

Bangladeshi Diaspora in Peninsular Malaysia
Organizational Structure, Survival Strategies and Networks

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Zusammenfassung

Einleitung:

Im Zeitalter der Globalisierung ist die Mobilität und Ansiedlung von Menschen jenseits ihres Heimatlandes bei gleichzeitiger Beibehaltung ihrer transnationalen Kontakte (aufgrund ihrer mehrdimensionalen gesellschaftlichen Verankerung) eine verbreitete Realität. Wenn wir uns in diesem Kontext auf die UN Daten beziehen, stellen wir fest, dass 2005 geschätzte 191 Mio Menschen bzw. 3 % der Weltbevölkerung als Migrant/inn/en außerhalb ihres Heimatlandes lebten.¹ Die vorgelegte Dissertation wird nicht die Frage beantworten, warum Menschen auswandern. Vielmehr wird sie untersuchen, wie diese Migrant/inn/en in der Fremde überleben und wie sie verschiedene Strategien entwickeln, um ihre Ziele zu Gunsten einer höheren sozioökonomischen und kulturellen Mobilität zu verwirklichen.

Wie in anderen Einwanderungsgebieten ist die internationale Arbeits-Migration sowie die Aufnahme von transnationalen Aktivitäten für die Bangladeschi überaus üblich und wird infolgedessen in unserer Studie als alltägliche Realität bestätigt. Daher zielt die vorliegende Arbeit darauf ab, Organisationsstrukturen, Vernetzungsformen und Überlebensstrategien der Bangladescher Migrant/inn/en in Malaysia (welche dort zunächst als temporäre Gastarbeiter ankommen und dann versuchen, sich im Gastland zu integrieren) zu erforschen. Dabei werden ihre in der Gesellschaft verankerten Wirklichkeiten ebenfalls berücksichtigt. Da sich die besagten Wirklichkeiten als Regelwerk der Bewältigungsstrategien der Migrant/inn/en herausstellten, wurde während des Feldaufenthaltes der Fokus auf diese gerichtet.

Problemstellung:

Am Beispiel der Halbinsel Malaysia zeigte sich, dass die untersuchten Personen verschiedene Formen transnationaler Aktivität betreiben. Um sich an das Gastland anzupassen und eine höhere sozioökonomische und kulturelle Mobilität zu erzielen, initiieren Bangladescher Migrant/inn/en verschiedene Überlebensstrategien in den transnationalen Lebensräumen des Herkunfts- und Gastlandes. Die einzelnen Bewältigungsstrategien resultieren aus den

¹ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/World.pdf>, abgerufen am 21. Februar, 2008.

mehrdimensional verankerten gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeiten und stellen als solche ein Regelwerk dar. Unter dem Begriff ‚mehrdimensional eingebettete Wirklichkeiten‘ werden einerseits die rechtlichen und institutionellen Konditionen verstanden, wie z.B. das Auswanderungsrecht des Herkunftslandes oder das Einwanderungsrecht des Gastlandes, und andererseits die sozialen Bindungen und Verantwortlichkeiten gegenüber der zurück gebliebenen Familie sowie die soziokulturellen Rahmenbedingungen im Gastland. Wenn es, wie vorausgesetzt, strenge Regeln gibt, die die Aufnahme von Migrant/inn/en (insbesondere ungelernerter und angelernter Arbeiter) kontrollieren, wie schaffen es die Migrant/inn/en sich nichtsdestotrotz dort anzusiedeln? Und ist es möglich ausschließlich intra-ethnische Netzwerke zu pflegen und damit die als authentisch(e) wahrgenommenen Kulturen zu bewahren? Ist es für sie üblich, nach ein paar Jahren des Aufenthalts oder aber nachdem bessere Aufstiegsmöglichkeiten gefunden wurden, den Kontakt mit ihrem Heimatland zu reduzieren? Sind ihre internen Organisationsstrukturen im Gastland homogen, so wie es in vielen Beschreibungen bezüglich der Organisationsstrukturen einer Diaspora bestätigt wird?

Folglich müssen wir unseren Fokus nicht nur auf die Überlebensstrategien der Migrant/inn/en richten, sondern auch auf die Art ihrer Einbettung. In diesem Kontext ist es erwähnenswert, dass sich Migrant/inn/en nicht nur in ihrem sozioökonomischen, politischen, umweltbedingten und geographischen Hintergrund auf Makroebene stark unterscheiden, sondern dass es auch viele Variationen in der Migrationspolitik gibt, die die Bewegung der Menschen wie auch ihre Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen regulieren. Die Erforschung der Bewältigungsstrategien der Migrant/inn/en sowie ihre Art der Einbettung in die Gesellschaft des Gastlandes sind daher bedeutsam im Kontext der Entwicklung der Menschen, die internationale Migration als eine effektive Strategie der Grundlagensicherung sowie der vertikalen Mobilität betrachten. Zugleich sind diese Forschungstypen notwendig, um eine adäquate Migrationspolitik zu formulieren, die weder den Kontext der Globalisierung noch die sich stark unterscheidenden sozioökonomischen, politischen, geographischen und umweltbedingten Gegebenheiten der Einwanderer und ihrer sozialen Netzwerke ignoriert.

Bangladesch ist derzeit laut der UN der weltweit sechstgrößte Exporteur von Arbeitskräften². Während ausreichend Studien über die Organisationsstrukturen und Überlebensstrategien der

² Development Prospects Group, World Bank
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Top10.pdf>, abgerufen am 16. April 2008.

mexikanischen, indischen oder chinesischen Diaspora durchgeführt wurden, liegt nur eine sehr begrenzte Anzahl von Studien zur Diaspora der Bangladeschi vor. Die zentrale Forschungsfrage und die Zielsetzung meiner Studie lauten wie folgt:

Zentrale Forschungsfrage:

“Wie leben und überleben Menschen in einem fremden Land um ihren Ansprüchen zu genügen und was ist die daraus folgende Konsequenz im Kontext der Organisationsstrukturen der Bangladesischen Diaspora im Zeitalter der Globalisierung?”

Zielsetzung der Studie:

- Überprüfen von Migrationsgründen der Gastarbeiter
- Ermitteln von Wirklichkeiten, in welche die Migrant/inn/en eingebettet sind und aufgrund welcher sie Bewältigungs- und Überlebensstrategien entwickeln.
- Verifizieren der Vernetzungsrollen, -modi und -regulatoren für Diaspora Adaption und ihre Konsequenzen.
- Analyse der Art der transnationalen Vernetzung und Aktivitäten der Migrant/inn/en, ihrer Interaktion mit Einheimischen und anderer Einwanderer und Einwanderinnen sowie die Beantwortung der Frage, wie soziale Netzwerke ihre begleitenden Überlebensstrategien widerspiegeln und die Organisationsstruktur ihrer Diaspora formen.

Theoretischer Rahmen:

Bei der Betrachtung von früheren Studien³ über Migration und Bewältigungsstrategien in der Diaspora fällt die weit verbreitete Annahme auf, dass soziale Netzwerke eine wichtige Rolle bei der Migrationsentscheidung und der Diasporaadaption spielen.

Daher wurden die Vernetzungsarten, ihre Beiträge, Konsequenzen und gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeiten (auf Mikro/Makroebene) während der Feldforschung genauestens geprüft, um

³ Massey 1987; Lomnitz 1988; Boyd 1989; Zhou 1992; Nina Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Katy Gardner 1995, 2006; Portes 1997; Glick Schiller et al. 2001, Bill Jordan et al. 2002; Peter Jackson et al. 2004; Dannecker 2003, 2005 usw.

herauszufinden, ob besagte Netzwerke eine unterstützende Funktion für die Migrant/inn/enbetreuung, Risikoreduzierung im Gastland, Übernahme von soziokulturellen und psychologischen Verantwortlichkeiten wie auch Kostenminimierung (des Auswanderns) haben. Neben diesen Aspekten wurde auch die Art der Vernetzung im Falle der Diasporaformierung und Integration der Einwanderer und Einwanderinnen in diese erforscht. Es hat den Anschein, dass die Integration nach Malaysia durch die anti-integrative Einwanderungspolitik des Gastlandes reguliert zu wird⁴.

Um die Hypothese, dass die sozialen Netzwerke der Einwanderer eine wichtige Rolle bei der Diasporaadaption- und Integration spielen, zu überprüfen, wurden die Überlebensstrategien und Anpassungsmechanismen der Migrant/inn/en durch intensive Feldforschung und Interviews eingehend untersucht. Heimgekehrte Migrant/inn/en sowie die Familien, Freunde und Nachbarn von Gastarbeitern im Heimatland wurden ebenfalls mitberücksichtigt, um Hintergrundinformationen zu sammeln.

Während der Feldforschung wurde herausgestellt, dass Migrant/inn/en mehr-dimensional verankerten Wirklichkeiten angehören. So sind sie zum Beispiel im Rahmen ihrer Gemeinde durch Blutsverwandtschaft⁵ und Heirat⁶ eingebunden und darüber hinaus durch imaginäre Bande mit ihren Freunden und Nachbarn. Die Bindungen unterscheiden sich hinsichtlich des sozialen Status, Geschlecht, Religion, Herkunftsgebiet, Ausbildungsgrad, rechtlichem Status, Arbeitsart, Ausgaben, Aufenthaltsdauer im Gastland sowie vielen weiteren Kriterien. Diese verschiedenen Beziehungsformen besitzen und verlangen verschiedene Formen von Verantwortung, Kohärenz, Konfliktaustragung und Konkurrenz, welche die Art der jeweiligen Vernetzung und Bewältigungsstrategie widerspiegeln. Auf dieselbe Art stehen sie neben ihrer informellen und ideologischen Einbettung auch unter dem Einfluss ihrer intra- und interethnischen Nachbarschaft, ihren Arbeitskolleg/inn/en, gutbetuchten und mächtigen Gastarbeiter/inn/en und Arbeitgeber/inn/en im Gastland sowie den Auswanderungs- und Einwanderungspolitiken des Heimat- und Gastlandes. Um mit diesen diversen Realitäten zurechtzukommen und fertig zu werden sind Migrant/inn/en daher auf Netzwerke angewiesen.

⁴ Pillai 1992; Anja 1996; Karim et al. 1999; Jones 2000; Zamir 2006 usw.

⁵ In Robin Fox (1967)

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Diese verschiedenen Muster von Netzwerken und Bewältigungsstrategien regulieren die Organisationsstruktur der Gemeinschaft und werden ihrerseits reguliert oder zumindest theoretisch motiviert von den idealtypischen soziokulturellen⁷ sowie statistisch-behavioristischen⁸ und wahrgenommenen⁹ Modellen der Gemeinschaft. Demzufolge wurden während der Feldforschung komplexe Bewältigungsstrategien der Migrant/inn/en bemerkt, welche auf Makro- und Mikroebene die soziokulturellen Praktiken der Gesellschaft des Heimat- und Gastlandes beeinflussten.

Neben der oben beschriebenen, so genannten Sozialvernetzungstheorie (Evers 1969) können in der Literatur im Allgemeinen noch vier weitere Definitionen des Begriffs Migration gefunden werden. In der Weltsystem-Theorie (Sassen 1988) wird internationale Migration als ein Nebenprodukt kapitalistischer Marktexpansion in vormarktwirtschaftliche und nicht marktwirtschaftliche Gesellschaften betrachtet. Es wird angenommen, dass Menschen armer Länder von den vom globalen Kapitalismus ausgehenden Push-Faktoren zur Abwanderung motiviert werden. Die Push-Faktoren veranlassen sie dazu, durch die Abwanderung in wohlhabende Länder nach besseren Lebensbedingungen, Sicherheit und Arbeit zu streben, den so genannten Pull-Faktoren. Vor dem Hintergrund der theoretischen Argumentation fragte ich die Interviewten weshalb sie nach Malaysia ausgewandert sind.

Neben Faktoren auf Makroebene wie sozioökonomischer, kultureller und politischer Transformationen, welche aus der kapitalistischen Expansion des indischen Subkontinents während der britischen Kolonialzeit resultieren, verwandelten auch der Befreiungskrieg von 1971, politische und ökologische Katastrophen, Armut und die sich daraus ergebenden Migrationszwänge, sowie viele weitere Faktoren Bangladesch in ein Arbeiter entsendendes Land¹⁰. Malaysia auf der anderen Seite gewährte und gewährt bis heute Migrant/inn/en aus verschiedenen Ländern Arbeit und trägt gleichzeitig durch die Entsendung von Arbeiter/inne/n zu der Wirtschaftsentwicklung anderer Länder bei.

Studien über die Gastarbeiter/innen in Malaysia und der industriellen Entwicklung des Landes verwenden oft die Theorie des „Segmentierten Arbeitsmarktes“ (Piore 1979), um die

⁷ Die Erwartungen der Migrant/inn/en hinsichtlich der Struktur der Sozialsysteme im Gastland. Z.B. erwarten diese eine integrierte und zusammenhängende Gemeinschaft

⁸ Das tatsächliche Verhalten der Menschen, das auf der Grundlage beobachteter Häufigkeiten von Interaktion und Verhalten basiert.

⁹ Einstellungen der Migrant/inn/en zu der Struktur ihrer Sozialsysteme

¹⁰ Chatterjee 1993; Siddiqui 2005; Gardner 2006 usw.

Ursachen für den hohen Anteil von Gastarbeitern in den so genannten „3-D“ (difficult, dangerous, dirty) Berufen zu erklären. Es wird postuliert, dass die florierende Wirtschaft von Malaysia, welche von den britischen Kolonialbehörden beschleunigt wurde, Berufsverzweigungen verursacht. In diesem Kontext werden preisgünstigere Gastarbeiter/innen benötigt, um die von den Einheimischen vernachlässigten Berufszweige aufzufüllen. Abgesehen von industrieller Entwicklung wird ferner argumentiert, dass die geographische Lage des Landes als der Knotenpunkt Südostasiens zudem das Betätigungsfeld der Migrant/inn/en erhöht hat und ihnen nunmehr erlaubt, sowohl als Händler als auch als Reisende einzuwandern (Pillai 1992). Die Fragen indes, in welchem Kontext und seit wann Bangladesch Arbeiter nach Malaysia entsendet, ob die geographischen Eigenschaften Malaysias die Einwanderung und die in dem Land vorhandenen Pull-Faktoren begünstigen, werden in Kapitel zwei und drei dieser Dissertation detailliert behandelt.

Um die Bedeutung der Migrationsgründe auf Mikro- und Makroebene zu erklären, war es notwendig herauszufinden, woher die Migrant/inn/en kamen und was ihre genauen Beweggründe für die Auswanderung waren. Da die strukturellen Ursachen auf Makroebene die einzigen Regulationsmechanismen für Migration waren, stellte sich die Frage, warum es überhaupt Zurückgebliebene im Heimatland gab, nachdem ihre Nachbarn, Freunde und Familienangehörigen in andere Länder ausgewandert waren? Es stellt sich weiterhin die Frage in welcher Form sich die Migrationsursachen- und Möglichkeiten der Migrant/inn/en entsprechend ihrem sozialen Status, Geschlecht, Alter und religiöser Zugehörigkeit unterscheiden? Diese Fragen wurden mit Bezug auf die in der „Neoklassisch-Ökonomischen Theorie“ (Todaro 1976) und der „Neuen Ökonomie der Arbeitsmigration“ (Stark 1991) Argumente, bearbeitet.

In der „Neoklassisch-Ökonomischen Theorie“ wird Migration unter Hervorhebung der Lohnunterschiede erklärt. Diese Theorie besagt, dass sich Menschen aus Entwicklungsländern üblicherweise zur Migration in urbane Gebiete oder in expandierende internationale Arbeitsmärkte entscheiden, sobald der Lohnunterschied mehr Anreize bieten als die Reisekosten vom Herkunfts- in das Gastland. Menschen werden also als rationale Handelnde wahrgenommen, da sie ihre Entscheidung nach Abwägung ökonomischer Kriterien getroffen haben und aus Gebieten ausgewandert sind, in welchen Einkommen und Beschäftigung gleichermaßen niedrig waren.

Obgleich sich für die vorliegende Arbeit der Lohnunterschied zwischen Bangladesch und Malaysia als bedeutsamer Faktor herausstellte, wurde dieser nicht die einzige Determinante identifiziert. Abgesehen von angelernten und ungelerten Arbeiter/innen migrierten auch Universitätsdozenten, Geschäftsleute und Student/innen nach Malaysia. Obwohl für die erst Genannten Arbeitslosigkeit und Unterbeschäftigung die Migrationsursache war, waren für die Student/innen, die Lehrer und Geschäftsleute die kulturellen Anreize und bessere Karriereaussichten neben der Abwägung ökonomischer Faktoren das ausschlaggebende Kriterium. In diesem Fall gab es neben ökonomischen Faktoren noch andere bedeutsame Gründe wie die Konkurrenz mit den Nachbarn, die Erlangung eines höheren sozialen Ansehens durch Migration, Veränderung des Lebensstils usw., die allesamt die Familien der Migrant/innen veranlassten, deren Auswanderung zu unterstützen. Und im Falle der weiblichen Migrant/innen war die Entscheidung zur Auswanderung zudem durch die sogenannte kulturelle Konstruktion des Geschlechts und der religiösen Identität beeinflusst.

Die Theorie der „Neuen Ökonomie der Arbeitsmigration“ besagt, dass Lohnunterschiede nicht die einzigen Faktoren für internationale Migration sind. Stattdessen ist Migration nur eine von vielen Bewältigungsstrategien von Familien in den sich strukturell transformierenden Ländern. Der diversifizierte urbane Sektor verändert beständig seine Eigenschaften und infolgedessen können Menschen die Land-Stadt Migration nicht als ihre einzige Überlebensstrategie betrachten. Es zeigt sich vielmehr, dass Familien temporäre Migration praktizieren anstelle von permanenter Niederlassung in wohlhabende Länder, um mit Marktversagen in ihrem Herkunftsland zurechtzukommen. Da sie es nicht schaffen, sich den neuen Lebensstilen anzupassen und sie zudem mit verschiedenen Risiken zurecht kommen müssen, diversifizieren Familien ihre Bewältigungsstrategien.

Hinsichtlich der Bangladescher Diaspora kann festgestellt werden, dass, obwohl die Migrant/innen bei ihrer Auswanderung nach Malaysia häufig von ihren Familien unterstützt werden, nicht alle Familienangehörigen dieselbe Meinung zur Migration haben. So wandern häufig der Vater oder aber der älteste Sohn nach Malaysia aus, weil deren Ehefrauen oder Eltern es so wünschten. Manche wählen eigentlich andere Länder als Auswanderungsziele aus, fühlen sich aber aufgrund mangelnder Netzwerke und ökonomischer Mittel nicht in der Lage dorthin zu reisen. Manche entschieden sich sogar zur Auswanderung, um soziokulturellen Status und Prestige zu erlangen.

Wie diese Migrant/inn/en zurechtkommen, welche Überlebensstrategien sie nutzen und wie sich ihre Entscheidung zur befristeten Auswanderung allmählich hin zur permanenten Niederlassung wandelt (aufgrund von Erlangung von Wissen und neuen Netzwerken) kann die Theorie der „Neuen Ökonomie der Arbeitsmigration“ nicht beantworten. Daher befasst sich die Studie nicht weiter mit diesem theoretischen Ansatz und wählt stattdessen den Sozialvernetzungs-Ansatz. Dieser Ansatz dient bei der Abhandlung der Organisationsstrukturen der Bangladescher Diaspora, den Wirklichkeiten der Migrant/inn/en und ihrer Überlebensstrategien als theoretisches Gerüst. Und im Kontext der jüngsten Erkenntnisse über Diasporaadaption und die gesellschaftliche Einbettung ist die Studie ein Versuch, existierende Abgrenzungskonzepte über die Organisationsstrukturen der Diaspora, und ihrer sozialen Vernetzung neu zu bewerten.

Gliederung der Dissertation:

Das **erste Kapitel** dient der Einleitung des Themas, der Problemstellung, der zentralen Forschungsfrage, der Zielsetzungen sowie des theoretischen Hintergrunds der Dissertation.

Das **zweite Kapitel** ist eine Analyse der strukturellen Faktoren (auf Makroebene) des Herkunfts- und Gastlandes, welche die Bangladescher veranlassen, nach Malaysia zu emigrieren. Das Kapitel wirft verschiedene Fragen auf, beispielsweise wie und in welchem Kontext Bangladesch zu einem Arbeiter entsendenden Land wurde. Was sind die Regulationsmechanismen, die den Zuzug von Migrant/inn/en nach Malaysia kontrollieren? Und schließlich: Gibt es in diesem Kontext auch informelle Möglichkeiten der Migration?

Im **dritten Kapitel** werden wir die gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeiten der Migrant/inn/en auf der Mikro- und Makroebene sowie die Art ihrer Bewältigungsstrategien diskutieren. Wir werden überprüfen, ob Migrant/inn/en auf soziale Vernetzung als eine ihrer Bewältigungsstrategien angewiesen sind und, falls dem so sein sollte, was dessen Regulationen sind. Wie diese verschiedenen Realitäten eine überaus komplexe Form der Einbettung darstellen, was diese genau genommen sind und in welcher Weise sie (von den Migrant/inn/en) gemanagt werden, wird ebenfalls Gegenstand dieses Kapitels sein.

Das **vierte Kapitel** konzentriert sich auf eine Diskussion über die diversen Vernetzungsformen, ihre Einbettung und Konsequenzen im Kontext der

Organisationsstrukturen der Bangladescher Diaspora. Diesbezüglich wird der Hauptfokus auf die alltäglichen Realitäten der Migrant/inn/en im Gastland, dem Anpassungsprozess, wie etwa die Formierung von neuen Netzwerken oder die Beibehaltung alter Kontakte, und die Nutzung von Wissen und dessen Widerspiegelung auf die Organisationsstruktur der Diaspora gerichtet sein.

Das **fünfte Kapitel** wird die Grundstruktur transnationaler Vernetzung der Migrant/inn/en und ihre Praktiken, welche durch ihre mehrdimensional verankerten Wirklichkeiten geleitet und reguliert werden, analysieren. Es wird diskutiert, ob es im heutigen Zeitalter der Globalisierung möglich ist, ausschließlich intra-ethnische Netzwerke und authentische Kulturen zu bewahren.

In dem letzten Kapitel wird überprüft, ob die existierenden Ansätze bezüglich gesellschaftlicher Einbettung, authentischer Kultur und Organisationsstruktur einer Diaspora geeignet sind, um die Organisationsstrukturen der Bangladescher Diaspora sowie die komplexen Bewältigungsmechanismen der Migrant/inn/en und die daraus resultierenden Konsequenzen zu analysieren.

Forschungsergebnisse:

1. Aufgrund der anhaltenden Globalisierung hat die Arbeitsmigration von Bangladesch in andere Länder in den letzten Jahren stetig zugenommen. Dies wurde durch die hohe Arbeitslosigkeit, häufig auftretenden Naturkatastrophen und einer hohen Bevölkerungsdichte weiter beschleunigt. Malaysia, ein angrenzendes Land mit einer florierenden Wirtschaft, ist einer der Länder, welches Arbeiter aus Bangladesch aufnimmt.
2. Neben staatlich basierten Initiativen findet im Forschungsgebiet auch Anwerbung im Privatsektor statt.
3. Entgegen der Annahme, dass Löhne und damit Geldüberweisungen bei einem längeren Aufenthalt zunehmen, deutet die Studie darauf hin, dass sich eine höhere Anzahl von Aufenthaltsjahren in geringeren Mengen von Geldüberweisungen niederschlägt.

4. Die Migrant/inn/en sprachen in den Interviews von zwei Arten von „Hotspots“. ‘Bangla Bazaar’¹¹ ist beispielhaft für lose geknüpfte Netzwerke, welche primär zum Zwecke der sozialen Mobilität betrieben werden. Eine zweite wichtige Kategorie sind eng geknüpfte Netzwerke innerhalb der Gemeinschaft der Migrant/inn/en. In diesem Fall ist ihre Hauptintention, sich in einem fremden Land gegenseitig zu unterstützen.

5. Es ist den Gastarbeitern auferlegt worden, dass sie (sowohl Männer wie auch Frauen) ihre Jobs verlieren, sollten sie eine(n) Einheimische(n) heiraten und dass es ihnen nicht erlaubt ist, Familienangehörige nachkommen zu lassen. Es ist erwähnenswert, dass Fachleute und Auslandsentsandte, männlich wie weiblich, von diesen Restriktionen befreit sind.

6. Die Migrant/inn/en scheinen in zwei große Gruppen unterteilt zu sein, namentlich die ‘Noakhali’ und ‘Barishal’. Diese Spaltung ist hauptsächlich das Resultat von Konkurrenz und Konflikten bezüglich Arbeitskraft- und “*hundy*” (Geldüberweisungen via informeller Kanäle) Unternehmen sowie dem Streben nach Führerschaft in einem Ableger einer Bangladesischen Partei (in Malaysia).

7. Unter den verschiedenen Arten des Kontakts mit dem Heimatland ist Informationsteilung via Telefon und Familienfürsorge (belegt durch den monetären Rückfluss) am häufigsten (85%).

8. Beim genaueren Betrachten der Strategien der Migrant/inn/en bezüglich Anpassung und vertikaler Mobilität bestätigten 20 % der befragten Migrant/inn/en, dass sie Wissen als Nebenprodukt von persönlichen Erfahrungen ansammelten, nachdem sie mehrere Jahre im Gastland verbracht hatten. Der Rest (80%) skizzierte die Bedeutung der Interaktion (Vernetzung) mit erfolgreichen, ehemaligen Migrant/inn/en (41,3 %), anderen Volksgruppen (20%) sowie mit Arbeitskolleg/inn/en und Arbeitgeber/inne/n (18,7%).

9. Es hat sich herausgestellt, dass Migrant/inn/en mit lose geknüpften Kontakten eine höhere Einkommensmobilität besitzen als solche mit eng geknüpften Kontakten. Losegeknapfte Kontakte helfen Migrant/inn/en dabei, ihre Interessen zu realisieren, scheitern jedoch daran, Kohäsion und Integration innerhalb der ein gewanderten Bangladeschi herzustellen. Dies ist

¹¹ Beliebter Treffpunkt in Kuala Lumpur.

ist als Folge der heterogenen Struktur, der sozioökonomischen und soziokulturellen Unterschieden und der damit einhergehenden unterschiedlichen Interessenlagen zu verstehen.

10. Bangladescher Migrant/inn/en müssen den Gebräuchen des “Masuk Melayu” folgen, um sich in der malaysischen Gesellschaft zu integrieren. Sie können die Vermischung von Bengali und Bahasa nicht verhindern. Aus eben diesem Grund haben ihre Integrationsversuche in der malaysischen Gesellschaft hybride Identitäten und eine hybride Kultur hervor gebracht.

11. Es ist erwähnenswert, dass die Beschäftigungsfelder der Muslime, sowohl jene aus der Diaspora als auch Bumiputera Malayan, nicht nur zu friedlicher Koexistenz führen, sondern auch in manchen Kontexten Spannungen zwischen mächtigen Einheimischen und den Gastarbeitern erzeugen.

12. Es hat sich herausgestellt, dass der Fluss von Ideen und Informationen zwischen der Heimat- und Gastgesellschaft eine schichtspezifische Ausprägung hat. Während gering qualifizierte Migrant/inn/en transnationale Vernetzung als Überlebensinstrument betreiben, engagieren sich wohlhabende Geschäftsleute in diesem Bereich zum Zwecke der Profitmaximierung und Wertsteigerung ihrer Geschäfte.

13. Die Hybridisierung der bangladesischen Diaspora scheint das Resultat ihres Anpassungsprozesses (arme Migrant/inn/en) sowie ihrer Strategien zwecks vertikaler Mobilität (wohlhabende Unternehmer und Fachleute) zu sein.

Fazit:

Unsere Befunde bezüglich der Organisationsstruktur der Bangladescher Diaspora verdeutlichen, dass die Gesellschaft in mehrere Segmente unterteilt ist. Tatsächlich sind jene „normativen Modelle“, weswegen die Bangladescher als Beispiel eines eng zusammengewachsenen Sozialsystems konzeptualisiert werden können, die Ideologien der Verwandtschaft und des Nationalismus. Die Aussage *“You see we are living here, but we are taking care of our family and relatives at home. I am rich, but I don’t forget you, my fellow*

*brothers*¹² kann als ein Beispiel für den dominierenden Verwandtschafts- und Nationalismus-Diskurs gesehen werden.

Zugleich gilt allerdings, dass wir, wenn wir uns auf die „statistisch-behavioristischen“ und „wahrgenommenen“ Modelle konzentrieren, eine Abwesenheit von gesellschaftlichem Zusammenhalt bemerken. Eine Analyse der „perzeptiven“ Modelle der armen Migrant/inn/en verdeutlicht, dass die meisten Migrant/inn/en ihre vertikalen intra-ethnischen und inter-ethnischen Verbindungen als geschäftlich, ausbeuterisch und lose betrachten. Obgleich die Wahrnehmung der weniger privilegierten Migrant/inn/en bezüglich ihrer losen Verbindungen also den Ansatz einer größeren Gesellschaftsintegration nicht unterstützt, sind sie nichtsdestotrotz auf eben diese Verbindungen angewiesen, da ihre starken Kontakte allein für sozio-ökonomische Mobilität nicht ausreichen.

Beim genaueren Betrachten dieses Dilemmas kann man andererseits feststellen, dass die Überlebensstrategien der Migrant/inn/en von ihren Wirklichkeiten gesteuert werden.

Während arme Migrant/inn/en nach vertikaler Vernetzung mit ihren reichen Landsleuten als eine Strategie zur höheren sozioökonomischen Mobilität trachten, versuchen wohlhabende Geschäftsleute sich durch inter-ethnische Geschäfte und eheliche Bindungen sowie durch Nutzung von intra-ethnischen Bündnissen zu bereichern.

Andererseits sind Fachleute und professionelle Händler hauptsächlich auf ihre vertrauensbasierten engen Kontakte angewiesen. Tatsächlich haben diese Kontakte die Informationen und Vernetzungen, die für eine vertikale Mobilität nötig sind. Daher fällt hinsichtlich des Vernetzungsverhaltens der Fachleute und der professionellen Händler eine Widerspiegelung der „normativen Modelle“ auf. Wir können demgemäß behaupten, dass diese Segmente der Bangladescher Diaspora die Eigenschaften eines dicht gewobenen Sozialsystems besitzen.

Allerdings zeigt der Rest der Gesellschaft (Arbeiter/innen und Geschäftsleute) gegenteilige Eigenschaften aufgrund der verschiedenen Form der gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeiten.

¹² Ihr seht, dass wir hier leben, aber wir kümmern uns um unsere zurück gebliebenen Familien und Angehörigen. Zwar bin ich reich, aber ich vergesse Euch nicht, meine Mitbrüder und –schwetsern.

Daher widerspricht diese Studie anderen Studien, die bezüglich Migration und Diaspora¹³ den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt und die Integration hervorheben, ohne sozialen Status, Religion und Gender bezogene Differenzierungen und Politiken zu berücksichtigen. Demgemäß können wir keine Kultur generell als essentiell lose- oder dicht gewoben charakterisieren (s.a. Embree¹⁴). Stattdessen müssen wir die tatsächliche und individuelle Einbettung der Akteure betrachten. Diese erlaubt es uns vielleicht herauszufinden, wie sie ihre Überlebensstrategien lenken und aufgreifen, um ihr Streben nach sozio-ökonomischer und kultureller Mobilität zu realisieren.

¹³ Wie etwa Massey et al. 1987; Zhou 1992; Rudnick 1996; Karim et al. 1999; Zamir 2006 usw.

¹⁴ Evers 1969.

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Abbreviations

APMRN- Asia Pacific Migration Research Network
BAIRA - Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BDT- Bangladeshi Taka
BMET- Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BNP- Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BOESL- Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd
EPU- Economic Planning Unit
G to G-Government to Government
IC- Identity Card
ICT- Information and Communication Technology
IT- Information Technology
KL- Kuala Lumpur
MFA- Migrant Forum in Asia
MTUC- Malaysian Trade Union Congress
NEP- New Economic Policy
NGO- Non-Governmental Organization
PR- Permanent Resident
RM- Ringgit Malaysia
SWT- Strength of Weak Ties
UN- United Nations
USD- United States Dollar
WARBE- Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees

Glossary

- Adda*-Informal discussion
Adam babsha-Manpower business
Adat-Custom
Angin panas-Strong wind/Unfavourable time
Ashami-Criminal
Attio-Relatives
Baba-Father
Bahasa Melayu-Malay language
Baju kurung-Traditional Malay dress
Bari-House
Bin-Son of
Bint-Daughter of
Biri-One kind of cheaper cigarette
Boro mamu-Elder maternal uncle/Malaysian immigration police
Boro vai-Elder brother
Borolok homu-Becoming rich
Calling visa-Legal way of entering into a job
Chanda-Donation
Chacha miah-Paternal uncle
Dalal-Broker
Deshi big brother-Elderly country brother
Eid-A kind of festival of the Muslim community
Gala Kata passport-Forged passport
Ghan ghan korsilo-Requesting for something in an irritating way
Ghanishta-Intimate
Ghush-Bribery
Halal-Sacred, according to Islamic custom
Hantaran-One kind of Malay marital ritual
Haram- Profane/forbidden, according to Islamic custom
Hazz- Pilgrimage to Mecca, according to Islamic custom
Hejab-Veil, practiced among the Muslim women

Hundy-Transferring economic remittance bypassing law

Hundy-walas- The persons who assist the hundy businessmen in practising hundy

Jalan card- The identity card that allows the documented migrant workers to move and work freely in Peninsular Malaysia

Jhamela- Hazards

Kampung- It refers to village in Bahasa Melayu

Khati Muslim- Pious Muslim

Kutum-Relatives

Makan-Food

Minum-Drinks

Mamu restaurant- Halal restaurants owned by the Tamil Muslims

Mamu-Maternal uncle/Malaysian local police

Melayu- Peoples who belong to Malay ethnic community

Milad mahfil- One kind of religious rituals of Muslims

Parda- One kind of veil practiced among the Muslim women

Pasarmalam- Informal markets that start and operate at night in Malaysia

Pete-vate- Serving for meal only

PC passport- Forged passport

Purba shatarkota- Prior awareness

Qadi- Religious marriage celebrant

Ramadan- Sacred ritual of fasting among Muslims in the month of Ramadan

Rotichanai- It is a kind of hand-made bread prepared from the wheat flour

Salat- Five time's ritual prayer in a day practiced among the Muslims

Shahajjo- Help

Shami- Husband

Shoukhin- Fanciful

Soto vai- Younger brother

Surau- Muslim prayer house

Tips- Bribery

Zakat- Giving alms to the poor according to Islamic ritual

Chapter One

Introduction

During this period of globalization, movement and settlement of people outside their country of origin while these migrants still maintain transnational contacts because of their multi-dimensional and varying forms of embeddedness, is a common reality. At present whether people will choose migration as a probable livelihood strategy, hence, is not a matter of enquiry. Instead how they survive and develop different strategies in a foreign country to mitigate their aims for higher socio-economic and cultural mobility are the issues that need to be investigated. Along with these, questions regarding the nature and range of embeddedness of the immigrants which they of course need to encounter both in the origin and host countries also lay ahead of us. In fact, if we refer to UN data, we may notice that for the year 2005 about 191 million people or 3% of the world population were estimated to be immigrants living outside their country of origin¹⁵. And the world wide official flow of economic remittance for the year 2006 was estimated to exceed USD 276 billion, USD 206 billion of which were flowing towards developing countries.¹⁶ According to UN data moreover, apart from official sources there are also unofficial flows of remittance. These migrants mainly depend on their networks, both formal and informal, to fulfil that purpose.¹⁷

As a matter of fact, the remittance transfer of migrants represents one of their transnational activities, while the utilization of manifold channels in transferring money across the state-borders indicates the existence of transnational networks between the origin and receiving societies. The question is if the respective authorities of the individual countries develop regulatory frameworks targeting to assist migrants in their remittance transfer, why and how do the immigrants bypass these public channels and develop (and depend on as well) alternative networks. The questions that we need to explore are whether the use of authorized and unauthorized sources of remittance transfer reflects their class, status, religious or gender identity and whether these factors also regulate the flow of migrants, goods and information. In the same way, we need to find out if the “channelling” of economic remittance incorporates other forms of remittance like information, ideas as well as knowledge between the

¹⁵ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/World.pdf>, access 21st February, 2008.

¹⁶ <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/254>, access 21st February, 2008.

¹⁷ <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/World.pdf>, access 21st February, 2008.

transnational spaces of the home and receiving countries. And if along with economic remittance, social remittance is also transferred, then the question demands answering what type of actors are involved there and whether this involvement has any reflection on their identities as well as lifestyles and “lifestyling”. We need to know moreover, why the current migrants engage themselves in diverse forms of transnational activities and whether these transnational activities only represent the co-ethnic networks of the migrants (something we notice in the case of the Mexican and Chinese Diaspora).

Consequently, we need to focus not only on migrants’ survival strategies, but also on their nature of embeddedness. In this context it is noteworthy to furthermore mention that not only do immigrants represent a very diverse micro and macro level socio-economic, political, environmental or geographical background, there are also lots of variations in the case of migration policy that ideally governs and manages the movement of people as well as their living and working conditions. The explorations of immigrants’ coping strategies and their nature of embeddedness are therefore significant in the context of development of the common people, who consider international migration as a common livelihood strategy and a way for upward mobility. At the same time, these types of research are necessary in order to form an appropriate migration policy where neither the context of globalization nor the very diverse socio-economic, political, geographical and environmental conditions of the immigrants and their social networks are ignored.

As a matter of fact, in obtaining sustainable development the formation of appropriate and contextual migration policy is necessary on the ground that both the emigrants and immigrants contribute greatly to the GDP of nation-states while at the same time through the flow of ideas, information and knowledge they ease the formation of human capital. Their contributions can be grasped in the forms of economic and social remittances as well as by evaluating their active participation in the industrial sectors of the host country. Regarding the contributions of migrants if we refer to recent data of the UN we may notice that for the year 2006, 0.7% of GDP is shown as officially recorded economic remittance (whereas the unofficial supply of remittance is actually believed to be larger than the above percentage of GDP).¹⁸

¹⁸<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/World.pdf>, access 21st February, 2008.

Bearing these questions and issues in mind this study intended to explore the survival strategies of Bangladeshi migrants in Peninsular Malaysia, who went there as temporary migrant workers. While doing this it also took into account their range and forms of embeddedness and the effect of these on the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora as well as their modes of networking, identity and culture. In fact, Bangladesh is presently 6th largest exporter of labour according to recent data of the UN.¹⁹ While there is a lot of research being done on the organizational structures and survival strategies of the Mexican²⁰, Indian²¹ and Chinese²² Diaspora regarding the Bangladeshi Diaspora these research initiatives are yet to be performed. In this context it is necessary to mention that currently, attaining economic solvency and a better future are the major causes among many that motivate Bangladeshis not unlike some other communities to migrate and consequently find ways of settling down in comparatively well-off countries, at least for a few years, while at the same time maintaining homeland contacts to fulfil transnational liabilities and also for business and professional purposes.

Under these circumstances, current study is an initiative to explore the embedded realities, organizational structure, modes of networking and other survival strategies of Bangladeshi migrants in the multi-cultural social setting of Peninsular Malaysia where they attempt to settle down and accumulate better fortunes and careers for themselves and for their intimate social networks. The question is if the host country Malaysia imposes a ban on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers how do they still continue living in the receiving country?²³ Do they depend only on co-ethnic networks for their survival and upward mobility? What are the structural factors that motivate Bangladeshis to become migrants in Peninsular Malaysia? Apart from the macro level factors are micro level issues that control the flow of migrants also relevant? After sojourning for a few years or finding ways for a better future do all of them decrease their homeland contacts? Do they represent a homogeneous organizational structure in the receiving country, something usually evidenced in ethnographies regarding the organizational structure of a diaspora?

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ They are counted as the citizens of the top one emigration country.

²¹ They are counted as the citizens of the top third emigration country.

²² They are counted as the citizens of the top fourth emigration country.

²³ The decision of importing Bangladeshi workers remains frozen for Peninsular Malaysia until 23rd of May, 2006.

In fact, reviewing the previous studies (Massey²⁴ 1987; Lomnitz²⁵ 1988; Boyd²⁶ 1989; Zhou²⁷ 1992; Nina Glick Schiller²⁸ et al. 1992; Katy Gardner²⁹ 1995, 2006; Portes³⁰ 1997; Glick Schiller³¹ et al. 2001; Bill Jordan³² et al. 2002; Dannecker³³ 2003, 2005; Peter Jackson³⁴ et al. 2004 etc. and so on) on migration and the coping strategies of the diaspora it was assumed that social networks play an important role for the likelihood of migration and diaspora adaptation.

The modes of networking, its contributions, consequences and micro and macro level embedded realities, therefore, were scrutinized during the field research to see whether networks support by guiding them, reducing their risks in the host countries, bearing their socio-cultural and psychological responsibilities as well as minimizing their costs of migration. Along with these, the nature of networking in the case of diaspora formation and integration were also explored, where migrants' integration and assimilation in the multi-cultural social setting of Peninsular Malaysia seemed to be regulated by the anti-integration migration policies of the host country (Pillai³⁵ 1992; Anja³⁶ 1996; Karim³⁷ et al. 1999; Jones³⁸ 2000; Zamir³⁹ 2006 etc. and so on). Consequently, the forthcoming chapters of this

²⁴ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. *Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico.*

²⁵ Larissa Adler Lomnitz. *American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 90, No. 1. March 1988. Informal Exchange Networks in Formal Systems: A Theoretical Model.*

²⁶ Boyd, Monica. 1989. *Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and New agendas.*

²⁷ Min Zhou. Temple University Press. 1992. *Chinatown. The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave.*

²⁸ Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (eds). 1992. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration. Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered.* The New York Academy of Sciences.

²⁹ Katy Gardner. 1995. Clarendon Press-Oxford. *Global Migrants, Local Lives.* See also Katy Gardner and Zahir Ahmed. 2006. *Place, Social Protection and Migration in Bangladesh: A Londoni Village in Biswanath.* Sussex Working Paper T 18.

³⁰ Alejandro Portes. 1997. *Globalization from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities.* WPTC-98-01. Princeton University.

³¹ Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouran. Duke University Press. 2001. *Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. Georges Woke up Laughing.*

³² Bill Jordon and Franck Duvell. 2002. *Irregular Migration. The Dilemmas of Transnational Mobility.* Edward Elgar Publishing limited, Cheltenham, UK. Northampton, MA, USA.

³³ Petra Dannecker. 2003. *The Meaning and the Rationalities underlying Labor Migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia.* See also Petra Dannecker. 2005. *Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia: The Construction of "Others" in a Multi-ethnic Context.*

³⁴ Peter Jackson, Philip Crang and Claire (ed). 2004. *Transnational Spaces.* Routledge.

³⁵ Patrick Pillai. 1992. *ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia.*

³⁶ Rudnick, Anja. 1996. *INSAN, Kuala Lumpur. Foreign Labors in Malaysian Manufacturing. Bangladeshi Workers in the Textile Industry.*

³⁷ AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar. Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd. 1999. *Foreign Workers in Malaysia. Issues and Implications.*

³⁸ Sidney Jones. 2000. *Making Money off Migrants. The Indonesian Exodus to Malaysia.*

³⁹ Zahid Zamir. 2006. *Migrant Workers' Contribution in Malaysian Economy.*

thesis will be comprised of an analysis and discussion on sojourners' embedded realities, complex coping mechanisms, survival strategies, the organizational structure of their diaspora as well as their integration and assimilation in the receiving country from the perspectives of social networking.

To check the hypothesis, which is that networking plays a significant role in diaspora adaptation and integration-- migrants' survival strategies and adaptation mechanisms were scrutinized through an intensive fieldwork and interview-survey of the Bangladeshi migrants of Peninsular Malaysia. The returned migrants, families, friends and neighbours of migrants in the home country, moreover, were taken into consideration to have insights and information.

However, during the ethnographic field study a kind of essentialism was noticed in the migration literature, where without exploring the modes of networking and its context, social networking was generally perceived as intra-ethnic and also cohesive. For example, if we refer to the ethnography of Zhou⁴⁰ we notice that manpower agents cum businessmen play roles as "transnational liaisons" between China and United States. There the relationship is explained as an instance of a classical patron client relationship. Albeit the would-be migrants need to purchase services of the manpower agents to see their dreams to be fulfilled as migrants in the United States, the relationship is still defined as an instance of patriarchal forms of the patron client relationship. The question is whether the ties can be perceived as morally articulated and kinship oriented when services are bought and sold on the basis of monetary transaction.

Though it is described in Zhou⁴¹ that migrants usually depend on co-ethnic networks to deal with their harsh embedded realities (such as anti-immigration policies in the United States) whether these embedded realities also shape the appearance and modes of networking is not fully explained.

⁴⁰ Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim. 2001. Formation, Consolidation and Diversification of the Ethnic Elite: The Case of the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United State, p. 236. See also Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim. 2006. The Paradox of Ethnicization and Assimilation: The Development of Ethnic Organizations in the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United States, p. 232, retrieved http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/zhou/pubs/Zhou_Kim_Paradox.pdf.

⁴¹ Min Zhou. Temple University Press. 1992. Chinatown. The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave, p-220-221.

For example, among the migrants those who possess the power to make hay for the other sojourners by assisting them to settle down in the receiving country in comparison to other migrants who do not have these capabilities actually demands investigation as does the question whether both of these groups obtain the same position and power in the networks. Whether these power differentiations within the community also reflect on the nature and strength of networks such as “strong tied”⁴² and “weakly tied”⁴³ relationships we also need to monitor. Or in other words Zhou’s study lacks explanation if apart from institutional embeddedness, networking is also regulated by the socio-economic power differentiations of the migrants. And if the answer is yes, then what are these realities and how do these factors control the nature of networking and what are the reflections of it upon the organizational structure of community? All these questions demand proper investigation through a thorough field research.

