant *baris*, 43 weddings had been solemnized in recent years. Interestingly, 39 of these took place in migrant families and only four in non-migrant families (Table 7.9). It may be commonly assumed that male migrants working in Singapore are highly desirable as bridegrooms, and that this accounts for the high number of marriages in migrant families, but this is not the case. Of the 43 marriages, 18 were

Table 7.9 Incidences of marriages by migration status: a case of 50 selected migrant *baris*

Total marriages in both migrant and non-migrant families in recent years	Marriages in migrant families	Marriages in non-migrant families	Payment of dowry from the bride's family	Receipt of dowry for the bridegroom
43	39	4	Yes 14 No 4	Yes 19 No 6
	Total migrant families 104	Total non-migrant families 61	Total cases 18	Total cases 25

of female members of migrant *baris* and 25 were of their male counterparts. This gender differentiation suggests that migration enhances marriageability not only of male migrants but also female members of their families who do not participate in migration but who benefit from the enhanced social position of the family. Dowry is a common practice in marriages in Bangladesh, with the bride's family paying moveable and immoveable assets to bridegroom. Dowries were paid in the case of 33 of the weddings surveyed, with only 10 involving no payment. It is not surprising to see such high instances of dowry payments in migrant *baris*, with non-migrant bridegrooms using the money to finance their migration. Indeed, some bridegrooms did not want to accept a dowry but they had no other way to fund migration. In many cases, the marriages took place very quickly because the bridegroom needed money to join the foreign labour market.

Generational Dynamics

The effect of migration on intergenerational dynamics is complex: on one hand, migration provides the grounds for sons to exercise their right of choice of a marriage partner, nucleation of the family, and management of remittances; on the other, in a situation "where landlessness puts stress on intergenerational relations" (Amin 1998: 1), it opens doors for migrant parents to claim benefits and privileges in the broader community. Historically, in rural Bangladesh the extended family was the fundamental unit of social organization as well as the unit of production, and the patriarch had exclusive rights to organize work tasks, deploy the family's labour, accumulate earnings, and distribute them for family welfare (Pryer 1992; Faraizi 1993; Wood 1994; Baluja 2003). Today, parents are rarely the sole holders of economic assets or the only people with decision-making privileges. Structural changes in the economy have forced family members to look for work outside the country, which is seen as eroding the authority of traditional senior figures and giving individual family members more freedom in decision-making (see also Hugo 2003).

> In former times, the bridegroom's father or grandfather chose the bride he was to marry. When the grandfather was still alive he had the last word because he was the senior person in the family and everybody had to listen to him. At that time, the father paid for everything, because the money was in his hand, and he also had his son in his hand because he was living with him before and after marriage. The father decided what the son had to do. Today things have changed. Many migrants choose their bride on their own. They no longer listen to their parents. He is free because he pays the marriage expenses on his own. (A village man from Gurail)

Women's roles as independent labour migrants have been well-documented (see, e.g., Parke 2005). My findings shift attention to a different type of newly gained independence: that of male returning migrants in the context of the patriarchal family. In the traditional context, the bridegroom's father and other senior male family members were responsible for choosing brides for the younger men of the

family, and sons were obliged to comply with the decision imposed on them. This has changed over time due to many factors, migration being among them (Naved et al. 2001). The elders' right to choose a daughter-in-law based on their own interests—for example, increased labour power and cash in the form of a dowry—has gradually been called into question, since migration has given sons an economic position substantially independent of their traditional elders. With his own source of cash, the migrant son increasingly claims for himself the right to choose his own marriage partner. I have argued elsewhere that the younger generation has always wished to realize their own aspirations against the will of their parents, and it is through migration that they have gained the economic power to have their own, independent voice (Rahman 2003).

An often neglected but important aspect of the social development outcomes of migration is the privilege that the parents and senior male relatives (usually uncles) of migrants enjoy in the social and political domains of many migration-source villages. Migration outcomes permeate the village's social life, affecting the traditional power structure. Many social committees at the local level, previously dominated and headed by traditional leaders, have experienced a change of leadership, and this challenges traditional power relations. In 2006, three major committees—of a mosque (brick-built), a primary school, and a madrassa (religious school)—were headed by migrant parents and first uncles. It is interesting is that all these parents and first uncles assumed the headships of these committees after the successful migration of members of their families.

Migrant parents and uncles have been found to be increasingly influential in the political life of Gurailians. Many of them were actively involved in the Union Parishad election (usually one chairman and nine ward members from each Union Parishad are elected), campaigning for their own candidates. Informants composed of non-migrant family members, migrant parents, and ward member candidates gave the impression that it was virtually impossible to win the election without the active support of the village's migrant-sending families. These families not only possess the 'migration capital' necessary to influence voting behaviour, but they also hold cash to spend on support for their candidate. Migrant families' political support also influences the voting decisions of non-migrant families; this is because they are often tied to them by credit arrangements, and also because of the prospect of migration to Singapore. Migrant families have valuable access to networks that can facilitate insertion into foreign labour markets.