In the same way, in migration literature for example, in the writings of Massey⁴⁴, Boyd⁴⁵ or Dannecker⁴⁶ we notice explanations on why people migrate, how they migrate, whether transnational networks assist them to migrate, whether these migrants try to settle down and how this is regulated etc. and so on. What is missing in these studies, however, is any research on the term networking itself and its form. Instead, co-ethnic networking, whether it is host country based or transnational, is considered as a given fact.

But if the study is on migration and social networking, then one needs to explore how networking functions, what the relevant factors are that govern the modes and likelihood of networking, how it changes over time, whether it reflects the existing class, status, religion, gender, race, institution based differentiations. Also the consequence of networking regarding the organizational structure and culture of the community of origin and host country etc. and many other things must be explained. Therefore, Bangladeshi migrants’ modes of networking and the consequences of these on the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora are

⁴² Mark S. Granovetter. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. *AJS* volume 78, Number 6 and Mark S. Granovetter. 1983. The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. *Sociological Theory*, volume 1.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. *Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico.*

⁴⁵ Boyd, Monica. 1989. *Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and New agendas.*

⁴⁶ Petra Dannecker. 2003. *The Meaning and the Rationalities underlying Labor Migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia* See also Petra Dannecker. 2005. *Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia: The Construction of “Others” in a Multi-ethnic Context.*

given special preferences in this study. In doing so the literature (Granovetter⁴⁷ 1973, 1983, 1985; Portes⁴⁸ 1995; Guarnizo⁴⁹ et al. 1998; Kloosterman⁵⁰ et al. 1999, 2001; Steven Vertovec⁵¹ 2001 etc. and so on) that focus on the exploration of embeddedness and the reflection of it on the socio-economic and cultural activities of the actors is taken into account. Pursuing these approaches it was found that networks play roles as survival strategies and ways for higher socio-economic mobility for the migrants. They also possess different dimensions that are regulated by the then embedded realities of the migrants, however. As a result, along with the exploration of networking and the organizational structure of a diaspora, migrants' modes of embeddedness also need to be taken into consideration.

During the field research it was found that migrants belong to multi-dimensionally embedded realities, as, for example, within their own community they are embedded in ties of their "consanguine" and "affine" as well as fictive ties with their friends and neighbours (of which some are well-off and some are not). They also differ from each other on the basis of gender, religion, area of origin, educational attainment, legal status, occupation, probable expenditure, length of stay in the host country etc. and many other criteria. These different forms of relationships possess and also demand various forms of responsibilities, coherence, conflicts and competition that all reflect the nature of networks and other coping strategies. In the same way, along with their informal or ideological embeddedness, they are also affected by their intra and inter-ethnic neighbourhood, co-workers, well-off or powerful sojourners and employers in the host country on the one hand and on the other, the emigration and immigration policies of origin and host countries. To cope and to deal with these diverse realities migrants therefore depend on networks. In this context, they utilize their existing relationships and other forms of embeddedness to develop new ties and networks.

⁴⁷Mark S. Granovetter. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. *AJS* volume 78, Number 6 and Mark S. Granovetter. 1983. The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. *Sociological Theory*, volume 1. See also Mark Granovetter. 1985. The University of Chicago. *Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness*. *AJS* Volume 91 Number 3, p. 481-510.

⁴⁸ Alejandro Portes. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995. *The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship*.

⁴⁹ Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith. The Locations of Transnationalism, p- 6. In Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith (eds.) *Transnationalism From Below. Comparative Urban and Community Research*, V6-1998.

⁵⁰ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun and Jan Rath. 1999. Mixed Embeddedness: (In) formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23 (2). See also Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath. 2001. Immigrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies: mixed embeddedness further explored. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 27, No.2.

⁵¹ Steven Vertovec. *Transnational Social Formations: Towards Conceptual Cross-fertilization*. Paper presented at Workshop on "Transnational Migration: Comparative Perspectives", June 30-July 1, 2001, Princeton University.

These diverse patterns of networks and coping strategies on the one hand regulate the organizational structure of the community and on the other hand are in turn regulated or at the very least theoretically motivated by the ideal socio-cultural as well as “statistical-behavioural⁵²” and “perceptive”⁵³ models of the community. As a result, complex coping mechanisms (of the migrants) were noticed during the field visit that influenced macro and micro level socio-economic and cultural practices of the community in both origin and host countries. On the basis of these findings I therefore will discuss in the forthcoming chapters how intra, inter-ethnic and transnational networking were developed as the outcomes of their embedded realities and how they were utilized to enable the migrants to find a way of settlement and accumulate economic, social and cultural capital. Besides, the likelihood of the existence of a hybrid transnational identity, ‘quasi formal economic practices’ as well as hybrid or “creole”⁵⁴ culture within the migrants and their newly developed intra and inter-ethnic strong and weak ties, will be addressed in the next chapters.

Nonetheless, this research is an attempt to explore the socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of migration from the perspective of social networking. The migrants’ embedded realities are furthermore investigated in order to illuminate their coping strategies. This in-depth research is direly needed as apart from the social networking theory, there prevail at least four other major classical theories that address the issue of migration from different point of views. Consequently, whether or not it was possible to overlook the other theoretical outlooks while collecting data, we will find out later. In fact, to justify the theoretical position by raising questions such as ‘how do people live and survive in another country to meet their demands and what is the consequence of this in the context of the organizational structure of a diaspora at this age of globalization’ I think it would be wise to call attention to the objectives of this research and compare its position with those theories. So during the field research the objectives of the study were:

- To check sojourners’ causes of migration or in other words, ‘why do they migrate’.

⁵² Hans-Dieter Evers. Models of Social Systems: Loosely and Tightly Structured, p-115-127. In Hans-Dieter Evers (ed.). Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand In Comparative Perspective. Cultural Report Series No. 17/ Yale University/Southeast Asia Studies. 1969.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ulf Hannerz. WPTC-2K-02. Department of Social Anthropology. Stockholm University. Flows, Boundaries and Hybrids: Keywords in Transnational Anthropology.

- To find out the realities in which migrants are embedded in and develop strategies to cope and survive with. In other words, ‘local, national, transnational and global—within these levels where do they belong and how do they survive’
- To verify the roles, modes and regulators of networking for diaspora adaptation and its consequences. In other words, ‘how do they survive and find ways to fulfil their desires, how is networking shaped by their embedded realities and whether the organizational structure of Bangladeshi Diaspora and migrants’ survival strategies are also shaped along the lines of networking’.
- To know the nature of their transnational networking and activities, interactions with natives and other diasporas on the one hand and on the other, how these reflect on their concomitant survival strategies and shape the organizational structure of their diaspora. In other words ‘how do the migrants develop coping strategies in a foreign society, do they only maintain co-ethnic networks and whether at this age of globalization geographical distance from homeland also creates socio-cultural differences and changes within the migrants and their home-based kith and kin’.

Now if we revise different approaches on migration in a nut shell and relate or compare them to the objectives of the current study we see that most of the theories focus on only one aspect. Instead of taking into account the overall underlying causes of migration, the migrants’ complex coping mechanisms (which assists them to fulfil their objectives of migration) and the realities that are encountered by migrants in the transnational spaces of origin and receiving country most of these theories either emphasize the macro level structural factors or micro level issues. In the same way, we can discuss only the primordial aspects of migration that are explained as the facilitators of migration and diaspora adaptation. The question is whether feelings of “nostalgia”⁵⁵ towards home-based consanguine and affine and feelings of common country brotherhood on the basis of shared homeland, history and culture are enough to blend out the other realities, obstacles and diversities the migrants need to face when realizing their aims through international migration.

We need to answer, moreover, whether it is possible to dislocate or define migration as a phenomenon that is “disembedded” from the everyday local, national, transnational and global

⁵⁵ Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouran. Duke University Press. 2001. Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. Georges Woke up Laughing, p- 263-265.

realities. In fact, at this “age of migration”⁵⁶ modern ICT not only nurtures the continuous flow of money, migrants, commodities, ideas, information and knowledge within (micro-macro) and outside different countries (transnational and global), but also assists migrants and their networks to remain simultaneously connected with more than two or three countries. And this is exactly how, being concurrently regulated by their transnational networks, migrants take part in their families’ decision making process and also motivate them in their daily lifestyles and “lifestyling”⁵⁷. This study attempts to explore these multi-dimensionally embedded realities and the coping strategies that will be discussed in detail in the next chapters. Beforehand let us concentrate on the following discussion about existing theories on migration that may assist us to know what the significance of this study is since there already exist countless literature on migration.

As a matter of fact, alongside the social networking theory we find at least four other explanations of the term migration. For example, in the World Systems theory⁵⁸ international migration is explained as a by-product of capitalist market expansion into pre-market and non-market societies. It has been argued that the structural transformations as well as displacements occur in the field of social, economic and political sectors of pre-market or non-market societies as a result of global capitalism. Consequently, the traditional livelihood, peasant economy or “command economy” of these countries is changed by capitalist expansion and people therefore try to find new ways of livelihood. It is argued that people from poor countries are thus motivated by push factors resulting from global capitalism and attempt to find jobs and progress through migrating to the well-off countries. Taking into account these arguments of push-pull factors a question was raised during the interview. I basically asked why respondents migrated to Malaysia. At the same time a lot of literature was also scrutinized to find out how Bangladesh became a labour sending country and Malaysia a labour receiving country.

Through the field study and literature reviews (Chatterjee⁵⁹ 1993; Siddiqui⁶⁰ 2005; Gardner⁶¹ 2006 and so on) it was found that along with the macro level socio-economic, cultural and

⁵⁶ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller. 1993. The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1993. The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World.

⁵⁷ Solvay Gerke. 2000. Global Lifestyles under Local Conditions: the New Indonesian Middle Class, p- 137, in Chua Beng Huat (ed.), Consumption in Asia. London: Routledge.

⁵⁸ Saskia Sassen. 1988. The Mobility of Labor and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁹ Partha Chatterjee. 1993. Oxford University Press. The Nation and Its Fragments.

political transformations that resulted from British colonial capitalist expansion in the then Indian Sub-continent,⁶² there were other causes like forced migration (created by the colonial rulers), the liberation war of 1971, political and environmental catastrophes, poverty and many other factors that converted Bangladesh into a labour sending country. Malaysia, on the other hand, not only imports workers from different countries, but also contributes to other countries' economy as a labour sending country. Studies already conducted on Malaysian foreign workers and the country's industrial development often apply the notions of Segmented Labour Market theory⁶³ in explaining the causes of why this country depends on immigrant workers mainly for its so-called "3-D"⁶⁴ jobs.

It is posited that the booming economy of the country that was expedited by the then British colonial authority creates job bifurcation. In this context cheaper migrant workers are needed to fill up those posts that are neglected by the natives because of poor salary and also due to its labour-intensive characteristics. Since the natives show reluctance to take up these types of jobs, the authorities of the host country therefore gradually develop migration policy and a formal recruitment system of immigrant workers. Apart from industrial development, scholars also argue that the geographical location of the country at the junctions of Southeast Asia has increased migrants' scope to immigrate into the country either as travellers or as traders (Pillai 1992)⁶⁵.

However, in what context and since when Bangladesh has become a labour sending country for Malaysia, whether the geographical characteristics of the country assist Bangladeshis to enter via clandestine ways as well as the pull factors that prevail in Malaysia, will be discussed in detail in chapter two and three. Instead, let us now find out whether these macro level structural factors were the only cause for Bangladeshi migrants' migration to Malaysia

⁶⁰Tasneem Siddiqui. The University Press Limited. 2005. Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices.

⁶¹ Katy Gardner and Zahir Ahmed. 2006. Place, Social Protection and Migration in Bangladesh: A Londoni Village in Biswanath. Sussex Working Paper.

⁶² At that time Bangladesh was one of the parts of Indian Sub-continent. Instead of Bangladesh, the name of this area was Bengal.

⁶³ Michael J. Piore. 1979. Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Society. New York. Cambridge University Press.

⁶⁴ The term 3-D job mainly refers to the difficult, dangerous and dirty jobs. In explaining the situation of migrant workers in Malaysia, scholars, such as Sidney Jones (2000) applies this term. For in detail discussion, find Sidney Jones. 2000. Making Money off Migrants. The Indonesian Exodus to Malaysia. Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies. University of Wollongong.

⁶⁵ Patrick Pillai. 1992. ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia, p-1.

(as temporary workers) where they tried to find better lives for themselves and their consanguine and affine.

In fact, to find an answer to this question it was needed to verify where these migrants actually belonged and whether there were micro level factors that also converted into their embedded realities or causes for migration. In fact, if the macro level structural causes were the only regulators of migration, then the question arose why there were some home-based remainders when their neighbours, friends and family members had left the homeland to accumulate economic and cultural capital in other countries. And even in the host country they attempted to achieve higher socio-economic mobility through lengthening their duration of stay. We need to know whether the macro level structural aspects are perceived in a homogeneous way by the heterogeneous bodies of migrants on the one hand and on the other, whether the causes and capabilities of migration are the same irrespective of their class, status, gender, age or religious identity. To find answers to these questions a detailed and intensive field study was conducted both in the origin and receiving country. Said study enabled this author to grasp the multi-dimensionally embedded realities of the migrants. In doing this I encountered two major questions that are actually raised in Neo-Classical Economic and New Economics of Labour Migration theories. It is noteworthy that each of the questions are disconnectedly explained or raised within these theories (which are found as partial realities in the case of the Bangladeshi Diaspora).

For example, in Neo-Classical Economic theory⁶⁶ migration is explained highlighting the wage differences. In this case it is argued that people from developing countries will normally decide to go to urban areas or try to migrate to the rising international labour markets if the wage gap between these sectors goes beyond the costs of movement from origin to host area. Even though there is insecurity and a low chance of obtaining job in the new areas they will still migrate on the ground that multiplied by the high incomes in the receiving areas their low employment probability will be minimized and they will anticipate higher incomes than those of them that remain in the rural areas or origin country. People are thus identified as rational human beings because they have made their decision calculating the economic profit and migrated from the previous area where incomes and employment were both low.

⁶⁶ Todaro, M. P. 1976. Internal Migration in Developing Countries: A Review of Theory, Evidence, Methodology and Research Priorities. *International Labour Office, Geneva*.

Though wage differentiations between Bangladesh and Malaysia were found to be a significant factor they were nevertheless not the only one determinant. In fact, apart from semi-skilled and un-skilled workers also university teachers, businessmen and students travelled to Malaysia. Though in the first case un-employment or under-employment were the causes for migration, in the latter accumulation of a better professional career and cultural capital were one of the major causes along with economic rationality. Besides, their decision of migrating to Malaysia was not taken individually. Instead it was a household decision. In this case along with economic reality there were other significant causes like competition with neighbours, accumulation of higher social status and pride through migration, changing pattern of lifestyles etc. that motivated the households to support their migration (even by selling their arable lands or borrowing money from strong tied networks). And for the female migrants the decision to migrate was evaluated by the so-called cultural construction of gender and religious ideology. Regarding this how these female migrants managed to migrate, whether their households supported their migration or the females decided to do so on their own will be discussed in further detail in the next chapters. Before that let us see in what way migrants' households took part in their migration and whether there exists any difference with the explanation given under the New Economics of Labour Migration theory⁶⁷.

The New Economics of Labour Migration theory states that wage gaps are not the only factor for international migration. Instead this is merely one of the household coping strategies in the structurally transforming countries. In these countries, so describes the theory, the very diverse urban sector often changes its characteristics and as a result, already displaced people cannot consider rural-urban migration as their only option for survival. It is shown that households will choose temporary migration instead of permanent settlement to well-off countries to cope with market failures. Failing to adjust to the new consumer tastes that have arisen through capitalist expansion and also in order to cope with different kinds of risks like unemployment, lack of insurance or crop failure because of the application of new technology etc. households will diversify their coping strategies. Consequently some of the members will be sent to urban areas, while others are to foreign countries bearing in mind that they thereby contribute to the household budget through remittance transfers.

Regarding the Bangladeshi Diaspora though it is found that migrants' movement to Peninsular Malaysia was supported by their families, it is not likely that all members had the same

⁶⁷ Stark, O. 1991. *The Migration of Labour*. Blackwell. Cambridge.

opinion of migration. For example, often the father or the eldest son of the family had to leave for Malaysia because their wives or parents wanted them to do so, though actually they themselves did not want to go to Malaysia. Some of them selected other countries for migration, but were unable to move due to lack of networks and economic capabilities. Some of them even decided to migrate in order to achieve higher social status, a better professional career or to gain cultural capital within their surroundings of kith and kin. For them the accumulation of cultural capital was the main reason for migration, instead of economic capital. And in the case of female migrants, neither economic capital nor cultural capital was the regulator, instead they had to cope with as well as bypass the gendered and religious ideology of their living and working surroundings in this context.

Or in other words, the decision of Bangladeshi migrants' migration was not only regulated by their "relational embeddedness"⁶⁸ within their house-based strong tied networks, but were also guided and regulated strictly by their "structural embeddedness"⁶⁹ with their neighbours, labour brokers and formal and informal institutions. In the same way, after sojourning to a foreign country how these migrants cope, what types of survival strategies are followed and even, how their decision of temporary migration is changed towards permanent settlement due to the accumulation of knowledge and new networks is neither discussed nor found in the New Economics of Labour Migration theory. Consequently, this study overlooks this theoretical approach and opts for a social networking theory. There the later approach is also critically evaluated in pursuit of the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora, the migrants' embedded realities and their survival strategies. And in the context of newly found knowledge on diaspora adaptation, their embeddedness and organizational structure this study is an initiative to re-evaluate the existing boundary concepts of social science (which will be gradually clarified in the forthcoming chapters). Therefore, the concomitant chapters of this book and the contents will be:

The **second chapter** will consist of an analysis of those macro level structural factors of origin and receiving country that motivate Bangladeshis to migrate into Malaysia. Along with the nature of industrial development, migration policy as well as the situation of multi-cultural politics of the host country, we will discuss how and in what context Bangladesh has become

⁶⁸ Alejandro Portes. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995. *The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship*, p- 6.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

a labour sending country (to Malaysia). What are the regulators that control the flow of migrants there? Since when has the official flow of migrants been taking place? Finally, whether or not do informal ways of migration remain in this context?

The **third chapter** of the thesis will be made up of a discussion on the micro and macro level embedded realities of the migrants and the nature of their coping strategies. I will check whether migrants depend on networking as one of their coping strategies and if so what its regulators are. I will try to verify, moreover, whether migrants are only embedded in the micro and macro level realities of the host country or if they are also embedded in transnational realities. How these different forms of realities create a very complex form of embeddedness, what these actually are and in what ways these are dealt with (by the migrants) will also be the contents of this chapter.

The **fourth chapter** focuses on a discussion on the diverse forms of networking, its embeddedness and consequences in the context of the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora. Regarding this, migrants' everyday realities in the host country, adaptation processes such as the formation of new networks or maintenance of old ties, utilization of knowledge and the reflection of it on the organizational structure of the diaspora will be the main focus.

The **fifth chapter** will be arranged by focusing on migrants' nature of transnational networking and the practices that are guided and regulated by their multi-dimensionally embedded realities. I will find out if at this age of globalization it is possible to maintain only co-ethnic networks and an authentic culture. Along with this I will discuss how migrants' interactions with natives and other diasporas reflect on their coping strategies and the outcomes of these on their organizational structure and culture. Discussing the transnational activities and networks of migrants will also assist us to assess the impact of migration on the migrants' home-based close and distant social networks.

The **sixth chapter** will be the conclusion of this book. There we will find directions on how we can conceptualize the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora, the migrants' embedded realities and coping strategies at this age of globalization. In this context I will argue whether the existing notions on embeddedness, networking, authentic culture and organizational structure of diaspora are appropriate to analyze the organizational structure of

the Bangladeshi Diaspora, the migrants' complex coping mechanisms and the consequences. The discussion, I think, will be fruitful for upcoming works where the organizational structure of diaspora and migrants' adaptation processes will be explored from the perspective of social networking.

Chapter Two

Globalization, Industrial Development and the Structural Background of Bangladesh and Malaysia

1. Introduction

Referring to the wide range of probabilities and realities related to migration, Castles and Miller⁷⁰ predicted that the “last decade of the twentieth century and the first of the twenty-first will be the age of migration”. They argued that in many ways these movements are related to the macro level socio-economic, political and environmental hazards, changes, restraints and turmoil. Upheavals in the ex-Soviet Bloc, the Gulf War, environmental catastrophes as well as wars and other crises in Africa, the booming economy of Asia, the Intifada of the Palestinians, increasing economic and political cohesion (“integration”) in Western Europe, “unstable and debt-plagued democracies in Latin America” etc. were set forth as instances that were directly connected to the new types of international migration and refugee movement. Along with the new patterns of international migration and its effects, they also explained the causes of rural-urban migration. They explored how the instances of mass movement created various socio-economic and political outcomes or exaggerated the (existing) tensions both in the micro and macro level. For example, the refugee outflow from Burma to Bangladesh is depicted as a severe strain on a country like Bangladesh that is already suffering from acute poverty.

In fact, if we consider existing writings on large scale population movements from different parts of the world, for example Zhou⁷¹'s writings on the Chinese Diaspora in the United States, Glick Schiller and Eugene Fouran's⁷² ethnographic work on the Haitian Diaspora in the United States or the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Malaysia as quoted in Zamir⁷³, we may conclude that normally, people migrate to find jobs, higher socio-economic status or safer homes - when these are not present in their home country. Migration may take different forms, for example, a person may migrate as a blue-collar labourer, skilled professional,

⁷⁰ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller. The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1993. *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*, p- 2.

⁷¹ Min Zhou. Temple University Press. 1992. *ChinaTown. The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*, p-18-19.

⁷² Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouran. Duke University Press. 2001. *Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. Georges Woke up Laughing*, p-1-4.

⁷³ Zahid Zamir. Cosmic Publishers. 2006. *Migrant Workers' Contributions in Malaysian Economy*, p- 1-5.

entrepreneur, or as family member. Furthermore migrants often also live outside their country of origin as refugees. Apart from the broader socio-economic, political and environmental factors, migration policy also plays crucial roles. As a matter of fact, depending on the institutional frameworks on immigration and emigration, sojourners sometimes get opportunities for migration along with their families and in other cases, without their family members. While in some countries, both male and female migration is encouraged there are also countries like Bangladesh, where female migration in some sectors is strictly restricted by the emigration policy⁷⁴. In the same way, ideally, peoples' permanent settlement and integration into a foreign country is supposed to be determined by the respective migration policy.

However, although macro level institutional frameworks for the regulation of migratory movement exist, common people's social networks are still considered as significant role players with regards to transnational migration, assimilation as well as adaptation into a new country. In this context, if we refer to the ethnographic examples of this study, we may notice that migrants' lives are regulated not only by the macro level institutional as well as socio-economic and political frameworks of both origin and host countries, but also by the broader "structural"⁷⁵ and "relational embeddedness"⁷⁶ (of migrants). Thus they try to negotiate and cope with the existing situation. Let us take a deeper look at the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Malaysia in this context. There, by functioning as "strong ties" their intimate intra ethnic social networks enable the Bangladeshis to migrate as they provided monetary and moral support. Meanwhile the weak tied networks help them with connections or in general assist them directly for migratory purposes - all in a time when un-skilled and semi-skilled workers' immigration to Malaysia is officially forbidden for Bangladeshis. In the same way, utilizing inter-ethnic social networks of varying strength (strong and weak ties), migrants develop ethnic enterprises or try to find their way to integrate and assimilate into the receiving society, though it is not allowed for the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers.

Consequently, the presence of Bangladeshis in the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia is not only noteworthy for economic contributions, but also from the perspective of ethnic and religious balance in the multi-ethnic context of the host country it demands a proper and

⁷⁴ 'Presidential Order 1981' in Tasneem Siddiqui, 2001.

⁷⁵ Alejandro Portes. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995. *The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship*, p- 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

thorough investigation. Moreover, the effect of migration both in the micro (within the families and neighbours of the migrants) and macro level socio-economic development of the origin country is also taken into account in this study.

Depending on an improved communication system on the one hand poor migrants maintain trans-boundary networks with their families and thus help them to survive, while on the other well-off merchants maintain the same system for their transnational ethnic entrepreneurship and manpower business. Here in this context, we may obviously cite that both the micro level's individuals' life and macro level's socio-economic, political, cultural and institutional frameworks of origin and host countries are influenced and shifted by international migration. As in the forthcoming chapters we will find elaborate discussions on the micro and macro level outcomes of migration, here in the current chapter, we will therefore only focus on the macro level structural aspects. The discussion will explore (1) in what context Malaysia is converting into a labour receiving country and (2) Bangladesh on the other hand is becoming a labour exporting country. Additionally, (3) this discussion will also shed light on how Malaysia's multi-ethnic social setting is controlled and influenced by the country's historical experiences of migration (both documented and undocumented) and their settlement pattern (s).

As a matter of fact, it is now known to us that like in other countries, international labour migration is an old and common phenomenon both for Malaysia and Bangladesh that has intensified during the ongoing era of globalization due to improved technological and communications systems. While on the one hand, the process of rapid industrialization and the consequently booming economy of the host country create demand for the importation of cheap labour from different countries, both poor and well-off Bangladeshis on the other hand consider migration as a viable livelihood strategy. Hence in the next section I shall at first focus on the structural backgrounds of Bangladesh (home land) that motivate its people to migrate to a foreign country (for higher socio-economic mobility). Afterwards I shall discuss the situation in Malaysia.

2. Bangladesh as a Labour Exporting Country

Bangladesh lies in the north eastern part of South Asia. The size of the country is about 147,570 sq. K.M⁷⁷ and the total population is 123.85 million⁷⁸ (enumerated). The country contains the eighth largest population of the world. The population density is also acknowledged to be one of the highest worldwide - only city-states such as Singapore and Hong Kong are comparable to the Bangladeshi situation.⁷⁹ In comparison to its scarce resources, Bangladesh has such a large quantity of surplus labourers, that it makes it next to impossible for many Bangladeshis to secure a livelihood inside the country. The country is often identified as one of the poorest and least developed countries of the world with a per capita income of US\$ 235.⁸⁰

High population density, limited resources, low rate of economic development, high unemployment rate, malnutrition, high illiteracy, frequently recurring natural disasters like floods, cyclones, droughts, heavy dependence on foreign aid as well as political turmoil⁸¹ etc. are often described as the common characteristics of this country. Said characteristics motivate Bangladesh's citizens to move to another country in pursuit of a better life, career and future. Amongst other things, environmental degradation, poor infrastructural conditions and unsuitable involvement of population in the fertilizer market are considered as the causes of the comparatively slow growth rate.⁸² Apart from that poor savings and low investment rate are also viewed as the underlying causes of Bangladesh's dire situation and subsequent heavy dependency on foreign aid.⁸³

In fact, failing to secure their livelihood inside the country, Bangladeshis started to migrate to other countries even before the country's independence in 1971.⁸⁴ It has been argued by migrants and also quoted in different relevant articles that whenever the population rises to such a Malthusian extent, i.e. one that does not allow the maintenance of a healthy livelihood,

⁷⁷ Population Census 2001. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (published July 2003), p- xvii.

⁷⁸ Ibid: p- xviii.

⁷⁹ Tasneem Siddiqui. The University Press Limited. 2005. Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices, p- 72.

⁸⁰ Zahid Zamir. Cosmic Publishers. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contributions in Malaysian Economy, p- 1.

⁸¹ According to Siddiqui (2005, p- 72), "Within a few years of independence, the country experienced authoritarian rule, first civilian in nature and later followed by military control."

⁸² Asian Development Outlook 1996 & 1997.

⁸³ Zahid Zamir. Cosmic Publishers. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contributions in Malaysian Economy, p- 1.

⁸⁴ Abdul- Rashid Abdul -Aziz. Asia Pacific Population Journal, Vol 16, No 1, March 2001 Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia's Construction Sector, p-6.

people migrate elsewhere. For example, as quoted in Siddiqui, even nowadays both rich and poor Bangladeshis engage in migration as a livelihood strategy⁸⁵.

However, it is worth mentioning that apart from voluntary labour migration, this country also experienced forced migration. As a matter of fact, present day Bangladesh and the historic Bengal both have hundreds of years of migration experiences.⁸⁶ In the seventeenth century upon its return to Britain the East India Company mentioned being accompanied by Bengali servants. The recruitment of Indian sailors on British ships that were usually harboured in Calcutta likewise took place at this time. Gardner describes that by the late eighteenth century there were complaints on the ground that “lascars” (Indian sailors) did not get enough wage in comparison to the British sailors and were forced to do the most unlovable duties.⁸⁷ Though sailors were recruited from all over East Bengal, most of them nevertheless came mainly from Chittagong, Noakhali, and Sylhet.⁸⁸ It is often argued by the Experts that most of these migrants became settlers in the host countries and should therefore be seen as the pioneers of present day’s migrants. Assisted by the already established social networks, nowadays Bangladeshis tend to go to England not only to work, but also to study.⁸⁹ Moreover, family reunification is also a not so uncommon reason for migration.

During the last few decades, the present form of short term international labour migration has intensified within Asia. Throughout the 1970s in order to mitigate the labour needs of Middle Eastern countries temporary labour migration policies were initiated. Later, by the early 1980s such type of migration continued due to labour demand from the newly industrialized countries of East and South-East Asia. According to BMET⁹⁰ that in the Middle Eastern, East and South-East Asian countries four categories of migrant such as professional, skilled, semi-skilled, and un-skilled workers are employed. The professional category is comprised of doctors, engineers, nurses and teachers. Into the skilled category fall workers employed in manufacturing and garment sectors as well as drivers, computer operators and electricians.

⁸⁵ Tasneem Siddiqui. The University Press Limited. 2005. Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices, p-71.

⁸⁶ Visram 1986, described in Katy Gardner.1995. Clarendon Press-Oxford. Global Migrants, Local Lives. p- 36.

⁸⁷ Ibid: p-35.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Katy Gardner and Zahir Ahmed. 2006. Place, Social Protection and Migration in Bangladesh: A Londoni Village in Biswanath. Sussex Working Paper T 18, p-8-9.

⁹⁰ Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training.

Whilst tailors and masons are defined as semi-skilled workers, housemaids, cleaners and labourers are classified as un-skilled workers.

As data collected from BMET clearly indicates most of the migrant workers are males. Said data states that from 1991 to 1999 a grand total of 2,082,270 employees migrated overseas; a mere 13,544 out of which were women.⁹¹ This situation more or less resembles the circumstances of the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia, which will be described in detail in chapter three. Regarding this low figure of female migration, the study has noticed the reflection of gendered ideology within the migration policy of the origin country. Furthermore, on the individual level, among migrants and their families a tendency to hide information concerning their female relatives' migration has been noticed during the data collection. In fact, though a high socio-cultural appreciation is attributed to male migration, in female migration the opposite is true. This should be seen as an example of the gendered ideology, where the male is considered as the bread earner while the women's position and role models are constructed inside the household and thereby within the country.

Even though we see an insignificant official figure of female migration the total number of migrant workers and their contribution to the national economy is highly emphasized in the national data base and in different literature.⁹² According to BMET and BAIRA⁹³ data, from 1976 till present Bangladeshi workers have been employed as professionals, skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled migrant workers primarily in twenty two⁹⁴ different countries as well as a few others.⁹⁵ Whilst for 1976 the total number of migrants was described as 6087 and their remittance amounted to US\$ 23.71 million, for the year 2007 (up to June) the total number of migrants was 335098 and their amount of transferred remittance was US\$ 2043.90 million (April 2007)⁹⁶.

However, these statistical figures only indicate official sources of remittance and documented means of migration. This study (among migrants in Peninsular Malaysia and their families in

⁹¹ Tasneem Siddiqui. The University Press Limited. 2005. Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices, p- 82.

⁹² Tom de Bruyn and Umbareen Kuddus. IOM. No. 18. 2005. Dynamics of Remittance Utilization in Bangladesh, p- 40. See also Siddiqui (2005), p- 84.

⁹³ Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies.

⁹⁴ The name of these twenty two countries are, K.S.A, Kuwait, U.A.E, Qatar, Iraq, Libya, Bahrain, Oman, Malaysia, Korea (S), Singapore, Brunei, Jordan, Ireland, UK, Laos, Mauritius, Italy, Spain, Madagascar, Lebanon and Namibia.

⁹⁵ Please find appendix 2.

⁹⁶ Remittance probationary figure April 2007 from Bangladesh Bank.

Bangladesh as well as within the community of returned migrants) has clearly shown us that apart from travelling as documented workers, migrants also leave the country as tourists and students. Moreover, based on their structural embeddedness within so called “coyote” groups⁹⁷ or in other words, manpower agents and labour brokers, they migrate through clandestine ways and on “*PC passport*”⁹⁸ (“*gala kata passport*” in Bengali language). In the same way, most of the un-skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers rely on their weak ties (manpower agents cum entrepreneurs) for transferring remittance back to home countries instead of depending on a professional banking system. For example in a survey among 150 sample respondents of Peninsular Malaysia, 76.4% confirmed that they sent money through a “*hundy*” system, while 13.9% used May bank (a Malaysian bank) for that purpose and the rest (9.7%) the Agrani remittance bank (a branch of a Bangladeshi public bank, established in Kotaraya, ‘Bangla Bazaar’). In this context it is quite interesting to note that the ways of remittance transfer to home country vary significantly according to class, status, gender and educational backgrounds of the migrants (that will be discussed in chapter three and five). Therefore, the official statement on the amount of remittance and the number of total migrants can be identified as partial⁹⁹.

Or in other words, we need to consider both official and unofficial channels of migration and the corresponding remittance flow if we want to have a proper idea of the contributions of migration to the national economy. In the same way, to grasp the likelihood of its (migration) potentiality as a probable survival strategy and a way of upward mobility (for the migrants and their families), a comprehensive understanding of the actual ways of migration, remittance transfer as well as other modes of correspondences among the migrants and their embedded networks of origin and host countries is necessary (as well).

The potentiality was also tested in Siddiqui¹⁰⁰’s arguments and against the BMET data to know whether over time the flow of remittance and other means of transnational contacts changed or remained intact. For example, referring to the BMET data on the total number of

⁹⁷ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico, p- 278.

⁹⁸ The word ‘PC’ refers to photo changing. Consequently, PC passport means changing of photo of the original person. In fact, buying another person’s passport that has few months’ visa the middleman replaces the original photo with the new customer’s one. Accordingly, along with photo all other things are changed. His customer’s address is replaced with another person’s credentials.

⁹⁹ Please find appendix 2.

¹⁰⁰ Tasneem Siddiqui. The University Press Limited. 2005. Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices, p- 79.

migrant workers and their transferred amount of remittance Siddiqui has mentioned that even though we may see a stable flow of short-term migrants since 1976 we can nevertheless find a distinct degradation of this type of migration over the last few years. It was argued that in 1999, the number of migrants were 268,182 that decreased in the next year towards 222,686 and in 2001 to 188,965¹⁰¹. In order to find the causes of this reduction Siddiqui focused on the high costs of migration and the competition with other sending countries. Finally in addition to these points we must also consider the issue of ban in Malaysia that was imposed on the immigration of Bangladeshi workers after the 1997 financial crisis¹⁰².

Moreover, as Siddiqui states,¹⁰³ the flow of remittance does not necessarily increase proportionate to the total number of migrants. She showed that in 1994 the growth rate of overseas emigration was 23.79%, even though for that time the remittance increased only by 14.31%. In the same way, she provided other years' examples of poor growth rate of remittance in comparison to the number of migrants. She also identified some underlying causes of that. These are firstly the basic necessity that for the first few initial years migrants need to spend money in order to settle down into the receiving country, secondly the trend that now-a-days low-paid semi-skilled and un-skilled migrants are employed abroad, while highly-paid skilled workers and professionals previously used to migrate overseas in increasing numbers and thirdly the decrease of migrants' wages paid by the receiving country in the past few decades.

Though the above points are relevant with respect to migrant Bangladeshis this study nonetheless indicates that migrants' length of stay in the respective receiving country and its contribution to the integration and assimilation are significant factors. It is noteworthy that the amount of remittance transferred to home country decreases over time, even though one might assume the opposite. In fact, ideally we may postulate that the amount of remittance should increase according to their duration of stay in the receiving country, since their extended stay and subsequently increased assets (knowledge and networks) would assist them to earn more.

¹⁰¹ Please find appendix 2.

¹⁰² See Lian Kwen Fee and Md Mizanur Rahaman. 2006. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, Vol. 21, No.1. International Labour Recruitment: Channelling Bangladeshi Labour to East and South-East Asia, p- 93. According to the authors that in 1997 a ban was imposed on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers for the upcoming years due to the large inflow of undocumented Bangladeshi migrants into the country. Their attempt to develop marital relationship with the locals was also identified as one of the causes (of that). However, in this context we may assume that the bar was applied to protect locals from conducting inter-ethnic marriages with the Bangladeshi un-skilled and semi-skilled workers.

¹⁰³ Tasneem Siddiqui. The University Press Limited. 2005. *Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices*, p- 84.

In fact the opposite has proven true. The result of the study, derived from the Pearson correlation coefficient, is -.130, meaning there is a **negative correlation** between the above variables. In consequence I conclude that higher numbers of resident years translate into lower the amounts of remittance.

Moreover there exist clear indications that the longer they live as migrants, the more they integrate and assimilate into the receiving society. Consequently migrants engaged in inter-ethnic marriages utilizing (their) contacts and amicable relations, do not send money home regularly due to their newly developed strong ties to the host society. Rather, they phone or email their friends sporadically or infrequently visit them. These social calls vary according to their class, status, gender and power (capabilities). Also migrants that are already (intra-ethnically) married but live without their family members due to immigration rules in the receiving country, do transfer money to their family and close associates, but not in any way the amount, they would be supposed to according to their income. It was described by migrants that whenever they had learned enough survival strategies and developed enough networks to be upwardly mobile, they tended to spend money there on the spot, instead of sending the total amount to their home country. They considered it an investment into the future that might help them to gradually integrate into the receiving country or travel to another country for a better job. According to Yunus (one of the respondents of this study),

“If I spend RM five for local friends or any other well-wishers, I can earn RM twenty. They will help me in this regard. I, therefore, invite them to my house or to visit Kotaraya if I have time.”

Under these circumstances what is the actual pattern of the communal organizational structure, how do the respondents survive and maintain their immigrant lifestyles and does Bangladeshi culture take on a hybrid pattern because of the multi-ethnic social context of Malaysia? These questions demand further analysis. We will discuss these in the next chapters. Before we do so however, let us first explore the structural background of Malaysia, where Bangladeshi migrants engage in a sojourned life in order to construct a better future for themselves and their families.

3. Malaysia as a Labour Receiving Country

From the above discussion we may conclude that Malaysia is one of the labour receiving countries, to which Bangladeshis go to as temporary migrant workers. Hence, in this section we will explore the context of Malaysia as a labour receiving country, although it is a labour sending country. We can extrapolate this from the framework of international labour migration where some countries identify themselves as labour sending countries like Bangladesh, while others view themselves as labour receiving or both, as in the case of Malaysia. Several articles on migration indicate that a substantial flow of Malaysian migration to the Middle East and then to East Asian countries in the 1970s took place. For example, it is depicted in APMRN¹⁰⁴ that approximately 200,000 Malaysians are presently working in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore.¹⁰⁵

If we again focus on the milieu of Malaysia's labour importation as well as the diverse ways and causes of in-migration from neighbouring countries, we can see that both the geographical location and the booming economy of the country have contributed heavily to this effect. The geographical setting of the country at the junction of Southeast Asia has widened scope of people entering the country either as travellers or as traders (Pillai 1992)¹⁰⁶. Also, this urgency for the importation of cheap labour from different countries, especially from the Asian region can be seen as the outcome of three major factors, such as: (a) speedy industrialization, (b) local people's reluctance concerning labour-intensive jobs and (c) the rise of the middle class and its heightened demand for domestic workers.

As a matter of fact, Malaysia's last two decades of economic boom through rapid industrialization has boosted labour immigration from different countries. By bringing in workers from fifteen (15) different countries¹⁰⁷ in various employment sectors it has been converted into one of the major destinations for immigrants. Among them workers from Indonesia comprise the largest number (65.9%), followed by Nepal (10.9%) and India

¹⁰⁴ APMRN refers to 'Asia Pacific Migration Research Network'.

¹⁰⁵ Find Migration Issues in the Asia Pacific. 'Issues Paper from the Malaysia' at <http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnw9.htm>, access 13th September 13, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Patrick Pillai. 1992. ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia, p-1.

¹⁰⁷ In K. Somasundram's article Special session on "Refugee protection in today's complex migratory setting", Malaysian Trade Union Congress. This data is also published by MFA (Migrant Forum in Asia) in a paper named *Migrants and Rights in Malaysia*. Retrieved 21 July 2006. <http://www.mfasia.org>.

(7.56%)¹⁰⁸. Other sending countries are Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, China and Philippines. Migrants from Iran, Cambodia, Singapore, Nigeria, Peru, Taiwan, Congo, and Uzbekistan are also not uncommon in Malaysia.¹⁰⁹ The findings from the secondary data suggest that the highest numbers of foreign workers are employed in the manufacturing sector (32.4%), while the second largest amount find jobs in the plantation sector 22%, followed by domestic services 17.5% and construction work 15.5%¹¹⁰. At present, the number of registered migrant workers in Malaysia is 1.8 million, increased from previous years' (July 2005) figure, which was 1.6 million.¹¹¹ The presence of a similar number of unregistered workers is estimated in a government report (MFA).¹¹² According to that estimate, out of the 10.5 million strong labour forces, 2.6 million are foreign workers.

Therefore, we may notice that international labour migration is a very old phenomenon in Malaysia. The multi-ethnic composition of the country has been influenced greatly by the immigration processes of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Capitalistic enterprises and the accompanying demand for infrastructure required a large number of workers. This was further stimulated by the British colonial authority. Upon noticing the unreliability of the locals regarding wage labour, the colonial rulers encouraged the entry of foreign labourers from many different countries such as China, India and Indonesia¹¹³. This inflow enabled them to accommodate the massive demand for labour. However, in order to control the amalgamations of migrants and local people, a kind of "divide and rule" policy was introduced by the colonial authority --- on the basis of class, generation, work, geographic location, ethnicity etc. Consequently, the immigrant workers became separated from each other and from the indigenous population and this of course facilitated the multicultural politics among population.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁸ 500,000 still here illegally. Nation N29. March 17 2006.

¹⁰⁹ In K. Somasundram's article Special session on "Refugee protection in today's complex migratory setting", Malaysian Trade Union Congress. This data is also published by MFA (Migrant Forum in Asia) in a paper named Migrants and Rights in Malaysia. Retrieved 21 July 2006. <http://www.mfasia.org> .

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² MFA (Migrant Forum in Asia), Migrants and Rights in Malaysia. Retrieved 21 July 2006. <http://www.mfasia.org> .

¹¹³ AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar. Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd. 1999. Foreign Workers in Malaysia. Issues and Implications, p- 10.

¹¹⁴ Patrick Pillai. 1992. ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia, p-1.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that the Government of Malaysia categorizes its multi-ethnic population into two groups, such as: (1) Bumiputera and (2) non-Bumiputera. Whilst the term Bumiputera refers to the Malays and the indigenous population in Peninsular Malaysia and in Sabah and Sarawak, more than twenty native ethnic groups, the term non-Bumiputera indicates people of immigrant descent.¹¹⁵ The state policy of Malaysia, for example, depending on migrant labour for its economy made it possible for these immigrants to enter into the country and settle down. These immigrants were then gradually converted into non-Bumiputera citizens. Pillai¹¹⁶'s citation should be taken into account in this context. Here it is:

“It was British colonialism which brought in Chinese and Indian migrants and moulded Malaysia into the multi-ethnic society that it is today. Multi-ethnicism and ethnic-based politics makes the issue of cross-country labour mobility in Malaysia more complex than in other homogeneous societies in the region.”

Besides, there are vast differences between the situations of migrant workers in Peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak. According to a country report of ISIS¹¹⁷ Malaysia, the management of migrant workers, for example, is conducted not only by the separate administrative authorities, but is also influenced by the under-lying social, political, historical and economic factors (of migration) that vary between regions. Moreover, referring to the geographical characteristics and location of Sabah, it was argued that the control and supervision of cross-border migration are likewise influenced significantly by these aspects.¹¹⁸ Consequently, the overall situation of the country's labour mobility, integration and assimilation of migrants needs to be examined placing special focus on certain aspects, such as, (1) the influence of multi-ethnic politics and social setting, (2) geographical location as well as diversities¹¹⁹ and (3) the overall industrial development.

¹¹⁵ Migration Issues in the Asia Pacific. 'Issues Paper from the Malaysia' at <http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnwp9.htm>, access 13th September 13, 2007.

¹¹⁶ Patrick Pillai. 1992. ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia, p-1.

¹¹⁷ The Institute of Strategic and International Studies.

¹¹⁸ Vijayakumari Kanapathy, International Migration and the Labour Market Developments in Asia: Economic Recovery, the Labour Market and Migrant Workers in Malaysia, p-379. Paper prepared for the 2004 Workshop on International Migration and Labour Markets in Asia organized by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) supported by the Government of Japan, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Office (ILO), February 2004.

¹¹⁹ However, this article does not cover the data of Sabah and Sarawak. The secondary data, collected from official sources may contain some part of the data, but not the full. This research was done among the migrant workers in Peninsular Malaysia and paper is formulated based on that information.

Out of these factors, industrial development policies and its connectedness with the multi-ethnic social situation of the country, demand particular emphasis. These are highlighted on the grounds that the necessity for immigration of Bangladeshi workers has risen as a result of Malaysia's economic development that will be explored further in the next segment of this chapter. On the contrary, it is noteworthy here that scholars have tried to identify the immigration of migrant workers in Malaysia based on the several development phases of the country. These phases are, the pre-independence colonial period, the post-independence 1957-70 phase, the first decade of the New Economic Policy (NEP) 1971-80, the second decade, 1980-90 and recent developments.

As numerous works of literature indicate colonial Malayan economy in the 19th century was developed (by the British authorities) through importation of 'cheap labour' from China and India (Karim et al.¹²⁰ 1999, Rudnick¹²¹ 1996, Pillai¹²² 1992). They were recruited as workers for tin mines and rubber plantations. At that time a dualistic economy was created by the colonial authority examples of which are the self-reliant agricultural sector manned by peasants as well as the "foreign-owned, export-oriented" tin and rubber sector (Pillai 1992). Since from the very beginning Malays were self-supporting peasants, they did not find any necessity to work under a strict employment contract of British rule (Karim et al. 1999). This might be one of the reasons why British colonial authorities depended mostly on immigrant workers. Three densely populated countries as sources of cheap labour such as Java, China and India have been identified by Karim et al. (1999) from which the initial recruitment came. In fact, among these three groups Indians were in advantageous position compared to the Javanese and Chinese workers (Ramachandaran 1994, quoted in Karim et al. 1999).

Scholars also argued that the dualistic economy contributed greatly to the development of a plural society in Malaysia. It has been stated that even despite the massive changes brought on by NEP after 1970, some earlier features of the previous dualistic economy still remain intact.¹²³ It has also been speculated that the allocation of ethnicity with economic function, examples of which being Bumiputeras (Malays and other indigenous people) with agriculture

¹²⁰ AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar. Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd. 1999. *Foreign Workers in Malaysia. Issues and Implications*, p-10.

¹²¹ Rudnick, Anja. 1996. *INSAN*, Kuala Lumpur. *Foreign Labors in Malaysian Manufacturing. Bangladeshi Workers in the Textile Industry*, p-40.

¹²² Patrick Pillai. 1992. *ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia*, p- 1.

¹²³ *Ibid*: p-2.

and public services, Chinese with trade, industry and tin mining and Indians with plantations, is the outcome of dualistic economy (Pillai 1992).

However, before colonial rule a kind of “inter-island migration” was already taking place that allowed Indonesians to enter Malaysia for employment purposes. We can postulate that these Indonesians were assimilated into Malay culture due to the ethnic and lingua-cultural similarities.¹²⁴ Like Indonesians a number of Indians also arrived in Malaysia via the sea route. Their entrance was traced even before British colonial times. They were found engaged in a petty trade with the coastal people of Malaya.¹²⁵

If we concentrate on the post-independence (1957-70) period, we may find a significant feature, which is, the application of a new development strategy. This strategy really started widening the scope of structural changes only during the globalization and the industrialization process. At that time already, however, there was rapid economic growth, even though job-creation was not so successful. As capital-intensive techniques were given preference in industrial development schemes, a poor level of labour absorption could not be avoided (Pillai 1992). The unemployment rate in West Malaysia remained relatively high throughout the 1960s and reached into 7.4% in 1970.¹²⁶ Some economists also estimate a somewhat higher rate of unemployment mainly among young and urban Malays for that time. Consequently, frustration was born out of the jobless situation of the masses that finally led to inter-ethnic violence on May 1969.¹²⁷ Thus, not only tensions arising from communal politics can be identified as the cause of that conflict, but also the high unemployment rate of the local people aggravated the existing situation.

The “New Economic Policy” was implemented in 1971. Accompanied by export-oriented industrialization and public sector expansion it resulted in urban job growth and a mass migration of rural Malaysians to the cities.¹²⁸ At that time two things were given preferences, firstly the fostering of growth with equity and secondly the reduction of previous inter-ethnic

¹²⁴ AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar. Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd, 1999. Foreign Workers in Malaysia. Issues and Implications, p- 10.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Patrick Pillai. ISIS, Malaysia 1992. People on the Move. An Overview of Recent Immigration and Emigration in Malaysia, p- 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Help Wanted. Abuses against Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Indonesia and Malaysia. Retrieved 20th September 2006. <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/indonesia0704/4.htm>

tensions.¹²⁹ Through the influence of this policy, demand for labour in the manufacturing and construction sectors instantaneously increased. Along with these factors, by the early 1980s, a growing middle class augmented the demand for domestic workers. Moreover, at this time it became increasingly obvious to the Malaysians that migrant workers were a necessity for the agricultural sector.¹³⁰

It is mentioned in literature that through the importation of migrant workers from Indonesia and Thailand for work in the rural plantations this labour shortage was overcome.¹³¹ Initially a kind of undocumented recruitment was documented by the researchers¹³² due to the absence of legal provisions on importing and employing foreign workers. Later, people from other countries of Asia, the Middle East and Africa entered into Malaysia in clandestine ways following the instances of the Indonesians and Thais.¹³³ Malaysian employers received permission for the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in 1986¹³⁴. After that, Bangladeshi workers were brought in to work in the plantations. A few years later, in 1991 private entrepreneurs were given the opportunity to start agencies to recruit foreign labourers directly from their country of origin¹³⁵.

However, the immigration of migrants, especially of undocumented workers, was considered to be a threat to the stability of the society by the local administrators of Malaysia. They were also accused of being the cause for different kinds of social problems. Therefore, different policies were inaugurated to regulate the situation. Three principal features are identified by Kanapathy¹³⁶ among said policies. These are (1) bilateral agreements with major sending

¹²⁹ Patrick Pillai. ISIS, Malaysia 1992. People on the Move. An Overview of Recent Immigration and Emigration in Malaysia, p- 2.

¹³⁰ Help Wanted. Abuses against Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Indonesia and Malaysia. Retrieved 20th September 2006. <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/indonesia0704/4.htm>

¹³¹ Asia Pacific Migration Research Network. Retrieved 20th September 2006. <http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnwp9.htm>

¹³² Vijayakumari Kanapathy, International Migration and the Labour Market Developments in Asia: Economic Recovery, the Labour Market and Migrant Workers in Malaysia, p- 380. Paper prepared for the 2004 Workshop on International Migration and Labour Markets in Asia organized by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT) supported by the Government of Japan, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Office (ILO), February 2004.

¹³³ Asia Pacific Migration Research Network. Retrieved 20th September 2006. <http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnwp9.htm>

¹³⁴ Unpublished data Bangladesh High Commission and Immigration Department of Malaysia.

¹³⁵ Asia Pacific Migration Research Network. Retrieved 20th September 2006. <http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnwp9.htm>

¹³⁶ Vijayakumari Kanapathy, International Migration and the Labour Market Developments in Asia: Economic Recovery, the Labour Market and Migrant Workers in Malaysia, p-382. Paper prepared for the 2004 Workshop on International Migration and Labour Markets in Asia organized by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and

countries, (2) work permits, and (3) foreign worker's levy. To eliminate illegal migration some measures were also initiated that are listed as follows: (1) Registration of undocumented migrant workers without showing any kind of threat, (2) implementation of a ban on the inflow of foreign workers, (3) general pardon for all undocumented workers, enabling them to return to their home country without being put on trial, (4) intense scrutiny to protect any kind of unauthorized entry and recruitment of migrant workers under the security operations "Ops Nyah I" and "Ops Nyah II" and finally (5) imposition of harsh penalties on migrants and others that assist in any kind of undocumented employment of workers.¹³⁷

Thus, we find two altogether scenarios concerning immigration and integration of foreign workers into Malaysian society. In the pre-independence British colonial period, colonial authority created the multi-ethnic composition (of the country) and the multi-cultural politics due to their urgent demand for cheap labour. After independence the situation changed, however even though the inflow of migrant workers continued. Moreover the colonial rulers moulded Malaysia into a multi-ethnic society not only by importing migrant workers, but also keeping quiet with regards to undocumented entry of peoples from neighbouring (or any other) countries. In the post-independence phases we see the implementation of the Immigration¹³⁸ and Employment Acts¹³⁹. These steps are pursued by the authority to protect undocumented entrance of migrant workers. Furthermore, through the application of these Acts they try to prohibit migrant workers, especially low-skilled and un-skilled labourers from assimilating and integrating into the Malaysian society.

In order to fundamentally grasp this problematic scenarios we need to have a look at the current (post-independent) development policy of the Malaysian Government, called "Vision 2020"¹⁴⁰. Aiming to become a fully developed society by the year 2020, endeavours towards a knowledge-based society are being undertaken that will gradually replace capital and labour with knowledge as the primary driving force of the economy. To correspond to the demands of a knowledge-based society it is expected that Malaysian citizens would have gain the

Training (JILPT) supported by the Government of Japan, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Office (ILO), February 2004.

¹³⁷ Ibid: p-383.

¹³⁸ The Immigration Act 1959/63.

¹³⁹ Employment Act 1955.

¹⁴⁰ Dr. Mahathir is the chief planner of this vision. According to him, "In our pursuit towards developing the K-economy, knowledge has to replace labour and capital as the key factors of production in our economy. The challenge for Malaysia is to develop this knowledge amongst our citizens so that our success will be due to the contributions of Malaysian talents and knowledge workers" (Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Putrajaya 8 March 2001 – quoted in Evers. 2001. Towards a Malaysian Knowledge Society, p-2).

required knowledge as they could contribute individually to the development of the country. In this regard, it is noteworthy that for the construction of a knowledge-driven society only Malaysian citizens' participation is encouraged, whereas there is no mentioning of the (planned or actual) contribution of migrant workers.

Under these circumstances the question of how Bangladeshi migrant respondents manage to enter into Malaysia and integrate and assimilate at the same time will be discussed in chapter three and four. However, before shedding light on the structural and relational embeddedness of migrants on what their nature of entrance and survival in the host country depends, in the next section we will explore some more aspects of the structural frameworks of Bangladesh and Malaysia that are related to the beginning of labour migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia.

4. Labour Migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia

Until January 1997, Bangladesh used to be the second largest official supplier of migrant workers for Malaysia, whereas Indonesia was the largest.¹⁴¹ Actually, if we pay a closer attention towards the flow of Bangladeshi workers into Malaysia, we may draw the conclusion that apart from the 'G to G' based official sources, there are also other sources that include private sector recruitment of workers along with the clandestine ways of short-term migration. Apart from these sources, we may notice personal initiative-based professional migration as well as migration in the form of family reunification, where spouse and children of the well-off migrants (like professionals and businessmen) travel to Malaysia on 'dependence' visas.

Besides, from the point of view of authorized and un-authorized sources of migration we can see variations. For instance, while on the one hand, Bangladeshis move to Malaysia as the result of official agreements between the governments (of these two countries), on the other hand, they also enter the country (and subsequently find employment as migrant workers) utilizing the means of private recruiting agencies - when their recruitment is officially prohibited. In these cases, the well-off labour brokers and entrepreneurs enable said labourers to migrate either on tourist/student visas or via undocumented ways, like entering into the

¹⁴¹Zahid Zamir. Cosmic Publishers. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contributions in Malaysian Economy, p- 18.

country through the Hazzai road of Thailand.¹⁴² In the later case, migrants enter into Thailand as a documented tourist, but are brought to Malaysia by road without registration in the immigration department.

Through this study it has come to my knowledge that these diverse types, sources and states (documented/undocumented) of migration reflect largely on the nature of post-migration settlement practices (in the study areas) as well as the organizational structure of the community, where some manage to reach their targets, others fail. Therefore, we require a profound and holistic understanding of all these channels and forms of migration if we want to justify in any scientific manner whether migration to Malaysia facilitates the respondents' upward mobility and provides them with a better survival strategy – the reason most of them have migrated to this country in the first place. However, in the previous section it has already been mentioned that the forms of migration, adaptation and survival of the study people and its relatedness with their nature of embeddedness will be explored in detail in the next chapters and hence, here we will only focus on the aspects of 'G to G' based and private sector initiated migration patterns from Bangladesh to Malaysia.

Bangladeshi labourer's migration to Malaysia happened to take place at a large scale during the period 1990-1991, when the massive flow towards Middle Eastern countries dropped due to the Persian Gulf War. It was at this time that Malaysia was suffering from severe labour shortage due to the structural transformation (ILO, 1998) of the economy by the implementation of NEP (1971-1990)¹⁴³. At that time through the application of NEP new jobs were created at the manufacturing and service sectors of urban areas. Consequently, the previous rural sector-dependent Malays started to migrate to the urban areas which in turn of course led to a shortage of workers in the rural areas, especially in the plantation sectors.¹⁴⁴ To overcome this crisis, Indonesians were recruited initially; later on, in 1992, Bangladeshi workers were brought into Malaysia on a large scale through an agreement between the governments of Bangladesh and Malaysia¹⁴⁵. As a matter of fact, a total of 10,537 Bangladeshi workers were recruited officially for different industrial sectors of Malaysia in

¹⁴² Find more discussion in chapter four.

¹⁴³ Lian Kwen Fee and Md Mizanur Rahaman. 2006. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, Vol. 21, No.1. International Labour Recruitment: Channelling Bangladeshi Labour to East and South-East Asia, p-93.

¹⁴⁴ Zahid Zamir. Cosmic Publishers. 2006. *Migrant Workers' Contributions in Malaysian Economy*, p- 16.

¹⁴⁵ Abdul- Rashid Abdul –Aziz. 2001. *Asia Pacific Population Journal*, Vol 16, No 1. *Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia's Construction Sector*, p-6.

1992.¹⁴⁶ However, before that, in 1986, a trial was conducted through the recruitment of 530 workers for plantation service.¹⁴⁷

It is worth mentioning that the presence of Bangladeshi labourers in Malaysia was also identified prior than 1986¹⁴⁸. According to the publication¹⁴⁹ of BMET, the year 1978 should be seen as the initial beginning of labour migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia. During that year 23 Bangladeshis were sent to Malaysia for working through the private recruiting agencies. After 1978, the recruitment continued for the next couple of years (relying only on non-governmental sources). ‘G to G’ based migration started in 1986, but it was cancelled again after the 1997 financial crisis. In 2000 a special approval was given for the recruitment of fresh workers from Bangladesh that was again terminated in January 2001. Then, even though there was an agreement in 2003 for the recruitment of workers, it did not come into effect.¹⁵⁰ The decision to import Bangladeshi workers for Peninsular Malaysia was not made until the 23rd May of 2006.¹⁵¹ However, according to unpublished data of the Bangladesh High Commission, in Sarawak state, demand for 12,595 workers mostly for manufacturing service was attested by mission in 2006. The withdrawal of the ban for Peninsular Malaysia took place on 24th May of 2006¹⁵².

However, if we concentrate on the following table (table 2.1) we may notice that the unofficial flow of migrant workers did not end at all, though after the 1997 financial crisis the ‘G to G’ based migration process officially stopped. Carried on by self initiative and private sector syndicates, for the next two years transnational migration continued until a new approval was given in 2000. In the same way, from January 2001 up to May 2006 Bangladeshis entered into Malaysia and worked there. Amongst them the semi-skilled and unskilled workers mainly entered through the channels of recruiting agents and labour brokers, though there was no official recording of it. As a result, these workers were devoid of work permits and thus converted into undocumented workers that led situations, such as where they relied solely on their weak ties with manpower agents for survival. Therefore, they became followers of the two central factional groups called ‘Noakhali’ and ‘Barishal’ and served the

¹⁴⁶ Source: <http://www.bmet.org.bd/report.html>, access 8th September 2007

¹⁴⁷ The information is collected from the unpublished data of Bangladesh High Commission, Malaysia.

¹⁴⁸ Please find appendix 2.

¹⁴⁹ Find <http://www.bmet.org.bd/report.html>, access 8th September 2007.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ The Daily Star, May 24, 2006.

¹⁵² The Daily Star, July 22, 2006.

interests of these well-off brokers in order to find a way to adapt and become upwardly mobile (as well). This too will be discussed in detail in chapter three and four. Let us have a look at the following table regarding the year of entrance of Bangladeshi respondents in Malaysia.

Table 2.1: Yearly Flow of Migrants and Their Length of Stay (in years)

Year	Length of stay	Frequency	Percentage
2006	.33	1	.7
2006	.67	1	.7
2005	1.00	4	2.7
2004	2.00	5	3.3
2003	3.00	4	2.7
2002	4.00	3	2.0
2001	5.00	1	.7
2000	6.00	9	6.0
1999	7.00	2	1.3
1998	8.00	1	.7
1997	9.00	2	1.3
1996	10.00	43	28.7
1995	11.00	14	9.3
1994	12.00	21	14.0
1993	13.00	13	8.7
1992	14.00	9	6.0
1991	15.00	7	4.7
1990	16.00	5	3.3
1988	18.00	4	2.7
1976	30.00	1	.7
Total		150	100

Source: Survey data of Bangladeshi migrants in Peninsular Malaysia

If we compare the BMET data and the research findings depicted in the table 2.1 we can see that the respondents started to migrate to Malaysia even before 1978. Consequently, we may state that not only ‘G to G’ based data provide partial information, but also in some cases private sector based data fail to draw a complete picture of the flow of migrants.

5. Conclusion

How do migrants manage to travel abroad even though there exists an official ban? How do they manage to operate without governmental and recruiting agency based channels? Do other sources of information and channels that facilitate their migration exist? All these questions need answering as well as careful scrutiny. Therefore, in the next chapters (chapter three and four) according to the findings of the empirical investigation I will explain how migrants find their own way of movement, develop potential survival strategies and form

different ties (in the host country) in order to achieve the necessary support from the better-off and well-connected people. Moreover, at this period of globalization how is the flow of information and transnational networking facilitated by the modern communication system? And is it in any way reflected in the organizational structure of the community? These questions will be explored and answered in chapter five.

Before proceeding on to these, however, it should be noted that the history as well as the causes behind labour migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia cannot be understood straightforwardly. The path is not simple and it has several pros and cons. The immigration proceedings, the inherent causes behind migration and the involved bodies and frameworks that regulate the situation--- all have specific impacts and consequences. Their aims and planning for migration are also not homogenous. The questions are-- how are they organized now in Malaysia? Do they work like a homogeneous body? How do they maintain transnational networking? What is their dream for their homeland? Or do they cut all the bonds through the long span of staying abroad? How do they manage to stay for a long time (entering as temporary workers or as tourists)? How do they integrate themselves into the multi-cultural society? What is the response of the host society in that context? We will proceed on these issues in the following chapters.

Chapter Three

A Socio-economic Profile of the Migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia

1. Introduction

This chapter portrays the socio-economic background of the migrant Bangladeshis, their diverse coping strategies and their assigned¹⁵³ working and living conditions. Their survival strategies should be seen as the outcome of three aspects. These are firstly the structural background of the origin and receiving societies, secondly the migrants' own characteristics, their status, everyday experiences, causes, consequences and ways of immigration and thirdly the migrants' transnational liabilities and contacts. While on the one hand, the country of destination determines the rights, obligations and boundaries of the migrant community, on the other, the migrants' own position and status acts as the regulators of their experiences, practices and daily interactions across the research areas (as well). Based on their respective status as well as interests, migrants try to modify, control and adapt to the outcomes of these structural conditions through interaction, manipulation and negotiation. The formation of diverse forms of networks in and outside of said community is the result of before mentioned bargaining processes which are also dynamic in nature.

Consequently, in order to understand the role of networking (as a potential coping strategy) in the host society, the geographical and social distribution of the community, their housing and working atmosphere, legal position, types of income, qualifications, internal differentiations along age, gender, origin, length of stay and marital status as well as the state of relationships and ties between neighbours, co-workers, housemates, employers and employees (in the multicultural environment), have been scrutinized in this study. While doing so the dynamism of the receiving society and also the trans-border communications, modern means of correspondences and contacts between origin and receiving countries have been emphasized.

The geographic and socio-economic profile of the Bangladeshi community, the multi-ethnic environment and the legal domain (mainly the employment act and the immigration policy) of Malaysia are all necessary to understand the culture of migration, its inherent exploitation, the

¹⁵³ Ideally, and sometimes practically, the host society determines the rights and duties, living and working conditions of the migrants.

migrants' destinations (in the receiving society), their level of integration, and finally, the various forms of survival strategies developed within the network of "strong and weak ties".¹⁵⁴ On the other side, the regular flow of information, money, goods, people and ties across the transnational space are captured highlighting the dynamic nature of societal and trans-border communications. The exploration of these aspects helps to demonstrate the pattern of the migrants' community as well as its organizational structure. There the association of different groups of people into a common platform is not yet reality. Rather, the nurturing of class and status interests, the introduction of a pseudo patron-client relationships¹⁵⁵ based on weak ties of loose networks, the fluidity of said networks and in general inter-ethnic networking to cope with the everyday realities and inter-ethnic conflict, are all "social facts" in the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia.

However, while the current chapter is a mere description of the heterogeneous social conditions of the migrant community, their diversified and dynamic alliances and the structural characteristics of the origin and destination countries, the next chapters will try to explore their outcome reflected on the communal organizational structures. Therefore, the discussion will be carried on highlighting three aspects. These are:

- 'Ethnic mapping'- An Analysis of the Geographic and Socio-economic Distribution of the Migrant Community

¹⁵⁴ Mark Granovetter. 1983. The strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited, p. 201.

¹⁵⁵ By 'pseudo patron-client relationship' I intend to mean the fluidity of the bond. Though the tie is developed for the mutual benefits, but it is not long lasting. Patrons are resourceful and clients are inferior in the sense that they lack the command of economic, social, legal and political resources and contacts in Peninsular Malaysia that the patrons have. For this, they (clients) need to develop a tie with the stronger group by their friends'/relatives' contacts (strong tie). However, both of the parties know that the opposite group will not consider his/her interest always. Once the goal is fulfilled he may change the party for a better one or the patron may ignore the client if he finds someone more beneficial for him. Because, the society is dynamic, globally influenced and the life reality of the migrants is always changing in line with the structural conditions of the origin and receiving society. For this, both of the actors try their best to maximize the utility. For example, the workers try to receive the job or enter into the country paying as low as they can. On the other hand, the opposite party tries to pull out his best from the workers. As he is in the advantaged position so he can impose different conditions upon the workers (to bring them in or to fulfil any type of demand) ranging from monetary charge to providing wage-free labour in his business or political organizations. Workers maintain his orders as long as they fail to find another option. Thus at a first glance though the relationship is manifested as a paternalistic form of patron-client relationship, but in reality, it is not the fact. Rather, a kind of exploitation and class relationship can be noticed there, though they like to introduce them as "boro vai"/"deshi vai" (elder brother/country bothers). By the term 'pseudo patron-client relationship' here and in the following chapters, I will highlight the underlying power relationship between the 'weak ties' of privileged and the oppressed groups of Bangladeshi migrants.

- “Mixed embeddedness”: The Socio-economic, Political and Institutional Framework of Both the Countries of Origin and Destination, Migrants’ Different Social States and Internal Groupings and the Survival Strategies of the Community
- ‘Networking as a Potential Survival Strategy’— Exploration of the Nature of “Strong and Weak ties”, the Patron-client Relationships and Reference Groups of the Bangladeshi Diaspora

2. ‘Ethnic mapping’- An Analysis of the Geographic and Socio-economic Distribution of the Migrant Community

The current¹⁵⁶ official figures of the Malaysian Immigration department and the Bangladesh High Commission indicate that around 59,611 documented Bangladeshi workers are employed in different sectors of Malaysia as of April 2006.¹⁵⁷ They make up around 3.35% out of the 1.8 million total work forces. However, a slightly different figure is found in an article of the Malaysian statistics department. It was presented in the Regional Census Programme for Asia & Pacific (ESCAP) which took place in Bangkok in November 2006¹⁵⁸. There Malaysia was clearly identified as a labour receiving country, mainly of low-skilled labour. By the beginning of March 2006, of the grand total of 1,850,063 registered migrant workers, 58,878 were estimated to be Bangladeshi. Since this inconsistency of data is significant to understand the diverse coping strategies of Bangladeshis (which will be described later) the following table is provided based on the data of the Malaysian statistics department.

¹⁵⁶ The word current statistics indicates the time of field research in Peninsular Malaysia conducted since November 2005 to the beginning of July 2006 and then August 2006.

¹⁵⁷ Source: Unpublished data at the Immigration Department Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur and Bangladesh High Commission, Damai.

¹⁵⁸ Expert Group Meeting On ESCAP Regional Census Programme, International Migration in Malaysia, Statistics Department Malaysia, attended by Ms Prema Letha A Nair and Ms Norhayati Jantan.

Table 3.1: Migrants by Country of Origin in Malaysia, March 2006

Country	Number of migrants	Percentage of total migrants
Indonesia	1,215,036	65.7
Nepal	200,000	10.8
India	139,716	7.6
Myanmar	92,020	5.0
Vietnam	85,835	4.6
Bangladesh	58,878	3.2
Philippines	22,080	1.2
Pakistan	15,021	0.8
Thailand	7,282	0.4
Cambodia	6,637	0.4
Sri Lanka	5,076	0.3
Others	2,482	0.1
Total	1,850,063	100

Source: Expert Group Meeting on ESCAP Regional Census Programme, International Migration in Malaysia, Statistics Department Malaysia, attended by Ms Prema Letha A Nair and Ms Norhayati Jantan

The above table shows us at least two things. Firstly not only Bangladeshis, but also workers from different countries are working in Malaysia and secondly the official statistics concerning the migrant community has changed within a short period of elapsed time. In fact, the interviews among Government and non-Government officials highlight the fact that not only was Malaysia a multi-ethnic country historically, but it also enlarged this multi-ethnicity during its infrastructural development by bringing in a constant stream of workers from different countries. Concerning the statistical variation of Bangladeshi migrants the officials mention two explanations: a) “*the migrants are not stable* and b) *very often they change their jobs bypassing law through networking.*”

Zahid Zamir¹⁵⁹ likewise showed statistical variations and tried to critically analyse the causes. He writes that the statistics of documented workers published by the Malaysian Immigration department do not support the information of BMET¹⁶⁰. He argues that the Bangladeshi workers often change their jobs because they fail to get the jobs and salaries that were promised by the labour brokers in their home country. They quit the job and become “illegal” in order to overcome the costs of their initial relocation. Furthermore unfair treatment of employees by their employers as well as deportations back to their home country (once their job contracts have expired) are also mentioned as probable causes for statistical variation.

¹⁵⁹ Zahid Zamir. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contribution in Malaysian Economy, p. 20.

¹⁶⁰ Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training.

In fact, even though the Immigration Act¹⁶¹ theoretically states that migrant workers are not allowed to change their work sector or employer without prior approval from the Immigration department, during my survey and interviews a strict enforcement of this law was not evidenced by the facts. In this context it is mentionable that out of 150 sample persons¹⁶² 52% had prior job experiences in Malaysia and 26% migrants are employed as undocumented workers. The presence of a large number of undocumented¹⁶³ Bangladeshi workers, at least on par with the official number of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia or even a bit higher, is also acknowledged by Government and non-Government officials in newspapers and interviews.¹⁶⁴ However, this study tries to grasp the logic of this statistical variation and also the causes of job change by the interviewed Bangladeshi migrants in Peninsular Malaysia. Amongst different arguments the most common causes can be listed as follows:

1- To overcome the relocation costs within a short time frame migrants change their jobs and try to find better ones.

2- They are recruited as temporary workers, normally for three years, which they find inadequate comparing to uncertain future income prospects. Besides, instead of receiving a full three years' visa at a time, they need to renew it on a yearly basis, paying levy in the process. If they at some point fail to pay said yearly levy, they sometimes turn into undocumented workers.

3- They have no way to go back, because they were unemployed or underemployed in their home country. Besides, through migration they have lost the necessary contacts to find a job at home.

4- Without repaying the loan collected at the time of emigration in their home country, they cannot go back, because doing so would “*re-double*” their sufferings.

¹⁶¹ The Immigration Act 1959/63.

¹⁶² Respondents were selected through ‘snow-ball sampling’.

¹⁶³ Though the immigration rule is, “Migrants are allowed to work in Malaysia as long as they are granted with work permit with proper employer”, (The Immigration Act 1959/63), but the presence of undocumented workers is not very few.

¹⁶⁴ Interviews with a member of BAIRA (Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies), an official of Bangladesh High Commission, Immigration Department, and another official of Tenaganita are the sources.

5- Facing hostile attitudes and discrimination either by their ethnically diverse co-workers, neighbours or employers they change jobs.

6- Sometimes workers fail to renew their work permits even though they originally came on calling visas. It happens due to miscommunication and/or bankruptcy of the company. As they enter into Malaysia they are forced to spend a lot or in any case lack enough savings for homeward tickets, so an immediate departure is normally not possible.

7- They sometimes simply lose their passports by bad fortune or through falling victim to crime. In these cases the migrants try to stay by purchasing fake passports and “chop” from agents. In these cases more often than not they do not actually know they are buying forged documents.

8- Finally they are sometimes simply sacked by their employers etc.

One of the conducted interviews should be mentioned here in order to understand this statistical variation,

“You may not count our total figure, the number of the legal¹⁶⁵ and illegal workers. Often, legal workers convert into illegal by leaving the job for which the original work permit was issued. We have to change jobs to increase our length of stay. They don’t allow us to settle down and we also cannot go back home so soon. You know, some of us here have spent more than two hundred thousand taka¹⁶⁶ and all came from our relatives and friends. We have to reimburse them and at the same time save for our future. After staying a while we learn the Malay language and thus can communicate with the local people and employers. We personally contact them and show our skills. Sometimes the Malaysian Government gives us the chance to convert into legal workers and legal workers can then leave their previous jobs to find new ones that may pay more money. The Government in turn earns a profit, because a single person is paying levy two times a year and we also get the opportunity of staying longer. Thus some of us are here for more than 15 years.....”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Legal worker means the documented worker, who is possessing work permit and ‘Jalan card’. He pays yearly levy and renews his work permit. A worker who lacks these is considered as undocumented worker, in their own term illegal worker/ ‘abaidha sramik’.

¹⁶⁶ 1RM=17 BDT, 1 Euro=4 RM.

¹⁶⁷ Interview, June 2006, Penang.

Moreover, interviews with the migrants, the Government and non-Governmental officials reveal not only alteration of job by the migrants, but also changes in their dwellings as time passes. While, “*most of the migrants, especially the undocumented ones, change their place of residence very often*” is a frequent uttered sentence by the officials, the respondents of this study identify it as a coping strategy to avoid police harassment. Besides, the survey data says that 25% of the migrants¹⁶⁸ are living among locals as well as migrants from different ethnic communities. They live with them as their house- and roommates. And the rest of the respondents at least with said people as neighbours. Consequently, there are no fixed places which can be mentioned as specific areas of Bangladeshi migrants. Quite the opposite they live in a multi-cultural environment. Therefore, it is not very surprising that the Immigration department provides only the statistics of the migrants’ appointments in different industrial sectors of the country, although they were actually requested to provide information on the living areas of Bangladeshi migrants.

However, by interviewing some people of the Bangladesh High Commission, the Bangladeshi migrants, the Chinese¹⁶⁹, Malay¹⁷⁰, Indonesian¹⁷¹ and Tamil Indian¹⁷² ethnic communities and through my daily interactions and observations I have managed to identify some “hotspots”¹⁷³ of the migrant community, which are multi-ethnic as well. According to a Bangladeshi migrant, “*you will find us everywhere in this country.*”¹⁷⁴ For example when my snowball sampling survey was performed in Peninsular Malaysia migrants were found in different areas, namely Selangor (56%), Kuala Lumpur (11%), Johor Bahru (13%) and Penang (20%). As a result, interviews were conducted in different places and there was no specific area which could in any way be identified as the field site, rather these diverse sites should be classified as ‘research areas’. In this context we may look at the following tables

¹⁶⁸ Among 150 sample respondents.

¹⁶⁹ In most cases Bangladeshis are found working under Chinese employers.

¹⁷⁰ A kind of inter-ethnic networking is developed between two communities on the basis of ‘Muslim brotherhood’.

¹⁷¹ A kind of inter-ethnic networking is developed between two communities on the basis of ‘Muslim brotherhood’. Besides, they are found as the co-workers of Bangladeshis in different factories.

¹⁷² As a whole these two communities are not in a good term due to the management of scarce resources (struggling for scarce resources). Most Tamil Indians are careful to drive away Bangladeshis from their working areas being afraid of losing bargaining power. On the other hand, Bangladeshis try to tackle the situation by making friendship or business relationship with some of the Tamil Indians as they can convince their co-ethnic members on behalf of Bangladeshis.

¹⁷³ The term is used in bio-diversity research.

¹⁷⁴ Field note book, January 2006, Selangor.

that were developed based on the survey data conducted among Bangladeshi migrants from December 2005 to February 2006.¹⁷⁵

Table 3.2: Areas in Peninsular Malaysia

Areas	Frequency	Percentage
Kajang	15	10.0
Port Klang	23	15.3
Shah Alam	16	10.7
Subang Maoah	15	10.0
USJ 15 court 10	15	10.0
Kotaraya/KL	16	10.7
Butterworth	30	20.0
Taman Campus	13	8.7
Masai	7	4.7
Total	150	100

Source: Survey among Bangladeshi migrants

Table 3.2 shows the names of the working and living areas of the respondents at the time of data collection. Apart from these, names of some other places, such as, the Cameroon Highlands, Bukit Bintang, Jalan Ampang, Gombak, Damansara, KLCC, Pasir Gudang, and Rawang were mentioned by them as living and working areas of Bangladeshis.

Table 3.3: “Hotspots” of Bangladeshi Migrants

Spots	Frequency	Percentage
Nearby Bangladeshi shop/restaurant	25	16.7
In Pasarmalam	28	18.7
Sometimes friends house/own house	40	26.7
‘Bangla Bazaar’, KL	48	32.0
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	5	3.3
Total	146	97.3
Missing System	4	2.7
Total	150	100

Source: Survey among Bangladeshi migrants

And table 3.3 depicts the names of the “hotspots”. Within different categories of this table, ‘Bangla Bazaar’ is identified by the majority as the primary meeting place. The second

¹⁷⁵ Apart from the survey, observation, intensive semi-structured interviews, group discussion and case study methods were also followed to collect data. Starting from June 2005 data collection continued until 1st July 2006 and then during the month of August 2006. Field research has been conducted both in the origin and receiving countries.

highest category is an example of strong tied networks within the community. This type of networking is found among Bangladeshi neighbours of the same socio-economic background, co-workers and house mates of the same areas, where their main intention is to find ways to assist each other in a foreign country.

But it should also be noted, based on the respondents' answers, that the 'Bangla Bazaar' of Kuala Lumpur, the common meeting place of Bangladeshis, is an example of weak tied networks, which are maintained primarily for social mobility.¹⁷⁶ A type of commercial networking is developed there within and outside the community. The reciprocal exchange takes a monetary form between different actors. The phrase 'Bangla Bazaar' has been coined by the migrants. There a type of 'transnational business system' has been developed by the Bangladeshis. Migrants start their ethnic entrepreneurship along with people from other ethnic communities, among which Malays and Indian Muslims are predominant. In order to understand this type of inter-ethnic networking and the so-called patron-client bonds, developed as potential survival strategies, this area's depiction is vitally necessary for this study. Therefore, based on data of the Immigration department, let us at first try to provide the distribution of Bangladeshis in the different industrial sectors of Malaysia. Then we can go on to draw an ethnic map of the 'Bangla Bazaar' that represents the migrants' perception (or "mental map") of that area. It is noteworthy that the 'ethnic map' of Bangladeshis is not a static one. Rather, it is constantly changing depending on the dynamics of the social systems, the migrants' networking capabilities and the immigration policy of Malaysia.

¹⁷⁶ Please find appendix 7 to see the photographs of the 'Bangla Bazaar' area.

Table 3.4: Statistics of Migrant Workers in Different Industrial Sectors of Entire¹⁷⁷ Malaysia, April 2006

Nationality	Domestic workers	Construction	Manufacturing	Service	Plantation	Agriculture	Total
Bangladesh	10	9,614	40,715	5,787	1,101	2,384	59,611
Kemboja	3,835	290	2,235	199	114	41	6,714
China	6	1,366	199	566	-	12	2,149
Mesir	-	-	-	3	-	-	3
Ethopia	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Fiji	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
India	62	7,616	33,349	61,841	28,027	7,423	138,318
Indonesia	300,884	229,388	208,977	45,885	341,522	61,728	1,188,384
Laos	-	26	36	2	1	-	65
Morocco	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Myanmar	10	13,845	60,488	15,854	1,294	1,107	92,598
Nepal	27	4,498	165,514	20,973	3,953	4,258	199,223
Pakistan	3	4,398	6,877	2,590	356	966	15,190
Filipina	9,067	1,277	2,118	1,557	5,229	1,236	20,484
Korea	-	41	-	-	-	-	41
Russia	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Sri Lanka	833	312	3,982	373	69	67	5,636
Syria	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Taiwan	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Thailand	451	1,388	849	4,776	211	226	7,901
Uzbekistan	-	11	-	15	-	-	26
Vietnam	7	8,767	77,446	2,410	311	267	89,208
Total	315,200	282,837	602,787	162,833	382,188	79,715	1,825,560

Source: Unpublished data, Immigration Department, Putrajaya, Malaysia. Note: Figures are showing frequencies

However, though the breakdown of Bangladeshi workers employed in different sectors of Peninsular Malaysia (58,891) and Sarawak (720) was provided by the authority they nonetheless fail to deliver any data about the distribution of the migrant workers in the different states of Malaysia. This essentially means there is no information concerning the geographical distribution of the migrant community in the different areas of the thirteen (13) states of Malaysia. The *'mobile character'* of Bangladeshi workers is identified as the main reason for that. Besides, the presence of a large number of 'undocumented workers' provided by inter-ethnic and community based networks as well as entrances via student visas are often cited arguments often explored in newspapers and face to face interviews.

¹⁷⁷ The original word was in Malay language (Bahasa Melayu). The term 'seluruh' is interpreted here in English that stands for the word 'entire'. I translated the word in English from Bahasa to represent it in an international language. For this, I took assistance of a Tamil Indian and a Malay man of my research areas in order to keep the accurate meaning of the word intact. In the same way, some other words written in Bahasa Melayu are converted in English language by the assistance of the native speakers of Malaysia. For example, 'warganegara' stands for nationality, 'pembantu rumah' for domestic workers, 'pembinaan' for construction sector, 'pembuatan' for manufacturing sector, 'perkhidmatan' for service sector, 'perladangan' for plantation sector, 'pertanian' for agricultural sector and 'jumlah besar' for total number of workers and we have presented these in the table 3.4.

Map 1: Bangladeshi Migrants in Peninsular Malaysia¹⁷⁸



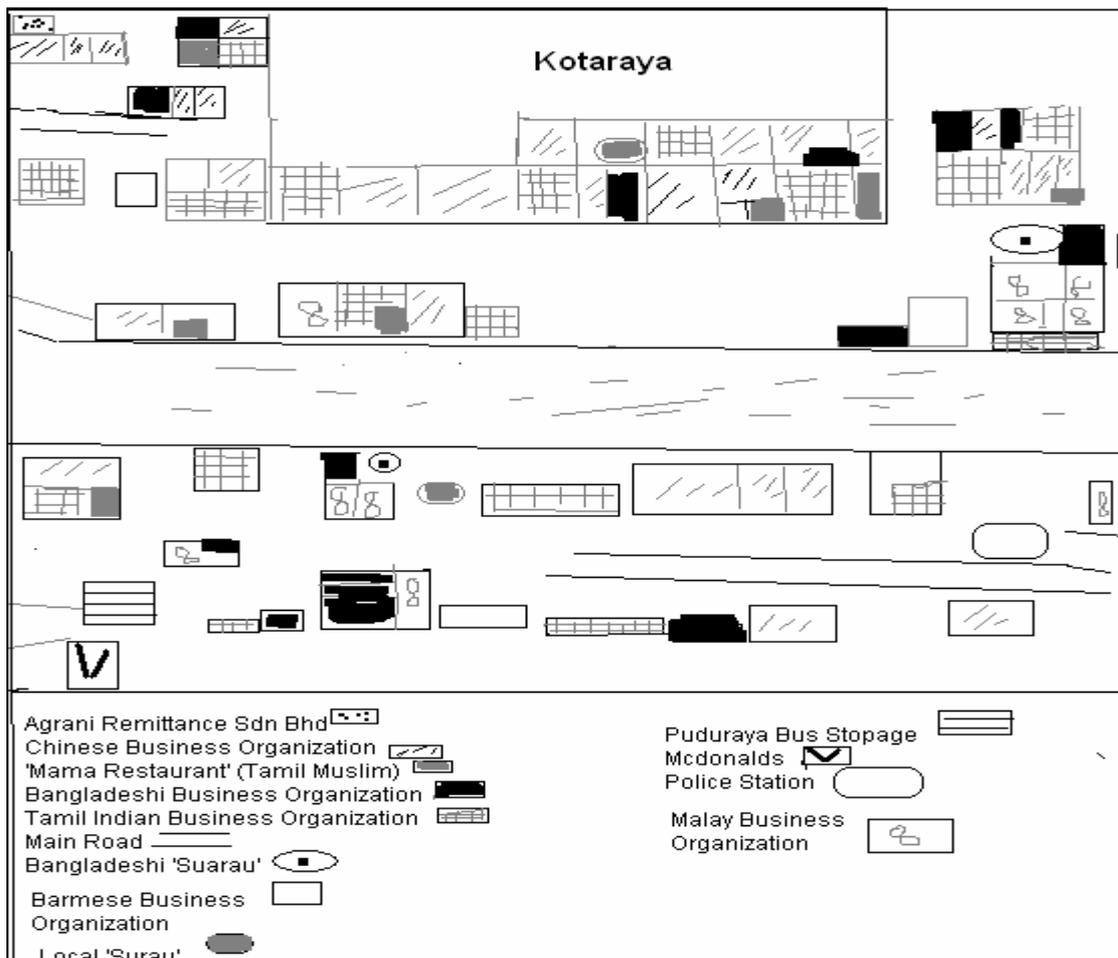
¹⁷⁸ Source: Own compilation from <http://www.travelportal.info/>. Please find appendix 6 to see the research areas in Peninsular Malaysia.

Figure 3.1: Kotaraya,¹⁷⁹ a “Hotspot” of Bangladeshi Migrants



Kotaraya, Bangla Bazaar of Kuala Lumpur

Figure 3.2: ‘Bangla Bazaar’ of Kotaraya, Kuala Lumpur



¹⁷⁹ Source: Own compilation from www.berjaya.com.my/kotaraya1.htm.

The ethnic map of the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ reveals that the bazaar’s environment is multi-ethnic, with Bangladeshis that are about to set up their business enterprises developing inter-ethnic ties with other entrepreneurs from different ethnic communities. However, if we refer to table 3.2, we see that 11% of the migrants are working in said bazaar (and also in Kuala Lumpur). The question is what is the socio-economic background of the migrants (class and status) and of what people is this 11% comprised of? Three things can be done to find answers for this question. Such as,

1-Checking the frequency- results about the living areas of the migrants.

2-Analyzing interviews conducted among migrants of different status groups about their causes of living in a certain area.

3- Making a cross tab between occupation and area of living on the basis of survey data.

Let us explore these aspects chronologically.

Table 3.5: Selection of Living Areas

Selection criteria	Frequency	Percentage
My relatives and country mates are living here/cheaper place	42	28.0
This area is selected by company/factory	84	56.0
Owner of a house	2	1.3
For working/business	22	14.7
Total	150	100

Source: Survey among Bangladeshi migrants

The biggest category (56%) of this table (table 3.5) falls under “*Area is selected by the company/factory*”. This category indicates the un-skilled or semi-skilled workers, who are employed in nearby factories of diverse companies. Through interviewing factory managers and labourers we have found out that documented labourers get their dwelling places from their respective employers. And areas near the work space are usually selected as living areas. In order to minimize transport cost and maximise time and profit as well as to provide ample security, this option is normally chosen by the authorities. This leaves three other categories. The first category (28%) indicates the strong tied networks developed in the same area based

on kinship. The second one (1.3%) is characterized by property ownership and the last category (15%) marks a selection of areas, giving priority to business.

From the survey data and interviews it has been found that the ownership of property in Malaysia is possible either through relations to a local (husband/wife) or as IC/PR¹⁸⁰ status holders. Interviews conducted with officials of the Immigration department, the Bangladesh High Commission as well as workers enabled me to clarify that ‘workers cannot get IC/PR’, they are employed on a purely temporary basis¹⁸¹. And during the survey I met workers (8%) that had already been living in Malaysia for more than 15 years. Nonetheless they were still not allowed to apply for IC/PR. According to them,

“We have asked the authority about it, but they maintain that we have come here as temporary workers. We were not officially allowed to stay for such a long time. If we really want PR/IC, we have to go back to Bangladesh and apply from there by showing our bank balance as businessmen.”¹⁸²”

Moreover, the survey data shows that among 150 respondents only 24 people are the property owners. Taking this into account two types of property ownership can be defined: a) bicycle, motor-cycle and car owners and b) house, business and car owners. Therefore, the second category is the group of businessmen. This is so because the data shows that house owners usually are also doing business. Then we have to also consider two other categories, the first and last one. Both these categories show that there exist opportunities of area selection, which is not possible for documented labourers. While the last category is the group of businessmen, there are others that likewise can freely select their place of living (either undocumented labourers or documented professionals). To clarify this point further we should consider the following arguments.

¹⁸⁰ IC/PR refers to the identity card of the permanent residents.