There is also a community sentiment based on the common experience of migration to a specific destination. Parents, returnees, and migrants overseas all supported Taher, a returnee who stood for a ward member post in the 2003 election. Taher joined politics in 1999 upon returning from Singapore almost empty-handed. His involvement in local politics is rather interesting: it started with minor logistical help to some prospective migrants. Subsequently, he took an interest in left-behind families and returnees and provided support and counselling. Over time, his friendliness and unreserved support for migrant families, potential migrants, and even returnees, made him popular among the migrant families in Gurail and in the Gurailian migrant community in Singapore.

This chapter has shown that when the impact of migration is examined as a social process over time, a myriad of social and relational changes can be observed within families and village communities. Both the migrants and their families reap certain benefits from the international migration of labour in numerous ways. Among the many aspects of family life that have been affected by out-migration, nucleation of the family, socially outward mobility for women, socially upward mobility, changing generational dynamics among male members of the family, the nature of mobilization in local politics, and sources of local political power are noteworthy.

Chapter 8
Conclusion

We are currently in a moment where temporary form of labour migration is being promoted more and more actively by many sending countries in the global South as a developmental intervention. This book has espoused a process-orientated approach to the explication of Bangladeshi migration to Singapore. Such migration is located within the broader context of South–South migration generally, characterized as predominantly regional in scope, temporary in duration, and single as regards migratory category, and as a process within which migrants can build assets, expand familial affiliations, and identify themselves in relation to the country of origin. This orientation toward the home country gives South–South migration a particular significance for all parties involved—migrants and their families, home country, and host country. Given these key attributes of South–South migration, questions arise concerning how migrants experience emigration, and what impacts this temporary form of migration entails for migrants, their families, and their *baris* in the origin country. These are the two broad questions that have guided this book. To explore these questions further, I have identified two components of the migration process: the *emigration process*, comprising the motivation for migration, recruitment, arrival in host country, and the social world in the host country; and the *remittance process*, consisting of remittance transfers, receipts, control and use, and remittance-induced development outcomes.

My approach to Bangladeshi migration draws on powerful concepts, the *migration process* as developed by Castles and Miller (2009), and the idea of *becoming a migrant* framed by Belanger and Wang (2013). The term 'migration process' sums up the complex sets of factors and interactions which lead to migration and influence its course, but it leans intrinsically towards the receiving country's experiences and policy environment. As a result, the concept is more appropriate for use in the context of developed countries, where immigrants are likely to secure permanent residency over time. 'Becoming a migrant' focuses on how migrants experience key aspects of emigration such as recruitment, training, and leaving one's country of origin, and it is intrinsically concerned with the process of emigration. Having been developed in the context of South–South migration, it seems more

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suitable for describing the temporary form of migration. However, the concepts are complementary to each other, and bear the potential to offer a deeper understanding of the migration process both in the sending and the receiving country. This book has embraced both concepts in their essentials, in order to offer a thorough account of Bangladeshi migration to Singapore.

This book has attempted to make a conceptual contribution to the theory of labour migration by drawing attention to certain sociological variables, such as relative social status and key social and cultural forces, that have the potential to explain aspects of labour migration but which have largely been overlooked in the existing migration research. I have maintained that the utilitarian tradition does not adequately consider (a) the role of the group (such as, here, the *bari*), and (b) the role of sociocultural factors, in its theoretical framing. Economic theories often suggest that worsening economic deprivation leads to increased migration and sees international migration as a response to international wage differentials. Research on labour migration has experienced an excessive domination by economic explanations, and econometric analysis has been such a dominant factor in the studies of labour migration that the very language of analysis tends to marginalize the social and cultural factors causing and perpetuating migration, and influencing migration outcomes. This book has not denied the existence of sheer poverty in the migration-source communities in Bangladesh, but has made the point that poverty alone cannot convincingly account for migration from Bangladesh. This research has espoused the 'broad model' of rational choice that sees rational choice not only in utilitarian terms but also in non-utilitarian ones, thus giving more scope to explain the complex and multifaceted nature of migration behaviour.

This book has attempted to make a methodological contribution to migration research by introducing a new unit of data analysis to migration research and employing diverse research methods for primary data collection. *Individual migrants* have traditionally been the primary unit of data analysis in migration research, although economists subsequently noticed that family plays a pivotal role in agrarian/traditional societies, and so argued that it is the family that decides who will migrate as a part of family strategies to diversity risk and generate capital. Yet, while accepting that the individual and family are of great importance as units of analysis in migration research, this book introduces the *bari* as a new unit of analysis. The *bari*, as we saw, is a territorial group formed usually by patrilineal blood ties and consolidated by family values. It is the responsibility of all families in a *bari* to support and uplift each other and maintain harmonious relationships within it. In analyzing migration from a *bari* perspective, this study seeks to add another unit in order to the analysis of migration causes and consequences in Bangladeshi society, and so develop an account that is both deeper and broader than can be found in the literature thus far.

As a matter of fact, the existing studies tend to offer disconnected accounts of temporary migration by documenting the experiences of migrants *either* in the host country or in the home country. This book has embodied the argument that it is only by adopting a methodology which seeks to track the process of migration from the origin to the destination that one can begin to understand why migrants choose to

migrate, why they extend the stay overseas throughout their working age, and what implications this has for the migrants, their families and *baris*. The fieldwork is accordingly divided into that focused on the migration-source country and on the migration destination country, that is, Bangladesh and Singapore respectively. The fieldwork in Singapore comprised several surveys of Bangladeshi migrants, supplemented by interviews, focus-group discussions, and case studies. Meanwhile, the fieldwork in Bangladesh consisted of several village studies, surveys of migrants in the village, a survey of migrant *baris*, and interviews which local political, religious, and economic elites. This research has thus drawn from a diverse sets of research methods: for instance, sources of primary data collection include migrants, their families and *baris*, non-migrant families, recruiting agencies, migrant brokers, and migrant organizations. At a methodological level, approaches to data collection involved mixed methods, two-way surveys, and multi-sited and multi-level surveys. Data collection techniques themselves comprised surveys, interviews, case studies, and focus-group discussions.

We can broadly identify several key aspects of migration that are crucial to understanding the contemporary labour migration in Asia in general, and Bangladeshi migration to Singapore in particular: for instance, the policy that sets the rules and regulations on entry to and exit from Singapore; migration decision-making, which is informed by a number of social and cultural factors in Bangladesh; recruitment, which facilitates the transfer of labour from Bangladesh to Singapore; the social worlds that migrants inhabit in Singapore; the remittances that migrants send to their families back home; and the implications that migration has for migrant family dynamics. This book has organized these key aspects of labour migration into six broad themes: (i) migration policy, (ii) migration decision-making, (iii) recruitment, (iv) social worlds of migrants, (v) remittances, and (vi) family development dynamics. These six aspects are of paramount importance for the systematic understanding of Bangladeshi labour migration to Singapore. They are interrelated and deserve treatment in full: I therefore addressed each aspect separately in an individual chapter. Drawing on the findings set out in the chapters of this book, I offer a summary of the key findings in the discussion below.

First, this book has provided a broad understanding of Singapore's migration policy. The role that the state plays as an agent in regulating the size and composition of population movements across international borders is of paramount importance here. It is the state that determines the entry and exit of foreigners, which devises migration policies to attract desired foreigners, and which erects barriers against unsolicited entry. Not only do migrant-receiving states craft rules revolving around issues of border control and security, but they also develop policies to manage their foreign populations and integrate them into the society and economy. This book offers a detailed overview of migration control policies in Singapore with reference to seven key issues: (i) the nature of migration policy, (ii) broader features of migration policy in Singapore, (iii) classes of non-resident population, (iv) administrative and legal frameworks for managing the non-resident population, (v) specific policies targeting semi-skilled foreign workers,

(vi) pathways for professional, skilled, and semi-skilled foreigners, and (vii) integration of immigrants and emigrants into Singapore society.

Singapore's high growth rate policy has resulted in its labour demand exceeding the supply available from the local population. This imbalance has forced policy makers to pursue a proactive foreign worker policy. Building on the demand-driven migration policy framework, Singapore has devised a sophisticated foreign manpower policy to attract foreign workers of all categories and retain them for considerable periods of time in order to meet the demand of the economy. Singapore adopts a liberal policy for skilled and professional foreign manpower, in contrast to semi-skilled or low-skilled foreign manpower. However, this book has shown that Singapore's demand-driven system accommodates both highly skilled professionals and low-skilled foreign workers. Although dictated by economic imperatives, Singapore's foreign worker policy provides low-skilled migrant workers a place to work and opportunities to acquire skills during their extended stay, thus contributing to improved human security and development in the relatively poor countries in the region.

A set of broad features of migration policy has been identified to illustrate the migration policy framework in Singapore. These features cover almost all the major issues related to immigration, whether temporary, permanent, or transnational in character. We can broadly identify two criteria for admission of foreigners: *economic* and *cultural*. By economic criteria, I mean skills, age, education, and working experience; and by cultural criteria, I mean primarily cultural compatibility. While Singapore does not compromise on the economic aspects of work, it favours cultural and ethnic compatibility, especially in certain sectors of the economy. However, the issue of ethnic compatibility is important in the sense that it reduces the social tensions that may arise from the large inflow of migrant workers in the country. Apart from these broader features, this study also identifies some specific policy measures targeting semi-skilled foreign workers. These policy measures have facilitated regular inflows of foreign workers and reduced the possibility of social disruptions associated with the migration of large number of semi-skilled migrants from culturally diverse source countries.