¹⁸¹ They are recruited for three years at first, then they are given two years renewal if their employer applies for them. After five years they need to sit for an exam about their qualification. If they pass then they receive another three years extension. According to the Employment contracts of Bee Lian Plastic Industries Sdn Bhd, Johor and Popular House Sdn Bhd, Kuala Lumpur, “The duration of contract shall not be less than three years.” It is also found that after expiry of 3 years contract normally Bangladeshi workers receive another two years renewal from their employers. According to the Immigration Department Malaysia, “After the 5th year, the said worker will have to attend a course and proficiency test in order to obtain a certificate from Malaysia Labour Vocational and Knowledge (MLVK) or Construction and Industries Development Board (CIDB) before renewal of pass is granted. The maximum period of granted is for ten years.” The data is also available at, <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Workers-Remittance/appendix.pdf>, retrieved January 22, 2007.

¹⁸² Survey in Subangjaya, December 2005.

“In most cases our salary starts at about 3300 RM¹⁸³. Then gradually we receive different types of increments. In Government universities, the basic salary has decreased a little bit, but so far, it does not matter much. Besides, we receive housing allowance (approximately 2000 RM) which allows us to rent ‘fully furnished’ houses. We get festival bonuses, tickets after the end of contract¹⁸⁴ etc. Research initiative is encouraged here. Professors earn almost RM 15 to 20 thousand. So we are comparatively well-off here. Our contributions are highly recognized. Normally we select our house on the basis of environment, allowing us to maintain a sound lifestyle along with family members. We also try to get a nice working atmosphere. House rent does not matter. However, we prefer apartments in KL, close to the university. ”¹⁸⁵

From the above part of an interview with a university teacher we can derive some interesting aspects. Such as,

- 1- Professionals receive such a vast amount of house allowance that they do not need to worry about the amount of rent.
- 2- They prefer to stay in Kuala Lumpur adjacent to the university areas.
- 3- Their priority is a healthy living and working environment.

All three factors fit neither into the first category nor into second or third. Rather, Kuala Lumpur is the area where they prefer to live. That means they belong to the last category, ‘working/business.’ However, the next comment is collected from another status group of migrants questioned on their way of area selection. They mentioned,

“Nowadays ‘mamu’ (uncle)¹⁸⁶ is very careful about illegal workers. We always try to live in such places where we can get assistance from our friends and relatives in time of emergency. In case of police raids or sickness and for job searching we also need them. They provide us shelter, because even though they are legal workers they have good contacts with police. They

¹⁸³ Malaysian currency.

¹⁸⁴ The contract is for two years. After that they can renew it.

¹⁸⁵ Interview was conducted with a lecturer of a private University, Malaysia, May 2006.

¹⁸⁶ Undocumented workers address police as ‘mamu’. ‘Mamu’ is a Bengali word. In English it means maternal uncle. In order to talk about police or to warn his friend about police in time of moving or escaping away from a place they mention this term. They do this in order to hide their actions/steps from the police.

*make arrangements with the local police. Thus we can stay here paying money to the police. By staying together we can save money, because we share house rent and food.”*¹⁸⁷

Thus we can see that the first category is comprised of undocumented workers who need to follow altogether different strategies to face their every day realities. Living with country mates and relatives is a way to combat risks. Moreover, the result of cross tab can be added to see whether there exists any link between occupation and area selection. The chi-square test between the profession of migrants and living areas in Malaysia shows a highly significant relationship. The null hypothesis was (H_0) that there was no relation between profession and living areas, but Pearson's chi-square for p (significance) value is .000, which means the null hypothesis can be rejected at 1% level of significance, so the conclusion is that profession and living areas are indeed very significantly related.

Even though in this section my aim was to describe the geographic and socio-economic distribution of the community, I can still see some aspects of the communal organizational structure and the structural background of the research areas. Such as,

- 1- The respondents are not a homogeneous body. They are divided into different status groups.
- 2- Different kinds of bonds have been developed within the community on the basis of their living and working conditions.
- 3- A multi-ethnic environment has an effect on the development of inter-ethnic networking.
- 4- In the regulation of migrants and the maintenance of the status quo Malaysian immigration policy plays a strong role.

Therefore, in the following section we shall try to discuss these aspects in more detail. In order to do this on the one side community organizational structure will be described and on the other, focusing on migration policy, we shall explore the legal position of the migrants. This will eventually lead to an analysis of the “mixed embeddedness” of the migrant Bangladeshis, which is an underlying fact of their survival strategies and the concomitant negotiation processes (as well).

¹⁸⁷ Group discussion with a group of workers in Port Klang, April 2006.

3. “Mixed embeddedness”: The Socio-economic, Political and Institutional Framework of Both the Countries of Origin and Destination, Migrants’ Different Social States and Internal Groupings and the Survival Strategies of the Community

The recruitment of 530 Bangladeshi labourers for plantation service in 1986 though has often been described as the official beginning of the un-skilled and semi-skilled labourers’ migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia¹⁸⁸, however in the yearly publication of BMET 1978 was identified as the initial phase when 23 low-skilled workers were brought in. This means that the information about the beginning as well as the ways of emigration also differ similar to the statistical variation (discussed in the previous section).

In fact, interviews and surveys highlight the fact that apart from official sources, there are unofficial sources, personal initiatives and clandestine ways that pave the way for immigration into Malaysia. Migrants enter into said country not only as un-skilled or semi-skilled workers, but also as skilled professionals through personal contacts and private sector initiatives. The presence of around 200 professionals in different universities, IT sectors and other Governmental and non-Governmental organizations, were mentioned several times by a body of expatriates and some officials of the Bangladesh High Commission during this interviews. Some of them came to Malaysia directly as experts and some as students who joined in different service sectors after graduation. Apart from that, about 35 businessmen are found engaged in ethnic entrepreneurship. Depending on the structural background of this country, which is, “*foreigners can be property owners, but they have to have a local partner (at least 51% shares owned by a Bumiputera), who is a citizen,*”¹⁸⁹----- they conduct business. In

¹⁸⁸ It is found from the unpublished data of Bangladesh High Commission, Malaysia.

¹⁸⁹ I have collected this information through the interviews with Bangladeshi businessmen in Kotaraya. However, in Malaysia three types of business enterprises can be seen as 1-a sole proprietorship, 2-a partnership and 3- a locally incorporated company, or branch of a foreign company. All sole proprietorships and partnerships need to be registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (“CCM”) under the *Registration of Businesses Act 1956*. There is no system in CCM for allowing foreign individuals or companies (locally incorporated or foreign, whatever it is) to be registered as a sole proprietor. The provision of business for foreign company is to choose the decision of operating a branch in the receiving country, instead of forming a local company. In this context, according to the *Guidelines on Foreign Participation in Wholesale and Retail Trade* with effect from 1 November 1995 that in Malaysia all kind of foreign investment need to be dealt with through the companies incorporated in Malaysia under the *Companies Act 1965*. Since in New Economic Policy (formulated in 1970), the sole regulator of the government's policy on investment, eradication of poverty and to rectify racial imbalances are highly emphasized, so the structure of capital ownership pattern takes the form of Bumiputeras 30%, non- Bumiputeras 40% and for foreign interests 30%. Based on the ideals of NEP the Foreign Investment Committee (“FIC”) formulated its *Guidelines for the Regulation of Acquisition of Assets, Mergers and Take-overs of Companies and Businesses* (“FIC Guidelines”) and developed it under the division of Economic Planning Unit in 1974. However, after the expiry of NEP in 1990, New Development Policy (1991-2000) was introduced in the country in 1991, where along with the twin objectives of NEP like poverty

order to do this some start business through inter-ethnic business networking and some by inter-ethnic marital bond.

However Bangladeshis, that manage to get Malaysian citizenship, can invest personally. During my interviews I came across such an IC holder. He had in the country for 30 years and was then engaged in a business alongside his main profession. Through his profession as a university teacher and other achievements he conveyed the sense of a respectable person among documented and undocumented workers in the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia. His lifestyle, educated offspring, pattern of housing and “*generosity towards poor*” was found as a praiseworthy topic among labourers when they raised the issue of class relationship between ‘rich and poor’ Bangladeshis in Malaysia. Through admiration and critique they express their expectations towards others and also self motivations as migrants in a foreign country.

However, from the discussion we can also notice that there exist remarkable differences among migrants. This diversity can be demonstrated in manifold ways. As a discussion list we may identify the following points,

- 1-Gender
- 2-Age
- 3-Religion
- 4- Areas of origin
- 5-Education and other qualifications
- 6- Marital status
- 7- Mode of immigration
- 8-Occupation: Primary and other sources of income

eradication and remedy of ethnic imbalance wealth redistribution through rapid growth were given preferences. On 1 August 2004 new guidelines were issued by the FIC among these some relevant conditions (for this study) are depicted here as “acquisitions by Malaysian and foreign interests, in the case of companies that do not have any Bumiputera equity or having less than 30% Bumiputera equity, the equity condition imposed will be Bumiputera (indigenous Malay) equity of at least 30%. In the case of acquisitions by foreign interest, the remaining equity can be held either by foreign interests or jointly by foreign and Malaysian interests. However, in the case of acquisitions of companies with Bumiputera equity shareholding of 51% or more, the companies will be required to maintain at least 51% Bumiputera equity at all times. The requirement of at least 30% Bumiputera equity participation will be applied by all ministries except where exemptions have been granted by the Government. Foreign interest is allowed to acquire landed properties exceeding RM 150,000 per unit.” Note: data is collected from http://www.prac.org/newsletters/Skrinea_2004.pdf retrieved April 24, 2007.

9- Expenditures etc.

In the next section I will discuss these topics and try to find out whether these work as potential factors for the development of different ties/networks within and outside the migrant community.

3.1 Gender Balance: ‘A Community without Females’

Out of 150 respondents only two were females. The interviewees selected by ‘snow-ball sampling’, discarded their contacts with Bangladeshi female workers. Rather, a negative attitude and comments towards women were noticed. On the other side, among two female samples one was a factory worker (Sanda) and the other (Marry) was providing services in her husband’s business enterprise. In fact, we met Sanda in Penang while we were conducting an interview with a Chinese factory manager. Marry is the wife of Dabir Miah¹⁹⁰, an entrepreneur and middleman in ‘Bangla Bazaar’, Kuala Lumpur. Sanda came on a calling- and Marry on a spouse visa. Both of them also declined having any direct communication or friendship ties with Bangladeshi workers. Later on in the conversation, while Marry partially agreed about her “*social relationship*” with both her husband’s networks and customers, if on a limited scale, Sanda admitted lacking this entirely. On the contrary, she emphasized her friendship with a female Vietnamese housemate.

The interviews with the factory management and further observations also support the argument that female workers live inside the factory compound and without direct permission from the authority any kind of movement outside their quarters is forbidden to them. Generally, they are permitted to visit nearby market areas or banks once a week for necessary shopping as well as to transfer remittance to their home country. The factory provides them with transport. These regulations are seemingly carried out to provide security and moral decency for the female workers. They were also supported by Sanda who argued the females were “*feeling at home, like in their mother’s lap when they were inside the factory*”. Petra Dannecker’s¹⁹¹ research paper on Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia also mentions the public disappearance of Bangladeshi female workers in Malaysia.

¹⁹⁰ Please find chapter four.

¹⁹¹ Petra Dannecker. 2005. Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia: The Construction of “Others” in a Multi-ethnic Context, p. 249.

Interestingly enough while female movement is regulated by law and their housing is arranged inside the factory area, for men neither housing nor movement is controlled. They can rent a house or “stroll around” (Petra Dannecker, 2005) if they have time. The question is, whether the security of men is a factory concern or is it perceived differently for men and women? By highlighting the gendered international migration policy we may try to understand this. If we refer to the examples of Portuguese female would-be migrants’ hazards in obtaining official visas in Portugal, at the very beginning of European guest worker movement, discussed in Boyd (1989),¹⁹² we can see the reflection of a gendered division of labour in migration policy.

Ideally women’s place was constructed inside the home and also economically dependent on the income of the male. Boyd depicted this construction as instrumental. She argued that it might ensure the flow of remittance from the male migrant workers’ to their family members that somehow “continued the flow of foreign exchange to Portugal”. As a matter of fact, in what extent did all the female workers follow and support these immigration rules and how it was negotiated, is a matter of further research.

Though both male and female respondents are saying that they do not have any contact to each other, during my discussion with the factory managers as well as current and returned migrants----- different incidents or “*accidents*” of female migrant workers were hinted at where interactions with male Bangladeshi workers were identified as the major cause of mishap. One case, the dismissal of a female Bangladeshi worker as punishment for “*unwanted pregnancy*” in Penang was mentioned by a Chinese factory manager and an agent of BAIRA during the interview.¹⁹³ In this context we should bring that, even though for having relations or breaking the rules of the Immigration Act both male and female are liable, only female workers are tainted with a bad reputation. They are treated as the bearer of disgrace for the Bangladeshi nation both at home and abroad. Their micro and macro level contributions to their origin country through flow of economic remittance and as a ‘rice earner’¹⁹⁴ of their

¹⁹² Boyd, Monica. 1989. ‘Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and New agendas,’ p. 659.

¹⁹³ Field notes, June 2006.

¹⁹⁴ Instead of ‘bread earner’ rice earner is mentioned here, since rice is the staple food of Bangladeshis.

family are somehow overlooked. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis'¹⁹⁵s write-up may work in explaining this.

In fact, women are expected to play a role in the construction and reproduction of national identity along the lines of a culturally constructed femininity. Consequently, apart from biological reproduction women's role is also glorified as the bearer and transmitter of authentic Bangladeshi culture. They are also expected to show this by behaving 'properly'. For Bangladeshi womanhood this proper behaviour is based on Islam¹⁹⁶ and a common culture where the woman's role is seen as a domestic mother staying at home and taking care of the family and not as a rice earner in a foreign country. She is not supposed to go against the 'domestic and cultural values' by engaging in relationships with men. Therefore, women working abroad and becoming friends with men other than their relatives are considered both by male and female migrant workers, as devaluing their femininity and also dishonouring the Bangladeshi nation.

Thus, not only the less mobile character of the female workers and the factory rules and regulations are enough to explain their invisibility, but also the broader structural features and gendered ideology of the host and origin countries are found embedded in the overall situation. The exploration of this embeddedness is important to know the underlying causes for statistical imbalance, rules and regulations, the attributed 'social taboo' on interaction between male and female workers and the negative attitude and comments of male counterparts concerning female migrants.

In this context, if we take into account the following conversation among male workers during the group discussion, we may understand the cultural construction of gender¹⁹⁷ and the prescribed behaviour for men and women in a way specific to Bangladesh. Or in other words, in order to analyse Bangladeshi female migrant workers' experiences as foreigners, their low profile in the receiving country and also the impressions of male migrants about un-skilled and semi-skilled female labourers, we have to understand both the Bangladeshi and Malaysian

¹⁹⁵ Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis. 1991. *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle*. See also Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell, Carol Wolkowitz (1997) edited *A Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory*, p. 146.

¹⁹⁶ According to Population Census - 2001, Bangladesh is predominantly a Muslim majority country, around 89.7% are Muslims, 9.2% are Hindus, 0.7% is Buddhists, 0.3% is Christians and 0.2% belongs to other religious communities. Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, July 2003, p.66.

¹⁹⁷ Sherry B Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Eds.). 1981. *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

social system and their ways of constructing social reality. The discussion started following a simple question whether the male migrants had any contacts or ideas concerning female workers and it continued,

“I do not know anybody. Earlier I used to see some women in Jahor Bahru and also in Port Klang, but they all left after 1996. I had no interaction with them as they were restricted to the factory. Besides, I felt shy about getting in touch with them. Due to bad reputation they had been sent back to Bangladesh earlier. These women don’t represent normal Bangladeshi ladies. They actually, were call-girls¹⁹⁸ in Bangladesh. Their behaviour was so disreputable that they caused harm to the social environment of this country and spoiled the reputation of all Bangladeshis. Some of them used to work in Bata Company and they stole shoes from the company. Later on it was discovered and they were sacked. Now Bangladeshi women stay here as wife or students. They don’t work here. Sometimes I meet rich women, but I do not dare to talk to them, because I am not supposed to. They would be disturbed by me, because I am a simple worker while they are rich and educated.”

From these comments we can raise some important issues and facts. Such as,

- 1- That for a certain period of time Bangladeshi women used to work in Malaysia as un-skilled and semi-skilled workers. We need to know when, why and how they left Malaysia.
- 2- It is a fact that the migration of female labourers is banned in the research areas. My queries are--- how do they prolong their length of stay even in the face of restrictions that exist for Bangladeshi workers in the host country? Do Governmental regulations or prohibitions exist in Bangladesh to control the migration of female workers to foreign countries?
- 3- What is the common marital status of un-skilled and semi-skilled Bangladeshi workers?
- 4- Is there evidence of any regulatory framework, terms and conditions on policy level against bringing spouses to Malaysia?

¹⁹⁸ Instead of ‘sex worker’ they prefer to identify them as ‘call girls’ to show their hatred. This term also represents the construction of ‘feminine attitude’ where women’s domain is located inside the household, in the private sphere. Violation of this prescribed behaviour is considered by these workers as shame for the Bangladeshi nation.

5- What is the prescribed and expected behaviour for men and women in Bangladesh, how is it constructed and transmitted across border?

6- How is the cultural construction of gender negotiated to fulfil the everyday demands of the populace? Does it have any class specific manifestations?

Even though in discussions with male migrants I was told that different kinds of “*social problems were created by female migrants*” and these were the cause of their disappearance in Malaysia, interviews with factory managers, manpower agents as well as reviewed literature paint quite a different picture.¹⁹⁹ If we take a look at the emigration policy of Bangladesh we may find some restrictions concerning certain kinds of female migration, especially the migration of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers.²⁰⁰ In 1981, a ban was imposed by the then Government on migration of female workers except for the professionals. In 1987, an amendment was added further restricting the migration of the un-skilled and semi-skilled categories. However, in 1997, not only the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers, but also the migration of all other categories of female workers, including professionals was prohibited by a Government decree. As quoted in Tasneem Siddiqui, “in the same year this was changed from a ban to restrictions, from which professionals were excluded”.²⁰¹ The restriction and prohibition on the migration of un-skilled and semi-skilled women over 35 years was set aside by the Government in 2003. Still, in that decree, women less than 35 years old were not permitted to migrate on their own.²⁰²

The interviews and survey data show that as migrant workers women came until 1996²⁰³ and usually left the country after their job contract expired. The few female respondents, according to the factory authorities, that managed to continue their residence permanently, mainly convinced the authority through their competency. Instead of trying to change jobs that would perhaps increase their duration of stay, they remained in the same factory. In other words, it can be said that the extent of job duration of un-skilled and semi-skilled female workers in the host country does not depend on their personal networking skills and initiative. Rather, the abilities of the workers and also the willingness of the authorities are found to be

¹⁹⁹ Field notes and interviews, conducted during April to June, 2006.

²⁰⁰ ‘Presidential Order 1981’ in Tasneem Siddiqui, 2001.

²⁰¹ Tasneem Siddiqui. 2006. ILO Working Paper no 66. International Labour Migration from Bangladesh: A decent work perspective, p. 8.

²⁰² Ibid: p-8.

²⁰³ Field notes 2006.

the primary contributors. Consequently, unlike male workers, female workers' survival strategies mainly developed through the maintenance of relationships and ties with their female housemates as well as employers and authorities. In other words, instead of co-ethnic ties, female migrants prolong their duration of stay in the host country through 'inter-ethnic' networking. Male migrants' reluctance to show any contact with female migrants can therefore be explained highlighting the 'public disappearance' and disconnectedness of female workers with their 'country-men'.

On the contrary, male workers protected themselves from deportation either by renewing their work permits in the same company or by starting work in another company (converting into undocumented workers). They then preferred to wait for an opportunity provided by the host government to again convert into documented workers. Besides that, according to the respondents, after January 2001 male workers entered into Malaysia through clandestine ways, while females could not because of the patriarchal social system of Bangladesh. A female's decision to travel to another country depends on the male elders of the family. Females were not permitted or encouraged by their male guardians to work abroad, because the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia was frozen by the host Government until May 2006. Considering women as the "weaker sex" (Moore, 1995²⁰⁴) and hence unworthy of taking risks (like travelling and working on tourist visas), the male dominated society of Bangladesh prohibited them from working abroad. Besides, being afraid of losing honour in the society, people are sometimes reluctant to provide data concerning their female relatives' involvement in any kind of un-skilled or semi-skilled job in a foreign country.²⁰⁵ Karim et al. (1999) also identified the cause of female workers' low presence in Malaysia as embedded in the socio-cultural system of Bangladesh. The study depicted that as a country with a Muslim majority female's participation in public sector work (and therefore leaving home) is usually discouraged in Bangladesh.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Henrietta L. Moore. 1995. Polity Press. *Feminism and Anthropology*, p-15.

²⁰⁵ The Government estimation as quoted in Petra Dannecker (2005) is that in the 1990s around 5000 women migrated to Malaysia per year.

²⁰⁶ Zehadul Karim, AHM, Moha Asri Abdullah and Mohd. Isa Haji Bakar. 1999. *Foreign Workers in Malaysia: Issues and Implications*, p. 54.

As a matter of fact, to a certain extent it was agreed that a few female workers were deported from Malaysia due to “*unwanted pregnancy*”²⁰⁷. In these cases, however, not only the females, but also their male partners had to return to Bangladesh. It was said that in a sense these women were not so guilty, because their “*boyfriends*” were entirely from the Bangladeshi community, whereas Bangladeshi men were found “*accused in adultery cases*” with women from different ethnic communities. Since they engaged in relations with Malay, Chinese and Indonesian ladies they started to forget their home country ever more with every passing day, described by these manpower agents. Later on, they increasingly postponed or decreased their remittance. However, my question is not if ‘making love’ or ‘becoming a single mother’ or ‘engaging in inter-ethnic relationships and marriages’ are good things or bad. Rather, from the above narration we can easily see how in Bangladeshi society a ‘gendered ethnic boundary’ is drawn and transmitted even across border. Both of them were accused on the grounds of having ‘culturally demarcated’ national boundaries and role models. On the one side women were criticized for their violation of femininity, on the other men were also blamed for the “*negligence*” of their economic and productive roles.

However, while women were criticized along the lines of femininity, their ‘gendered rights’ were somehow overlooked or bypassed. The violation of the reproductive rights²⁰⁸ of women is kept out of sight by culturally attributed ethnic boundaries. Rather, an initiative is noticed to consider them (both male and female) as ‘purely economic objects’, instead of human

²⁰⁷ Every year semi-skilled and un-skilled female migrant workers need to accept ‘mandatory medical testing’ for renewal of the work permit. If they are found positive in any of the diseases like HIV/AIDS, STDS, tuberculosis, malaria etc. they are terminated from their job instead of medical treatment. Even, there is the provision of immediate deportation if they become pregnant. FOMEMA (Foreign Workers Medical Examination Monitoring Agency) is in the charge of this medical testing which is guided and controlled by the Immigration Act 1959/63 (Amended 2002). This information is collected through expert interviews of different level as, N.G.O, Bangladesh High Commission and factory managers. The caution of job loosing in case “the employee is found to be pregnant” is also written in the contract form of BEE LIAN PLASTIC INDUSTRIES SDN. BHD. However, the law is discriminatory, because the local female workers receive maternity leave and other facilities in time of pregnancy, sanctioned by the Employment Act 1955. Moreover, professional women and expatriates do not need to face the same amount of medical testing. For more information please find Access Denied, p. 66-67, published by TENAGANITA, SDN. BHD.

²⁰⁸ “All human rights--civil, cultural, economic, political and social, including the right to development--are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated . . . the human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls is a priority for governments and the United Nations and is essential for the advancement of women”, --The Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 213. We can also quote from the same platform as, “ Ensure the full realization of the human rights of all women migrants, including women migrant workers, and their protection against violence and exploitation; introduce measures for the empowerment of documented women migrants, including women migrant workers; facilitate the productive employment of documented migrant women through greater recognition of their skills, foreign education and credentials, and facilitate their full integration into the labour force,” -- The Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 58 (k).

beings. The conditions of the contract forms, which are regulated by the Immigration Act, should be mentioned here as an illustration of this argument. That ‘their (both male and female) jobs will be terminated if they marry a local’ or ‘they are not allowed to bring family members’, have been imposed on them as foreign workers, even though equal rights and conditions of employment for both foreign and local workers is proclaimed in the Malaysian Employment Act 1955 (Act 265). It is therefore noteworthy that professionals and expatriates, both male and female, are free from these restrictions. Consequently, even though they are found living with family members and relatives, the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers (the majority of the migrant Bangladeshi community), are still defined as living a ‘married bachelor’,²⁰⁹ life.

As a result, among 100 married persons only 6% are found officially living with their family members after bringing them abroad. Moreover there is another category (9 % of the couples). Crossing the ethnic boundary they are living with inter-ethnic family members (marrying local ladies). Within this group three internal segments are noticed: a) ‘documented’ workers, b) ‘undocumented’ workers and c) ‘in between statuses (applied for legal work permit). Thus, a kind of ‘divide and rule’ policy within the migrants of different status groups is carefully nurtured by the authorities. In other words, by fostering discriminatory migration policies an ‘institutionalized otherness’ is implemented among different status groups of Bangladeshi migrants. The creation of diversified ties and networks based on everyday experiences, concomitant survival strategies and the overall negotiation processes between different ties, can be identified as the outcome of this ‘institutional otherness’; where the migrants not only let themselves be converted into a ‘marginalized’/ ‘exploited’ position, but also produce their own impact by developing different networks within and outside the community.

The exploration of this impact is a subject for another chapter.²¹⁰ Let us therefore again concentrate on the topic we were discussing i.e. the absence or low presence of female workers in Malaysia. To clarify whether migration policies support any divide and rule policies let us make a cross tab and also chi-square test among married migrants of different occupations. The null hypothesis was (H_0) that there was no relation between profession and marital status (‘living with’ or ‘bringing spouse’ to Malaysia). But Pearson’s chi-square for p

²⁰⁹ By ‘married bachelor’ we are trying to define those who are married, but living without their spouses. Though they do not have separation or divorce with their spouses, but still they are living alone due to the immigration rule.

²¹⁰ Please see chapter four.

(significance) value is .000, which means the null hypothesis can be rejected at 1% level of significance, so the conclusion is that migrants' profession and family life (bringing in or living with spouse) are significantly related. The cross tab, presented in table 3.6 will also support the idea that migration policy is discriminatory on the grounds that it allows some migrants to bring family members, while discourages others .

Table 3.6: Cross Tabulation Occupation, Marital Status and Living with Family

		Members										
Marital Status	Brought Spouse (%)	Occupational variations ²¹¹ (%)										
		<i>'R'</i>	<i>'C'</i>	<i>'B'</i>	<i>'V'</i>	<i>'W'</i>	<i>'T'</i>	<i>'W, B and A'</i>	<i>'P'</i>	<i>'P,B and A'</i>	<i>'F'</i>	<i>'N'</i>
Married (100)	Yes (6)	0	0	16.7	0	0	0	0	16.7	66.7	0	0
	Planning To bring (4)	0	0	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	75	0
	It is not Allowed (81)	3.7	8.6	2.5	2.5	2.5	6.2	2.5	0	0	66.7	4.9
	Married a local Lady (9)	22.2	0	22.2	0	0	0	0	0	33.3	22.2	0

Source: Own compilation from the cross tabulation of survey data

The table depicts that only few categories, for example, (1) – plain professionals, (2) - professionals, businessmen and agents and (3)-businessmen are living with their Bangladeshi family members. The highest category is that of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers and also a few vendors (engaged in informal businesses in the 'Bangla Bazaar', for example, opening 'call booths' as a sublet systems in large Bangladeshi shops, selling vegetables, newspapers, and phone cards etc. in baskets and so on). Though married, they are living without their family members lacking any legal right to bring them abroad. Besides that, there are two other categories. Amongst them one group has managed to live with their family, because they are married to locals. This group is comprised of semi-skilled, un-skilled workers as well as professionals and businessmen. While the skilled professionals are better-off in their social and economic position and engaged in side businesses alongside prestigious jobs, the other respondents are far less well-off. Owing to their undocumented status these un-skilled and semi-skilled workers managed to find decent jobs either by their wives or their wives'

²¹¹ Here 'R' stands for restaurant workers, 'C' construction sector, 'B' businessmen, 'V' vendors, 'W' wage labourer, 'T' transport sector, 'W, B, A' worker, businessmen and agent, 'P' professionals, 'P,B,A' professionals, businessmen and agent, 'F' factory workers and 'N' is for unemployed migrants.

relatives' contacts. In other words, through inter-ethnic networking they find a way of survival.

The situation of the businessmen, within this group, does not show any distinctly different picture. They started their businesses depending on spouse visas and as employees in business organizations, where their wife was the nominal owner of the business. The wife acts as the guarantor of the husband in this case. Finally, the other group of interviewees (those presently alone and wishing to bring their spouses in), planned to do so via commercial networking. For that they need to go to brokers who may assist them for payment. Since they are not able to completely provide for their spouses, in order to cover the expenses, their strategy is to find jobs for their spouses either in ethnic enterprises of the manpower agents (that are bringing them in Malaysia) or in different restaurants and factories through their (agents) connections. Thus, to adapt in their host society, the specific characteristics²¹² of Bangladeshi femininity and masculinity, discussed earlier, are being altered, re-constructed and also negotiated as can be illustrated focusing on different initiatives of the respondents of these two categories, that are 'married to locals' or planning to 'bring their spouses'.

It is mentionable, that even though most of the male respondents express that at present there is no Bangladeshi woman worker in their working areas, they nonetheless have Chinese, Philippines, Malaysian and Tamil female co-workers. The spouses of the locally married businessmen, restaurant and factory workers of the table often were their previous co-workers. Thus on the one side, we can see the formation of inter-ethnic marital bonds (by the workers), while on the other, a kind of criticism is also noticed against these cross boundary ethnic ties. It was voiced by workers that before coming to Malaysia, returning migrants, that were their relatives or friends, warned them about local ladies with the aim of helping to avoid clashes with other communities. Providing the example of a Bangladeshi worker, who has developed a matrimonial bond with an Indonesian lady they remind themselves to refrain from pursuing relationships with local women, because by doing so they might forget their parents and families that originally sent them (spending huge amounts of money in the process). Thus through horizontal networks, both local and transnational, the workers share, construct and also transmit knowledge about their duties and prescribed behaviour as migrant workers in a foreign country.

²¹² That woman will stay at home/private sphere and man in the public sphere or women are unworthy of taking risks and to migrate abroad etc. can be quoted here for example.

The other respondents, the majority of the migrants that are living without family members, console themselves by the thought that at least they perform their ‘primary duty’ by sending money home to their families. For them, even though it is prohibited, there are still a couple of alternative ways to bring in their families, such as bringing wives on tourist or student visas. Some of the interviewees were planning to seize this possibility, but the majority was not so keen. As they did not know whether they would be permitted to stay for the next year, they didn’t dare to bring their families to Malaysia considering the risks of wasting money. Besides, this was seen by them as “*too expensive*”, because they would have to rent a house that would include water bills, electricity bills, monthly rents etc. Therefore, the ‘gendered survival strategies’ of the respondents, the low presence of female workers and the overall negotiation processes of the workers against the political, socio-economic, institutional and ideological regulatory frameworks need to be explained considering different factors. Concerning this, not only the macro level structures and constraints of the origin and receiving countries, but also the nature (male or female) of the respondents, their class and social status, the working environment and neighbourhood as well as the gendered discourse on masculinity and femininity are found to be equally important.

In other words, we can try to analyze these very diverse and ‘gendered coping strategies’ of Bangladeshi migrant workers by taking into account the concept of ‘mixed embeddedness’²¹³ of Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun and Jan Rath. According to them,

“We will show that the socio-economic position of immigrant entrepreneurs-----and, consequently, also their prospects with respect to upward social mobility-----can only properly be understood by taking into account not only their embeddedness in social networks of immigrants but also their embeddedness in the socio-economic and politico-institutional environment of the country of settlement. We, therefore, propose the use of a concept, *mixed embeddedness*, which encompasses both sides of embeddedness to analyse processes of insertion of immigrant entrepreneurs. Complex configurations of mixed embeddedness enable immigrant businesses to survive—partly by facilitating informal economic activities---in segments where indigenous firms, as a rule, cannot.”

²¹³ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun and Jan Rath. 1999. *Mixed Embeddedness: (In) formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands*, p. 2.

However, my attempt here is not to analyze the ethnic entrepreneurship of Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia. As a matter of fact, I shall discuss this in chapter five. On the contrary, from the above discussion we can conclude that there exist no co-ethnic ties between Bangladeshi male and female migrants in the research areas. Rather, a kind of ‘inter-ethnic’ networking is formulated there. By keeping this inter-ethnic networking as an issue for further analysis, let us come back to the other internal factors of the migrants - to see whether these work as potential components for the development of different ties and bonds within and outside the community.

3.2 Traditional Hierarchy, Different Age Groups and the Migrant Situation

The age structure of the respondents, presented in the table 3.7, shows that at present, the highest age group is 31 to 45 (60%) years old. There are also two other categories of respondents, such as, migrants from 18 to 30 (26.7%) and 46 to 56 (13.3%) years old.

Table 3.7: Age Structure of the Respondents

Age groups	Frequency	Percentage
18 to 30 years	40	26.7
31 to 45 years	90	60.0
46 to 56 years	20	13.3
Total	150	100

Source: Survey data of Bangladeshi migrants

The age distribution indicates that all migrants belong to the highly productive group. In fact, if we consider the national dependency ratio of Bangladeshis depicted in the population census (2001) that, “dependency ratio of a population is defined by the ratio of population of 0-14 years and 60 years and over to the population of 15-59 years age”²¹⁴, we may come to the conclusion that Bangladeshi migrants in Malaysia represent a group of people with big potential. Zamir (2006) also narrated the presence of highly productive group of migrant workers in Malaysia (all workers belong to the 15-49 years age group which is the biggest one, 94%). This group is comprised of such types of workers that are 15-39 years old²¹⁵. ‘Failing to find a suitable field to utilize their productivity in the home country they decide to

²¹⁴ Population Census – 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, July 2003, p. 52. According to that census, “This is a summary measure to the age composition of population. If the population in the age group 0-14 is high then the dependency ratio would be higher. The population proportion in the older age group (60 years and over) has also some impact on the dependency ratio”.

²¹⁵ Zahid Zamir. 2006. Migrant Workers’ Contribution in Malaysian Economy, p. 23.

migrate'--- is a well cited quotation in different articles on migration. While in Siddiqui (2005)²¹⁶ migration is identified as a common livelihood strategy of Bangladeshis even before the country's independence, Aziz (2001)²¹⁷ listed some push factors of migration through a study of Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia's construction sector. According to him, amongst others there are diverse and significant stimulators for migration. Such as, "1) poor remuneration at home, 2) slim employment opportunities and 3) sheer boredom and parental encouragement." Therefore, it is not surprising that all respondents of the study are in their productive age. The question is how do the migrants with full productive capabilities organize themselves in Malaysia?

In fact, the question if traditional age hierarchy was still active within the migrants in the host society and if yes then how it operated, was taken into consideration during my field visit. In fact, as there are ideals narrated in literature (Vatuk 1990²¹⁸; Gayathri 2006²¹⁹; Yuling 2006²²⁰) that by virtue of age elderly people receive special care and protection by the younger generation (especially sons), I intended to check whether this type of cultural capital played any potential role for the development of survival strategies in the host society. But the interviews and survey data of Bangladeshi migrants do not support this view. It was noticed that age had no significant effect on the migrants in the sense that elderly people did not get any special chances, appreciation or respect from their fellow countrymen. Within the strong tied groups they are addressed as "uncle" or "elder brother" etc., but this address has no further function as a potential strategy of survival or upward mobility.

On the contrary, migrants achieved job and other facilities depending on their vertical networking, personal qualities and status of immigration into the country that helped them to mobilize scarce resources. For example, amongst the migrants of 18-30 years age group there were both un-skilled and semi-skilled workers as well as businessmen and vendors. Within the businessmen and vendors group two respondents were found to be owners of business

²¹⁶ Tasneem Siddiqui. 2005. International Migration as a Livelihood Strategy of the Poor: The Bangladesh Case in Tasneem Siddiqui (ed.) Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices, p. 73.

²¹⁷ Abdul-Rashid Abdul- Aziz. 2001. Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia's Construction Sector, p. 8.

²¹⁸ Vatuk, S. 1990. To be a Burden on Others: Dependency Anxiety among the elderly in India in Owen M Lynch (Ed.), Divine passions: the Social Construction of emotions in India, Berkeley: University of California Press.

²¹⁹ Srinivasan Gayathri. BOLD, Vol. 17 No. 1 .2006. The Elderly in Indian Retirement Community, p. 2.

²²⁰ Zhi Yuling. BOLD, Vol. 17 No. 1 .2006. Family Inter-generational Support in Urban Zhejiang, China, p.24.

enterprises, whilst the others were trying to survive renting small booths for 'phone card and call shops' business in one of the business enterprises of the previous group. Thus within the businessmen group there was internal hierarchy on the basis of income sources, even though they were almost all in the same age groups. Of these two ethnic entrepreneurs one managed to start his business at the very beginning obtaining a business visa. His elder brother, who was already present in the host society, helped him to obtain this visa and acted as a partner in his enterprise.

On the other hand, the second respondent lets call him Minnat Ali, set up his business through ethnic and inter-ethnic networking. He had already lived in Malaysia for thirteen years when he became a businessman. Before that he used to work as a production supervisor where he managed to form friendships with country-men and members of different ethnic communities. Later on, he started a joint business with his previous co-workers and friends in the same factory. Into his business organization he recruited Bangladeshis and inter-ethnic members that consequently all supported him in his competition with the co-ethnic and inter-ethnic entrepreneurs of the 'Bangla Bazaar'. Therefore, we can see that instead of depending on age hierarchy these migrants managed to get followers and comparatively respectable positions through personal qualities and networks.

Out of three different age sets, only those who found a better way of upward mobility in the host society, became 'respected leaders' and 'patrons', though they may have been of younger age. The other migrants tried to become affiliated with the affluent people, because they were not as well-off as their peers. Though more aged than these leaders, they addressed their better-off patrons as "*borovai*" (elder brother) or "*boss*" (leader) like all the other clients in the group. These "*respectable chiefs*" possessed the right to command a group comprised of young and old alike. In other words, instead of age, respondents' occupation, properties, legal status, connections with the natives and other capabilities in the host society are found to be significant factors and hence considered better survival strategies that lead to the possibility of integration into the receiving country. The other sojourners that lack these resources attempt to link up with the successful few and form a group of weak tied networks to facilitate their successes at working and living abroad. This type of leadership structure is quite different from the examples of old Chinatowns in the United States. Whilst among the Bangladeshi community a new-comer may be converted into a leader due to his economic and social

capabilities, for the Chinese community as depicted in Min Zhou (2001)²²¹, “usually older, first-generation immigrants” possess the right to be a “Kiu lings” (leaders of overseas Chinese).

However, although age hierarchy does not make any sense with regards to upward mobility and immediate migratory group formation, it is nevertheless linked with some other factors that somehow regulate their entrance into Malaysia and the respondents’ reality of life. The following lists will cover how age converts into a matter of consideration for the migrants. Such as,

- That the minimum age requirement for un-skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers is 18-25 (25-45 years for housemaids) at the time of entrance into the country.²²² Consequently, when requesting visas and work permits Bangladeshi migrants are supposed to fulfil this demand. However, this is not reality for all of the respondents, since apart the official way they also enter the country and change jobs clandestinely. As a result, after finding out about the age requirement from labour brokers and returned migrants, the ‘under-aged’ and ‘aged’ migrants change their original age to find a job in a foreign country. In the same way, not only age, but also the names of migrants are altered during the process of job changing. In order to prolong their duration of stay migrants adopt this strategy while information sharing along the lines of co-ethnic networking provides them with the means to do so.
- At present documented workers, though some of them are in their forties and fifties, if the duration of their migrant-life is taken into account or their arrival ages considered one can see that many of them are also in their twenties. For example, all of the 46-56 year old respondents have been living in Malaysia for the last 10 to 30 years. The longest resident has stayed 30 years and is an IC holder now. The collected data states that he came to Malaysia in 1976 as a skilled 26 year old worker. However, in this matter it should be mentioned that neither all the respondents of these groups came holding documented status nor as un-skilled or semi-skilled workers. Besides, as time went on and experience gathered they changed jobs as well as engaged themselves in

²²¹ Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim. 2001. Formation, Consolidation and Diversification of the Ethnic Elite: The Case of the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United State, p. 233.

²²²Appendix 1. Regulatory Framework at <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Workers-Remittance/appendix.PDF>, retrieved 30th March 2007, p. 105. See also Anja Rudnick. 1996. Foreign Labour in Malaysian Manufacturing. Bangladeshi Workers in the Textile Industry, p. 54.

different kinds of informal business initiatives, alongside their main income sources. Ultimately, though age has no significant effect in regulating the organizational structure of the community, it should still be regarded as an important asset for the few migrants that have been abroad for such a long time.

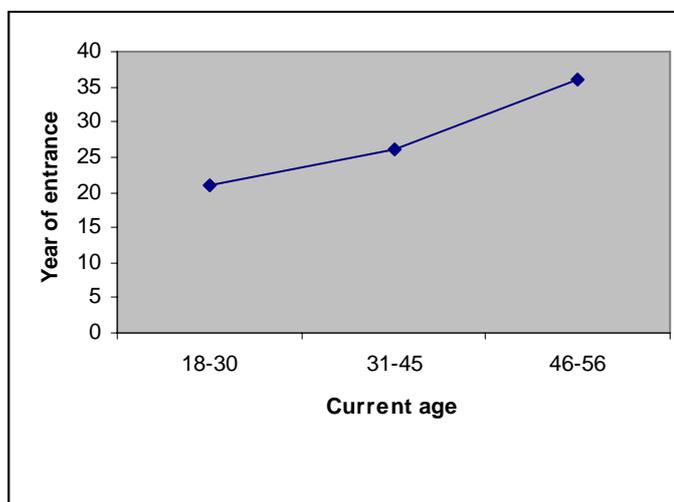
- This study has noticed significant links between migrants' marital status and age distribution. Apart from the two 'divorced' persons all the respondents of the 46-56 years age group are married. Besides that, amongst the members of the largest group, that of 31-45 years, out of 90 interviewees 81% is married. The last group, the most junior one is comprised of 9 married and 31 unmarried persons. Therefore, we may say that the more aged the respondents are, the higher the possibility for them being married. Since bringing a spouse is not allowed for un-skilled and semi-skilled workers, they either maintain transnational networks with their families at home or try starting a new family through getting married with locals. Moreover, the migration policy of Malaysia may also be identified as rigid concerning the integration of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers on the grounds that migrant workers' (of the mentioned group) marriage with locals is considered void in the workers' contract form.²²³ As we have already seen in table 3.6 that though most of these un-skilled and semi-skilled workers are living like married-bachelors because of above mentioned migration policy, there are still workers, skilled as well as un-skilled and semi-skilled, those have indeed developed inter-ethnic marital ties and other kinds of relationships in the host society. However, whether the Bangladeshis' transnational networking practices and the migration policy of the host country can be identified as hindrances for the migrants' integration into the receiving society, is a matter of further analysis and also an issue of migrants' survival strategies that will be explored in the next chapters²²⁴.
- The comparison of entrance ages of the three different age groups as shown in figure 3.3, depicts that the interval is decreasing gradually from 46-56 to 18-30. Whilst the mean age of entrance for the most senior migrants was 36, it decreased for the next two groups to 26 (for the 31-45 year olds) and 21 (for the 18-30 year olds). These age variations may denote a present rise in popularity of migration as a potential survival strategy. My interviews with returned and current migrants as well as labour brokers and experts indicate that the improvement of the "migration industry" through

²²³ Contract form is guided by the Immigration policy (Immigration Act 1959/63) of Malaysia.

²²⁴ Please find the discussion of chapter four and five.

commercial and kinship based transnational networking as well as transmission of knowledge on migration facilitated the increase of migration popularity for the younger generation (that view migration as a strategy for upward mobility).

Figure 3.3: Comparison of Migrants' Age of Entrance



Source: Own compilation from survey data

Thus though at present we have not noticed any age based ties or groups in the host society, we can still see that networking and migratory knowledge sharing within different age groups are playing a significant role in promoting migration as a potential survival strategy for the younger generation. In fact, their contributions can be seen in two manifold ways: 1) the micro level social construction of the necessity of migration for upward mobility, 2) the provision of channels and knowledge about ways of coming and settling down into the receiving society. Supporting Ballard's²²⁵ arguments Kanwal Mand²²⁶ also discussed the chain migration from the South Asian sub-continent to the UK where earlier migrants served as information pools and thus helped later coming migrants to find jobs, accommodation as well as to adapt to the new environment. Similar to age, religious identity also plays a significant role to the emigration of Bangladeshis to Malaysia. In the next segment we will check the likelihood of its connectedness with group formation in the host society.

²²⁵ Ballard, R. 1994. *Desh Pardesh: the South Asian Presence in Britain*. London: Hurst.

²²⁶ Kanwal Mand. 2006. *Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper Nr 18. Social Capital and Transnational South Asian Families: Rituals, Care and Provision*, p. 6.

3.3 “Religion does not Matter, We are All Workers”

The above comment is quoted from a group discussion²²⁷ conducted with semi-skilled and unskilled Bangladeshi migrant workers in Port Klang, Peninsular Malaysia. From the comment it seems that the religious composition of Bangladeshi workers has failed to make any significant contribution to their group formation, rather their motivation of migration which is to make a living as a migrant labourer, is prioritized as it appears to be the sole regulator of their lifestyles in a foreign country. Out of 150 sample respondents only 2.7% declared themselves non-Muslim, whilst the majority (97.3%) was Muslim. We can find the cause for this small percentage if we look the national population census²²⁸ of Bangladesh. There we find that it is a predominately Muslim country. Consequently, it is not surprising that the low presence of non-Muslim Bangladeshi workers in comparison to their Muslim counterparts is a representation of their home country situation.

However, even though workers were not divided according to their religious identities, the construction of a “Muslim brotherhood” was nonetheless found as the common practice of different status groups both in the origin and receiving countries. “*That ‘khati’ (pure) Muslims will be respected in the receiving country*” or “*based on religious background Muslims may integrate*” are the strongly suggested and nurtured discourses on assimilation. These are transmitted by the networks of strong and weak ties between migrants of different research areas. And transnational networks add an extra dimension by creating a role model for future migrants who likewise wish to settle down abroad for a better future, in their words “*borolok homu*” (to become rich). They try to make a list of “*dos and don’ts*” for ‘real Muslims’. Real Muslims will be “*busily working, not be insensitive to local ladies, not ‘stroll around’* (Petra Dannecker, 2005) *unnecessarily and will abstain from drinking alcohol*” etc. These characteristics are identified as common and expected amongst the current and returned migrants. At the same time they criticize others who violate these stereotyped constructions. To them, these “*wrong-doers*” are the causes of the community’s “*bad reputation*” in the host society that hamper fulfilling some of their wishes of assimilation. They continue,

²²⁷ The discussions were conducted in March 2006.

²²⁸ According to Population Census - 2001, Bangladesh is predominantly a Muslim majority country, around 89.7% are Muslims, 9.2% are Hindus, 0.7% is Buddhists, 0.3% is Christians and 0.2% belongs to other religious communities. Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, July 2003, p.66.

“The country is nice. The climate is good, only one season. Once Melayu used to like us, to give us free food, shelter and free rides in their vehicles, but now they don’t trust us anymore with regards to women. They rely on us in money matters, but not for their women. They say that we are not real Muslims, we are misguided.”

In fact, the host country’s identity as a “Muslim country” was advertised and hence considered as a suitable place for migration by the families of many migrants. It was their kinship and commercial networks in the origin country and also transnational ties that took an active part in this overall construction process. Concerning this Hashim’s narration about his visit to Malaysia should be seen on the grounds that he was not permitted at first to go there by his family. They advised him to continue his studies. At last, observing his reluctance towards studying and his concomitant planning to visit a Muslim country, he was permitted on a condition that *“he must come back and make regular correspondence while he was abroad”*. Consequently, among different causes, the receiving country’s religious background was also taken into consideration.

It is noteworthy that the situation was regulated not only by the micro level initiatives, but also by the macro level cultural construction of the Muslim brotherhood. Regarding this, interviews with Government officials and also recruiting agencies can be remembered where there the Muslim brotherhood between these two countries was glorified. This image is also created and represented as well in the unpublished data of the Bangladesh High Commission, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Petra Dannecker’s comment can be taken into consideration in this regard. According to her,

“The memorandum of understanding, which both countries agreed on in 1994, was presented by the Bangladesh Government and in Bangladeshi newspaper as part of the Muslim Brotherhood between the two countries. Even though the Malaysian Government froze the agreement in 1995 Bangladeshi recruitment agencies and the Bangladeshi Government still continue to construct a special relationship between the countries based on religious grounds.”²²⁹

²²⁹ Petra Dannecker. 2003. *The Meaning and the Rationalities underlying Labor Migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia*, p. 19.

The low presence of non-Muslim migrants in Malaysia in comparison to Muslims may also be analysed highlighting the cultural construction of Malaysia's image as a Muslim country. Identification of some countries as Muslim like Pakistan, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia etc. and some as Hindu, for example India, is a common phenomenon. In Bangladesh this is transmitted through different ties and networks of the migrants. Specifically, the attempt to refer to some countries such as India as a place for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims, remind us of the historical legacy of the current Bangladeshis. Their religious identities formed by historical events such as the 'Partition of Bengal' in 1905²³⁰ and later on, the creation of Pakistan and India in 1947²³¹, still resonate with the current population (in the form of ties and networks). This tells us that the respondents' selection of destination country is motivated by these historically and culturally constructed images of their respective host countries. This is significant if we want to explore what roles networks play in these stereotypical identifications and how the transmission of constructed knowledge functions.

The preference of Malaysia as destination country (for the Muslim community) may lie in the fact that until now Pakistan has failed to reach the status of a labour receiving country. Besides, the liberation war of 1971 between East (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan as a consequence of which Bangladesh emancipated itself to an independent country may also be the cause of avoidance. During the interviews with Muslim migrants and labour brokers I noticed that they thought that because of religious similarities Hindus should migrate to India. And the few Hindu respondents also postulated that the cause of their sufferings abroad might lie in their religious background. They voiced their intent to advise their friends and relatives, who are from the same religious background, from immigrating to Malaysia. Ranabir Samaddar's work also mentions that the migration of many Hindu Bangladeshis to neighbouring India (which took place in several phases) was a consequence of communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims as well as the migration of the Chakma ethnic community as a result of ethnic eviction through the Kaptai Dam project of the Chittagong Hill tracts.²³² Thus through the everyday discourses of different level actors the cultural construction of this country's image as a predominately Muslim country is getting more accepted every day.

²³⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru. 1991. *The Discovery of India*.

²³¹ Partha Chatterjee. 1993. *The Nation and Its Fragments*.

²³² Ranabir Samaddar. 1999. *The Marginal Nation. Trans-border Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal*, p. 28-30.

Interestingly enough even though Muslim migrants like to introduce themselves as followers of Islam, they are still found to be fragmented into different religious and political groups. The presence of religious and politico-religious organizations amongst the migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia that echo the origin country's political system, can be mentioned here as an instance of this fact. Though few people engaged actively in these organizations, other followers' occasional presence was also noticed in the study. Besides I observed a kind of informal weekly and monthly gathering of the members of these parties during the field visit. While the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers used to arrange meetings at home, the get-together of professionals and businessmen took place in their institutes and business organizations. An instance of these informal political activities was the initiation of members of the branches of 'B.N.P', 'Jamayate Islami' and 'Tableague Jamayat'.

Not only the origin country, but also Malaysia as a country of destination equally emphasizes religious identities. Referring to several sources and mentioning the arguments of Kassim²³³ (1997) and Gurowitz²³⁴ (2000), Dannecker²³⁵ tries to explain this, highlighting the demographic politics in context of a multi-ethnic country. It is noteworthy that within these overall construction and transmission processes some aspects are carefully hidden from the migrants. Therefore, after their arrival in the receiving country most of them astonishingly discover the following aspects,

- That the country's inhabitants are not only Malays, but also other people live there, especially Chinese and Indian Tamils. It is a multi-ethnic country.
- Though it is a Muslim country, during working hours, they are allowed to go pray very rarely. Though they get time off to celebrate Chinese New Year they have to remain at work during the 'Eid'²³⁶ festival. According to their Chinese employer, *"you have come here for money. If you enjoy yourselves now and don't earn money, then your family will die of starvation."*

²³³ Azizah Kassim. 1997. "Illegal Aliens Labour in Malaysia: Its Influx, Utilization and Ramifications", Indonesia and Malays World.

²³⁴ Amy Gurowitz. 2000. Migrants Rights and Activism in Malaysia: Opportunities and Constraints.

²³⁵ Petra Dannecker. 2005. Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia: The Construction of "Others" in a Multi-ethnic Context, p. 250.

²³⁶ It is a kind of festival of the Muslim community, which is celebrated twice a year. After Ramadan (fasting in day time for the full month of Ramadan) they enjoy 'Eid-ul-Fitar' and another one is 'Eid-ul- Azha' where they slaughter a 'halal' animal in the name of Allah. This is to teach Muslims about the importance of sacrificing.

- Most of the respondents (68%) worked for Chinese employers. According to the respondents, “*Our employers like us very much. We are sincere and hard working; we are even ready to work overtime whenever they need it.*”
- These un-skilled and semi-skilled workers almost never found all Malays sympathetic to them. Besides, according to them Malays are followers of ‘shafi majhab’, whilst Bangladeshis adhere to ‘hanafi majhab’. Therefore, instead of going to Malay owned mosque, they usually try to pray at home if they have time.
- They (34%) need to develop survival strategies to avoid attacks from Tamil Indians and also to keep the Indonesians from stealing their valuables etc.

Therefore, it can be mentioned that though the country is ideally introduced to the migrants as a Muslim country, this cannot be taken for granted without careful analysis. The multi-ethnic politics and ethnic harmonization programmes along the lines of religion, the creation of otherness within and outside the community and the causes for the low presence of non-Muslim migrants need to be carefully explored. These examinations may help us to identify the roles of networking in the reproduction and construction of the dominant ideology as well as status quo. Since part of this exploration is an in-depth analysis of the organizational structure of the migrant community (which is the subject of chapter four) let us now return to the other aspects of group formation, of which this chapter is after all about.

3.4 Areas of Origin, Formation of Different Ties and Negotiations

In rural and mofussil (sub-divisions of a district) areas of Bangladesh, from where the majority of the respondents originated from, a multi-practised term is “*attio*” (kin). It refers to neighbours other than “consanguineal”²³⁷ or “affinal”²³⁸ relatives. People try to address their neighbours applying kinship terms to express their warm relationships. Though they are not related by blood or marital bond, they still try to develop a relationship with their neighbours utilizing kinship terms. Maintaining the principles of kinship terminology amongst

²³⁷ Robin Fox. 1967. Kinship and Marriage. An Anthropological Perspective. Harmondsworth, Eng: Penguin Publishers.

²³⁸ Ibid.

“fictive”²³⁹ relatives the senior male members are addressed as grandfather, uncle, elder brother etc., while for the female members opposite terms are applied. In the same way children of both sides convert into each others cousin etc. The in-laws of these neighbours are considered in-laws for other neighbours as well and are treated as brother-in-law, sister-in-law, parents-in-law etc. and so on. Thus people who are not relatives transform ‘fictional relatives’ and address each other as ‘kin’. In other words, people, who are not each others consanguine or affine, love to connect with each other by constructing ties or bonds in the homeland.

These relationships include not only application of kin terms, but also moral obligations and other duties. For example, people who migrate to a different country promise to help others who later on also wish to migrate. It is expected of them, seen as their duty towards their relatives. If they do not help they and their families may face criticism. Moreover, other fictive relatives will not consider said individuals and their families as members as their kin. As a result, while they are absent their consanguineal or affinal relatives are declined any kind of assistance and support from their neighbours. These types of moral obligations and duties on the basis of relatedness and connectedness to different level of kin and non-kin are also drawn in Gardner’s paper.²⁴⁰ Referring to the example of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in England and their relatives in the homeland Sylhet, a north-eastern district of Bangladesh, Gardner has explained how “shahajjo” (help) is delivered and expected from each other and how it helps poor families to survive. She has noticed the existence of actual types of patron-client relationships in her research areas.

However, the respondents of the current study, namely Bangladeshi migrants’ that have travelled to Malaysia and their families’ as well as relatives’ (*attios*) livelihood in the home country do not fully echo the “Londoni” example. Not depending totally on their kinship and marital sources as described in Gardner²⁴¹, most of the migrants to Peninsular Malaysia managed to come by utilizing their relatives’ networks with middlemen and also gaining knowledge about the way of travelling to and surviving in a foreign country. So instead of receiving direct assistance from their relatives, migrants indirectly utilized their assistance to reach the “*dalal*” (middleman), a kind of commercial labour broker. Thus the would-be

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Katy Gardner and Zahir Ahmed. 2006. Place, Social Protection and Migration in Bangladesh: A Londoni Village in Biswanath. Sussex Working Paper T 18, p. 20.

²⁴¹ Ibid: p- 21 and 23.

migrants managed to find *dalal* already there in their home-town. Since their relatives were supported by this middleman he became a trust-worthy person in the eyes of the soon to leave migrants. Later on, through monetary reciprocity even with these middlemen they managed to get contacts and links with manpower agents in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The respondents stated that the link between migrants, brokers and Dhaka based agents was not straight forward. Rather, even while on their way to their Dhaka based central manpower agent migrants also needed to convince several middlemen through the mediation of area based brokers.

At this level, considering that the chance to travel abroad is hard to get individual migrants start to compete with each other and pay both “*kind and cash*” to the middlemen for the ticket to quick economic prosperity (see table 3.8). Consequently, the previous kinship ties among these groups of more or less similar social status lost their importance and the fraternal feeling of national brotherhood was replaced by a conflict of interests. Middlemen thus were able to maximise their profits from these migrants, though ideally the quantity of payment was supposed to depend on the level of “*closeness*” with the commercial broker. For example, the informal assumption was that respondents connected with the middlemen through consanguineal or affinal bonds would pay less than the others attached by fictive ties - in fact the study revealed the opposite.

Although migrants know they are exploited by their middlemen they still try to maintain ties with them as an investment to a better future. In fact, a middleman who is also related with the ‘future migrants’ either by actual or adopted bonds, usually tries to show his moral obligations and duties by introducing said migrants with the central manpower agents (after of course receiving payment). Migrants address him as “*uncle*” or “*big brother*” / “*brother-in-law*” or simply “*boss*” depending on the type and source of connectedness and ties. But without paying his “*attio plus dalal*”, nobody managed to receive any contacts with the professional brokers of Dhaka. They feel relief and also deem themselves lucky since the middleman is living very close to them. In any kind of emergency, at least they or their relatives may go to him. Middlemen thus convert into a so-called patron among surroundings of those that remained at home and would be migrants, though the migrants know the actual exploitative nature of that relationship. In other words, unlike Gardner’s true patron-client relationship a kind of ‘pseudo protector and protected ties’ was noticed among respondents. Besides, the relationship can be identified as fluid in nature, because whenever the question of distribution

of scarce resources needs answering migrants of even strongly tied groups convert into competitors.

Table 3.8: Amount of Money Spent for Migration

Amount of money	Frequency	Percentage
More than 2 hundred thousand	125	83.3
Around 1 hundred thousand	15	10.0
Less than 1 hundred thousand	10	6.7
Total	150	100

Source: Own compilation from survey data

Thus the local *dalals*, migrants' fictive relatives work as a gateway to create links with the full time manpower agents. The manpower agents of Dhaka, who have contacts with the middlemen and agents of the receiving country, initiate further steps after taking service charges from the would-be migrants. As a matter of fact, most of the Bangladeshi migrants arrived in Malaysia following this type of commercial networking through developing fictive kinship bonds with the better-off people. In other words, as a potential survival strategy even before their arrival, migrants formulated a relationship and tie with influential people of the same area, for which the role of money in the vertical level was more pivotal than any kinship relation. The question of scarce resource management was found important not only among weak tied networks, but also within the strong tied groups of the same area. This argument is made on the grounds that during the search for ways of travelling abroad competition rose among friends that even shared benevolent feelings and had vowed to assist each other. Whether the existence of this competitive and exploitive relation within primordial bonds is still active in the host country, where the migrants need to mobilize scarce resources combating ethnic and inter-ethnic people will be discussed in chapter four. Here I will proceed by focusing on the nature of ties that are developed based on the areas of origin.

In Peninsular Malaysia depending on the prior home country networks some migrants convert into members of the 'Noakhali group', a south-eastern district of Bangladesh, while others (primarily from the southern districts and divisions) join the 'Barishal group'. The labour brokers of Malaysia, mainly business entrepreneurs, are thus able to enlist a steady stream of followers into their groups that may be utilized as social resources against their competitors. While the clients address their so-called patrons (the better-off people of the same hometown) as "*boss*" or "*elder brother*" and try to show their obedience towards them, which is usually expected, they on the other hand, facing the practical realities of a new environment such as language, food, new neighbours and co-workers, unknown streets, codes of conduct, police,

required skills for the new jobs, accommodation etc. try to assist each other depending on their capabilities (as they are all a 'low income group' and hence individually vulnerable). Thus the previous rivals convert into each others' friends in a new environment and form a new kind of strong tie.

However, even though they originated from the same area, the bond of strong ties was noticed only within members of the horizontal level while a kind of weak tie seemed to be found on the basis of home country's networks in the vertical level. These differences and similarities were created and also spontaneously developed because of other factors, for example, occupation, living and working areas, legal status, ethnic and inter-ethnic networking, membership in political organizations etc. This type of closeness may be compared with Gardner's discussion on "relatedness" where she described how one's relationship is measured by living areas, time, distance etc. that determine the quantity of assistance to the poor by their influential relatives in London.²⁴² In this way, areas of origin contributed to the formation of several strong and weak tied groups in the research areas.

In fact, this study has noticed a high presence (47.3%) of migrants from the south (10%) and south-eastern (37.3%) districts of Bangladesh. These migrants are found to be separated into two major factional groups, namely 'Noakhali' and 'Barishal'. These factions were developed in the host country among the privileged groups, whereas the other members of the same areas (of origin), though not so well-off, nonetheless followed their better-off reference groups in the quest to find a better way of survival. The cleavages were mainly the outcome of competition and conflict concerning manpower and "*hundy*" (sending remittance through informal channels) businesses as well as to obtain leadership in a branch of a Bangladesh based political organization. Therefore, though apparently individual business entrepreneurs, the labour brokers primarily came from different districts of the southern and south-eastern part of Bangladesh and received followers in their groups as well, but eventually merged into two main groups. Based on the similarities and differences of every day experiences, realities and demands the patrons of the same and different districts of this part (south and south-eastern) either developed a faction jointly or separated into another segment against their competitors. Consequently, it is not reasonable to simply write that Bangladeshi migrants in

²⁴² Ibid: p- 19-20.

Malaysia mainly come from the southern districts of Bangladesh as we see in Dannecker's²⁴³ writings.

Besides that, a large group of respondents (42.7%) were found in Malaysia that came from different districts of the Dhaka division. However, instead of formulating a separate group of their own they joined one of the influential groups that had been in existence for a long time and also managed to reach their vantage point. Though some of the well-off people from Dhaka division were clearly followers of different political branches, for business interests and to combat any kind of risk as foreigners they and their followers nonetheless allied themselves either with the 'Noakhali' or 'Barishal' group. A worker therefore may come from Gazipur (Dhaka division), but he can be a member of Kalim's (Noakhali) or Dabir's (Barishal) group depending on his expectations and the scope of his fulfilment.²⁴⁴ Consequently, either to renew their work permits as well as to transfer money to their home country or to counter threats from locals they try to develop networks with influential Bangladeshis. Or a businessman from Dhaka can try to create friendships with businessmen from Barishal or Noakhali, because they are all foreigners and need to cope with the environment if they are to make their fortunes. Hence, different kinds of alliances are formed by the migrants in order to survive abroad and become upwardly mobile.

It should be mentioned in this regard that these strong tied groups gradually disperse to other places depending on the availability of jobs. While documented workers normally receive accommodations alongside their job, that are usually close to their working area, undocumented workers depend solely on their "*Deshi big brother*" (country brother) for this purpose. They remain connected with their (so-called) patrons, try to convince them providing free service as assistants in their business organizations or as cooks in their restaurants and homes - unless they manage to actually find a job. Later on, some get jobs in nearby areas while others need to leave the place to find new jobs and accommodations. Thus the previous homeland contacts become gradually blurred and a kind of distance may appear because of new jobs, environments and people. Migrants working nearby maintain their relationships with each other through short visits in their free time, while the distant inhabitants try to do this through mobile phones. However, this type of network maintenance does not exist for life; rather on the basis of the everyday realities and the arenas of engagement, people of the

²⁴³ Petra Dannecker. 2003. The Meaning and the Rationalities underlying Labor Migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia, p. 10.

²⁴⁴ For detail discussion please find chapter four.

new working and living environment and new neighbours convert into each others friend, competitors and protectors.

Moreover, a kind of bargaining process was also noticed mainly among the workers, who had stayed in the research areas for long periods of time and managed ways of survival. During the interviews on being asked about the ways that were followed to find jobs, renew work permits and passports, while the majority of the respondents identified either the 'Noakhali' or 'Barishal' group as a means for this, a cluster of respondents (28.6%) were found who said, "*Any body who works.*" This negotiation process of the respondents can be explained highlighting three main aspects as depicted below:

1. It is a kind of pseudo patron-client relationship. Instead of considering their reference groups as protectors, what we may see within the bonds of paternalistic patron-client relationships, they bargain with them to maximize their expectations. It is their power that allows them to achieve this (after often long sojourns abroad). After staying a while they help themselves through developing language proficiency, mainly Bahasa Melayu, setting up their own ties and also accumulating local knowledge regarding effective survival strategies.
2. The every day reality of the receiving society and the long time absence from the home country may snap their fictive kinship ties. Relationships need continuous nurturing that we may see in the origin country. At home, respondents used to celebrate different occasions ranging from the celebration of the Bengali New Year to the rituals of "rites of passage" along with their relatives, both kin and non-kin. This helped them to maintain their relationships. Gardner analyzed this applying terms like "distance", "time" etc. She thinks that if people are separated from their relatives, in her words "after a few degrees of separation", then the relationship and connection may lose its importance.²⁴⁵ Consequently, instead of showing blind trust and respect, respondents started measuring their patrons' initiatives (towards them) and also the intrinsic motives of their actions.
3. We need to explore who they are and how embedded they are, on what level they maintain home-based kinship networks, how they conduct intra and inter-ethnic networks and negotiations, what their conflicting interests are, the reasons for this etc. if we want to have a

²⁴⁵ Katy Gardner and Zahir Ahmed. 2006. Place, Social Protection and Migration in Bangladesh: A Londoni Village in Biswanath. Sussex Working Paper T 18, p. 20.

proper idea about their survival strategies and the underlying roles of networking. In fact, without a critical analysis of the survival strategies and the organizational structure of the diaspora community, any kind of understanding of the dynamic social system is next to impossible. Unlike the so-called stagnant South Asian societies as conceptualized in the classical South Asian ethnographies²⁴⁶, the study areas seem to be dynamic; they are connected with the outside world and their level of motivation is also influenced by the world situation. Therefore, we need to explore it emphasizing dynamism.

In fact, migration is itself an indication of dynamism. Especially in this era of modern communication systems, people receive information from different sources that facilitate the flow of new migrants. If we take into account migrants' ways of correspondence with their homeland, we can see that apart from sending letters and occasionally visiting, migrants get information from newspapers. They have regular contacts through mobile phone, internet etc. that vary on the basis of their education, occupation and social status. Sending remittance through “*hundy*” channels became more trustworthy to the migrants, because they were notified of the transaction's success by their families within a day, through a phone call. It should be noted that there are some workers who have managed to change their previous position due to networking. They arise from their worker status and convert into potential agents and businessmen and hence it is not likely that better-off people always act according to their class nor that poor people do the same. Based on individual demand and experience both better-off and poor as well as new migrants try to negotiate with each other and form groups of strong and weak ties. However, how far do they possess bargaining power, and in what context they change groups and develop new ties needs more in-depth analysis (that will be conducted in chapter four). Rather, here we shall proceed focusing on other aspects of the organizational structure of the migrant community.

3.5 Education Matters in Some Cases

Table 3.9: Migrants' Educational Attainment

Education	Frequency	Percent
graduate	16	10.7
undergraduate	8	5.3
Higher Secondary	32	21.3
Secondary	28	18.7

²⁴⁶ We may have a look at Inden (1990) for critical analysis of the discursive construction of static social system.

High School	14	9.3
Primary School	30	20.0
No primary school	22	14.7
Total	150	100

Source: Survey data on Bangladeshi migrants

The educational qualification of the migrants as we see in table 3.9 is also very diverse. Professionals came either as experts on respective fields or changed their positions after receiving higher degrees from Malaysian universities, but the circumstances of most of the workers and businessmen were quite opposite. Among them some respondents were found as graduates, while many of them only completed their higher secondary or secondary exams before entering into Malaysia. Moreover, some were lacking any kind of education from their home country. For example, among un-skilled and semi-skilled workers, that made up the majority of the respondents (81%) were both university degree holders as well as illiterates. Some graduates were even identified as unemployed during the field visit. The businessmen, that are now demanding honourable positions from their fellow country mates, have successfully graduated, whereas many others do not possess this type of educational achievement. They have changed their fortune after coming on calling and tourist visas. They managed to do business either engaging in joint businesses with their co-ethnic relatives or inter-ethnic natives as well as staying on spouse visas (inter-ethnic marriage). Therefore, we can say that except for professionals the other respondents needed to find their own way for survival abroad and also for upward mobility.

Though not the majority as we find in Rudnick's²⁴⁷ work, still it is striking that graduating from university has failed to create any meaning for the un-skilled and semi-skilled Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia. Facing mainly unemployment or underemployment as well as political instability and environmental degradation (such as floods) in their home country, these respondents decided to migrate to Malaysia. Their ambitions were to save money (after earning a lot in a foreign country) so as to set up a business in their home land or to find a better way of settlement in Malaysia. But the interview-survey as well as personal observations showed the opposite picture. It was found that un-skilled and semi-skilled workers needed to develop extra techniques to find jobs abroad. For example, after achieving knowledge on cooking, welding, carpentry, wall painting, cleaning, tailoring or simply working as taxi drivers and small scale vendors (they sold vegetable, IDD²⁴⁸ cards etc.) they

²⁴⁷ Anja Rudnick. 1996. Foreign Labour in Malaysian Manufacturing. Bangladeshi Workers in the Textile Industry, P.55.

²⁴⁸ IDD card refers to international calling card for long distance phone call.

managed to survive there. For that their ethnic and inter-ethnic ties and contacts helped them to know “*where to go and where to knock.*”

3.6 Marital Status, Homeland Contacts and Integration into Malaysia

It is already known to us that though the majority of the respondents are married, only professionals and businessmen are permitted by the host government to bring their spouses to Malaysia. We have also found another group who are living with family members through inter-ethnic marital bonds. Thus by considering marital status as a probable variable for understanding migrants’ life we may see the different structural conditions of the receiving country and the diverse life realities of the respondents. Facing these realities different ties have been developed by the migrants that crosscut both the ethnic and state boundary. If we make a list we can find that

1- A majority of the migrants are married with co-ethnic members, but are not permitted to live with them.

2- Some are married with co-ethnic members and also enjoy the advantage of living with family members due to their social and economic status.

3- A few are in a more advanced stage of integration into the host society through inter-ethnic marriage.

4-The rest are living a bachelor life and still think “*what to do, inter or intra-ethnic marriage which one should be preferred?*” and “*what is an effective strategy to by-pass immigration policy?*”²⁴⁹

Therefore, we shall explore three aspects: Firstly the transnational contacts of migrants, secondly the assimilation process and thirdly the organizational structure of the migrant community.

²⁴⁹ Malaysia as a receiving country mainly recruits temporary migrants. This country disagrees in offering residential status to its migrant workers.

It should be noted that the Bangladeshi migrants of the research areas maintain contact with kith and kin of their home country through transnational contacts. Because of the migration policy of the receiving country, which is that ‘un-skilled and semi-skilled migrants will be recruited on short term basis’²⁵⁰ they leave their home country leaving every body behind. Though they travel alone, it is mainly their family members that motivated and assist them in pursuing migration. Based on these home-based kinship and friendship networks as well as economic and moral support from the spouse, siblings, children and parents they manage to gratify their desire of “*becoming rich men*”. Some of them travel on calling visas, while some leave the country via student and tourist visas. Migrants may depart from their home country, but they are still linked with their original society (because of their family members, neighbours, friends and memories of childhood). Not only emotional attachment, but also the (1) recruitment policy of the host society (appointment of workers on short-term basis) and (2) responsibilities as bread earning members of the family---as son, father or as a husband, remind them to maintain their ties.

The few female respondents’ economic contributions to their families, known of by interviewing returned and current migrants are also mentionable in this regard, though their families disagreed about that. Rather, it was identified as a “*deposit*” for their future. It was mentioned that the deposit was mainly for buying arable lands, gold made ornaments and also to open a savings account in their parent’s name. These savings are to be used to arrange a marriage ceremony upon their return and also for the payment of dowry to their would-be husbands. The same situation is also quoted in Bhachu’s study. Bhachu shows that migration is playing a significant role in the continuation of marriage rituals amongst Sikhs and in the British context, female migrants utilize their earning capacity to buy goods for dowry.²⁵¹

However, apart from the semi-skilled and un-skilled (pekerja asing) migrants we have seen another group who are comparatively better-off and have travelled on business and professional visas or on second home basis²⁵². This body of expatriates (pekerja iktisas),

²⁵⁰ Vijayakumari Kanapathy. 2004. International Migration and Labour Market Developments in Asia: Economic Recovery, the Labour Market and Migrant Workers in Malaysia, p. 379.

²⁵¹ Bhachu, P (1991), Culture, Ethnicity and Class among Punjabi women in 1990s Britain. Kanwal Mandal. 2006. Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group Working Paper Nr 18. Social Capital and Transnational South Asian Families: Rituals, Care and Provision, p. 7.

²⁵² According to the unpublished data of the Immigration department, Malaysia and the visa holders (on second home basis), applicants must need to apply showing at least RM150, 000.00 bank balances as fixed deposit in a local bank. They need to face medical check up and also purchase medical insurance. They should find a local guarantor approved by the Malaysian government. Successful applicants are not permitted becoming an

consists of professional and IT specialists who are usually employed for their expertise and who receive at the very least a two years job contract. They are in the host country as they provide such types of knowledge and expertise that are rarely found among local population. Their monthly salary is at least RM 3000 and they are allowed to bring their spouses. Since their total number is not high (for example, among respondents only 6.7%²⁵³ are owners of expatriate passes/pas kerja) the state authorities do not consider them liabilities. In fact, within the respondents only professionals and businessmen are found as IC and PR status holders in Malaysia. Moreover, they act as guarantors for their relatives who enter on tourist visas.

In other words, though they are living abroad with families, they still maintain one kind of transnational contact through fulfilling relatives' desire for migrating to Malaysia. In fact, it was noticed that businessmen supported their manpower businesses by bringing in workers as employees for their enterprises. This type of transnational business networking is also noticed by Min Zhou²⁵⁴ where the first generation Chinese immigrants to the United States were assisted by co-ethnic labour brokers. The manpower agents helped to increase the flow of peasants from the rural Sze Yap region of South China as "transnational liaisons."

Thus two types of principles can be observed (in the migration policy) that facilitate the assimilation of high-classed groups into the host society compared to poor ones. Utilizing this advantage some start business alongside their regular professions, some convert into full time businessmen. Depending on the workers' choices different goods like for example, spices, oil, biri²⁵⁵, lungi²⁵⁶, Bengali CDs, DVDs, newspapers etc. are imported from Bangladesh. At the same time Malaysian goods and food items are exported to Bangladesh. In this "import-export" business money is also transferred to the home country. Workers hand over their remittance to them and the merchants buy goods with it. Thus the businessmen who pass

employee of a company. However, after obtaining approval from the Immigration department they are allowed to open their own company. In fact, foreigners with high income earners can go through this process and also be the owners of property valued at least RM150, 000.00 and above.

²⁵³ This percentage is comprised of 2% professionals and 4.7% professional cum businessmen.

²⁵⁴ Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim. 2006. *The Paradox of Ethnicization and Assimilation: The Development of Ethnic Organizations in the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United States*, p. 232, retrieved http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/zhou/pubs/Zhou_Kim_Paradox.pdf.

²⁵⁵ Biri is a kind of cigarette that has no filter. Its nicotine is not as good as cigarettes. It is cheap and strong that increases its popularity to the workers. They can buy 5 packets of Biri by the same amount of money that is paid for a single packet of cigarette. Bangladeshi businessmen import 'Akij biri' from Bangladesh that is very popular among the workers of Bangladesh, Indonesia and Myanmar. Chinese workers also prefer Biri for taking Gaza (one kind of drug); they remove tobacco from the Biri (as it has no filter so it is easy to cast away tobacco from the item) and put Gaza inside of it.

²⁵⁶ Lungi is a kind of traditional dress of Bangladesh. Mainly men wear this at home.

some time in home country and some in the receiving country do not need to buy Malaysian currency. Along with money their recruited middlemen bring workers in disguise and also act as bearers of messages from home to abroad and vice versa. Consequently, workers eagerly try to be affiliated with their hometown reference groups that help businessmen to increase their earning. In other words, the already better-off migrants converted into more powerful actors through the divide and rule principle of the receiving country.

Referring to Azizah's²⁵⁷ arguments Abubakar²⁵⁸ (2002) also wrote about this differentiation in migration policy. He thinks that the number of expatriate groups is not so high and thus can be monitored easily. Therefore instead of worrying about them the Malaysian Government instead worries about un-skilled and semi-skilled workers. They are therefore issued temporary passes (*pas lawatan kerja sementara*), which are supposed to be renewed every year. Said government is worried about the number of workers because their entrance takes place from different sources, which are often undocumented paths. The writer mentioned that the high presence of un-skilled and semi-skilled labourers created job competition between migrant and local workers, especially after the 1997 financial crisis. Therefore, based on the above arguments as well as the interviews, conducted within the migrants and experts we may cite that:

- 1- The Malaysian Government is strictly controlling the flow, because it wants to protect local workers and their families from competition by migrant workers. In order to regulate inter-ethnic conflict government pursues this strategy.
- 2- It is a governmental strategy to regulate the pressure on the job sector.
- 3- In order to protect the un-skilled and low-skilled migrants from assimilating into the country these policies are nurtured by the authorities.

²⁵⁷ Azizah Kassim. 1998. Profile of Foreign Migrant Workers in Malaysia: Towards Compiling Reliable Statistics. Paper read at a Conference on 'Migrant Workers and the Malaysian Economy' organized by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

²⁵⁸ Syarisa Yanti Abubakar. 2002. Migrant Labour in Malaysia: Impact and Implications of the Asian Financial Crisis, p. 16.

However, how the low income group of migrants cope with this situation and what their strategies for survival are will be discussed in the next chapters, here we will try to find out whether there is any connection between the multi-dimensional circumstances of the host society and migrants' transnational contacts. In this context the following table can be taken into consideration. It shows the different types of home land contacts of the respondents.

Table 3.10: Nature of Transnational Contacts

Types of contacts	Frequency	Percent
Phone and remittance	127	84.7
Travelling to home occasionally	3	2.0
Newspaper, internet ,letter and phone	6	4.0
Business relation and manpower agent	14	9.3
Total	150	100

Source: Survey data of Bangladeshi migrants

From the table it can be seen that information sharing through telephones and care for the families back home (evidenced by the backflow of remittance) are the most outstanding. While on the one side, merchants are playing a crucial role in remittance transferring, on the other the development of a kind of “*phone booth business*” among un-skilled and semi-skilled workers is also noticed in the study areas. Facing and understanding the practical necessities of maintaining regular cell phone contact with their home-based relatives, a few workers, who have managed to stay quite a long time and consequently gotten ties and information concerning business principles, have opened up call booths. As it is very obvious that migrants maintain contact with their home-based relatives regularly, sometimes once a week, sometimes every 15 or 2/3 days, they decide to develop this informal business as a source for extra income. To save money, toll free cards such as “*cool talk*”, “*kigb*”, “*haza*” etc. are purchased by the migrants from these call shops, where their fellow country mates also provide them with information on “*where to go and how to find cheaper IDD cards.*”

In fact, it is noticed that regular transnational contact through telephone helps the sojourners to participate in different rituals of their homeland. For example, during religious festivals they make phone calls to their relatives, talk to them about the ceremonies and try to overcome their loneliness. Besides, through telephones they voice their opinions when their decision is needed to solve any (domestic) problems. Thus they take part in the wellbeing of their families and relatives back in their home country as decision makers. Therefore, long distance phone calls contribute significantly to their transnational contacts and (thus) the call booth and phone card vendors of the same class convert into their friends and well-wishers.

Regarding this if we pay heed to Yunus's case we can see an example of a migrant that utilizes mobile phones to make decisions for his family members on what type of school his daughter should be admitted or whether a female caretaker will be appointed for taking care of his mother who is in sick-bed. Or consider the homeland labour broker contacts of Nurun Nabi, who is working in a construction sector and trying to find a job for his son in the Middle East. This as well can be considered as an instance of transnational networking. Thus though abroad, migrants and their kin and friends back home are connected to each other. This appears to be expressed as strong ties and weak ties across border. Here in this case Nurun Nabis's family members become part of his strong ties and he assists them via phone. To set up a commercial linkage and to form a kind of weak tie with the labour brokers of Bangladesh and Middle East, he utilizes his mobile phone. Vertovec's argument may be appropriate in explaining these types of contacts. There he considers each individual as a "node linked with others to form a network."²⁵⁹

Besides that, maintenance of relationships through (1) occasional visits, (2) gift donations, (3) construction of houses for future security and short time visiting, where poor relatives are permitted to stay in their absence, (4) provision of alms to poor relatives in time of environmental hazard or finally (5) contributions for setting up a mosque or street repairs in the hometown area, are all mentioned as trans-border contacts of well-off businessmen and professionals. Along with this, job requirements, the terms and conditions of said jobs, most effective ways of getting into Malaysia etc. are transmitted by the same channel. Thus the relatedness between home and destination country networks is sustained. This also helps to keep the ideology regarding the expected behaviour of the rich to the poor or in other words so-called patron client relationship intact. Lisa Akesson (2004) in her work on the meanings of migration among Cape Verdian community²⁶⁰ also showed how the migrants try to prove their gratefulness to the home town relatives by sending money and gifts.

However, unlike the better-off people, poor migrants' home land contacts were shown in this study to be (1) economic supporters of their elementary family, (2) linkage makers between their neighbours and the labour brokers of Malaysia (that provided them entry into Malaysia) as well as (3) occasional gift donators to their relatives, who were taking care of their families.

²⁵⁹ Stephen Vertovec. 2001. Transnational social formations: Towards conceptual cross-fertilization, p. 5.

²⁶⁰ Lisa Akesson. 2004. Making a Life. Meanings of Migration in Cape Verde, p. 150-151.

Giving alms to fictive relatives or occasional visit is not possible and hence it is not expected of them. Rather maintenance of regular contact and help to migrate abroad (through connection with better-off agents) are the socially constructed role models for them, which are also transmitted through transnational contact.

It is observed that while the relatives of labour brokers or professionals are counting the days for their visit to home country, the exact opposite situation occurs when an un-skilled or semi-skilled migrant travels back home. His return is considered as a “*curse and disaster*”. His relatives think this because the migrants’ occasional home visits are not permitted by the immigration law of Malaysia. They can go back to home, but then they won’t be able to return. Migrants receive flight tickets after the expiry of their job contracts and the authorities want them to return to their home countries permanently at that point. There is, however, no system of interval visits, if anybody takes this initiative he needs to do this on his own risk. He may visit his home country, but there is no guarantee that he will get his job contract renewed upon his return to Malaysia.

As a result, workers those are better-off and confident enough to manage a new job and visa as well (for their return), take the risk of travelling. During the interviews only such types of workers, who were the middlemen of labour brokers as well as earned their living from informal sources along with their major occupation, admitted that they visited occasionally. Other means of maintaining contact, for example through phone calls and remittance sending are very common and are also expected by the migrants’ relatives. Establishing small scale grocery shops--- full of Malaysian and Singaporean electronic goods²⁶¹ along with other items, setting up phone booths, hiring a place in the market area in order to open cyber cafés accompanied by ‘web cams’ and internet phone calling facilities etc. are noticed as the outcome of remittance and transnational contacts, as indicated by the unskilled and semiskilled workers. Besides, considering the heavy cost of travelling, workers try to avoid short term visits because, they have to purchase not only the flight tickets, but also gift items for all of their relatives, both close and distant. It is expected of them, converted into a social custom and any violation of it is criticized as negligence of duties towards relatives. Thus maintenance of kinship ties through gift sending turns into a social ritual of migration that is

²⁶¹ These are sent by the workers as gift items. Sometimes when the returned migrants leave the host country then they bring these goods for future business in home. Sometimes the remainders also sell these items that they receive from abroad etc. Besides, businessmen import these commodities from Malaysia whenever they fly for Bangladesh.

depicted as “transnational loyalty” in Akesson’s work.²⁶² Salih (2000)²⁶³ also noticed the tradition of the gift sending ritual among Moroccan female migrants in Italy, who took presents with them in time of holiday visits to their hometown.

However, a kind of intrinsic conflict of interests between migrants and those that remained back home was noticed as an underlying fact of the gift sending ritual. Whereas the relatives back in home country consider receiving something from abroad as an indication of dedication or remembrance of them, the migrants think that they are unaware about their struggles in a foreign society. It seems to be a true fact to the migrants that their relatives “*do not hesitate a second before wasting money*”, since they are receiving remittance without any kind of hard work or effort. As the migrants increasingly perceive their relatives’ failure to appreciate the actual sufferings and sacrifices of the sojourners they gradually try to decrease the amount of remittance and instead try to invest it in informal businesses (if they have the chance to do so). In other cases they spend it on movies, visiting friends, finding local “*girl friends*” or going to pubs. According to the respondents, there is a high demand for Bangladeshi male migrants amongst local Malaysian ladies because of the males perceived “*responsibility, generosity, nice clothing and handsome appearance*”. Migrants consider this type of “*friendship making*” with locals as a kind of social investment that may assist them to open business enterprises through inter-ethnic networking.

It is noteworthy that the instances of earlier migrants’ successful integration through inter-ethnic business entrepreneurship motivated the new migrants to choose these types of inter-ethnic ties as a potential survival strategy. Concerning this we can make the following list of modes of inter-ethnic networking practiced by the different economic and status groups of Bangladeshi migrants:

- Inter-ethnic marriage of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers takes place with their co-workers or neighbours. Since their marriage with locals is not allowed by the government, they visit a third country like Thailand or Singapore where they court each other and then later come back to the family members in order to obtain permission. Mainly Malays, Indian Muslims and Indonesian ladies are found as

²⁶² Ibid: p- 150.

²⁶³ Ruba Salih. 2000. Moroccan Migrant Women: Transnationalism, plurinationalism and gender. Grillo, R., B. Riccio & R. Salih. Here or there? Contrasting Experiences of transnationalism. Moroccan and Senegalese in Italy, p. 65. CDE: University of Sussex.

marital partners of Bangladeshi migrants due to the same religious background. Later on, these workers start businesses utilizing their spouse's business license. In this case the male migrant starts to work as an employee of his wife in her business organization and his designation then upgrades into managing director from his previous post (un-skilled or semi-skilled worker). Migrants consider this strategy very fruitful when aiming for permanent settlement and also see it as a profitable strategy for business. As their business license is managed under a local's name it is considered as a Malaysian citizen's business and therefore they do not need to pay high charges like foreigners do.

- However, for professionals and businessmen (business visa, IC/PR holders) there is no restriction on inter-ethnic marriage and therefore their marriage is solemnized in the receiving society.
- Through inter-ethnic marriage migrants gain in-laws from that particular community. Thus migrants also gain access to some of the friends of their in-laws. These come from different ethnic communities.
- Developing inter-ethnic business partnership with locals. Mainly people from the Malay and Indian Muslim community are found as business partners.
- Creating friendships or relationships with locals in order to keep themselves free from sudden attacks by others. Being often attacked or harassed by people from different ethnic communities and also enemies from their own community they develop this strategy. Chinese, Indonesian, Malay, Nepalese and to a certain extent Tamil Indians are found as friends of Bangladeshi labourers etc.

The professionals on the other hand, receive flight tickets after the completion of each job contract and they utilize this chance for a short visit back in their home country. Since they know that their contributions are highly recognized in the host society and hence renewable, they dare to take short term visits – on which their family members also join with them. They confirmed that there was hardly any example where a professional lost his job after his short term visit back home. And self employed businessmen and IC/PR holders travel to their home country as many times as they want. These visits are more related to business purposes than occasional visits. Therefore, it can be cited that transnational contacts also vary depending on the capabilities of the migrants and realities of the host country, which the migrants are embedded in and have to cope with.

As a matter of fact, how does the divide and rule principle of immigration policy as well as migrants' very diverse economic and social status reflect in the maintenance of transnational networking, is rarely noticed in most of the studies on diaspora formation. Rather, an attempt to prove migrants' "long distance nationalism"²⁶⁴ in the host society that binds all migrants together can be seen in most of the literature. Apart from the home-sickness there are different issues like for example exploitation by powerful elites, differentiation within migration policy or conflict of interests between home-remainders and migrants that are all significant but are not really addressed in these primordial writings on diaspora. Along with these issues, money making by powerful labour brokers utilizing trans-border networking needs critical investigation. And the introduction of inter-ethnic networking and conflicts in the host country, as an outcome of every day interactions with co-workers, housemates or neighbours of diverse ethnic backgrounds, is also insufficiently addressed. However, we will come to these issues in the next chapters; instead, let us now explore how the migrants manage to enter Malaysia and whether transnational contacts help them in this regard.

3.7 Migrants' Ways of Immigration and Networking

Table 3.11: Migrants' Ways of Immigration

Ways of immigration	Frequency	Percent
Bangladeshi relatives and friend	15	10.0
Tourist Visa and Agent	49	32.7
Modern technology	3	2.0
Calling Visa and agent	73	48.7
Student visa and agent	10	6.7
Total	150	100

Source: Survey within Bangladeshi migrants.

The survey data of table 3.11 concerning migrants' ways of immigration show that mainly five ways are followed to enter into Malaysia. The highest category is made up of those using calling visas (49%). Among different groups of migrants un-skilled and semi-skilled workers use this way. Based on the labour law²⁶⁵ of the country²⁶⁶, workers who enter this way are considered to be "documented" workers and receive the 'jalan card'²⁶⁷ as proof of their

²⁶⁴ Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fournon. 2001. Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home, p. 17-21.

²⁶⁵ Master Builders Association, 2003.

²⁶⁶ The Malaysian Immigration Act 1959/63 (Amended 2002) controls all the aspects related to recruitment of workers, provision of visas for staying and working legally.

²⁶⁷ Please find appendix 7. The picture of a migrant worker's 'Jalan card' is presented there.

working permit. This card helps them to move and work in the country without being afraid of immigration and regular police (polis biasa) or Rela²⁶⁸ volunteers.