Good migration management depends on efficacy in achieving the goals of migration policies and programmes. Unlike other host countries in the region, where the management of foreign workers is usually assigned to other ministries (e.g., the Ministry of Home Affairs in Malaysia, and the Ministry of Justice in Korea and Japan), Singapore empowers the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) to oversee foreign manpower as well as local workers, this being an outstanding recognition of their contribution to the Singapore economy. The MOM makes every effort to meet the local population's aspirations and economic needs, by increasing public awareness of the migration process, setting realistic goals, and achieving efficient implementation. All immigrants are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection under it. To make the migrant workers' stay comfortable and memorable, Singapore pursues policies to improve the working and living conditions of migrant workers and ensure the availability of health care facilities through the implementation of medical insurance for all semi-skilled migrant workers,

including domestic workers. To facilitate remittance transfers, Singapore has permitted international companies like Western Union and MoneyGram to operate. In addition, Singapore has allowed some labour-sending countries to open bank branches and exchange houses for the transfer of remittances by their nationals.

The pathways for professional and skilled foreigners are clearly stated in the immigration policies. A limited number of such foreigners are offered permanent resident status, and these permanent residents are a source of future citizens for Singapore. Semi-skilled migrants, however, are not usually accepted as permanent members of the society: while they are encouraged to stay for up to 22 years, they must ultimately return to their home countries. Since non-resident foreign manpower is critical to the economic development of the country and there is a need for different classes of non-resident population for sustained economic development, Singapore has developed special sets of policies targeting the integration of the non-resident population into Singapore society. In addition to non-resident immigrants, Singapore also targets overseas Singaporeans: citizens who have chosen to live in other developed countries for work and education. Singapore views both immigrants and emigrants (overseas Singaporeans) from a transnational, perspective and adopts policy measures to integrate both groups into Singapore society, something which can be called 'transnational inclusion' (Rahman and Kiong 2013). The Singapore case shows that a pro-activity and transparency in immigration policy is necessary to reduce the undesirable consequences of employing foreign manpower, and to maximize the benefits of the contemporary form of temporary migration, for both receiving and sending countries. Singapore's achievement in dealing with foreign manpower, therefore, sets an example for other countries in the region and beyond.

Second, Bangladeshi labour migration to Singapore is predominantly a rural phenomenon; potential migrants from remote villages will be joining the labour market in Singapore. Migration has emerged as a location-specific phenomenon in some districts in Bangladesh. Studying such migration locations has the potential to capture the interplay of different social and economic factors influencing migration and illuminate their relative merits in explaining the occurrence of migration. I therefore conducted fieldwork in the Singapore-migration source villages and *baris* to understand the social imperatives of migration. In particular, this book has examined the importance of migration in relation to status-claim tools, the geographical imaginations of migrants and non-migrants, the cultural notion of work, the diminishing role of education, and the emergence of migration as a status tool and the surfacing of relative social status across migration lines.

To this end, I have described different types of social groupings in Gurail village, a Singapore-migration source village in Tangail district. Gurail's major social groups include the family, lineage, and community. These parallel the physical division of home, *bari*, and hamlet or locality. I have explained the traditional tools for status claims in the village and showed how migration has emerged as a new tool for this end. This research has explained that individual acquisitiveness and freedom are often subordinated to the family and *bari* interests, and that the reasons for migrating are generally complex, multidimensional, and interrelated. Although

financial and work factors are the overt reasons that Bangladeshis cite for migrating to Singapore, other significant factors are also involved, and here we have tried to reveal them in all their complexity. The findings have revealed that migration decision-making is increasingly tied to the transformative power of *bidesh* (foreign land), the cultural notion of work, the diminishing role of education, and the transformation of migration into a social norm and status-claim tool.

Villagers regarded international migration as a status symbol. The findings suggest that the experience of migration itself has increasingly become an important determinant of a family's standing in the community. Village norms and values upheld a 'culture of honour' in which males are prepared to do whatever is required to defend their status as honourable men. Seeking employment overseas has become a norm among young men, and they did not consider themselves to be 'manly' without having attempted to live for some time in Singapore. Thus, migration has become deeply ingrained into the minds of young Bangladeshis, especially in the Singapore-migration source regions or districts. Those who did not attempt to change their destiny through migration were considered lazy, unenterprising, and undesirable. Villagers sought overseas jobs because they believed in power of *bidesh* to transform them and their lives. The non-migrants imagined Singapore as a source of change and good fortune, and goods brought back from Singapore bore special meaning to the members of migrant and non-migrant families. Gold is a case in point: although Singapore does not have any gold mines, people in migration-source districts, as well as across Bangladesh more generally, believe that Singapore's gold ornaments are purer and more durable than those from anywhere else in the world. And at a certain point, Singapore itself surfaces as a brand for many people in Bangladesh, expressed in terms of images of law and order, education, cleanliness, medical care, infrastructural development, and overall economic progress.

International labour migration and the opening up of the village to outside influences has not simply altered the perceptions of Bangladeshis concerning the outside world; it has also shifted the hierarchy of people's occupational choices, notably the preference for overseas employment over working at home. It has transformed people's experiences of social mobility and their understanding of work and education. Working in the local labour market has become associated with low status; local work is viewed as the vestige of what is backward and undesirable, while life abroad is painted in the most glowing terms. This study has thus described how the cultural notion of work has motivated young males to join the labour market in Singapore. The village study has revealed that migrants were concerned about the 'shame' and 'prestige' associated with working in the local and foreign economies respectively. When villagers transgressed the norms of society, they became subject to criticism from the community and failed to retain their social standing in the eyes of neighbours. Many villagers, especially young ones, are therefore socially compelled to choose Singapore for work.

Villagers without migration experience are free to choose their occupations in the villages; however, once they join in with international migration, whether to Singapore or any other country, their perception of work instantly changes. Such

migrants are expected to join in migration-status-consistent work in the locality, which is usually running a big shop in the local market such as non-migrants cannot usually afford to run. Indeed, the cultural notion of work often acts against the reintegration of returnees, since migration acts as a social status symbol for migrants: returnees are compelled to preserve and uphold their migration-induced social standing through remigration. And the cultural notion of work affects not only returnees but also the siblings of migrants left behind. Siblings of migrants are not expected to participate in work that non-migrant families do for subsistence, and the involvement of siblings of migrants in such work can even bring shame upon the migrant family and *bari*. Again, many current migrants are not able to finance—or sometimes are not even willing to finance—relatively expensive business ventures for their siblings or *bari* members left behind. As a result, many non-migrating young male relatives of migrants decide to migrate internally or internationally for work.

The perceptions of the transformative power of *bidesh* also challenge the conventional educational system. Educational attainment is associated with attainment of social status, enhancing status by distinguishing between those who are educated and those who are not. However, Bangladesh's conventional education system has failed to deliver the promised success, and in recent decades there has been a huge mismatch between population growth and job creation. The situation has further worsened due to the higher expectations and cultural perceptions of education. Individuals are often less motivated to pursue conventional education because they believe that such education has little value in the fulfilment of aspiration as compared to the transformative power of *bidesh*. We have thus noticed that, on one hand, there is a diminishing role for conventional education running alongside a demeaning attitude toward working in the local job market; on the other hand, overseas jobs which require minimal education are held in high esteem. In such circumstances, rather than pursuing education for extended periods, young males are motivated to seek overseas jobs and make an early start to their migration careers.

Most importantly, this book has noted the importance of relative social status in explaining the self-perpetuating nature of migration from the sending country. In existing theory, self-perpetuating migration is explained by a receiving-end factor—the possession or lack of crucial destination-specific capital (e.g., migrant networks, as proposed by sociologists) or a sending-end factor such as relative deprivation (as proposed by economists). The basic popular economic argument focuses on the potential contributions that migration may make to the absolute income of the individual or the family; an improved version would suggest that family members undertake migration not necessarily to increase the family's absolute income, but rather to improve the family's position (in terms of relative deprivation) with respect to a specific reference group. Economic explanations hence appeal to relative deprivation to account for the sending-end contribution to the self-perpetuating character of migration.

The standard sociological explanation is that once migration from a given sending community begins, it continues because of the emergence of migrant networks that lower the transaction costs and increase the benefits of migration, which is a destination-end attribute. Until now, sociologists have largely attributed

the self-sustaining nature of migrant flows, and their persistence after economic incentives have disappeared, to the emergence of social networks, a tool which seeks to explain migration's perpetuation through reference to destination-end attributes. Thus, there is an absence of sociological explanation that focuses on sending-end factors in the perpetuation of migration. In contrast, this book argues that the perpetuation of migration stems from considerations of relative social status, a sociological variable, at the sending-end. This research has demonstrated how social status and relative social status facilitate the perpetuation of migration by highlighting the migration dynamics at the *bari* and village level.