It is already known to us that in order to obtain 'calling visas' respondents contacted nearby middlemen in their homeland (Bangladesh), who introduced them to major agents. Thus networking and ties have been developed in the home country even before the migrants' arrival in Malaysia. This type of networking is performed by them through monetary exchange, where actors of both sides wish to gain a profit. While the term 'broker' defines a kind of 'commercial networking' and also profession in the manpower business, the workers (73%) mainly contact them to better their economic situation. For example, amongst the documented workers, 85% paid more than two hundred thousand BDT²⁶⁹ to the agents before entering into Malaysia and defended them by showing the logic of a 'better fortune'. However, the question of demand fulfilment in the host country is a subject that needs further analysis (which will be done in the next chapters).

Besides, there are some more options that are used by the migrants to enter into Malaysia. Among these one is kinship networking (Bangladeshi relatives and friend). Of those respondents that entered via kinship networks (10%), most (73%) are working as the unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Along with this work they (20%) are also engaged in side businesses. Though at present most of them (80%) are documented workers, when they first entered they did so using tourist visas (assisted by their relatives). They also began their working career as undocumented workers. The question is how did they manage their jobs and businesses? How did they manage to obtain work permits?

From the survey it can be depicted that 75% managed to find jobs through networking with country mates and in order to start businesses they used their inter-ethnic networking (both commercial/business partnerships and marital bonds). Because of the multi-ethnic environment and the migration policy of Malaysia Bangladeshis met them as work mates, house mates and neighbours. Gradually, they develop a kind of relationship as a survival strategy and also for upward social mobility. The detailed outcome of this inter-ethnic networking and its effectiveness will be discussed in chapter four and five.

²⁶⁸ Malaysia's baton-wielding volunteer reserve, organized to tackle the immigration issue.

²⁶⁹ Bangladeshi currency.

Moreover, though kinship networks (strong ties) allowed them to migrate, it failed to provide jobs directly. Rather, through commercial network (weak ties) they managed to get jobs. Their relatives, that had brought them into the receiving country, also introduced them to Bangladeshi agents. Then after paying a service charge²⁷⁰ the migrants received their jobs. Thus the migrants that at first depended primarily on kinship networks, later on developed a kind of commercial (weak ties) and inter-ethnic networks in the host society.

In the same way, 33% of all Bangladeshis entering Malaysia on tourist visas (another example of commercial networking) the majority (56%) found jobs in the manufacturing and construction sectors and also in hotels and restaurants (10%). They got these jobs through commercial networking.

Furthermore entering on a student visa (7%) is another form of commercial networking. It is also found as a potential survival strategy of the respondents in the host society. Because of the ban on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in Peninsular Malaysia (from January 2001 up to 23rd May 2006), some of the workers entered on student visas through the assistance of agents. However, among respondents of this research, there are also some genuine students. Out of 10 student-visa owners 30% are found to be actual students. They usually manage to later on find jobs in the different service sectors²⁷¹ of Peninsular Malaysia. The rest of the students work in manufacturing sector (40%), are engaged in businesses²⁷² (20%) or are unemployed (10%).

Finally, the migrants (2%) that belong to the 'modern technology' category are a group of professionals and businessmen. They all were university graduates and hence used to have the access to IT based knowledge. Therefore, through the assistance of modern communication systems (internet & telephone, fax) they were able to apply directly from Bangladesh for a proper job and visa in Malaysia. Thus, modern technology adds a new dimension to the transnational networking system along with previous sets of networking. Alejandro Portes's²⁷³ write-up on the rise of transnational communities and their connectedness with technological innovations should be taken into consideration in this regard. Quotes from

²⁷⁰ 84% respondents agreed that they paid service charge to Bangladeshi agents for their job, work permit and passport renewal.

²⁷¹ They are providing services as university teachers. Some of them are working in the IT sectors and also in N.G.O.

²⁷² They are the owners of a restaurant (Port Klang) and a phone booth (Kuala Lumpur).

²⁷³ Alejandro Portes. 1997. *Globalization from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities*, p. 2 and 9.

Castles²⁷⁴ work highlight, that through modern means of electronic transmission system the factory owners of Taiwan can enjoy a garment design thought up in New York and in one week's time the completed product can be exported to San Francisco. He argues that the same kind of improved communication and transportation facilities are the underlying fact for the rise of a class of immigrant transnational entrepreneurs. And suffice to say the samples of professionals and businessmen justify Portes's argument.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the chi-square test between migrants' ways of immigration and current jobs shows a highly significant relationship. The null hypothesis was (H_0) that there was no relation between profession and ways of migration, but Pearson's chi-square for p (significance) value is .000, which means the null hypothesis can be rejected at 1% level of significance. So the conclusion is that profession and migrants' ways of coming to Malaysia are significantly related.

However, though the cross tab shows a significant relationship between migrants' way of immigration and their types of activity in Malaysia, the qualitative data reveals more. It is already known to us that migrants, that have managed their 'calling' and 'professional' visa in time of immigration, receive jobs in the destination country as soon as they reach it. They have managed all necessities in their home country through commercial networking (documented un-skilled and semi-skilled workers) and IT based knowledge (professionals). But in order to do so they depended on the information provided by returned migrants, relatives or friends in the receiving country. Thus they know "*where to go, what the requirements are and how to apply*".

For example, all the documented workers of the survey mentioned that there were returned migrants in their home town who provided them with contacts to 'brokers', 'middlemen' and 'agents'. During the interviews with the returned migrants²⁷⁵ in Bangladesh I found out that their neighbours and relatives, who were working in Malaysia, followed the channels they originally had created to migrate. I also revealed that some of the prior migrants converted into 'middlemen' and took up this work as a profession after coming back either from Malaysia or from Middle Eastern countries. Stephen Castles'²⁷⁶ convincing arguments should

²⁷⁴ Manuel Castells. 1980. Multinational capital, national states and local communities.

²⁷⁵ The interviews were conducted in Savar, Gazipur, Dhaka, Noakhali, Sylhet, Comilla and Brahmanbaria.

²⁷⁶ Stephen Castles (1998), 'New Migrations, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Southeast and East Asia', Transnational Communities Programme Seminar, School of Geography, Oxford University, p. 1.

be remembered in this regard. Through the maintenance of social networks and the “migration industry” he thought that migration converted into a “self-sustaining process”. By the term “migration industry” he indicates the flow of migration guided and commanded by the “commercial and other considerations”, where agents and brokers are playing important roles.

Besides, though the professionals applied directly without visiting commercial brokers, they also contacted their colleagues and relatives, present in Malaysia to find out about the ‘quality of life’. Thus through transnational networking migrants of the homeland and country of destination are linked across time and space. According to Monica Boyd,

“Networks connect migrants and non-migrants across time and space. Once begun, migration flows often become self-sustaining, reflecting the establishment of networks of information, assistance and obligations which develop between migrants in the host society and friends and relatives in the sending area. These networks link populations in origin and receiving countries and ensure that movements are not necessarily limited in time, unidirectional or permanent”²⁷⁷.

Finally, the workers, who entered on tourist and student visas (both by commercial networking) did not receive jobs as soon as they reached the host country, though we see significant relationships in the cross tab between job receiving and migrants’ ways of arrival. Rather, the qualitative data says they entered into the country through their friends’ and relatives’ connections with the agents and brokers of the research areas. This worked out through monetary exchange. The agents, who are the owners of business organization in Malaysia, played roles as “*guarantors*” for the migrants. Thus they received visas and crossed the borders to make their “*good fortunes*”. However, that was not the end of their problems. Rather, it was the beginning. They had to rely on agents and weak tied networks for job management, even after their entrance. At this level some became successful in convincing agents and some failed. In fact, the rapidity of job management depends mainly on the amount of money given to the agents. Besides, they need to provide “*free service*” (no wage for their labour) as assistants in shops and restaurants or at home as cooks, caretakers etc. Or in other words, though commercial networking opens the way of emigration to the receiving country,

²⁷⁷ Boyd, Monica. 1989. ‘Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and New agendas,’ p. 641.

it is not free from exploitation. Ashikur's comment can be quoted here, "*Life abroad seems to me very hard*".²⁷⁸

Based on the previous examples of the last group of workers we can say that kinship networks help these migrants to come into contact with the agents, but they still each individually need to invest more for a "*better future in a foreign country*". The strategies that are followed by the 'privileged groups' to justify and keep up the overall social system, relying on their countrymen, will be discussed in chapter four. However, the reciprocal relationship between the brokers and workers is partially comparable with the patron-client relationship of the Chinese Immigrant community in the United States. Min Zhou et al.²⁷⁹ show a kind of paternalistic patron-client relationship among Chinese Immigrants that trigger off chances for mutual benefits. Quoting from Wong²⁸⁰ it was mentioned,

"For the labour brokers making money was the goal and for the workers securing a job that could make their sojourning dream come true was critical. This kind of interdependent relationship, combined with family or kinship bonds, common places of origin, and organizational sanctions generally kept individual conflicts to a minimum".

Among Bangladeshi migrants though this type of reciprocity prevails between brokers and workers, whether this reciprocal relationship becomes successful in controlling the internal clashes between and within different status groups is a matter of debate. Unlike Chinese Immigrants, diversity and heterogeneity are the common criteria for Bangladeshi migrants. For example, within a single strong tied network, there are differences on the basis of qualification, profession, legal status, marital relations, inter-ethnic bonds and conflicts, areas of origin and living. These differences all contribute to the formation of subgroups on the horizontal level. Thus the migrants are separated along the line of strong and weak ties on the one hand and on the other there exist internal cleavages in each segment.

Or in other words, apart from the bond of horizontal and vertical levels, different types of alliances are developed in the same axis depending on the interests and lived realities of the migrants. Instead of considering their patrons as life time guarantors these un-skilled and

²⁷⁸ Field notes, January 2006.

²⁷⁹ Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim. 2001. Formation, Consolidation and Diversification of the Ethnic Elite: The Case of the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United State, p. 236.

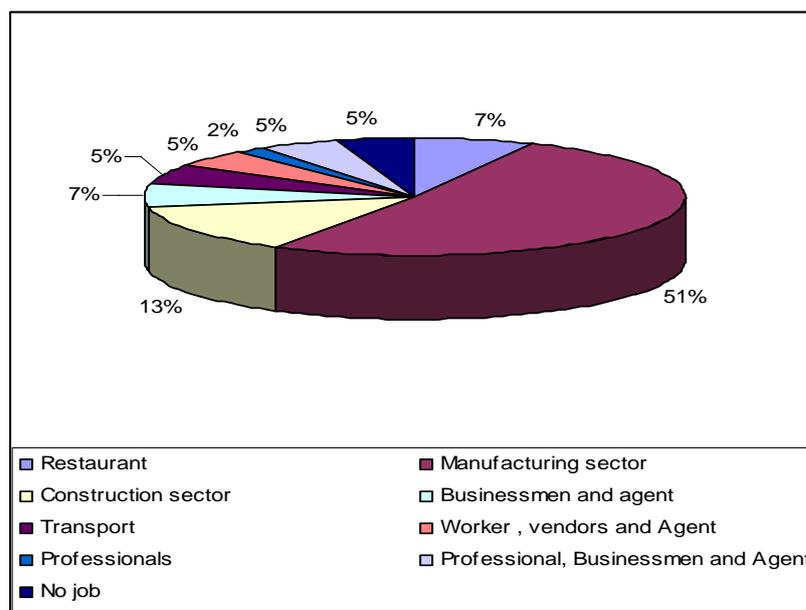
²⁸⁰ B.P. Wong. 1988. Patronage, brokerage, entrepreneurship and the Chinese Community of New York.

semi-skilled workers at the same time “*try to find a better one*” who can help them achieve positive mobility.²⁸¹ Concerning this, they do not reveal any group change unless an alternative one has been managed. Moreover, the conflicts between the leaders of each group about their followers, manpower and “*hundy*” business or political leadership are also not uncommon. Consequently, instead of a paternalistic shape, the patron-client relationship takes the form of class exploitation and also a kind of factionalist type that will be discussed elaborately in chapter four. On the contrary, here, depending on the internal differentiations of the migrant Bangladeshis I shall continue discussion and try to highlight some further categories.

3.8 Occupational Variations: Income Sources can be Multi-dimensional

From the above discussion on migrants’ ways of immigration into Malaysia we can find different status groups of workers recruited in diverse sectors of the country. In this portion I shall prolong discussion highlighting occupational segregation at first and then explore other aspects on migrant’s informal sources of earning that some how are related to group formation. In order to understand the formation of potential allies and networks of Bangladeshis in the research areas, this explanation is necessary.

Figure 3.4: Major Occupations of Migrants



Source: Survey data of migrant Bangladeshis

²⁸¹ Find more details in the ‘Area of origin, formation of different ties and negotiations’ part, discussed earlier.

The pie chart shows that Bangladeshi migrants can be divided into nine (9) major groups on the basis of their occupational statuses. While a majority (51%) of the migrants are found to be workers of manufacturing areas, also a few professionals (2%) can be seen in the list who are employed as teachers in different public universities, as N.G.O officials, bankers as well as IT specialists. Workers of the manufacturing areas are found engaged in different factories like for example, hand glove factories, rice processing mills, container factories, computer parts manufacturers, plastic goods (bag, utensils, boxes, covers, toys etc.) factories etc. They are also employed in paint processing companies (for domestic and other kinds of goods) as well as workers in aluminium and glass factories, furniture factories, the garments sector etc. and so on. Their designation also varies ranging from wage labourers to line leaders, production supervisors etc. As a result, within the group of workers of the manufacturing sector some convert into '*big bosses*', while others need to obey their orders etc. These kinds of position differentiations reflect on the salaries of the workers. For example, it is found that whilst a wage labourer's monthly wage starts at RM 400, a production supervisor, line leader or a technician gets around RM 650 as their entrance salary.

Moreover, during the field visit a keen eagerness was observed among un-skilled and semi-skilled workers to work overtime (and thus increase their income). Though according to the Employment Act²⁸² the payment of overtime was supposed to be fixed at 1.5 times their normal rate, few workers were aware of that. However, concerning this a common notion is found among low-skilled workers, which is "*working under a good or bad employer mainly depends on fate*". Because of this they try to secure this fate by convincing their immediate bosses to praise them when talking to the production managers. In fact, instead of considering an exact payment of their overtime their right, they think it is mercifully granted them. Consequently, in order to convince the authorities the production workers, wage labourers try to develop a good relationship with their Bangladeshi immediate bosses.

It was noticed that low-paid workers try to do the cooking, every day necessary shopping, house cleaning etc. for their bosses (living in the same house or nearby) to make them happy. They were found to obey their bosses' every word when any kind of informal talk was arranged. For example during group discussions they rarely disagreed with their bosses. To show respect they tried to perform the socially constructed role models of femininity for their

²⁸² Employment Act 1955.

leaders like cooking, food serving²⁸³ while during the meal actually standing beside the table without joining them, even though all of the low- paid workers were males too. In other words, a hierarchal relationship can be seen there that developed on a single factor such as post variations in the factory. In the same way, other aspects like finding better jobs, contacts with influential people or protection from unknown or sudden attacks by robbers, thieves etc. were also relevant. The relatively vulnerable migrant workers convert into followers or clients of the better-off and well-connected people. Therefore, we cannot simply write that in certain areas Bangladeshis are employed in or that their salaries conform to one specific amount etc. We have to verify the internal relationships within the migrant community and also with other communities in a given environment.

Like in manufacturing, differentiations and hierarchies are also noticed among workers of construction sites, restaurants or in transport sector. Since Bangladeshi migrant respondents are occupying a large portion of the manufacturing areas, I have tried to initiate the previous discussion also with respondents of this sector. The existence of occupational segregation within migrant workers on the basis of gender and nationality or the relatively highest presence of Bangladeshis in the manufacturing sectors is also observed by experts on migration. For example, Azizah (1998)²⁸⁴, Abubakar (2002)²⁸⁵ have shown that in Malaysia female workers are employed primarily as domestic maids, (which are mainly Filipinos), while males work in the construction sector, especially in Peninsular Malaysia. The authors narrated that among migrant workers Bangladeshis are dominant in the manufacturing sector, while Indonesians chiefly make up the plantation sector.

It has already been quoted that like nationality another kind of job variation can also be seen in Malaysia along the lines of gender. While male workers were mainly found recruited in transport, construction and manufacturing fields, the interviews with current and returned female migrants as well as manpower agents and factory managers delineated that female labourers could be found as domestic workers, toy makers, sewing machine operators of

²⁸³ This is observed in time of field visit in holidays and also in get togethers and festivals like 'Eid', 'Chinese New Year' etc.

²⁸⁴ Azizah Kassim. "Contemporary Labour Migration in Malaysia: An Overview". Paper read at a seminar on 'The Media and Labour Migration in Malaysia', Asian Institute for Development Communication (AIDCOM), Kuala Lumpur, (October 27-29), 1998.

²⁸⁵ Syarisa Yanti Abubakar. 2002. Migrant Labour in Malaysia: Impact and Implications of the Asian Financial Crisis, p. 19.

garments industries and so on, but never as construction workers. The underlying cause was depicted indicating the physical capabilities of male workers in comparison to their female counterparts. They explained it as “*construction work needs extra physical strength*”. Therefore, it is not surprising that among current and returned Bangladeshi female respondents most of them are found employed in garments industries, in the packing sections (of produced goods) of different factories, as assistants of their husband’s ethnic enterprises or simply as cooking-assistants of different Bangladeshi and Tamil Muslim’s ‘*mamu*’ restaurants.

The same situation of gender based differentiation in occupation is also noticed by Karim et al. According to them male workers do construction work and females are hired for the factories.²⁸⁶ In explaining this, Monika Boyd’s writings may be noteworthy. By criticizing indifferent approach to gender in the existing studies on migration she highlights that gender differences of a society may influence migration decision, household strategies, the nature of migrants, the organizational structure of ethnic enclaves, the immigration policies of a country and so on. Recruitment of female workers in sectors like “micro-electronic, toy making, textile and component assembling industries” is narrated as a reflection of gender differentiation in export oriented industries, where the incorporation of cheap, obedient, docile labourers are required - usually considered as female characteristics in most of the societies.²⁸⁷

In fact, the recruitment of female workers in Malaysia for jobs that are not highly-paid in comparison to the male workers or migrants’ employment in the so-called “3-D”²⁸⁸ jobs may be explained along the lines of the capitalist demand of the receiving country. Keeping production costs to a minimum level by hiring cheap labour is also identified as prerequisite for the economic growth of the country and also to fill up jobs that are not popular with the Malaysian citizens, but are unavoidable for capitalist expansion (Pillai 1992²⁸⁹, Karim et al.

²⁸⁶ Zehadul Karim, AHM, Moha Asri Abdullah and Mohd. Isa Haji Bakar. 1999. Foreign Workers in Malaysia: Issues and Implications, p. 54.

²⁸⁷ Boyd, Monica. 1989. ‘Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and New agendas,’ p. 655-660.

²⁸⁸ The term “3-D” jobs refer to difficult, dangerous and dirty jobs of the receiving country that usually Malaysian citizens like to avoid. It is mainly cited by the human rights organizations, non-governmental organizations and migration experts concerning the working and living conditions of migrant workers where they are employed in.

²⁸⁹ Patrick Pillai. 1992. People on the Move. An Overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia, p. 12.

1999²⁹⁰, Jones 2000²⁹¹, Zamir 2006²⁹²). To illustrate this argument if we have a look and compare male and female migrant workers' monthly income we may find that while Sanda as a worker of the packing section of a hand gloves factory in Penang, got RM 500 on average during her 10 years in Malaysia, male migrants who nowadays earn RM 1000 or more (after living 10 years in Malaysia) confirmed they started off with around RM 500 or more.

Moreover, when we asked whether locals earned more than migrant workers and what was the criteria on which their amount of salary depended workers identified two points, namely (1) - the type of work and (2) - the skill of the workers. Though most of the workers confirmed that their employers were pleased about their skills and wanted to keep them, they failed to identify the exact cause of wage differentiations. While some considered local workers more efficient than foreigners and believed that was why they were recruited into highly-paid posts, others expressed other explanations. "*Since it is their country, they (locals) should be given priority*"—mentioned by these workers.

However, they do not know that by law²⁹³ both migrants and locals are entitled to receive the same wages for the same kind of job, if they are employed as documented workers. Rather, they seem to be happy, since earning this amount of money in their home country, is beyond their imagination. For instance, when I asked returned and current migrants about their causes of migration, they identified either low income or unemployment problems at home as the cause. Besides, based on the difference or gap²⁹⁴ of currency rates between BDT²⁹⁵ and RM²⁹⁶ migrants think that their families "*can save enough money or buy what they want*" in the home country, as seemingly extra money is left over after paying for their basic needs. The same circumstances are also stated in Jones's work in the context of Indonesian workers, where most of the workers never dared to hope to earn this amount in their home land.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁰ Zehadul Karim, AHM, Moha Asri Abdullah and Mohd. Isa Haji Bakar. 1999. Foreign Workers in Malaysia: Issues and Implications, p. 2.

²⁹¹ Sidney Jones. 2000. Making Money off Migrants. The Indonesian Exodus to Malaysia, p. 1.

²⁹² Zahid Zamir. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contribution in Malaysian Economy, p. 101.

²⁹³ The same right on terms and conditions of work for local and foreign documented workers are narrated in the Malaysian Employment Act 1955 (Act 265).

²⁹⁴ In time of field visit the currency gap Malaysia and Bangladesh was 1RM=17 BDT. So if 400 RM is sent for a month then their families can get 6800 BDT per month that they cannot imagine before their travel abroad.

²⁹⁵ Bangladeshi currency is called "taka".

²⁹⁶ RM refers to Malaysian currency.

²⁹⁷ Sidney Jones. 2000. Making Money off Migrants. The Indonesian Exodus to Malaysia, p. 4.

Thus, we can see how Malaysia as a receiving country fulfils its capitalist demand by importing cheap labourers from such countries where unemployment or underemployment is a major problem. If we examine the situation of Bangladesh, one of the labour sending countries, we may see not only the problem of unemployment or underemployment, but also a significant portion of the country's foreign currency earnings are assured through the flow of remittance. As quoted in Siddiqui the importation costs of capital goods and raw materials for industrial development are fulfilled by income from remittance.²⁹⁸ On the other hand, by the unending flow of inexpensive labourers into such sectors which are unwanted by the Malaysian citizens but significant to the industrialization process this country profits in manifold ways: Firstly low production costs (through recruiting cheap migrant workers) and secondly high economic growth through the huge recruitment. Besides, the readiness of Bangladeshi workers to work overtime is also crucial for higher productivity. These low production costs are ensured by paying a low basic salary to the migrants consequently obliging them to work overtime.

Along with these formal income sources some migrants are found engaged in the "shadow economy" to overcome their low salaries. To a certain extent they were happy about their earnings, but were at the same time forced to think about their future security and savings as well. As they, especially un-skilled and semi-skilled workers, are not sure about how long they can continue to work in Malaysia, they try to earn as much as possible. Besides, to repay the cost of immigration, which was collected from the members of their immediate and extended families or even from fictive relatives, they were supposed to "*earn more than enough*" money. And for future ventures like starting a small scale business after departure or travelling to other countries as migrant workers, a handsome investment is necessary. They need that because without receiving advance payment from the migrants neither will manpower agents arrange the migrants' relocation to another country nor can they achieve permission from the "*local mastan*" (strongman) to start a business in their home country. Thus, to maintain the subsistence costs at home and abroad, to overcome the cost of immigration as well as saving for future security migrants try to earn money from different informal sources, a brief account of which are depicted below:

²⁹⁸ Tasneem Siddiqui. 2005. International Migration as a Livelihood Strategy of the Poor: The Bangladesh Case in Tasneem Siddiqui (ed.) Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices, p. 75.

- Selling international phone cards in their free time among migrant workers. Regarding this, they try to sell cards within their own groups either at home, during their holiday or even during work. Mainly Bangladeshis are their buyers. Besides, Nepalese migrants, comparative newcomers in the receiving country²⁹⁹, are found to be purchasing calling cards from them. These retail sellers buy cards from Bangladeshi, Burmese and Tamil Indian wholesalers of Kotaraya, where for every 15 cards they sell they receive a commission from the merchants.
- Growing Bangladeshi vegetables (the seeds of which are brought from Bangladesh by businessmen) at courtyards in their houses and selling said vegetables to neighbours or nearby Bangladeshi grocery shops. They grow these vegetables not only for sale, but also for their own consumption. This was found among slum dwellers of Butterworth, Port Klang and Kajang, where in each compound more than 10 Bangladeshis live together. Concerning this, joint businesses are also noticed in Taman campus of Johor Bahru where both Chinese and Bangladeshi labourers of the same house by turn engage themselves in vegetable and fish cultivation. They not only enjoy their products as meals, but also sell them in the weekly ‘pasarmalam’³⁰⁰ of the bazaar area or to their neighbours for a cheaper price.
- Selling cooked food like ‘rotichanai’³⁰¹, meat or egg curries along with soft drinks like sugar cane juice, coconut juice etc. in the construction sites (carrying the food in a basket or van). Mainly workers, locally married to Indonesian ladies, try to make extra money from these sources, enlisting their wives as sellers.
- Supplying “*ghee*” (clarified butter) to the local restaurants while preparing it at home or buying it from the wholesalers. Here in this context, workers married with Malay Bumiputera³⁰² turn into sellers. For example, Yunus’s Malay wife Nurmala helps him by making *ghee*. Since she has inherited arable land in the ‘kampung’³⁰³ areas of Perag from her parents she can help Yunus, one of the respondents of the current

²⁹⁹ According to the respondents Nepalese are employed in Malaysia by 2001 and onwards after the imposition of ban on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers in the research areas.

³⁰⁰ ‘Pasarmalam’ refers to the local informal market that starts at night.

³⁰¹ ‘Rotochanai’ is a kind of local bread prepared from wheat flour.

³⁰² The term ‘Bumiputera’ means native people. Malaysian government categorizes its multi-ethnic population into two groups, 1- *Bumiputera* and 2-*Non-Bumiputera*. The former term Bumiputera indicates literally ‘the sons of the soil’. In Peninsular Malaysia Malays and the aborigines and in Sabah and Sarawak, it refers to over twenty indigenous ethnic groups, such as the Iban, Bidayuh, Kadazan, Murut, Dusun, etc. The term Non-Bumiputera intends to identify people of immigrant descent, amongst them mainly are Chinese and Indian (Information is collected from ‘Asia Pacific Migration Research Network’, the name of the article is, Migration Issues in the Asia Pacific).

³⁰³ ‘kampung’ refers to village in Bahasa Melayu.

study. A man, one of the employees of the farm, provides her with milk for *ghee* every two to three days.

- Working as the middlemen of the landlords, on behalf of which they manage everything concerning the house. Said brokers' duties range from finding tenants to repairing houses and fixing the amount of rent etc. According to Mokbul, one of the brokers, "*since the landlord does not find enough time and also feels uncomfortable to visit the busy slum areas, he has appointed me. He addresses us as 'vodo orang asing' (foreigners are bad people). I am also his tenant, but I don't pay him, because I am working as his assistant.*"
- Sometimes workers were found as the middlemen of manpower agents and also money collectors from other workers. They deliver this to their so-called patrons who help transfer remittance to their home country by the "*hundy*" channels. Like their predecessors, gradually, after achieving the required information and networks, they convert into full-time manpower agents as well as "*hundy*" businessmen.
- Migrant workers who possess own houses through inter-ethnic marriage, try to earn money introducing a "*sublet*" system to their house. Another system is also noticed among tenants, where the first tenant turns into the other tenants' land lord. Regarding this, being a first tenant he tries to pay his own house rent from the payments of the other residents (of the house), who are there on the sublet system etc.

From the above discussion we can see that depending on the types of their "relational and structural" embeddedness, workers develop different kinds of strategies to survive in the host country. While the labourers, who found Bangladeshi and Chinese workers as their house-mates (because of the labour policy³⁰⁴ of the country on the workers' housing system), formulated a kind of informal inter-ethnic business, on the other hand through inter-ethnic marital bond some of the migrants and their families also converted into small scale vendors. Besides, others tried to find their own way developing intra and inter-ethnic ties with nearby or distantly situated people.

The question is how these combinations of formal and informal economic activities of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers can be conceptualized and whether the term "subsistence

³⁰⁴ It is written in the contract form of the workers that documented workers are entitled to enjoy free accommodation by their employers. Therefore, they are bound to live in the employer provided quarters, which is called "kongsis" in Bahasa.

economy” is applicable in explaining some of their survival strategies initiated mainly at home for household consumption and for the bazaar areas of the migrant community. In this context, the arguments and conceptualization of Evers and Korff (2000)³⁰⁵ concerning “strategies of survival in the cities” are found relevant. Their conceptualizations on shadow economy as well as the detailed empirical examples of informal and subsistence economic activities are carefully examined in this context. However, before doing this let us first discuss some more the economic activities of the Bangladeshi migrants. Without initiating any kind of amalgamated writing process, let us at first check the unemployed migrants’ survival strategies and then the other groups’ activities.

The migrants, presented under the ‘no job’ category in the pie chart, intend to survive in the host country providing the businessmen and manpower agents of the nearby area with free services. Under this “*pete-vate*” (serving for meal only) arrangement with the well-off people, the unemployed sojourners play roles as cooks and waiters in their so called patron’s house, as assistants in his business enterprises, as money collectors from the workers on behalf of the “*hundy*” businessmen etc. In community get togethers or cultural celebrations they act as the orators and helping hands of their respective reference group. They perform these stereotype role models of clients for the time being until a job with full payment and other facilities are provided by the patrons. Since they continue staying on undocumented status they lose their courage to freely move around (due to being afraid of police harassment and immigration raids). Consequently, they try to keep their vertical relationships with their Bangladeshi bosses intact.

Apart from the few professionals of the pie-chart (figure 3.4), the better-off migrants of the study areas are full time businessmen and some are also professionals who have managed to engage in businesses and integrated into the host society either by gaining citizenship and permanent resident status or through inter-ethnic marriage. While full time professionals are found engaged in job related activities and surrounded by colleagues, friends and also relatives, the other half of the well-off migrants are noted to be very strongly connected with the populace. Through their business related dealings and realities, both the merchants and professionals cum businessmen group remain affiliated with the migrant workers. Since the relatively poor as well as institutionally (because of the migration policy) and socially (lack of good jobs, decent income, educational attainment, connections with influential people, legal

³⁰⁵ Evers and Korff. 2000. Southeast Asian Urbanism, p. 131-152.

status etc.) vulnerable migrants are the target groups of businessmen, these merchants attempt to act as their (so-called) patrons. Apart from the supply of forged work permits and visas, through their manpower and “*hundy*” business, they function as transnational channels for these migrants. Besides, they also import newspapers, goods and foodstuffs from Bangladesh for their business and try to prove their concern for the workers.

Unlike the vendors, these well-off migrants possess their own business enterprises, pay tax for it (to the government of the host country) and thus belong to the formal economic sector, regulated under the government’s control. It should be mentioned in this regard that though they have managed to enter the government controlled formal market system of the host country by paying regular taxes some of their business activities like manpower and “*hundy*” business, forgery of work permits and passports etc. can still be identified as parts of the shadow economic activities. Though these are not the lion share of their business, we cannot overlook the combinations of income sources that consequently lead to the introduction of power hierarchy as well as weak ties between better-off and poor migrants. Moreover, it is noticed that along with intra-ethnic networks, their inter-ethnic networks and ties are related to their formal and informal economic projects, developed for upward mobility.

However, as this aspect of the organizational structure is one of the other chapters’ subject matter³⁰⁶, let us now rather turn the discussion to the question raised earlier on: How can we name and frame these multi-dimensional economic activities? Ever’s specification of shadow, informal and subsistence economic activities are very much relevant in this context and hence are presented next, keeping their original writing:

“1-The shadow economy covers all those economic activities which are not included in the official statistics, and which are therefore withdrawn from government regulations and taxation. 2-The informal sector consists of that part of the shadow economy in which small units produce for the market or render services. 3-Subsistence production comprises all consumption-oriented economic activities intended for private use and consumption outside of market economic relations.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ Please see chapter four and five.

³⁰⁷ Evers and Korff. 2000. Southeast Asian Urbanism, p. 131-132.

On the basis of the above arguments, the activities of unemployed migrant workers, who are tied to well-off people, can be identified as subsistence economic activities. They perform their role models only for self consumption and survival and receive no service charge for it. Instead of measuring the true economic value of their provided services (e.g. cooking, cleaning etc.) along the lines of a formal market system, the privileged migrants on the other hand, reciprocate providing protection, food and shelter. Though they do not pay a service charge to this lowest economic group, they nonetheless enjoy those migrants' free labour for their own ethnic enterprises. And hence they receive the opportunity of profit maximization by decreasing production costs. Their (the better-off people) activities therefore can be considered as mixtures of formal and informal economic fields.

As a group of professionals these expatriates enter into the country as skilled migrants and render services in exchange for monthly salaries. Their resident status is renewed by the employers through paying regular tax and hence, this sector certainly belongs to the formal economic field. Along with this, when they intend to boost up their status engaging into business, then as far as they maintain business regulations of the country, their activities can be identified as state regulated. In fact, to a certain extent they maintain business rules, but the qualitative data and the field observation augment the fact that "*hundy*" business, bringing workers in through clandestine ways, bribing the police to make forged chops as well as sheltering undocumented workers---are parts of the shadow economy. These are considered part of the shadow economy, because all the actions are initiated behind the curtain, avoiding tax and immigration law.

Finally, the boundaries for the identification of worker cum vendor groups' activities can be demarcated showing these activities as a combination of the formal and informal sector. The wage labour that they provide to their employers is exchanged through state mechanisms. They are recruited by the authorities for certain types of jobs, necessary for the capitalist production system of the country and hence can be seen as formal economic actors. Lacking the necessary monetary resources to set up business enterprises (something their comparatively well-off reference groups possess) they act as small scale vendors. All of their activities (like selling of phone cards, vegetables and cooked food, brokerage etc.) can be considered parts of the informal economy, though some of it is also utilized for private consumption. If fish and vegetable cultivations or cooked foods are kept outside of market relations, then we may address these as parts of the subsistence economy, though this is not a

proven fact. Though the Malaysian Government is not fixing the rate of costs and does not receive any tax for these businesses, their activities nonetheless affect the market areas on the grounds that instead of purchasing formal market produced materials, poor people may prefer buying goods from small scale vendors because of their cheaper prices. Thus, like the professionals and businessmen group, the workers cum vendors also earn money both from formal and informal sources. Below a table is provided on the monthly income of the different economic and status groups of Bangladeshi migrant respondents. They certainly indicate a combination of income from formal and shadow economic sources.

Table 3.12: Monthly Income, Strategies of Survival and Upward Mobility

Different economic and status groups	Monthly Income (RM)	Strategies of survival
Unemployed	0	Subsistence economy
Construction	200 - 2500	Wage labour and informal economy
Restaurant	400-1500	Wage labour and informal economy
Transport	500-1300	Wage labour and informal economy
Manufacturing	500 - 3000	Wage labour and informal economy
Workers, vendors and agent	700-1500	Wage labour, informal economy
Businessmen and agent	1000-4000	Formal and informal economy
Professionals	3000-4000	Formal economy as expatriate professionals
Professional, businessmen and agent	4000-6000	Formal and informal economy

Source: Own compilation from survey and interview data

We should note here that the income rates presented in the table may not be decisive. Whilst the higher income group may attempt to hide actual earning to avoid taxes, for the lower income group, a chance to exaggerate to a country-mate (formulated on the anticipated role models of a Bangladeshi man) may work. That “reality is constructed socially”³⁰⁸ and transmitted as well based on the perceptions of common people about what it should be, may also be true in this case. In Bangladeshi culture, there exists a high social value for migration and migrants are generally perceived to be a comparatively higher and better-off status group. In this context their status is culturally constructed and measured as well based on the amount of money earned abroad. Their ability to possess material objects like electronic goods as well as construction and maintenance of houses, cyber cafés, grocery shops etc. are evaluated in this regard. Consequently, it is not surprising that in order to keep their social status intact and to accumulate cultural capital they may intend to present a higher (than actual) amount of earning. They construct and transmit this ‘wishful reality of migration’ depending on the

³⁰⁸ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, p. 1-3 and 14-17 (Introduction: The Problem of the Sociology of Knowledge).

expectations towards them. The actual sufferings in a foreign country, the risks embedded in informal economic activities, the confrontations with others (both ethnic and inter-ethnic members) or unemployment and survival strategies are conveniently not mentioned.

However, apart from income diversities and realities there are other aspects, which are related to their social and economic status. For an instance, workers were divided into ‘documented’ and ‘undocumented’³⁰⁹ status on the basis of the legal status. While documented workers were concentrating on earning, undocumented workers first needed to develop ties to hide themselves from the police and also from any other kind of threat. In fact, whether the contributions of undocumented wage labourers can be identified within the formal economic sector is a matter of debate. They are recruited into the formal economic sector and also receive wages from their employers. It was found that along with making forged yearly working permits (after paying high charges for it to the employers and brokers), they were needed to provide “*ghush*” (bribes) to the local police so that they could stay and work in that particular area. Though their contributions and immigration status is not listed and counted in the official statistics, they are part of the country’s economic sector. And their contributions are evaluated as significant by their employers. Moreover, as most of these undocumented workers did not receive any other facilities except wages, they were strongly interested in overtime work to overcome their low income. Thus the so-called undocumented workers are contributing to the national economy of the country and therefore have converted into a part of the capitalist production and thus as indicate in the previous discussion incorporated into the formal economic sector.

As a matter of fact, from the previous discussion we may notice that though there remains an immigration policy to govern the migrant workers, there are other factors that help migrants to bypass that policy. The contributions of networking and knowledge with regards to construct potential survival strategies as well as to find several sources of income are noteworthy in this regard. Combinations of formal and informal economic activities, involvement of undocumented workers in the formal economic sector are instances of said factors that enhance the capability and strategies of migrants to bypass the immigration policy. Like these there is another aspect that (1) somehow represents the nature of ethnic and inter-ethnic networking and the then shared knowledge along the lines of strong and weak ties (concerning

³⁰⁹ At present there are about 26% migrants are employed as undocumented workers and 73% are as documented workers.

jobs, accommodation, probable risks etc.) and (2) is directly linked with the migrants' current occupation and income sources. This factor is the expenditure structure of different status groups. Let us discuss this topic now.

3.9 Main Expenditures and the Reflection of Heterogeneity of the Migrants

Table 3.13: Main expenditures of the respondents

Occupational Variations	Main expenditures from income		
	<i>Economic remittance, food, house rent, clothing, phone, levy, treatment, savings, bribing to police/others, entertainment, gifts etc.</i>	<i>Food, economic remittance, clothing, phone, levy, savings, entertainment, gifts, treatment, etc.</i>	<i>Food, phone, clothing, tax, occasional visit to home, cultural/religious programs, internet, gifts etc.</i>
Restaurant	6	5	0
Manufacturing	12	65	0
Construction sector	7	13	0
Businessmen and agent	5	0	5
Transport	3	5	0
Worker, vendors and agents	4	3	0
Professionals	0	0	3
Professional, businessmen and agent	0	0	7
No job	7	0	0
Total	44	91	15

Source: Survey data of Bangladeshi migrants

Though the national level data of Malaysia provides hardly any information concerning the expenditure of migrant workers, there are some empirical works, for example the study of Karim³¹⁰ et al., Abubakar³¹¹, Zamir³¹² etc. There a brief description of the expenditures of different migrant communities is shown in comparative perspectives. Three main aspects can be identified from the above literature, such as (1) -foods, (2) -remittance and (3) -levy. Concerning the Bangladeshi community apart from all the three items there are some more areas where the respondents are noted to spend huge amounts of money. The expenditure also reflect their diverse socio-economic and legal statuses in the sense that not all groups prefer the same area or item; while some highlight regular flow of economic remittance to families at home, in others' budgets, distributions of money for occasional visits to their home, cultural

³¹⁰ Zehadul Karim, AHM, Moha Asri Abdullah and Mohd. Isa Haji Bakar. 1999. Foreign Workers in Malaysia: Issues and Implications, p. 58-59.

³¹¹ Syarisa Yanti Abubakar. 2002. Migrant Labour in Malaysia: Impact and Implications of the Asian Financial Crisis, p. 18.

³¹² Zahid Zamir. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contribution in Malaysian Economy, p. 55-57.

and religious meetings in the host society etc. occupy more important spaces than (economic) remittance, in some cases it is even found to be a negligible criteria.

In fact, if we consider the lists of expenses presented in the table 3.13, we may find that respondents can be divided into three main status groups on the basis of their expenditure structure. The lists are also intersectional on the grounds that with the exceptions of two income and status groups as well as that of the unemployed workers, all other groups belong to different segments of the lists at a time. Whereas the respondents from two income clusters, for example, (1)-professional and (2)-professional cum businessmen groups represent the last category and the unemployed migrants belong to the first one on the other side, in other groups of migrants we can see crisscutting examples of expenditures between different categories. Though they do not represent all three criteria, the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers as well as worker cum vendors' expenditure lists cover examples of the first and second categories, whilst the businessmen's expenses fall within the records of first and third categories.

This kind of crisscrossing examples may be explained along the lines that the lists are not only a mere representation of monthly expenditures of the migrants, but also an indication of the migrants' life realities comprised of formal and informal earning sources, legal position, interaction with locals, transnational networking, integration and assimilation status. These are in themselves very diverse. In other words, the list of expenditures can be identified as instances of expenses by different income and status groups to fulfil their basic needs and find a probable survival strategy in the host society. Depending on their types of socio-economic and structural embeddedness it may vary. Concerning this let us have a look at the qualitative data.

It is already depicted that unemployed people need to provide free service for well-off Bangladeshi businessmen to maintain subsistence costs and find a place for living. But this is not the end of their expenditure; rather they also need to earn money for bribes to the police and locals so that they can stay and work in Malaysia. Concerning this, while some migrants said it was the privileged reference groups who took care of their undocumented and unemployed status, some other respondents demonstrated two ways of lump sum earning, such as: (1)-lending money from well-off people or friends and (2)-earning extra income

through part-time jobs (in construction sites, in hotels and restaurants or as a sweeper in different fast food shops).

This type of part-time earning is identified by them as very risky; still they continue to convince the local police through inducement. They are promised a suitable job soon by their so-called patrons and they continue their work hoping for a better future. They have no idea how many days are really meant by the term “soon”. Still it is seen as the only option for unemployed migrants. Considering the alternative, that is more expensive and risky, which is to “leave the country and wait for another calling,” they earn through part-time jobs. However, although some semi-skilled and un-skilled workers as well as businessmen and vendors are spending money for bribes for police and locals, for the professionals and businessmen cum professional groups these criteria are found to be absent. In the same way, while some semi-skilled and un-skilled workers as well as vendors can be found free from bribes, on the other hand the set of merchants can also be seen in the last category of the expenditure lists. They spend money for community get-togethers in the host country and to occasionally visit their homeland.

The instance that the (1) -professionals and (2) -professionals and businessmen do not send economic remittance like others, but rather spend money for community get togethers in the receiving country may be identified as an indication of integration, in R.D. Grillo’s term “here, but different”³¹³. It is already known to us that they (the first generation immigrants) that originally migrated to Peninsular Malaysia for upward mobility have become a part of the most privileged class of the so-called “*Bangla community*” and also possess social and legal status allowing them to live with their family members in the host society, be they ethnic or inter-ethnic. Hereby instead of only considering their home-country as an option for “eventual return”³¹⁴, they try to maintain their home land kinship networks³¹⁵ through occasional visits, sporadic phone calls, modern systems of communication e.g. contact via email and or chat programmes like “*yahoo messenger*” etc. They maintain networks with their home land, while at the same time spending most of their lives abroad. Their assimilation into the receiving society can be noticed in employment, business initiatives and in some cases in family life

³¹³ R.D. Grillo.2001. Transnational Migration and Multiculturalism in Europe, p.13-14. WPTC-01-08. Retrieved on April 22, 2007 at <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/>

³¹⁴ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico, p- 276.

³¹⁵ Though they are living with their nuclear family members, but the extended family members (both consanguineal and affinal), like parents, sibling, in-laws and also friends (the fictive relatives) are in Bangladesh.

because of inter-ethnic marriage. However they nevertheless remain affiliated with their home country through transnational contacts and networking.

The instances of (1)-businessmen and (2)-vendors and workers' transnational contacts and integration status in the host country do not echo the situation of said privileged class. Instead their status of integration can be coined as "neither here, nor there"³¹⁶. Apart from a few exceptions most of them of these categories do not have the legal access to assimilate into the country. Still their situation can be explained as 'in between statuses' on the grounds that they maintain transnational networks and activities with their home country and have at the same time managed to do business and integrate into the host country through inter-ethnic ties and matrimonial bonds. Lacking the legal status of integration most of them have somehow managed to negotiate with the host country's authorities through inter-ethnic bonds or bribery, while at the same time also sustaining active home land contacts by making phone calls, sending (economic) remittance, visiting occasionally or as "*hundy*" businessmen and manpower agents. Unlike the cases of the professional and professional cum merchants groups, their integration into the receiving society is characterized by a precarious existence. Due to shaky integration in the host country and being afraid of deportation they try to keep their transnational contacts intact, though their main intention is to settle down abroad.

As a matter of fact, the previous discussion on the types of expenditures of migrant Bangladeshis is quite different from other studies on migration, where outflow is simply explained relating to income. We may notice from the qualitative information that the expenditure structures are reflecting the diverse socio-economic realities of the migrants and the institutional structure of the receiving country Malaysia. This is generally ignored in most of the conventional research. However, to know and analyze the causes of this diversity we may briefly take a look at some of the aspects depicted below. These will mainly focus on the immigration policy of the receiving country and the respondents' types of embeddedness.

1. It is already known to us that migrant workers' recruitment and work in Malaysia is regulated mainly by the Immigration Act (1959/63) and the Employment act (1955).