We have noted that migrant individuals and their families are often regarded as role models in the *bari* and locality, since they are considered a new source of social status for their communities (principally, their family and *bari*). Migration thus engenders further migration, because when a member from the *bari* or locality migrates internationally, he upsets the local status hierarchy and non-migrants must respond to their new (social) status differences through undertaking migration themselves. We have seen that individuals undertake migration not only to enhance the absolute social status of family and *bari*, but also to improve the social status of family and *bari* with respect to other migrant families and migrant *baris*. It is important to note that migration to the global South and the global North is not seen as equal within the community. Villagers have a mental map of the global hierarchy of migration countries, and countries in the global North are firmly at the top. Migration to a country that occupies a higher position in the global hierarchy of migration countries upsets the status equilibrium in the migration-source locality, triggering more migration not only vertically but also horizontally, resulting in the diversification of destination countries among the migration-source *baris* and localities, as we have noted in the findings. This response to the global hierarchy of migration countries explains why many surveyed migrant *baris* have members in several countries in the global South as well as in the North. Migration induces further migration from the sending *baris* and localities as a result of differences in both absolute social status and relative social status, and the flow of new migrants is likely to grow with the concomitant diversification of migration destinations.

Third, this book has shown the significance of migration capital in explaining migration: migration capital is conceived as a form of social capital, specifically the set of resources inherent in the social and symbolic ties within migration networks. Bangladeshi migration to Singapore is based on an underlying social organization that supports and sustains it. This social organization includes common bonds of kinship and friendship, which are adopted and transformed through the reciprocity of mass migration. Together they comprise a web of interconnecting social relationships that supports the movement of people between Bangladesh and Singapore. The interpersonal relationships that make up the networks are reinforced through migrant institutions involved in the transfers of labour internationally. Migrant networks are gradually built up and elaborated over the years. In the beginning phases, social ties to migrants in Singapore were few in number. Starting from a small base, they extended, slowly at first, but as migrant experience accumulates the number of connections between migrants and others in the community

expands rapidly, and flows of migration increase accordingly. As the networks expand, they incorporate more potential migrants under their umbrellas. And eventually nearly everyone in the source-community can claim ties with Singapore migrants through links of kinship and friendship.

This study has shown how the recruitment of labour takes place across international borders, linking the operational and the economic aspects of recruitment, and explained how the recruitment structure in Bangladesh has evolved over time to facilitate the recruitment of thousands of migrants to Singapore. The study has identified four major players—BMET, BOESL, recruiting agencies, and migrant networks—that form a semi-coherent system of governance which facilitates Bangladeshi migration to many countries. The study has shown that recruiting agencies and migrant networks are currently the core players in labour recruitment in Bangladesh. The recruiting agencies and migrant brokers have different yet complementary roles in the overall recruitment process. Recruiting agencies work in collaboration with their counterparts in Singapore and use subagents to reach potential migrants. They are formal profit-making organizations serving prospective migrants. While this study has attempted to provide insights into the recruitment of Bangladeshis to Singapore, time constraints meant that it was not able to shed light on other aspects of recruitment, such as the political economy of recruitment at both ends. This can be considered an area of further research.

This book has proposed a twofold classification for the economic aspects of recruitment: the *recruitment fee* for migration, and the *economic cost* of recruitment. While both the recruitment fee and the economic cost refer to expenses incurred in the recruitment process, they vary as regards the mode of payment across the gender line. The economic cost of migration refers to the expenses that male migrants incur in the recruitment process, with potential migrants required to pay the intermediaries and recruiting agencies before their migration. Female migrants in Asia often do not need to pay the expenses for recruitment out of their own pockets prior to migration: this is due to the fact that sponsor-employers often pay for women's migration—especially in domestic worker migration—and deduct the advance payment from the monthly salary of the female workers when they start working in the destination country. A key difference between the recruitment of men and women to Singapore is that men must pay the economic cost of migration out of their own pockets prior to departure, while women from Indonesia and the Philippines usually do not, at least when they migrate as domestic workers. In the case of recruitment fees, capital flows 'down' from the employer-sponsor to the potential female migrant (domestic worker), while in case of the economic cost of migration, capital flows 'up' from the migrant to the intermediary and recruitment agencies. And there is another dimension to the economic cost of migration for male migrants: a potential migrant and his family often dispose valuable family assets to meet the financial costs of migration, selling off such things as arable land and livestock. I refer to this phenomenon as "the hidden cost of migration" because the selling of such valuable productive property puts pressure on the economic conditions of the migrant families by reducing the flows of family incomes in the long term.

The reciprocal character of migration facilitates the flow of labour by presenting potential migrants with crucial resources such as the financial and information assistance considered indispensable to move internationally for work. These social and symbolic ties, as well as the contents of these ties such as obligation, reciprocity, and solidarity, comprise the social bedrock upon which migration between Bangladesh and Singapore persists, and thus explain why migration to Singapore tends to be not only a location-specific phenomenon (restricted to specific *baris*, villages, or districts in Bangladesh), but also an expanding and cumulative process.

Fourth, the social worlds of migrants are particularly important to understand migrants' diverse experiences in the host country. This is a field of inquiry that has received disproportionate attention from scholars in the global South. The present study has investigated the conditions under which migrants work and live, the facilities available for medical care, the spaces offered for religious practices, the support available for creative exercises (e.g., migrant poetry), and organizational involvement in the well-being, equitable treatment, and empowerment of migrant workers. Bangladeshi migrants are working in three main sectors: construction, marine, and process. Workers' safety is the highest priority for employers, and as a result migrant workers are required to undertake regular safety courses and are must wear safety gear during working hours. The Workmen's Compensation Act provides for compensation to all workers injured at work. Migrants are encouraged to upgrade their professional skills while they are working in Singapore; indeed, arrangements for such on-the-job professional skill upgrading for foreign workers are rare in other migrant-labour-receiving countries in the region and beyond. Courses related to their specific skills are available for all migrants, and they can add more skills in their specific field. Such professional skill upgrading carry a number of benefits, such as the possibility of extended stays in Singapore (up to 22 years), income benefits, and promotion from general workers to foremen or supervisors.

Proving accommodation to millions of foreign workers is a big challenge for a small country like Singapore: however, Singapore has successfully met this challenge, and employers are required to offer acceptable housing for all foreign workers. There are three kinds of housing facilities for foreign workers. Migrant workers may live in apartments, dormitories, and on worksites (mainly construction worksites). However, the housing must meet certain standards: proper land use is governed by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), Housing Development Board (HDB), or Jurong Town Corporation (JTC); building structural safety standards are governed by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA); fire and safety standards by the Singapore Civil Defense Force (SCDF); environmental health requirements by the National Environment Agency (NEA); and drainage, sanitary, and sewerage system standards by the Public Utilities Board (PUB). If the employers do not ensure that their workers have acceptable housing, they can be prosecuted.

Singapore has institutionalized two-tired medical screening procedures for foreign workers: potential migrants are required to undergo medical examinations first in their home countries and secondly upon arrival in Singapore, and they are also required to be examined by local medical practitioners. A work permit is only issued if they pass the medical examination in Singapore. Once a foreign worker has successfully completed the medical examination, he enters the phase of medical care, in which every foreign worker is covered by medical insurance. An employer needs to buy and maintain a medical insurance coverage of at least SG$15,000 per year for each foreign worker. The cost of purchasing the medical insurance cannot be passed on the foreign workers; it must be borne by their employers. Employers also need to submit medical insurance details online before they request renewals of work permits for their foreign workers. As a result, employers cannot evade medical insurance requirement for foreign workers in Singapore.

Singapore is a multi-religious country where followers of each religion enjoy freedom to practice their own religions. Foreign workers are no exception: they also enjoy complete freedom to practice their religions. Bangladeshi Muslim migrants are offered spaces at their dormitories for prayers. Many are seen attending *jumu'ah salaat* (Friday prayer) in the mosques. Muslim migrants enjoy holidays during their two key annual events: *eid-al-fitr* and *eid-al-adha*, while some migrants participate in Tablighi Jamaat during their holidays. Bangladeshi Hindu migrants celebrate Durga Puja with other Bengali Hindu expatriates from Bangladesh and India.

This research has reported that some Bangladeshi-migrant workers pen thoughts on life away from home. Migrants' deepest feelings and emotions about their everyday life in Singapore and their loved ones in Bangladesh surface in their poetry. Apart from Bangladeshi migrants, other migrant groups such as Indonesians, Chinese, and Filipinos are also actively involved in writing their feelings and experiences in Singapore.

In many developed countries, migrant-focused organizations emerge to address the problems faced by foreign workers, and Singapore is no exception. This study has reported two major categories of such organizations: government organizations, and non-government organizations, which work together to ensure the well-being of foreign workers. Within the Ministry of Manpower there is a separate division, the Foreign Manpower Management Division (FMMD), which oversees various issues related to workplace grievances and checks on the well-being of foreign workers during their stints in Singapore. Of the several migrant-focused organizations that address foreign worker issues, the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME), Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2), and the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) are particularly noteworthy. In addition to these migrant-focused organizations, there are a few Bangladeshi-migrant-focused organizations such as Dibashram and the Singapore Bangladesh Society (SBS) that serve Bangladeshis in Singapore.

Fifth, this book has shown that research linking the remittance-sending context with the remittance-receiving context is more capable of capturing the complexity of remittances and their development dynamics. This study has examined remittances in relation to remittance sending, receipt, use and control, and their potential

for development. With regard to recipients of remittances, this study has identified the dominant role of men in remittance receiving. This gender gap in remittance receiving is ascribed to the patriarchal family system in Bangladesh.

In the context of use and control of remittances, this study has reported that the recipients of remittances enjoy more privileges in the management of remittances than the remitters do. Both the migrant worker and household surveys found that migrant households received remittances regularly, and that the amount of cash received was substantial. Since the majority of households had less land for subsistence living, they had a higher number of migrants as principal economic providers. The frequency of remittances (94% of migrants had remitted twice or thrice in the last three months) also confirmed the need for remittances in the everyday lives of the migrant households.