³¹⁶ R.D. Grillo.2001. Transnational Migration and Multiculturalism in Europe, p.17-18. WPTC-01-08. Retrieved on April 22, 2007 at <http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/>

This act promises equal wages and the same status and benefits both to local and foreign workers as long as their status is documented. However, though the expatriate professionals agreed³¹⁷ about receiving all kinds of benefits (like housing allowance, festival bonus, health insurance, renewable job contracts, scopes for permanent settlement, tickets for short visits to their home country after expiry of contract, encouragement for research initiatives and publications, travelling and guest allowances for full time professors etc.), the situation of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers is different even though they are documented too. For example, apart from wages they are entitled to get other extra benefits like lodging, medical facilities, sick leave (on average 18 days for 2 to 5 years service if hospitalization is not required and 60 days if it is required), holidays, public holidays (10 gazetted public holidays), annual leave (on average 12 days for 2 to 5 years service), 1.5 times payment for overtime work³¹⁸, transportation if the working place is far away, protection (under the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, Act 514), social safety contributions (SOCSO) by the employers for the workers and the employees and finally Providence Funds (EPF) etc. However, during the field visit I noticed two facts, such as: (1)-some workers do not have any clear cut idea about their rights and (2) - though some of the migrant workers know what they are entitled to receive as workers, being afraid of deportation³¹⁹ they do not dare to request these rights. For instance, it was mentioned by most of the documented workers that in case of fever, headaches, coughs etc. they receive free treatment, but if they are seriously ill, they need to start worrying about losing their jobs. Their employers consider any kind of absence from work a business loss and sometimes sack them if the absence is for a week or more. Consequently, instead of informing the authorities they try to bear the treatment costs on their own. Sometimes they avoid doctors. Considering “*Panadol*”³²⁰ as a reliable medicine for any kind of headache and pain they try to help themselves, without worrying about its side effects. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the expenditure lists of both documented and undocumented workers we can see that they are paying money for their treatment costs.

³¹⁷ Data is collected through interviewing university teachers and IT experts recruited in Malaysia as expatriate professionals.

³¹⁸ According to the labour law, there should be three types of payment for hours of work: normal, overtime and working on holiday. Provision for payment for working on Sunday or at night or on public holidays will be 200% and 300% respectively than the usual payment.

³¹⁹ Employers have the power to cancel work permit of their employees.

³²⁰ Panadol is a kind of pain killer pill, very much popular among the migrant workers.

2. Referring to the instance of a Nepalese worker it was quoted that he lost his fingers while working as a machine operator in a furniture factory. He did not receive any compensation; rather he was sacked on the grounds of being “*medically unfit*”. As a result, considering the consequences and harsh realities after job dismissal, the workers rather try to work as much as possible (to convince their employers) and consequently sometimes their health deteriorates. In fact, Pintu Miah of Taman campus, a respondent of this study, became an undocumented worker after becoming a tuberculosis patient. I was told by some of his workmates that too much work³²¹ and the unhealthy environment (dusty, too warm, old machines) of the welding factory might be the causes of his disease.

3. Most of the workers were also unconscious about health hazards caused from chemicals. They were usually found working in the factory without wearing masks or hand gloves (like Pintu Miah of Taman campus). They disagreed about receiving any kind of awareness information from the authorities (as precautions against health hazards). Besides, though 64% of the respondents confirmed getting free accommodation from their employers, during my visit to (some of) their apartments and *Kongsi*,³²² 10 to 15 people were found living in a single room. They were sharing two or three iron made double-storied couches. The same situation was also noticed in other rooms of the apartment, where only one kitchen and toilet were provided for all the members of the house. The apartment was not only congested but also worn-out and unhygienic. As a result, lacking privacy and suffering from inadequate facilities, a few (4.7%) of the documented workers started living in their own rented houses. Naturally this created an extra burden for them.

4. Moreover, irregular and low payment, deduction of medical expenses from their wages etc. were also identified by the workers as the causes of their job alterations. To overcome these extra expenditures, they try to earn a living from both formal and informal income sources. They explained, “*Of our daily income we try to save at least RM 10 for food and RM 5 for cigarettes, drinks (‘minum’) and entertainment.*”

³²¹ Under the Malaysian labour law workers are not allowed to work more than 60 hours a week.

³²² Usually *Kongsi* is a single-storey house made for foreign workers. These types of dwellings are made of wooden walls, zinc roofs and with few small rooms. Each room is fixed for ten to twelve workers, sometimes more. According to Azizah (Sojourn Vol. 15. No 1. 2000, p. 105), “each usually of about 10 feet by 12 feet in area, with each room often accommodating ten to twelve workers.”

Conscious workers try to save at least 2 RM 50 Sent per day for the yearly levy and RM 7/8 for savings, their family and incidental costs. Experienced workers try to consider whether they can maintain this amount or not. We choose our jobs depending on all these criteria. Experienced workers tend to take jobs if they get at least RM 25 per day. Inexperienced Workers take any job without considering the above facts and finally convert into illegal workers failing to pay levy.”

5. However, apart from the documented workers, there are also undocumented workers (among respondents), who are devoid of all kind of benefits except wages. Even they do not show the courage expect these facilities. It was found that their payment was lower than that of the documented workers and not so regular. To overcome their low income, they have to work overtime even on public holidays, as well as Sundays and at night time. Consequently, it may not be surprising that undocumented workers are earning a living from informal business activities. Unlike the documented workers, they bear the full costs for their accommodation, transportation, and treatment etc., along with the expenses for their own subsistence as well as their families at home. And to hide their undocumented status, they bribe the local police on a monthly basis. Their connections and networks with influential people (both ethnic and inter-ethnic ties) regulate the amount of bribe in this context.

6. According to Pillai, “The ineffectiveness of the 1989 measures prompted the government to come up with a new policy, announced in October 16, 1991. (...)It also outlines the responsibilities of employers (...). In addition, the 1992 Budget proposals introduced a levy on foreign workers, including expatriates, to ensure that foreigners are employed only when necessary.”³²³ It was found that this law was maintained only for expatriates. But for others, it did not work. In other words, though the levy was supposed to be paid by the employers for their employees, my interviews revealed that none but the low and un-skilled workers paid themselves. Consequently, sometimes they left their jobs (and thus converted into undocumented workers) having failed to provide the yearly levy. Zamir³²⁴ and Rudnick³²⁵ also noticed more or less the same

³²³ Patrick Pillai. 1992. People on the Move. An Overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia, p. 31.

³²⁴ Zahid Zamir. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contribution in Malaysian Economy, p. 55.

³²⁵ Anja Rudnick. 1996. Foreign Labour in Malaysian Manufacturing. Bangladeshi Workers in the Textile Industry, p. 64.

situation in their works, conducted among migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia. In fact, it is found that not only documented workers pay fees to renew their work permits, but also undocumented workers pay yearly charges either to their employers or manpower agents for forged work permits. They also demonstrate that there is no fixed amount of levy and that's why (sometimes) undocumented workers need to pay more.³²⁶ Bablu's comment is noteworthy in this regard, "*Earlier legal workers had to pay RM 1200 per year as tax, now we need to pay RM 1800. Our basic salary is not high enough, we cannot manage. In my case I failed to renew my work permit and now I am an illegal worker. All of us need to pay fees regardless of the amount of our income. It is really worthless, why should we pay?*"

7. That paying levy to the government on behalf of documented workers is a responsibility of the employers, not a duty of the employees-- is found to be quite unknown to the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers. Rather, they are suppressed in this regard by their employers and the powerful Bangladeshi labour brokers. This led to the introduction of a situation where poor migrants had to find informal income sources along with the formal one. For this they converted into so-called clients of powerful businessmen and maintained networks unless an alternative way of survival was managed.
8. Besides, it is not unknown to us that some Bangladeshi migrants are earning their income as business entrepreneurs (full time businessmen), while some workers try to likewise make a living (from side businesses) as vendors. Apart from tax, the practice of bribing is also noticed among them. In fact, though on the basis of the Income Tax Act 1967 all businessmen need to pay a yearly tax, which is 30% of their earning and have to get renewal of their business visa after each two years (showing the income and account balance of the company), during my field research I noticed certain practices of the shadow economy within them. While the vendors lacked any legal licenses for their businesses (being unable to acquire on due to small capital) large scale business entrepreneurs also violated the business rules due to their informal income sources. Their income from "*hundy*" and manpower businesses was illegal,

³²⁶ The formal rule is that the employers should pay yearly levy on behalf of the foreign workers between RM 360- RM2,400 that varies depending on the types of job and category of workers (Source: Patrick Pillai. 1992. *People on the Move. An Overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia*, p. 59).

because they did not obtain any permission from the authorities. At the same time, they recruited middlemen as vegetable and fish sellers in the 'pasarmalam' area. These middlemen had no license for any kind of business in Malaysia. Moreover, they arranged sub-let systems in their business enterprises to operate phone booth business and employed mostly students lacking business licenses. Therefore, to keep the risks to a minimum level, both the small scale and full time businessmen were required to pay bribes to the police and local strongmen. And eventually, thus ethnic and inter-ethnic business partners, middlemen and the vendors became associated with each other like a chain or a network of strong and weak ties. In those networks of entrepreneurs, middlemen and vendors some were more powerful than others and this possession of the necessary power allowed them command scarce resources. And utilizing that power they tried to find a better way of upward social mobility and also managed to receive followers from the lower economic groups (that stimulated their businesses on the other hand).

As a result, we may conclude here saying that the expenditure is nothing but a reflection of the survival strategies of Bangladeshi migrants. They develop these strategies against the backdrop of the many different realities, they face based on their types of embeddedness.

In fact, in the overall discussion we have noticed that the heterogeneous socio-economic characteristics of Bangladeshi migrants as well as the multi-ethnic environment and multi-dimensional migration policies of both countries (Bangladesh and Malaysia) are their embedded realities. These were encountered through the introduction of new ties and networks. These ties were developed in several sectors and levels, such as: (1) in the host country-- within the community (intra-ethnic), (2) in the host country—outside the community (inter-ethnic) and (3) between the home and receiving societies' kith and kin (transnational networking). Their modes of (formulated) networks and ties were shaped (and thus varied) based on the diverse realities of the migrants. In other words, it was a two-way process. On the one hand, migrants' types of embeddedness determined their realities and on the other hand, these realities regulated their coping strategies (networks). Therefore, the concept of mixed embeddedness postulated by Kloosterman et al. can be considered significant to explain the realities of Bangladeshis' lives (in the country of settlement) that regulate their forms of coping strategies (networking).

However, depending on the research findings I may add two more aspects to their concept of mixed embeddedness. Whereas in their work the socio-economic position and related (concomitant) scopes for the upward social mobility of immigrant business entrepreneurs in the Netherlands are understood emphasizing (1) their embeddedness in their own social network and (2) in the host country's socio-economic and politico-institutional environment, in the case of the Bangladeshi community (of Peninsular Malaysia), we can incorporate two more points into the existing conceptualization of mixed embeddedness. They are: (3) the origin country's socio-economic, politico-institutional structures regulated by the country's (existing) dominant ideology of class, gender, status and (4) the transnational liabilities, contacts and business relationships of the migrants (that also depend on their socio-economic position and legal status both in the country of origin and settlement).

These two aspects are added on the grounds that in this era of globalization modern communication technology fosters trans-border communications in such a way that migrants and their families, living beyond state boundaries, cannot be separated highlighting (only) geographical distance. We have found that migrants maintain contact with their homeland either by visiting or by sending remittance and gifts. They also maintain correspondence through telecommunication, newspapers and internet facilities. Thus, they try to take part in their families' decision making processes and also attempt to perform their prescribed role models (to the extent this is possible for them under the given circumstances and does not contradict their interests in upward mobility).

That migrants instrumentalize their networks is now known to us. They strive to network in order to enable themselves to face the harsh realities and also to mitigate some goals. Their aims can be listed as: (1) to get a link to the better-off people for survival, (2) to find out ways to mobilize scarce resources for their own sake, (3) to sustain the social construction of reality to an extent that does not contradict their interests and (4) to negotiate with those types of socio-economic and ideological constructions concerning the expected role models of migrants (at home and abroad) that seem to them exploitative in nature and also goes against their desire for upward mobility. Therefore, apart from home country networks, different modes of alliances are formed in the new environment and context of the receiving society, where access to scarce resources, maintaining this access and at the same time manipulating and negotiating it (all with the aim of a better future) are major concerns.

Owing to the different forms of embeddedness in the origin and host countries as well as in their socio-economic and also transnational networks, with regards to scarce resource management some migrants achieve more power than others, get legitimacy of exercising it over others or manage to manipulate the situation for their own sake (thus creating a kind of patron-client relationship). Unlike Gardner (“Londoni migrant Bangladeshis”) I am not considering this to be a hierarchal power structure nor reciprocal or paternalistic form of patron-clientele relationships. Rather, I am identifying it as a ‘pseudo patron-client relationship’. In fact, if we follow the classical definition and characteristics of the nature of patron-clienteles we may see that there is no place for negotiation within that relationship, rather, the moral obligations of this reciprocal relationship and the consideration of the patron as protector, keep the risks of confrontations between poor and well-off people to a minimum level. It helps to shape the bonds taking more or less permanent forms in nature. However, this classical model is quite different to the fluid modes of the ‘pseudo patron-client relationship’, found among migrant Bangladeshis in Peninsular Malaysia.

As a matter of fact, within the vertical relationships of the so-called “*Bangla community*” I have seen commercial reciprocity, exploitation, fluidity and negotiation as underlying facts that all add dynamic to the relationships. And in the context of the host society this is very relevant, since the society is itself very dynamic because of the changing nature of migration policy and the continuous flow of migrants there, from different parts of the world.³²⁷

Therefore, in the following chapters we shall try to discuss these dimensions of communal organizational structures in more detail. In this context ethnographic examples and case studies will be analyzed. However, before proceeding let us substantiate one more aspect on the nature of reference groups in the context of assimilation and integration in the host society, which is shaped along the lines of weak ties and so-called patron-client relationships. For this, I shall verify the data referring to the recent work of Fan and Stark³²⁸ on the "social proximity explanation of the reluctance to assimilate". I do this to check whether or not migrants try to integrate in the host country and in what context it takes place. Furthermore how are the reference groups chosen by the poor income and status group (s) to find ways of survival?

³²⁷ For in detail discussion about patron-client relationships and also ethnographic examples we may see Gellner and Waterbery 1977; Stiles 1991; Gardner 1995 and 2006 etc.

³²⁸ C. Simon Fan and Oded Stark. A Social Proximity Explanation of the Reluctance to Assimilate. KYKLOS, Vol. 60-2007-No. 1, 55-63.

4. ‘Networking as a Potential Survival Strategy’— Exploration of the Nature of “Strong and Weak ties”, the Patron-client Relationships and Reference Groups of the Bangladeshi Diaspora

Fan and Stark's paper focuses on the probabilities and motivators of migrant assimilation into the “mainstream culture” of the receiving society examining examples from two countries with different (per capita?) levels of incomes. The lower income country sends migrants to the higher income one, where migrants do not integrate, though this may decrease their earnings and productivity. This fact is supported by an observation from the United States, referring to the work of Lazear³²⁹. The paper posits the following variables: (a) Proximity between migrants and members of the host society, (b) income levels (or wealth, livelihood?) and finally the assumption that close proximity between migrants and locals leads to frustration (relative deprivation) and hence reluctance to assimilate.

If we consider the previous section's discussion on migrants' survival strategies in the host society of Malaysia, our response to this theory may depict as follows: societies are always stratified by status and income. With regards to the Bangladeshi Diaspora we have noticed the existence of at least nine income and status groups. Migrants of all of these groups are found engaged in side businesses along with their primary occupations as a way of survival.³³⁰ On the basis of the expenditure structure, which should be seen as a reflection of the very diverse realities of the Bangla community, they are separated into roughly three categories.³³¹ Both occupation and expenditure related diversities show that Bangladeshis are not a homogenous body. Some are comparatively better-off and powerful than others of the same community. These differentiations and hierarchy arise as a consequence of their different types of embeddedness in the socio-economic, political and institutional structures of the origin and receiving societies. Besides, the migration policy is itself very discriminatory. It is substantiated on the grounds that concerning integration and other facilities (like working environment, terms and conditions of their jobs or their living areas) it nurtures inequality between natives and foreigners, rich and poor income groups as well as skilled and un-skilled migrants.

³²⁹ Edward P. Lazear. 1999. Culture and Language. *Journal of Political Economy*.107: S95-S126.

³³⁰ Please see table 3.12.

³³¹ Please see table 3.13.

Since locals are more powerful than foreigners, migrants need to develop both strong (inter-ethnic marriages) and weak ties (commercial networking) with them if they want to settle down there or set up business enterprises. In the same way, poor income and status groups are found affiliated with well-off migrants to find a better way of survival. To increase income, find better accommodation, gain protection from locals and the police, find jobs or acquire forged work permits and visas they construct these networks. The affluent migrants, on the other hand, continue this vertical relationship because of business interests and also to achieve scarce social resources. Regarding scarce social capital as well as economic and political leadership they (the affluent migrants) compete with others of the same status group. Because of this they need support from their followers (clients). Consequently, there exist differentiations and unequal power relationships not only between migrants and natives, but also among members of the Bangladeshi Diaspora. It should also be seen that to adapt, learn the Malaysian language and local norms, find contacts with well-off people migrants depend on strong ties. Moreover aiming for upward mobility they try to be affiliated with their respective patrons as clients. Migrants thus have an option to choose different types of reference groups: the same income group in the host society, higher income groups in their own migrant community, or higher income groups in the host society. This theory is applicable only to the third option.

Let us consult more detailed empirical evidence from my research on Bangladeshi migrants in Peninsular Malaysia. These data show that the lower income groups of migrants tend to choose the second option for upward mobility (like achieving higher income and social status, keeping themselves free from any kind of attacks either by robbers or the police, finding a way to integrate etc.) and develop a bond of weak ties. They maintain strong ties within the same income and status groups, created among co-workers, housemates, neighbours of the same areas etc. As a survival strategy they try to get access to the powerful brokers of their own community, those that have already managed this become their reference group. This group in turn does not show a comparative deprivation in relation to the host society and therefore assimilates. The lack of assimilation of low income migrants is better explained as an outcome of a lack of social mobility and/or as a survival strategy.

There are, of course, also studies on diasporas (migrant groups that have not assimilated), like the relatively rich Lebanese of West Africa, and many others. Assimilation, in any case, is

never a one-dimensional process but needs a bundle of variables in order to be successfully explained. Let us consider some more aspects that are delineated below:

1. Space allocation (in the host society) for the un-skilled and semi-skilled documented workers is regulated by different principles, such as, job, migration policy etc. It is not always possible for migrants to compare their income with other people who are in a superior position. They cannot even imagine the social distance between them and the higher up professionals. They fail to compare or evaluate, because they do not get any chance to live in the same space. Moreover, undocumented workers try to find their living place in such areas that are comparatively cheap. However, it is already known to us that the house rent is not a big deal for the professionals, because it is paid by the authorities. Their main concern is to select a place where they can live a sound life with their families and colleagues. The instances and the underlying arguments for this type of segregated settlement in Malaysia can also be found in Evers³³² and Dannecker³³³'s writings.

2. On the basis of this research it is known to us, that the main motivation for migrants is to survive in the host country and then to find a better way for upward mobility. For this they develop ties, learn the Malaysian language, customs etc. They do not compare their situation with people whom they may not reach, because there is no scope for them to interact. Rather, they get chances to meet people that are of a relatively high status (not really that far away from them, however. Maybe one/two steps further), such as the middlemen of labour brokers. These “*dalals*” assist them to come into contact with powerful labour brokers at home and abroad.

3. Income is not the only factor; there exist other aspects that demand consideration, like prestige, honour, rank etc. For example, the well-off Bangladeshis compete with each other in order to be nominated as leaders of the branches of political parties (formulated along the lines of the political system of Bangladesh). In this venture their clients need to support them through informal voting.

³³² Evers and Korff. 2000. Southeast Asian Urbanism, p. 63.

³³³ Petra Dannecker. 2003. The Meanings and the Rationalities Underlying Labor Migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia, p. 21.

4. While poor income and status groups try to be affiliated with higher income groups for upward mobility, on the other hand, the better-off people are found actively integrating themselves into the host society by developing inter-ethnic business relationships with the local people. Natives from the host society are their reference groups. Besides, the integration of Bangladeshis into the receiving society through adoption of host language, norms, rituals etc. and development of inter-ethnic friendships and marriages all contrast with Fan and Stark's modelling on migration and assimilation.

In fact, migrants choose migration as a strategy for upward mobility. It seems that as a logical human being they should find someone, try to remain connected with a person (like Chinese migrants in the U.S.A) that is comparatively better-off; because he may assist him, show him the direction to uplift his economic and social position. My study has revealed that primarily labour brokers fill this position. They have managed to reach this vantage point through assimilation and also exploitation of lower migrant income groups.

Instead of changing their reference group the low status and income groups try to follow the paths of said groups. Some succeed at this; some are still on their way, like for example the small scale vendors, who manage their businesses alongside their jobs etc. They know that the brokers are making money utilizing their free service or as manpower agents (though the rule is that employers rather than migrants pay the service charge to the brokers these brokers still make money utilizing both channels³³⁴). Nonetheless they try to remain connected with their broker unless they find a better one. It is not likely that they always consider them as their patrons; rather it is a strategy of the low income group allowing them shelter from the better-off people.

But the assumption that they change their reference groups due to frustration is not true at all. They share their sufferings with their friends (strong ties) and merely try to survive at first. They maintain weak ties ('Bangla Bazaar') to find better ways of upward mobility. Through achieving appropriate knowledge of the most effective ways of gaining higher income and integration they try to enrich themselves. At the same time, they attempt to utilize their

³³⁴ The same situation is also noticed by Abdul-Rashid Abdul- Aziz. 2001. *Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia's Construction Sector*, p. 8. Referring to Osmani (1986) they mentioned, "In theory, agents receive no payments from the migrant—they are paid a commission by employers for recruiting on their behalf. But it is an open secret that prospective recruits must pay; otherwise they would be bypassed by those who are willing to do so."

connections with influential people of the same and other ethnic communities or with local power structures (like the police) to mobilize scarce resources. In order to avoid and combat any risk they depend both on strong and weak tied networks.

Therefore, testing against our data of Fan and Stark's theory we have noticed the following results. Stark's thesis or model is, in fact, very simple. He assumes that migrants take their host society as a reference group, as their income levels are higher in the host society. Migrants experience relative deprivation and therefore do not bother to integrate. This does not seem to be true as the (recent) migrants take successful earlier migrants as their reference group, try to get into contact with them (networking!) and strive after them. Else they try to integrate into their host society (as reference group) through adoption of religious practices, customs, language and through sometimes engaging in marriage.

5. Conclusion

In the very beginning of this chapter I stated my primary intentions were to portray the socio-economic background of the migrant Bangladeshis, their diverse coping strategies and the assigned working and living conditions in the host society. We have explored the structural background of the origin and receiving societies as well as migrants' own socio-economic background in order to 'know their ways of survival in a foreign society', which is the main research question of this study.

It has been depicted that social networking is playing a critical role in their (migrants) survival in the study areas that is itself regulated by the mixed embeddedness of the migrants. Their embeddedness is located in different forms and levels of socio-economic, political and institutional structures and conditions of the origin and destination countries. Moreover, migrants' embeddedness in transnational obligations and duties also influence their network building.

It has furthermore been found that depending on their respective levels of power and capabilities migrants modify, control, negotiate and adapt to the outcomes of the structural conditions. The formation of various forms of networks, like inter and intra-ethnic ties as well as transnational networking are noticed as the outcome of migrants' coping strategies and also of bargaining processes. In those dynamic processes of primary adaptation and upward social

mobility, migrants' reference group formation is manifested along the lines of strong and weak ties. Concerning the weak ties between well-off and poor migrants, a kind of so-called patron-client relationship is found in the study areas.

The investigation of these aspects of networking requires an analysis of the patterns of community organizational structures as well as their living and working niche (embeddedness). It is noticed that the heterogeneous groups of migrants' integration and assimilation in the receiving society is regulated decisively by the multi-ethnic environment of the host society and the divide and rule principles of the migration policies of the origin and receiving societies. Moreover, the formation of different forms of intra and inter-ethnic networking is done in order to cope with the everyday realities and to combat conflict is evidenced as reality in the study areas. This formation is more or less motivated by the individual socio-economic, institutional and political structures of the receiving society.

We may conclude here saying that in the overall discussion we have noticed that migrants instrumentalize their networks of strong ties (chiefly) for their adaptation into the receiving society. They become affiliated with the well-off (weak-ties) people to know (information) and find a better way (influence through networking) of survival (for upward mobility). Utilizing vertical networks they try to integrate and search for ways to mobilize scarce resources for their own sakes. Along with this, they bargain and also sustain the social construction of reality that is intrinsically suitable for the advancement of their interests. Highlighting these forms of horizontal and vertical networking I shall proceed in the next chapter with concrete ethnographic examples in order to demonstrate the organizational structure of the community. How information is transferred for the creation of knowledge, in what level do they need to reach their vantage points and how strategies are developed and manipulated as well in the host society, will be explored in chapter four.

Chapter Four

‘Mapping the Organizational Structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora’— Primordial and Inter-ethnic Networking and Integration in the Host Country

1. Introduction

Bangladeshi migrants are heterogeneous groups of people embedded in the diverse realities and liabilities of the origin and host societies. In chapter three, we have come across their non-homogeneous interests and concomitant coping strategies. Their networking is an asset. Our analysis has moreover evidenced that depending on their demands firstly of adaptation (to cope and survive in a foreign country) and secondly of upward mobility both strong and weak ties have been developed along the lines of horizontal and vertical networking.

In those very diverse forms of networking we have also noticed power relationships in these vertical relations. These are developed based on the migrants’ embeddedness. On the one side, their embeddedness is noticed in the socio-economic, political and institutional power structures of the homeland and receiving countries, while on the other it is also noticed within the transnational networks and duties. It is found that the discriminatory migration policies in the context of gender, class, status (both in the origin and receiving countries) and nationalities (receiving countries) contribute to this power hierarchy. At the same time the everyday realities of the multi-ethnic surroundings, individual migrants’ socio-economic characteristics and capabilities as well as their legal positions in the host country nurture this as well. Along with this, the authoritative and dominant ideology (on the grounds of gender, class, status and religion) of the unequal social system of Bangladesh has been transmitted overseas. In fact, though the migrant community (of the study areas) is living geographically apart, they remain connected with the origin country through a continuous transnational flow of people, money and information that on the other hand, transfers the dominant ideology of the homeland to the receiving society. Thus, the well-off migrants become more powerful in that specific context while the poor find themselves becoming weaker.

Besides these types of horizontal (strong ties) and vertical (weak ties) bonds, several sub-groupings have been noticed in the horizontal level. These are formulated (by the migrants) on

the basis of the diverse everyday realities they face through their mixed embeddedness. Regarding this, both the socio-economic, political and institutional structures of the origin and receiving countries as well as migrants' socio-economic statuses, transnational contacts and duties are found as regulators. Thus, along with bonds of strong and weak ties different types of alliances and cleavages are developed by the well-off and poor migrants in the horizontal level. Consequently, instead of homogeneity, heterogeneity and diversity are the common criteria for the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Peninsular Malaysia.

Apart from these primordial types of networking, a kind of inter-ethnic strong (inter-ethnic friendship, marital and other kinds of intimate relationships) and weak ties (commercial networking like partnership in business etc.) were also found as the outcome of the migrants' embeddedness in the receiving society, with which after all they had to cope with. These kinds of inter-ethnic networking were developed by Bangladeshi migrants (1) to encounter the threats and attacks from locals and other migrants, (2) to prolong their length of stay and (3) to find informal sources of earning along with the formal ones.

The question is which of these characteristics are prominent, how do they contribute to the organizational structure of the community and in what context does that happen? Therefore, in the next sections of this chapter I shall continue discussion highlighting the following aspects:

- Horizontal vs. Vertical Networking and the 'Patron-client' Relationship
- Formation of Inter-ethnic Networking- The Nature of Migrants' Embedded Realities and their Survival Strategies
- Integration into the Multi-cultural Society---Inter-ethnic Marriages and the Development of Hybrid Identities, as in the Case of Kalim Miah

In order to find answers to (1) whether or not the community is loosely or tightly structured, (2) how their identities are shaped and motivated by inter-ethnic networking and (3) on what level they manage to manipulate or negotiate with the realities and conditions of the receiving society (as part of their survival strategy) we need to analyze all above mentioned aspects thoroughly.

2. Horizontal vs. Vertical Networking and the 'Patron-client' Relationship

During the interviews on being asked about the uses of networks, two types of major functions were identified by the community. Whilst for primary adaptation and survival the roles of strong ties were emphasized, on the other hand, being convinced that weak ties were a way of upward mobility, the necessity for the maintenance and development of weak ties was depicted. Along with the maintenance of intra ethnic ties, inter-ethnic networking was also emphasized as a part of their survival strategy. And for upward mobility as well as integration and assimilation in Peninsular Malaysia, the roles of inter-ethnic strong and weak ties were identified as a must by the questioned migrants.

In the research areas, some migrants become more powerful than others and also find opportunities to exercise their power on the less privileged groups of the community. Through the discriminatory ideology and institutional structures of the countries of settlement and origin they have managed to achieve that power. Moreover, migrants' mixed embeddedness in the origin and host society's existing realities, membership in their own community (comprised of diverse socio-economic migrants) and transnational liabilities and contacts all contribute to this power hierarchy.

Under the circumstances, migrants try to come to terms with these realities. In that context, they rely on their knowledge regarding the ways of risk management. Moreover, unlike the relative deprivation theory of assimilation, developed by Fan and Stark, these migrants aim to survive utilizing networks. Since both intra and inter-ethnic ties are considered by them as the only option to survive in an alien society, these are given preference, though some of these networks are exploitative too. Instead of avoiding they strive after each other for mitigating mutual interests and benefits. Thus networking is practiced not only within the community, but also out side the ethnic boundary, amongst whom Malays, Indonesians and Indian Muslims are very common³³⁵. Whilst within intra-ethnic networking principles of kinship and the nationalist ideology of national brotherhood are instrumentalized (by the well-off migrants) to represent the vertical relations in a form of groups of "*protectors and protected*",

³³⁵ It is already mentioned in the previous chapter that Malays and Indonesian ladies are found as the marital partners, while for business, people from Malay and Indian Muslim communities are found as partners. Besides, most of the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers have identified Chinese people as their employers and also developed friendship relation with Tamil Indians as they can convince other Tamils not to consider Bangladeshis as their enemies or competitors.

for inter-ethnic networking, the ideology of Muslim brotherhood is manipulated by migrants and natives alike.

In this study I intend to identify this vertical relationship as a 'pseudo patron client relationship', since the bond is not a static one. Also a kind of agency of the exploited groups of people may be explored along the lines of field experience. The prevalence of certain exploitation is noticed by poor migrants as fundamentally embedded in the ties of the patron and clients. Therefore said migrants try to bargain to maximise their utility. In this regard they connect ties either with other influential people of the same community or create bonds of inter-ethnic strong ties (marital ties, friendship or other kinds of close relationship). Thus, the fluidity of the vertical relationship can be noticed. It is regulated by (1) the factional forms of conflicts within the community, (2) the dynamic social system, regulated by globalization, transnational contacts and migration and (3) also through the flow of information along the lines of strong and weak ties.

However, even though the poor migrants identify their patrons as exploiters, instead of living on their own or exclusively with their groups of strong ties, they develop new networks. In these new networks, repetitions of the older forms of patron and client bonds (for upward mobility) were discovered during my field research. They (less privileged groups) need to follow this survival strategy for several reasons, such as: firstly being unable to find ways of higher income on their own, secondly to extend their period of residence (they depend on these weak ties, because migrants' strong ties represent less information, slimmer capabilities, fewer contacts and less influence), thirdly (as foreigners) being afraid of harassment (physical, social or psychological) by locals, migrants from different ethnic communities and also by rivals of the same community they try to find a protector and fourthly the macro level institutions (migration policy) of the origin and host country create a situation where some migrants become less privileged than others and thus need to depend on them for survival etc.

It is noticed that clients only change their patrons or weak ties once a better one is found. Concerning this, migrants' length of stay and (achieved) knowledge played significant roles. They manage to improve their capabilities after passing some years in the host society, where they increase their knowledge and contacts (networks) through their practical experiences as migrant workers and by extensive interactions. In fact, if we pay a closer look at the migrants' ways of adaptation and upward mobility, we may see that 20% migrants confirmed that they

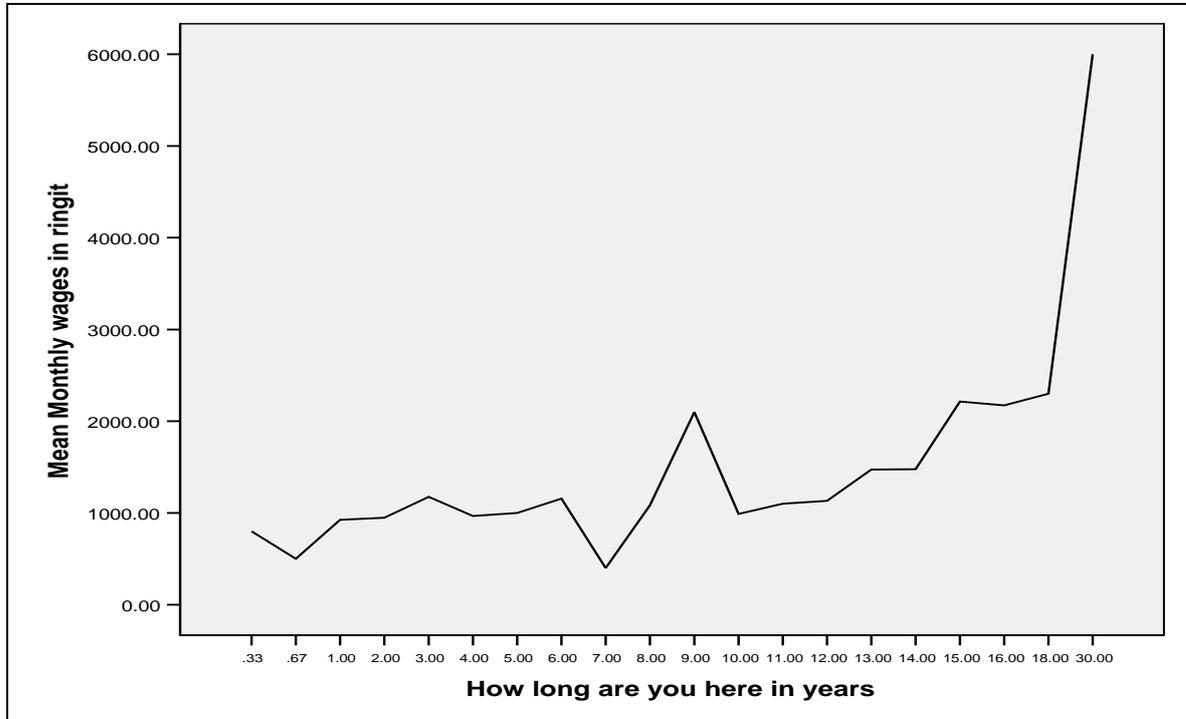
gained knowledge as a by-product of personal experience, after staying some years in the host society. The rest of the migrants (80%) delineated the importance of interaction (networking) with successful erstwhile migrants (41.3%), other ethnic communities (20%) and also with co-workers and even employers (18.7%). Thus, they gained knowledge allowing them to find better ways of survival. This data is also significant on the ground that none but the migrants have highlighted the contribution of knowledge as an effective strategy for upward mobility and significant resource for survival. Regarding this, they tried to achieve knowledge through (1) prolonging their length of stay and (2) “channelling” information within the lines of networks.

The role of knowledge as a potential survival strategy may be demonstrated by considering its reflection on two aspects, such as: firstly finding alternative ways of settlement in the host society and secondly managing channels for shadow economic activities (to increase income mobility). As a matter of fact, this argument is substantiated on the ground that besides finding a way of settlement, increasing the amount of income is identified as one of the major indications of success by migrants. In order to do this, they engage both in formal and shadow economic activities. In this context, they maintain networks and collect information from these sources on *‘what to do, where to go and how to do it’*. This is how they obtain their goals.

In this regard, the result of the chi-square tests between two variables (the migrants’ amount of income and knowledge management through networking and length of stay in the receiving society) can be taken into consideration, as it shows a significant relationship. The null hypothesis was (H_0) that there was no relation between wages and knowledge management (through networking and length of stay). But Pearson’s chi-square for p (significance) value is .043, which means the null hypothesis can be rejected at 5% level of significance. So, the conclusion is that wages and knowledge management are significantly related.

The above result can also be shown by the following line graph. This graph is calculated through a comparison between the migrants’ amount of wages and the durations of immigrants’ stays in the study areas. It is found that length of stay leads to the introduction of appropriate knowledge for upward mobility in three ways. These are: (a) building more networks, (b) increasing practical experiences and knowledge on how to cope with the multiple realities of the host society and (c) flow of information along the lines of networks.

Figure 4.1: Average Increase of Monthly Wages and the Contributions of Knowledge and Networks (experience is the by-product of length of stay that leads to the development of appropriate knowledge)



Source: Survey and interview data of Bangladeshi migrants

The line chart indicates that the average income of migrants increases gradually corresponding to the length of their migrant-life in Malaysia. Though for the seventh year we see a decrease of income it again increases in the ninth year. After a decline of earnings in the tenth year, a more or less steady increase can also be noticed in the figure.

The decreasing rates of income in the seventh and tenth years can be explained focusing on migration policy. It is already known to us (through our discussions in chapter three) that unskilled and semi-skilled workers (comprising the majority of the respondents (81%)) are not allowed to stay in the receiving society longer than ten years at the maximum. After five years said workers need to pass an exam so that they can obtain a proficiency certificate. Concerning this, only the successful candidates receive another three years' extension. After that, some manage to get renewals for the next two years. Those who can prove their extreme qualification for a certain type of job and also that this is directly needed for the well-being of their company, may obtain this permission.

Though not all we still observe that the other migrants who fail to get extension, try to extend their stay in Malaysia through shadow economic activities. For this, they are forced to depend on networks in Malaysia as they can learn of “*alternative ways for income and ways to manage these*”. In this context, they develop weak ties with well-off and well-connected people (i.e. authorities of the host society), that can provide them shelter (as they are now undocumented workers).

In fact, migrants posited that they developed several strategies in their last years to bypass deportation. While they were interviewed they illustrated three arguments, such as that they: (1) normally, through controlling their movements, try to hide themselves from the local police and immigration authorities. They continue this until an opportunity to convert back into documented workers is presented them by the host government, (2) develop vertical relations with powerful businessmen as they can provide alternative ways for survival, like working as assistants in their business enterprises and (3) start their own businesses through networking and knowledge sharing.

Concerning this, on the one hand, they try to get information about the scope of a certain type of informal business activity; while on the other hand, they try to locate the embedded risks and threats-- if any business were to be launched in that sector. They also attempt to learn potential ways to combat these shortcomings. Thus, we can explain the decline of earnings (during the seventh and tenth years) emphasizing a few factors, such as: firstly that it is an outcome of less successful networking of the migrants, secondly that less effective knowledge sharing along the lines of strong (horizontal level) and weak ties (vertical level) may be the underlying fact and thirdly that migrants’ embeddedness in the institutional framework of the host society may reflect on their earning (migration policies of the host country foster anti-integration laws concerning the settlement of the semi-skilled and un-skilled workers).

As a matter of fact, if we consider Kalim Miah’s case, discussed later in this chapter, we can see that he has managed to stay in the research areas for fifteen years. It is found that he has advanced to his position as businessman through inter-ethnic networking and also utilizing knowledge, even though he originally entered into Malaysia as a semi-skilled worker. An interview with him reveals that he opened a business enterprise in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’. There along with other goods, DVD and VCD cassettes of Bangladeshi and Hindi music videos and

movies are sold³³⁶. We can argue that while he was a worker in the ‘Merching Plastic Factory’ of Port Klang he learned a few things, related to his business. He managed to find out the places and persons from whom he could buy cassettes at a cheaper rate. In this context as a former worker he was favoured by the local staff (inter-ethnic networking) of the factory and thus he managed to purchase goods at a lower rate than the other unknown buyers. He also learned how to bypass the rules of the copyright system. Applying this knowledge he used to make hundreds of copies from the best of different amusement items, such as music, cinema etc. His embeddedness in the intra-ethnic networks provided him with the right information for his country mates and their friends’ (both ethnic and non-ethnic friends) tastes for a specific type of music video or movie. Thus, on the one hand he found out that most of the Bangladeshi workers preferred for Bengali and Hindi movies and music videos to other (entertainment) items, while on the other hand, by considering these goods as marketable items for his business enterprise, he was able to make a profit.

Like this interviewee other respondents also stated that their networking and “accumulated local knowledge”³³⁷ work as potential factors for their increase or decrease of income in the host society. Their effective or ineffective integration in the research areas also depend on these two variables. It was found that through achieving local knowledge and utilizing commercial networks (monetary reciprocity) some of the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers have changed their passports, names, age, information regarding their work duration etc. Here as well powerful brokers performed significant roles. All these initiatives were taken to (1) increase earning, (2) to stay longer, (3) to find a way to integrate, (4) to improve their social standing etc.

And hence, considering the above roles of knowledge, we may denote Evers’ conceptualization (of knowledge) depicted in one of his seminal article, titled ‘Towards a Malaysian Knowledge Society’³³⁸. In that article he criticizes the existing essentialized ideas on knowledge, while identifying the problems and other related factors that should be taken into account in the case of Malaysia’s journey towards a knowledge society. Criticizing the notions of “disembedded knowledge”³³⁹ he sets forth the following arguments,

³³⁶ Please find appendix 7 to see Kalim’s enterprise.

³³⁷ Hans-Dieter Evers. 6-8 August 2001. Third International Malaysian Studies Conference (MSC3), Bangi. Towards a Malaysian Knowledge Society, p-12.

³³⁸ Ibid, p- 18.

³³⁹ Ibid, p-19.

“The current discussion on a knowledge-based economy is focused rather narrowly on technical science knowledge. The wide field of social competence, i.e. on how to relate to other people, how to avoid conflict and ethnic strife, either on a personal or on a large scale political level, is neglected. Local or indigenous knowledge is seen as important in development programming, but usually in a rather narrow sense (locals know the local climatic conditions, they know when to plant and when to harvest etc.).”

As a matter of fact, we may notice from the following table (table 4.1) that Bangladeshi migrants’ accumulation and application of local knowledge as strategies for survival are embedded in their social relations. It is found that migrants share information within their networks and achieve local knowledge on how to survive and find a way of upward mobility. For example, when the respondents were interviewed they informed me that through a discussion with their co-workers they learned three strategies on risk management. These are: (1) instead of arguing with their rivals like Tamil Indians, they need to keep quiet when there is any confrontation with them, (2) gradually this will convince the Tamils that the Bangladeshis are not their rivals, and (3) in order to protect themselves from severe harassment or physical assault, migrants need to always carry RM10/12 with them to pacify robbers with. Apart from this it is also found that their local networks help them to receive information on immigration raids beforehand - allowing them to hide. They define these types of networking as “*purba shatarkota*” (prior awareness).

In the same way, regarding risks they not only learn “*symbolic words*” from their networks, but also find secure places for shelter. Therefore, when the words like “*mamu*” (uncle) for local police, “*boro mamu*” (elder uncle) for immigration police, “*angin panas*” (strong/scorching wind) for immigration raid etc. are uttered by their ethnic or inter-ethnic networks, they take the necessary steps to accordingly hide themselves in secure places. Like risk management, they depend on their networks for better jobs and even to learn Bahasa, the local vocabulary and code of conduct, that is relevant for their particular living and working place. They collect information about possible job vacancies, the nature of these jobs, salaries, working environment, required qualifications etc. from their networks. Through networks, moreover, they find cheaper places to live and also gather information about living niches, neighbours and risks. Let us now consult the following table that summarizes the functions of networks.

Table 4.1: Different Forms of Networking and its Function

Purpose of networking	Contact and influence through networks		
To combat risks	It helps for bribing to local police (21.2%)	Tries to keep valuables in safer place and also move in a group of strong ties to encounter any kind of attack (32.9%)	Networking with country men and other communities help them to feel relief about any kind of fear as foreigners (14.1%)
To get in touch with the employer	Through self initiatives and country friend (33.1%)	Inter-ethnic relatives, wife, friends and previous employer (22.6%)	Bangladeshi agent (44.4%)
To find dwelling place ³⁴⁰	With the help of Malay people (11.3%)	Bangladeshi friends (18.7%)	Through Bangladeshi agent (8%)
To manage job	Self and through the assistance of country mates (45.5%)	By Muslim brothers or local wife (11.2%)	Calling visa (commercial networking) and managed here through agent (43.4%)
For adaptation	Interaction with prior BD migrants (41.3%)	Interaction with other ethnic communities (38.7%)	Through experience after living a while (20%)
To learn Bahasa Melayu	Interaction with BD people (34.7%)	Interaction with locals (40%)	Self attempt through observation and experience (25.3%)

Source: compiled from survey data

The above table shows that information sharing through networks on different paths of risk management play significant roles for migrants to cope with their harsh realities and find ways to survive. Depending on their embedded social networks they learn local languages (mainly Bahasa Melayu), necessary to communicate and survive in the multi-ethnic social setting (of Malaysia) as well as maintain the livelihood of themselves and their families. In the same way, they also come up with information on better jobs, dwellings or even manage to find out about the procedures of convincing employers and/or police so that they can work and stay without possessing any valid work permit. Consequently, the situation reminds us again that Bangladeshi migrants' economic actions are guided by their socially embedded knowledge on "*what to do, how to do it and where to go*".