To understand the trends in remittance use and development dynamics in the households, this study introduced the ideas of the 'near past' and 'near future' usages of remittances. Remitters and recipients were asked rank the five priority areas in which they had used and would use remittances. Based on a comparison of past and future (potential) uses of remittances in both surveys, some trends in remittance use emerge. First, dependence on remittances for family maintenance was declining. Second, savings occupied a predominant position in the recent past and potential (future) uses of remittances. Third, building of houses had been completed for a majority of the migrants, and as a result they intended to purchase arable land to build up the asset. Fourth, education and health care were a significant area for remittance use. Fifth, investment in businesses was a future strategy for capital formation. It is important to note that migrants usually require a few years to recoup the expenses incurred in the migration process, which delays the positive effects of remittances.

A portion of migrant remittances was used for family maintenance, because migrants were the principal economic providers for families left behind. Approximately two-thirds of the migrants were forced to be principal economic providers because their households had no land (and local economic means) for subsistence living, laying the foundations not only for economic compulsion in the migration decision, but also explaining the most frequent usages of remittances in family maintenance. Compared with what their lives would have been like in Bangladesh, migrants in Singapore are probably economically better off, and function as agents of change for their households, although this is tempered by their separation from family and by uncertainty about their duration of stay and capacity to earn and remit.

Migrants tend to set aside savings—the question is, what can be done with these savings. Should they be directed toward investment? Several studies have shown that policies aiming at converting migrants into small entrepreneurs have not met with remarkable success, especially in Asia. This policy assumes that migrants are the appropriate agents for undertaking investment and that they are all latent entrepreneurs. This study finds that the majority of recipients are 'saver-rentiers while a few are 'saver-investors', and, again, patterns of investment vary along gender lines: female recipients of remittances show less interest in investments,

especially productive assets. A sense of fear and uncertainty prevails among the migrant community. Therefore, this study proposes policy makers pursue policies encouraging migrant workers and their families to become more active in domestic capital markets as saver-rentiers, and suggest that a generation of saver-rentiers will at least not endanger the longer term income security of migrants and their families. Given the economic situation of migrant households, the amount and frequency of remittances, the trends in remittance use, and the implications of all this for migrant households, we can conclude that slowly but surely migrant remittances are helping migrant workers and their families to advance on the road to improved life chances.

Research on remittances as a social process is still in its infancy, and much work is still required to develop a full and appropriate conceptual and methodological schema. This study should be seen as an early attempt to conceptualize remittances as a social process and to integrate the different sites of remittances, in the hope of making a conceptual and methodological contribution to remittance research. One limitation of this research is that it has not been able to draw out the family and household dynamics to illustrate the full significance of gender and patriarchy in the remittance process. Identifying the conditions under which migrant households spend more on physical and human capital, and the impact of these investments on local economic development remains important topics for further inquiry.

Sixth, and finally, this book has addressed the migration–family relationship with specific emphasis on family development dynamics. This research has shown that when the impact of migration is examined in the context of migrant *baris*, a myriad of social and relational changes can be observed within families. This study has looked beyond the commonly reported trends in the migration–family relationship by investigating the impact of migration on returning migrants' relationships with their families (wives, fathers); the impact of migration on the social relations within a village both inside and outside of the immediate families; the impact of migration on education, medical care, and food consumption; the houses of migrant *baris*; *dhado*n, a business enterprise for migrant wives; the impact of migration on the upward social mobility of immediate family members; and the impact of migration in terms of changing power relations, in which parents benefit from their son's migration.

Migration has implications for broader changes within familial and social relations. I have used the concrete example of the *dhadon* as a vehicle for women's entry into the public sphere, and as a signifier of their socially outward mobility. This new role for left-behind women has also led to changing women-to-women relationships. Mobile remittance transfers have facilitated flows of money from migrants overseas to their desired recipients at the family, bypassing traditional banks that require bank accounts and often long journeys from remote areas to local cities where these banks are usually located.

This breakthrough in international remittance transfers and mobile communications has affected the authority structure of the traditional families: women are playing new roles in managing the foreign money earned by husbands overseas,

over and above the management of households' existing economic resources, effectively becoming husbands in absentia. Popularly called 'Singapore wives' or 'Singapore sisters', these women are taking vital family decisions regarding resource allocations, education, health care, and many other related issues, often in consultation with their spouses and brothers in Singapore. Older male members of a left-behind family have also benefited from male out-migration by gaining sociopolitical influence within the village.

In sum, then, this book has documented how members of the families left behind enjoy social privileges in the origin communities as a result of migration. At the same time, this research has pointed to how parents may lose power over their migrant sons in terms of not any longer being able to choose their brides. This has broader implications for the management of remittances and family affairs. It can therefore be said that the temporary migration of millions of Bangladeshi men has contributed to social change in their own families and communities—a process which will most likely in turn stimulate macro-changes in Bangladeshi society in the near future.

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