³⁴⁰ Since landlords are not allowed to rent their houses to the undocumented workers, so it is very difficult for them to find a house for living. Therefore, depending on networking they try to find a house, where they can live without being afraid of police harassment.

However, for further clarification regarding the roles of accumulated local knowledge, the formation and functions of horizontal and vertical networking and the consequent so-called patron-client relationships, let us consider the following case study. Through the representation of this data we shall specify some aspects, such as: (1) on what ground horizontal and vertical bonds are developed, (2) how these facilitate the flow of information that results in appropriate knowledge for survival and (3) how can we figure out the characteristics of the patron client relationship in a comparative perspective.

2.1 “Actually in Many Respects, We are Responsible for Our Misfortune in Malaysia”---A Case Study in Sungaibakap (Taman Rabina, Penang)

The above sentence is an indication of the “mental image”³⁴¹ of the Bangladeshi Diaspora that represents the level of intra-ethnic trust and cohesion in a foreign social setting. It seems that the members of said community in many respects cannot rely on each other to make their fortunes. Whereas the ancient practice of Chinese Gunaxi defines one’s place in the social structure and prescribes roles along with trust and security, for Bangladeshis the opposite situation can be drawn from the comment. However, does this resemble the reality of the study areas? Let us consider the following narratives:

“I was gossiping with friends in a local restaurant (of their home town) and my son dropped by. He informed me about a guest at our house. I was bit reluctant to join him as I might have to quarrel with my wife for the entertainment costs. She always wanted to spend more, but I could not afford that. And how could I as a petty owner of a grocery shop?”

But I had to join my son, because his mother advised him not to leave the place unless I joined him. In the morning, as usually she was nagging (‘ghan ghan korsilo’). She wanted me to migrate like others of the Feni district. I however did not want to do that. A lot of money was needed. I did not have that money and neither did my parents. I had set up the grocery shop spending my last savings of what I had inherited from my parents. But still I had to join my son.

³⁴¹ Gould and White. 1974 (Reprinted 1986). Mental Maps.

Alas, my wife was happy, which was very unusual! She came to me quickly with information of a 'dalal' (broker). He was her distantly related 'mamu' (maternal uncle), who had recently returned back from Malaysia. He promised her to help me as he considered this his moral obligation (as a kin). As seldom happened she was happy. She described how much money I might need for travelling to Malaysia. It seemed to me that not the 'mamu' but, rather she was the 'dalal'. I had to agree, because such a chance for prosperity might not come ever again in my life. I sold my grocery shop and Benu (my wife's nick name) gave me her ornaments. Still I did not have enough money, BDT three hundred thousand, a lot of money! I borrowed from my friends. I promised them reimbursement and also assured them I would find a way for their migration to Malaysia."

From the above account on a migrant's travel to Malaysia we may see that different types of ties are developed as strategies for upward mobility. This migrant develops vertical networking with a well-off middleman to find a job abroad and thus overcome his economic insolvency. He depends on his intimate (*ghanishta*) social networks to create a link with that labour broker. He also utilizes his strong ties to get hold of economic and moral support for his migration. His kinship and friendship ties are his close social networks. These on the one side regulate the flow of information about the possible places, tentative expenditures and links (to a labour broker) for migration, while on the other side easing his travelling to a foreign country through monetary support.

These close networks also demand mutual trust in their core. For example, the respondent desired to gain economic solvency through migration, but he could not afford said migration for two reasons, such as: 1) he did not know how to find a trustworthy network necessary for migration to a foreign country and 2) he lacked enough capital to purchase a flight ticket and bear other associated costs. He did know a few village-mates, who had travelled to a foreign country. Hoping for a good fortune there, they depended on vertical links. He however could not rely on these networks. Neither had he managed to get support from his distant neighbours. Rather, being noticed their (neighbours) instances of migration a feeling of deprivation or competition arose in the mind of this respondent and his wife that increased their eagerness for migration. But they did not step forward to fulfil that expectation before a dependable network was managed. He considered his connections with the middleman as reliable, because they were introduced by his wife.

His wife on the other hand, longed for her husband's migration as they could thus gain a more prosperous future. She finally managed to find a kin who was a middleman and therefore, relied on him for her husband's migration. Moreover, their embeddedness in intimate friendship networks enabled them to mobilize the economic support, necessary for migration. Though friends did not receive any material well-being except a dream for converting into would-be migrants themselves, they still provided him (the respondent) with support. Trusting his words concerning the reimbursement of loans and his promise to organize a suitable network of their migration, they assisted him. Therefore, we can see that within the insider networks of kinship and friendship, trust is a common factor. It works as a base to gear up the relationships so that they may enable themselves to obtain support from each other.

Along with the provision of supportive roles, these close networks also expect certain social roles, duties and obligations from him. His embeddedness in family life as "*baba*" (father) and as "*shami*" (husband) determines some moral obligations and duties towards his son and wife respectively that he cannot avoid. We can also see that he was assisted by his "consanguine" (respondent's father) with the capital, required for setting up a grocery shop that assisted him to parent his son. In order to perform his socially prescribed economic roles (maintenance of livelihood) like providing food and other basic needs for him and his elementary family members, he depended on his parents (inheritance). At the same time aiming for upward mobility he formulated vertical relations outside of his insider networks. There he relied on his close networks to find a (comparatively) trustworthy person and also capital. His wife and friends acted in this context to fulfil their obligations towards him.

Thus, within intimate networks, trust and respective duties as well as moral obligations towards each other perform major roles that can be analyzed following the Gunaxi model. The situation is comparable with the Chinese Gunaxi-Networks on the grounds that this migrant's intimate social networks assist him towards accomplishing his goals through a specific type of social mechanism. In this mechanism micro level individuals (i.e. the migrant and his friends and kin) are connected with the macro social order (central manpower agents of Dhaka) via middlemen. On the basis of their relatedness to each other (social status within

the insider networks), they are obliged to provide accurate information and support his/her “*attio*” (kin) or “*Zi ji ren*”³⁴² (insider).

Here, in this context, the migrant’s wife assisted him through money, information (the modalities of migration) and also by connecting with a broker based on her own connections with that middleman. It should be noted in this regard that the wife assisted her husband motivated by the mutual dream of becoming rich through migration. Furthermore even though our migrant’s friends were not his family members, they also assisted him. Moral obligations and trust, embedded in close social networks -- prompted them to do that. My question is, whether these brotherly feelings of trust and moral obligations remain intact when they compete for the same scarce resources of a given niche. Concerning this, let us now consider the following memories of this migrant:

“I could not sleep for the last days, I was so excited! Nobody from my family has ever travelled abroad. I saw my friends, neighbours travelling to Saudi Arabia and Singapore, but I could not imagine doing the same myself. We were very grateful to ‘mamu’. He took the money, organized my passport and told me to wait. After one month he returned to our house and told me that my name had been changed. He assured us that this would not cause trouble; rather it would allow me to migrate to a foreign country. I was informed that some of my neighbours would also travel. He told me not to disclose how much money I spent. He said that he favoured me as a ‘kutum’ (kin). I did not reveal anything. Rather I took up identity with my new name as Iqbal, instead of Junayed Miah (my original name).”

I can still remember the day! It was 2nd June of 1988. ‘Mamu’ introduced me with another person whom I had never met before. We were fifty people in total. We left the village together with that man, a friend of ‘mamu’. My wife and son were crying, but they were happy also, imagining a future--full of goods, food and money. In Dhaka we were kept in a hotel for three days. It was also my first travel to Dhaka. Finally the day came, when we flew towards a better future, towards Kuala Lumpur!”

³⁴² The term is quoted from Chinese word that is applied to indicate insider. For more discussion please find Scott C. Hammond & Lowell M. Glenn. E: CO Vol. 6 Nos. 1-2004. The Ancient Practice of Chinese Social Networking: Gunaxi and Social Network Theory, p. 24-31.

Iqbal's memories of his migration to Malaysia may remind us the relevance of the national context of Bangladesh. In fact, as a post-colonial country the fragile economic and political system of Bangladesh has yet to be stabilized. Until now migration is identified (by the experts) as a common livelihood strategy for relatively educated and young Bangladeshis, that lack alternative for higher income mobility inside the country.³⁴³ Unemployment or low payments are the main causes (among others) that motivated Bangladeshis to migrate even before the country's independence.

If we consider Iqbal's case we can see that (in 2006) he was forty nine (49) years old and had four children. He reached Higher Secondary Education levels at his home country. Consequently, he was in a situation where he held expectations of economic prosperity, but didn't consider himself educated enough to be able to afford a better job in the capital of Bangladesh. Nor was he totally uneducated like some of his neighbours. He was in an in-between status. Consequently, there was no hope for him of quick economic prosperity except via migration. In fact, Iqbal's case is not a unique one. Rather, it is noticed in the study that the migrants migrated for economic prosperity and also for a better career, having failed to manage an appropriate way of upward mobility in their home country.

In fact, it has already been presented in the previous chapter that the groups of would-be migrants, who were each others' fictive relatives and friends, competed with each other to win over the labour broker. They acted in that way because they considered migration to Malaysia to be a difficult task that might not be possible for everybody, if there were too many candidates. Their labour broker confirmed them in that way because he could mobilize the masses according to his own ways. These conflicting interests were beneficial to the labour broker, because everybody wanted to win his attraction by providing "*kind and cash*". He thus managed to pull out extra money from the competitors as they considered it an investment towards a better future. In other words, the middleman got the opportunity to exploit his so-called clients due to the competitive relationships among these more or less similar status groups. These combative relationships arose as an outcome of struggles over a scarce resource (a chance for migration). The middleman merely increased its severity. Therefore, the previous brotherly feelings and trust based networks of friendship and fictive

³⁴³ Abdul-Rashid Abdul- Aziz. 2001. *Bangladeshi Migrant Workers in Malaysia's Construction Sector*, p. 8. See also Petra Dannecker. 2003. *The Meanings and the Rationalities Underlying Labor Migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia*, p. 11.

relationships are altered in a competitive environment that cannot be analyzed applying the Chinese Gunaxi model.

Being an ignorant person concerning migration my questioned migrant began to trust his patron totally and also felt gratefulness towards him, even though he paid money for his patron's services. Due to his thankful feelings towards his fictive relative (patron) he followed all his suggestions. He even did not protest when his original name 'Junayed' was altered to 'Iqbal'. Neither did he question the causes of this name change or nor did he intend to develop friendships with the other would-be migrants. His dream of a prosperous future along with hopes of a prestigious status and also imaginations of new experiences and a new life in a new country kept him from developing ties with the other future sojourners, even though they were his neighbours.

However, within the ties of consanguineal and affinal relatives these trust based relationships were found intact. On being asked whether migration disrupted their family bindings, 91% claimed they did not. It was quoted by them that geographical distance failed to create any mental distance between the family members. They posited three arguments regarding this, such as: firstly their decision of migration to a foreign country was a collective decision of the household members, secondly their consideration (which was still upheld³⁴⁴) which was that migration would bring well-being to all members of the unit and thirdly their transnational contacts (phone, email, remittance, gifts etc.) helped them to remain closely related to their family members.

Iqbal's narration also depicts that apart from insider networks there exist other ties, where monetary interest performs the major roles. It also demonstrates that though commercial, the relationship is developed utilizing kinship ideology. This kinship ideology helps the actors to hide the actual exploitation. On the contrary, they try to represent it in a form of patron client relationships. There the nationalist discourse on country brotherhood is emphasized. The argument that moral obligation (of kinship) has failed to play any pivotal role within these vertical relationships is substantiated on the ground that it works under certain conditions where the well-off broker's service needs to be purchased by the poor clients. Though they address each other as kin, it does not work at all (concerning managing a way of migration), unless the so-called patron's demanded amount of money is paid by his fictive relative

³⁴⁴ In time of field research it was asked.

(respondent). The would-be migrant cannot borrow money from his patron; rather he must depend on his close networks for that.

At the same time, he also usually fails to travel abroad if he depends only on close networks unless he is assisted by the broker. Iqbal migrated abroad being facilitated by the broker after purchasing his (broker's) services through monetary transaction. In this context of money lending his close kinship and friendship networks enabled him to migrate. Since his close ties have limited information, no connections (networks) with the central manpower agents of Dhaka and hence no real ability to help him to migrate and find a job abroad, he has developed vertical ties outside of his horizontal network.

It should be mentioned here that, while in vertical networks commercial interests are the main motivators, moral obligations of certainty and trust are expected from their well-off patrons, as country brothers. If they fail to fulfil their expectations, they criticise their fictive country brothers or so-called patrons. This criticism also reveals the agency of the poor groups against exploitations. However, though the patrons are rebuked for the negligence of moral obligations, the poor migrants do not possess any real power to command their patrons act like “good” patrons. They are unable to do it, because their socio-economic position, ascribed rights and capabilities are not equal. However for the consanguineal and affinal relatives as well as horizontal friendship circles, moral obligations like trust, care and nurture are given preferences along with the culturally constructed role models. According to Iqbal,

“I did not know that it was a PC (fake) passport and a forged visa. My Agent put my photo on another man’s passport and that’s why I had to take up this man’s name. Gradually I learned everything. Our visa was only for Thailand. So instead of Malaysia we were taken to Thailand. There we found other Bangladeshis, around three hundred in number. We lived in a house for a week. There were five rooms all in all, two toilets and a bathroom for all of us. We had to sleep on floors. We were not allowed to move outside, all the windows remained closed even in day time! There was not enough food or water. Sometimes at night we had to go hungry. And we were afraid of evictor. I could not imagine what would happen if I had to return to Bangladesh. Finally, a Chinese man came. We did not know how to address or even talk to him. ‘Yes’, ‘no’, ‘very good’, ‘bad’----- these were all the words I knew. But my friends whom I met there solved my problems. They told me not to talk loudly as it might make the Chinese man angry or make the police suspect we were illegal workers. Among them some

had already travelled to Malaysia. After expiry of their job contract they had returned to Bangladesh, but had subsequently failed to start a successful business at home. Having lost all hope for a better future they also followed 'dalals'.

We were taken to Malaysia via the Hazzai road of Thailand. They kept us in boxes on the back side of lorries (just like goods). We endured almost 10 to 12 hours without normal breathing and in constant fear of police.

Finally we reached Perag. The Chinese man disappeared and a new man came, this time a Tamil Indian. I was afraid at his appearance, he was a very strong man! All my planning with regards to giving a good lesson to our Bengali 'dalal' disappeared soon. Because all were friends, they all had links with each other while I was the new comer.

Still we were lucky; finally we were brought to Malaysia. But I have heard from my friends that sometimes 'dalals' also fail to get illegal workers cross the borders. They are caught by police and locked up in jail. Since the 'dalal' usually know them he is released (after paying a bribe), but the poor workers need to pass their days in prison as 'ashami' (criminals). There are many such migrant workers in the jails of Thailand, Cambodia and in Malaysia. They also spent money like me to come to Malaysia, but their 'dalals' cheated them. Our Agent also did not tell us we would be kept in the jungle or in another country. One of my friends was taken to Nepal in order to bring him in as a Nepalese worker. They purchased a Nepalese passport for him, because 'calling' was banned for Bangladeshis. When he was finally brought back here I could not recognize him. His sufferings in the jail were beyond description. It changed his appearance! Another friend was taken to Thailand. Having been caught at the airport he was taken to Laos. He was given food once very two to three days. Instead of in a house they kept him in the jungle. On his way to Malaysia he had been very afraid of snakes, wild cows and police. One of my neighbours from Bangladesh asked me to find her missing husband. She had had no contact with him in the last eight years (after his departure from Bangladesh)! There are many cases like this. Being unemployed or underemployed we try to come here and our agents seize this chance. Instead of Malaysia they manage visas for Thailand and intend to bring us here through backwater channels (networking). However, ever since the Twin-tower crisis we cannot get visas for Thailand easily."

The case of Iqbal shows us on what grounds horizontal and vertical networks are practiced and how networking is regulated by different modes of embeddedness. Through their common experience in a given environment migrants achieve knowledge, work together and try to assist each other depending on their capabilities (this may be identified as strong ties). But it is weak ties, or in other words commercial networking that helps them to see their dreams come true. If we come back to Iqbal's case we may see that his networking with an experienced (knowledgeable) and powerful labour broker allowed him to venture to Malaysia. But he could not manage this before he was assisted by his affinal and village based fictive kinship network (strong tie). Though the middleman was also addressed by him and his wife as uncle, it did not carry any meaning unless he bought his "good fortune". Instead of kinship based moral obligations, all the transactions were commenced through commercial networking, though he was assured a "special favour" (as a kin). But by paying heed to Iqbal's life history we have seen how those moral obligations were fulfilled! In fact, utterance of kinship terminology was nothing but an excuse to hide the exploitation and also an attempt to seem trustworthy. This faith was necessary for the smooth continual of his manpower business. And to a certain extent, the powerful labour broker became successful in representing himself as patron both to Iqbal and his friends. He even managed to arouse competition within close social networks (of friends and neighbours) expressing his concerns for Iqbal. Let us see how he specified his experiences:

"So, we were taken to a plantation company in Perag. We were thirty in total there, others were sent to another place. After three months, immigration raids took place that led to the deportation of most illegal workers. Amongst us all were arrested, except seven. We managed to hide in a nearby jungle, because one of the members of the company said, 'angin panas' (strong/scorching wind) and we understood that the 'boro mamau' (Immigration police) was coming. Within a few days I managed to learn these symbolic words from my Bangladeshi co-workers in the company. We were there in the jungle for seven days. After two or three days some company officers provided us with food in the jungle, at night. Later on they sacked us saying, we were illegal people.

I went to Kuala Lumpur with them. There we each embarked on our own individual survival struggles and dispersed to different places by our own decision. I had a bag and that was all. Sometimes I used to sleep in the 'surau', sometimes in front of restaurants. I then got a job in a restaurant. I was still afraid, because I did not know the local environment, language and

people. I worked there until 1991. I managed to make some friends there who told me about a plantation company in Penang. They informed me of some brokers in KL. I bought a passport and work permit from one of these brokers. I got a new job with higher pay and worked for six months. Still I was an illegal and eventually they sacked me. Then I came to this plastic factory and found a new job. In 1994, when the Malaysian government gave us the opportunity to become legal workers, on 15th June I got my permit spending almost RM 3500 under this company's name. Accompanied by other illegal workers, we went to the brokers of Kotaraya and they helped us in that regard. Since then I have been working here. In the meantime, in 1996 I took another chance of a government declaration to convert into a legal worker. The Factory knew that some of the workers including myself were staying KL with a false passport and name. We did that so we could stay longer. Our manager had no problem with this because we were efficient workers.

Actually in many respects, we are responsible for our misfortune in Malaysia. Though all of us were Bangladeshis, at the very beginning agents cheated us, because we were helpless. And we could not understand anything. Now we live in the same house and we cook together, pray together and try to assist each other in times of emergency. Our Chinese boss likes us, the local polices and also local people know us. We know that they see us as workers, because we came to their country for income purposes. So we do not talk to the local ladies as it may create unnecessary trouble. If we have time, then we go to 'surau'. Melayu say, it is very good that you people are coming to pray. Now they know that we are humble. Earlier when we used to wear long-sleeved shirts they used to tease us. Now they understand, though workers, we are very 'shoukhin' (fanciful). In front of our house we reap vegetables, we have DVD players, televisions with 'astraw' (to receive broadcasts transmitted by satellite) connections and almost every Sunday we try to congregate for religious discussions (...)"

Iqbal's depiction of his sufferings, while migrating to Malaysia, shows the fluidity of the so-called patron client bond. He understood the intrinsic power relation and exploitation through his practical experience as a migrant and this understanding motivated him to take revenge. Along with this, by a comparison with some of his friends and other sojourners' experiences, he managed to develop his ideas that patrons were not really patrons; rather they were exploiters. His perception raised his latent agency against the so-called patron, but he failed to initiate any concrete steps. He could not do so, because of his embeddedness in the given

environment of a foreign society. Moreover, he lacked the necessary capabilities and power to command any action owing to his poor socio-economic background and undocumented status.

In fact, on the one hand, depending on the practical experience (knowledge) of labour brokerage and connections (networking) with the respective authorities (inter-ethnic networks), Iqbal's patron became ever more powerful than his clients. On the other hand, the migrants' ignorance, helpless situation, lack of power as well as their motivation for quick economic prosperity helped him (patron) to nurture his business interests through exploiting his clients. However, after a certain period, the migrants eventually found out they were exploited by their vertical networks. Information sharing and knowledge gaining within their horizontal ties helped them in this context. Thus, instead of considering vertical relationship as a paternalistic form of patron-client relationship, respondents perceive it as a pseudo patron client relationship.

Their depiction may help us to reveal their agency against "*their exploiters*" (what has already been discussed). With this in mind information sharing has been found as the underlying fact that contributes to the rise of agency of exploited migrants. Through migration they get chances of interaction with other migrants that open up the options of information exchange as well as comparison with other information (what we have seen in Iqbal's case). Besides, through embeddedness in different types of social networking they become learned persons on the ground that they gradually learn what is expected to them as foreigners or how they can combat any conflicts or risks, like immigration raids. So, along these lines they try to judge or compare between exploitation and "*real favour*" so they can negotiate and manoeuvre the situation.

Therefore, evaluating the above experiences of Iqbal (regarding his migration and settling down in Malaysia) and paying a closer look at the conceptualization of James Scott³⁴⁵, John Waterbury³⁴⁶ and Kenneth Brown³⁴⁷ on patron client relationships (where they try to posit some characteristics as guidelines for the analytical enquiry of patron clientele) we may theoretically argue that the vertical bonds of Iqbal and his well-off (so-called) patron

³⁴⁵ James Scott. Patronage or Exploitation, p- 20-37. In Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (Ed) Patrons and Clients. In Mediterranean Societies. Duck worth, London. 1977.

³⁴⁶ John Waterbury. An attempt to put patrons and clients in their place, p-329- 341. In Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (ed.) Patrons and Clients. In Mediterranean Societies. Duck worth, London. 1977.

³⁴⁷ Kenneth Brown. Changing forms of patronage in a Moroccan city, p- 309-327. In Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (ed.) Patrons and Clients. In Mediterranean Societies. Duck worth, London. 1977.

(manpower agent) are not morally articulated and hence lack the “legitimate power”(Scott) to be seen as an example of patron client relationship. In fact, if we summarize their central arguments and compare them with the situation of Bangladeshi migrants in the study areas (in Peninsular Malaysia) we may see the following differences between the classical nature of patron client relations and the situation of Bangladeshi patron clientele. The differences are depicted in the following table:

Table 4.2: Nature of Bangladeshi Patronage in the Context of Transnational Migration and Diaspora Settlement in the Host Country

Classical features of patron client relations	Migrant situation
1. Disparity between patron and clients regarding access of “wealth, power and status”.	Yes.
2. Informal and personal relationship between patron and clients.	Partially.
3. They are morally obliged to each other.	Yes and no.
4. It is durable in nature.	No.
5. Reciprocity is a common factor.	Partially.
6. Patron: provision of subsistence, protection and security, acting as the friends in need, application of power and influence for extracting resources (from the outside) for the well-being of the clients etc. Clients: in return, clients are expected to be loyal and support their patrons, if necessary.	Yes and no.
7. Patron client relations are governed by the wider context (for Brown, political contexts of Morocco regulates the bonds of patron and clients)	Yes.
8. If clients’ status changes over time it may influence their loyalty towards patrons etc.	Yes.

Source: compiled from case study and interview data

From the above table we have seen that for the first and last two criteria the Bangladeshi situation resembles the classical nature of patron client bonds as depicted in Scott, Waterbury and Brown. But for the other characteristics we notice a duality. Now to explain the situation we may find the following explanations about the above characteristics of the table. The explanations are given below maintaining the chronology of the above criteria:

- There are disparities between poor migrants (or would-be migrants) and well-off manpower agents concerning networks, influence, (necessary) information to find ways of migration, wealth, power (possessing legal or clandestine channels for the transfer of migrants to another country) and status (because of socio-economic position, political back up and cross-cutting ties with powerful persons of the host country etc.) as well.

- **Formal behaviour:** though utilizing kinship and nationalist ideology, actors try to represent the relationship like an example of patron-client bonds, but the poor migrants need to buy the services of the patron. Otherwise, they are not assisted. The patrons even try to maximise their profits through bargaining with their so-called clients. **Informal behaviour:** at the same time, patrons also declare that they conduct their manpower business for the well-being of their clients and also their nation. Money making as well as profit maximization are not their main goals, say the patrons. Moreover, for the accumulation of honour and prestige, they spend money in religious and cultural get togethers of Bangladeshis in the host country (this will be discussed later). On the other hand, depending on their nature of relatedness to the patron, among followers some manage to travel spending fewer amounts than others (who are considered as more distant relatives) etc. As a result, kinship ideology plays an important role in determining the economic behaviour of the patrons. However, it is also formal behaviour on the ground that the respondents still need to buy services, even as relatives their service charges are not waived of. In fact, it is not at all likely that patrons assist their clients as friends in need.
- Commercial necessity and (managing opportunities of) upward mobility are the main regulators of this bond. Clients show their gratefulness for the time being. But when they discover the underlying exploitation and understand that working as manpower agent is a business strategy for their patron, they try to find other patrons in the host country.
- Clients try to find alternative sources for upward mobility. They develop inter-ethnic ties or go to another well-off person if possible. They try to judge whether or not their patrons are making money on them. For this they depend on different sources such as (1) experiences (of their own), (2) information sharing within the networks of poor migrants, (3) accumulation of local knowledge to increase the chance of survival and upward mobility and (4) fostering of inter-ethnic ties depending on common sources of interaction and engagement (as Muslims, neighbours, workmates) etc. Patrons also get chances to incorporate new members into the group because of their major profession as manpower agents. It is not likely that manpower businesses are one time ventures. Rather, based on the demands of the employers of the receiving country they bring in workers continuously. Though their attempt is to keep hold of the group

members, this is not always possible. Hence, considering it as a business strategy they recruit new members and bring in workers from the origin country. They also hire workers for their business enterprise.

- Between patron and clients a kind of reciprocity can be observed, which is commercial in nature. Clients need to buy services from their patron. In return, they show their loyalty to the patron until they find a better survival strategy. Moreover, as soon as the clients discover their hidden exploitation, they withdraw their gratefulness. However, though on the short run, clients show their respects to the patron and try to work for him without being paid eventually they discover their exploitation. Information sharing (within the horizontal networks) and self evaluation (on the motives of patrons' activities) help them in this regard. In fact, profit maximization is one of the major aims of both patrons and clients. Both of the groups want to reach their vantage points depending on migration (poor migrants) and manpower businesses (well-off entrepreneurs). At the same time, accumulation of cultural capital is also a given priority. In fact, rich patrons expect honour from their followers because of their manpower business. And as successful entrepreneurs, they compete with other well-off country mates for prestigious leadership positions, high social valuation and social status. Poor migrants also hope for a better future where they and their families will be respected by their neighbours and family members because of economic prosperity. Consequently, the activities of patron and clients are guided both by economic and cultural capital. It is noteworthy in this regard, that neither the economic nor the cultural capital work as the main regulator. Both are internally linked and guided by the socio-economic, political, institutional and transnational realities, in which migrants and their patrons are embedded.
- Clients receive services from their patrons, but they need to purchase these. If they fail to provide money or disagree about providing free services to the entrepreneurs or question them about their forgery, they (clients) are devoid of service. Consequently, patrons are not considered as friends in need. And hence, clients show their loyalty towards them for a certain time only; in other words, it is not a long lasting loyalty.
- For Bangladeshi migrants, both the micro and macro level socio-economic, political, institutional and transnational realities regulate the durability and intensity of bonds.

- Through accumulation of experience and local knowledge, information sharing within their networks as well as the development of new networks migrants find ways to change their vulnerable status and start evaluating their patrons' activities. Consequently, though in the beginning clients show loyalty to their patrons, over time they try to change their status and find alternative strategies.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that we have already discussed the socio-economic differences and unequal capabilities of the poor and well-off migrants that resulted in the so-called patron and client bonds. Along with this we have raised the wider socio-economic, political, institutional and transnational contexts of Bangladesh and Malaysia as issues for analysis. On the one hand, the fragile economic and political system of Bangladesh has been found as realities in which migrants are embedded and on the other, the anti-integration migration policies of the host country (Malaysia) are identified as one of the stimulating forces that effect them to strive after networks with well-off country men. In fact, the national situation (of Bangladesh) creates an urgent necessity to consider migration as a livelihood strategy and also an option for upward mobility. Also finding a way of settlement into the receiving country is another outcome of their embedded realities.

Consequently, in order to enable themselves to find a way of migration and integration as well in the host country, they convert into the clients or followers of powerful manpower agents. Since the emigration policy of the origin country does not allow them to migrate without these networks, they develop vertical networks. Besides, they individually also lack the knowledge and contacts that are required for migration and integration into the receiving country. This generates the necessity of development of ties outside their close social networks. So, these are the wider contexts related to the so-called patron client relationship of Bangladeshi migrants that are discussed in detail in the previous chapters. Moreover, how the nature of patron and clientele is influenced and regulated by the changing circumstances of the study areas and the migrants as well, are also explained (here and in the previous chapters).

Therefore, there remains only one aspect in the table that has yet to be explored. This unexamined fact of the Bangladeshi patron client relationship is their duality. These 'dual or

in-between situations' may remind us of an old dilemma of embedded versus "disembedding"³⁴⁸ economic activities. We will come to this point later on.

Rather, here we will clarify the functions of networking. For this, at first we will define how strong and weak ties are operationalized in this study. Later on, Granovetter's conception of strong and weak ties and the concomitant strength of weak ties (posited by him) will be analyzed testing against the data of this study. This type of comparison is important on the ground that the formulation of different forms of networking, like friendship (for adaptation) or distant relationships (for survival in the host society), were defined by the migrants as a must that may bear a resemblance to his (Granovetter) point of view. Let us hereafter develop arguments exploring the following aspects:

- Operational Definitions of Strong and Weak Ties
- Revisiting Granovetter's Conceptions on Strong and Weak Ties

2.2 Operational Definitions of Strong and Weak Ties

In the previous sections (of this chapter) and also in chapter three we have mentioned that mainly two types of ties are followed by the Bangladeshis (of the study areas). People develop strong ties for adaptation and weak ties for upward social mobility as illustrated by ethnographic examples. We have seen in Iqbal's case that his close social networks are strong ties and distant networks are weak ties. His strong ties are his consanguine and affine as well as intimate friends, who are morally and socially obliged to assist him.

Trust is a common factor in close social networks. Unless an extreme situation (struggle for a scarce resource, e.g. an opportunity of migration to a foreign country) arrives, respective fellow feelings, duties and moral obligations remain intact within these strong ties that may echo the examples of the Chinese Gunaxi model as portrayed in Hammond's work.³⁴⁹ Referring to the work of Gao and Ting Toomey³⁵⁰ (1998) he has argued that the unconditional sharing of information (even secret) within the insider networks, is the main function of the

³⁴⁸ Anthony Giddens. 1991. *Modernity and Self –Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Polity Press, Cambridge.

³⁴⁹ Scott C. Hammond & Lowell M. Glenn. E: CO Vol. 6 Nos. 1-2004. *The Ancient Practice of Chinese Social Networking: Gunaxi and Social Network Theory*, p. 24-31.

³⁵⁰ Gao, G. and Ting-Toomey, S. 1998. *Communicating Effectively with the Chinese*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gunaxi relationship. In these relationships members are considered highly trustworthy and they are obliged to maintain that honour. According to him, within the insider networks relationships are perceived as family or like a family that cannot be altered except under extreme conditions. However, it is now known to us from the previous section's discussion that with the exception of friends (that means fictive ties) most of the actors of strong ties always remain intimate since they possess common goals as each other's consanguine and affine.

For weak ties, the opposite situation is supposed to be normal, since this relationship is developed to mitigate different kinds of supply and demand. Since their (migrants') close networks fail to fulfil their necessities (because of limited capabilities), they develop weak ties. For example, managing a way of migration or finding alternative sources of income etc. are fulfilled by developing weak ties. The actors of weak ties are not closely related to each other and hence do not meet frequently. In the same way, these people are not morally bound to assist each other, unless their service is purchased by the clients. Though the relationship is also developed instrumentalizing national brotherhood, but it mainly works depending on commercial exchange, instead of relying only on moral obligations (that can be seen in strong ties).

Due to mutual demand for upward mobility well-off brokers support their clients (after extracting service charges from them) as parts of their manpower business, while on the other hand, in order to find ways of migration or higher income mobility, poor migrants develop relationships with them. Better-off businessmen cum brokers depend on poor migrants to make a profit via manpower and "*hundy*" business. They (the poor migrants) are also the buyers of Bangladeshi goods and food stuffs from these entrepreneurs' enterprises, which operate in the study areas. Hence the actors of weak ties know that these ties are secondary (derivative/unoriginal) in nature and are essentially a tool for upward mobility. Accordingly it delineates that within the weak ties-- all the actors cannot belong to the same socio-economic position and are not the possessors of equal capabilities (as well).

As a matter of fact, if they all held equal power, information and capabilities to command any act, then none of them would waste money and time on these then essentially useless their weak ties. Rather, as a rational human being, they would find their own way depending solely on their strong ties. As an opposite form of relationship the strong ties on the other hand, are

informal and primary (fundamental/original) in nature. They become parts of their close social networks naturally, owing to their embeddedness in kinship (blood related and marital kin) and friendship circles. So, these are the strong and weak tie situations in the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia.

Nevertheless, I shall make clear how strong and weak ties are operationalized in this research as I can therefore demonstrate the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi community more vividly. For this, I shall carry on discussion focusing on the following variables. It should be mentioned in this regard that these variables were incorporated to extract ideas about the roles and modes of networking as a potential survival strategy (of the Bangladeshi Diaspora) in a foreign country³⁵¹. The variables and values are:

Size and Density- To know the number of participants and the extent of a network following questions were raised, such as:

Do you have any idea about other Bangladeshi migrants? How many people do you know? Did you meet any Bangladeshi today/last week? When did you last meet? Do you have any homeland contacts? How do you maintain contacts? Do you have any contact with other communities?

Answers are provided below in the table,

Table 4.3: Size and Density of Networks

Contacts with other BD migrants/Other communities			Their number of friends				Date of last Correspondence	Regular Homeland contact
<i>Ethnic</i>	<i>Inter-ethnic</i>		<i>Ethnic</i>	<i>Inter-ethnic</i>			Recently, at that	Yes
Yes (100%)	Yes (78.7%)	No (21.3%)	More than 100 (25.3%)	Less than 100 (74.7%)	More than 100 (No)	Less than 100 (100%)	day before interview (100%)	(100%)

Source: Survey data in Peninsular Malaysia

³⁵¹ The central ideas and guide lines for understating forms of ties (networking) of Bangladeshi Diaspora were borrowed from different articles on networking. Among others Mark S. Granovetter's publication entitled 'The Strength of Weak Ties' (AJS volume 78, 2 Number 4, 1973), Alejandro Portes's article named Economic Sociology and the Sociology of Immigration: A Conceptual Overview (in Alejandro Portes edited The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship. Russell Sage Foundation. New York, 1995) and Steven Vertovec's paper presented at the Workshop on "Transnational Migration: Comparative Perspectives", June 30-July 1, 2001, Princeton University are noteworthy in this regard.

The results depict that not all the respondents agreed they had friends and contacts with ethnic and inter-ethnic people. Though the statistics varies between ethnic and inter-ethnic friends, it is still significant that the Bangladeshi migrants maintain networking both with country people and inter-ethnic members. Besides, all the respondents agreed that they had everyday contact with their friends (ethnic and inter-ethnic) in the host society. Along with networking in the host society each of them also maintained home land contacts regularly.

Frequency- The following questions were asked to find out how often actors of a network meet or get chances for interpersonal interaction:

With whom are you living here? With whom are you working here? Do you have any fixed place or area for community get togethers? Where is this meeting place? When do you usually meet? How do you pass your leisure time? Normally where do you meet your inter-ethnic friends?

Concerning these queries let us have a look at the following table:

Table 4.4: Frequency of Networks

Housemate		Co-workers			Fixed place for community get together		Passing leisure time		Get together with inter-ethnic friends
Ethnic	Alone	Ethnic and inter-ethnic	Ethnic And inter-ethnic	Not fixed	Yes	No	Within neighbour hood	Outside	
(61.3%)	(6.7%)	(32%)	(94.6%)	(5.3%)	(97.3%)	(2.7%)	1- Enjoying movies at home (9.3%)	1-Visiting Kotaraya (23.3%) 2-Going To pub (12.7%)	1- Housemates (18%)
							2- Gossiping in local restaurant (12%)	3-Attending religious, political meetings and community get together (32.6%)	2- Workmates (48.7%) 3- Mosjid and restaurant (15.3%) 4- Neighbour (18%)
							3-Visiting local friends (10%)		

Source: Survey data in Peninsular Malaysia

The table denotes that apart from maintaining networks with their housemates, workmates and neighbours, Bangladeshis also attend different political and religious meetings and cultural celebrations. There are certain places for this kind of celebration which the migrants (both poor and better-off) try to visit. It is found that the better-off migrants become the conveners of these cultural and politico-religious programmes, where poor migrants participate in their free times. They visit Kotaraya ('Bangla Bazaar') to buy Bangladeshi goods from ethnic enterprises as well as to meet powerful labour brokers.

The data also indicates that the migrants' common living and working environment provides them the opportunity for regular contact with their ethnic and inter-ethnic friends. The common living and working niche as well as everyday interactions enable them to develop friendships with each other. In fact, along with the common experiences of immigration and everyday contacts, they (the Bangladeshis) face more or less the same realities as neighbours and workmates. Besides, they are found to spend their leisure hours together in their common surroundings (apart from visiting distant places and weak tie based networks). However, while the locals do not need to face an alien way of life (since they are all insiders there), owing to regular correspondence either in local restaurants or at their home and work places both of these groups still get the chance to construct networks. Bangladeshis meet the locals of Muslim belief in local mosque and "surau". Because of the same religious background (Islam) most of the Bangladeshi migrants and their (Malay, Indian Muslim and Indonesians etc.) friends enjoy and practice more or less similar religious festivals and rituals.

Strength and Intensity- To pull out information on the emotional intensity, reciprocal exchange and respective obligations to each others in the network some questions were asked, such as:

Whom do you consider your friend? How do you define your friend? Why do you maintain networks? How do you manage jobs and work permits? How did you get your dwelling place? Who introduced you to your employer? Where do you go to acquire a better job and other facilities? Do you pay them? Why do you assist poor/undocumented workers? How did you migrate? How do you send remittance to home country? How did you learn Bahasa? How do you manage to cope here? Why are you living together with others? How did/will you manage to stay longer? Why do you maintain homeland contacts? Why did you prefer inter-ethnic

marriage? How did you meet your inter-ethnic spouse? How did you manage your business visa? How did you get this property? How did you manage risks?

As a matter of fact, friendship ties were found primarily within people of the same socio-economic background. For example, un-skilled and semi-skilled workers identified other workers as their friends who often also were their housemates, neighbours and workmates. In the same way, no professional and businessman was found who considered a semi-skilled and un-skilled worker as his or her friend. It is not likely that all of the neighbours or co-workers converted each other's friend. Nor was national brotherhood considered as the only factor for friendship. Rather, migrants emphasized those as their friends whom they could trust in need. According to Ranjan Mallik (he used to work in a furniture factory of Kajang),

“My co-workers, likewise Bangladeshi workers in Kajangjaya, are my friends. We are not so well-off. We have to send money to our families. I also have some friends in my home town. They take care of my family. Sometimes I send gifts for them or try to make phone calls.

But I don't have any girlfriend. I also don't like the rich and educated Bangladeshis. They behave like we are not their country men. I know they would not assist me in danger. I don't know any female workers. It is better to avoid them, because they might create extra burdens and our families would not be happy about that.”

It can be ascertained (from the above comment) that professionals and businessmen generally are not friends with poor income groups. At the same time, it also assists us to know what they (the poor migrants) expect from their friends. Provision of trust, certainty, regular correspondence and assistance are the qualities among others through which their friendship is defined. On the basis of these moral and reciprocal obligations (for each other) they maintain friendship even with their home-based residues. Transnational networking helps them by allowing them to maintain contact with their home based friends. They (the migrants) are also assured that their friends reciprocate their obligations to the migrants by taking care of their families. These types of reciprocal obligations may remind us of the Chinese style of reciprocity, which is, “favours are always remembered and returned, but not always quickly. People who don't return favours are seen as poisoning the well.”³⁵²

³⁵² Scott C. Hammond & Lowell M. Glenn. E: CO Vol. 6 Nos. 1-2004. The Ancient Practice of Chinese Social Networking: Gunaxi and Social Network Theory, p. 26.

Migrants on the other hand, reciprocate their service through being related with them. Maintenance of correspondence sometimes by gift donations or by long distance phone calls (allowing migrants to keep themselves informed about recent events) eases the cross border friendships. Thus along with the consanguine and affine, friends (both home and abroad) become part of the close social networks of the migrants.

However, though these socio-economic statuses and concomitant frequent interactions (due to more or less the same working and living niche) are significant factors for intimate social networks, I would not go so far as to say that there is no contact at all between businessmen and workers. While the average worker told us that he was unable to resolve his problems owing to lack of capabilities, better-off migrants, on the other hand, expressed their contacts with the poor workers as generosity towards their country brothers. Or in other words, they tried to represent themselves as patrons of the workers, though the workers did not see them this way. All of the workers (100%) argued that they needed to buy these services (management of a new job, renewal of work permit, immigration to Malaysia, transfer of money back to home etc.) from their powerful patrons (e.g. brokers cum businessmen).

They went on to say that these brokers tried to “*cheat*” workers if they noticed that their so-called clients failed to participate in their forgeries and other un-lawful activities. Poor migrants thus instead of feeling loyalty and gratefulness (what they feel for their strong tied networks) towards their distant vertical networks, preferred to consider them as a strategy for higher social mobility. Therefore, from the comparisons between horizontal (intimate networks) and vertical networking (distant networks) we may safely say that distant and close social networks fundamentally do not resemble each other. Strong ties and close social networks incorporate mutual feelings and emotions towards each other, whereas in weak ties the expectation of material gains (higher income mobility, finding ways of settlement etc.) was more vital than any other concerns. Considering weak ties as distant relationships, actors visit them only when they become unable to fulfil their demands. As a result, the relative frequency of interactions of weak ties is lesser than that of strong ties.

Whilst poor migrants strive after vertical networking with their affluent country men, the well-off businessmen try to enrich themselves (buying houses, setting up business enterprises, managing permanent resident status, staying on spouse visa etc.) through inter-ethnic business and marital relationships as well as depending on intra-ethnic weak ties. They meet their inter-

ethnic spouses either as co-workers and neighbours (33.3%) or through inter-ethnic friends' contacts (66.7%). Because of the embeddedness in the institutional structures of the host society, these well-off businessmen instrumentalize inter-ethnic networking to by-pass the anti-integrating immigration policy. Therefore, these privileged Bangladeshis not only empower themselves through patron client relationships, but also through inter-ethnic business and marital relations.

Learning from their predecessors, poor migrants also try to develop inter-ethnic strong ties as they can then settle down in Malaysia and gain different means for shadow economic activities. Consequently, though for intra-ethnic strong ties moral obligations are the major factor, for inter-ethnic strong ties commercial necessity is also a significant factor (for Bangladeshi migrants). However, these are identified as strong ties (rather than weak ties) on the ground that the marital relationship opens a scope of options for integration into the host society. Regarding this, Bangladeshi husbands also do not need to pay their inter-ethnic spouses. Actors do not belong to separate households; rather they interact on a daily basis. Bangladeshi husbands and their inter-ethnic wives have more or less common aims (the well-being of their offspring and household).³⁵³

Duration- Since the duration or longevity of a tie is also considered a significant factor for measuring its closeness and its level of trust and potential, a few questions were also asked in this regard. Such as:

How long have you belonged to this 'Noakhali'/'Barishal' group? Do you often change groups? Who did you prefer to assist for jobs/migration? Do you maintain regular contact with your friends and family?

Raising questions on the above issues I have found two types of perceptions concerning the length of intimate and distant social networks. Migrants possess and at the same time believe that their intimate social networks are long lasting. "*Once it is developed, it will continue for life*"-- is a frequent uttered sentence that may resemble the Chinese perception of relationships. If the ties between husband and wife or parents and children are broken, this is considered as a "*great disaster*". Consequently, migrants need to prove their honesty and

³⁵³ The major differences between intra and inter-ethnic strong and weak ties can also be depicted in a table. Regarding this please find appendix 5.

eagerness towards their home based intimate relationships by maintaining regular correspondence. It was quoted by them that before departure they promised their consanguine and affine that they would not forget them. Neither would they engage in relationships with local ladies. Though it is found that a few (9%) of the migrants depicted migration as the cause of their divorce/separation, and developed inter-ethnic marital relationships (5.8%), the majority (91%) did not do so. Primarily unmarried migrants developed inter-ethnic marital or friendship ties and also other kinds of intimate relationships and considered themselves “*lucky*” in this regard.

Moreover, it is already known to us that apart from these marital and blood related relatives, migrants also maintain intimate relations with their friends. Two types of friendship are noticed in this regard, such as: (1) transnational friendships (their previous friends back home) and (2) migration related friendships (developed in the host society). While depending on transnational networking migrants preserve their home based friendships they maintain regular contact with their friends in the host society through working and living very closely. That means, in the host society common livelihood experiences owing to same socio-economic background open all kinds of scopes for the development of amicable relations. Or in other words, migrants’ embeddedness in their own social networks as well as in the domestic and working surroundings (of the host society) determine their friendships in the host society.

However, though concerning consanguine and affine most of the migrants possess similar types of concerns (something they bear on their own) but for friendship a differentiation is noticed. They try to show their social capital towards each other in times of sickness, police raids or mental agony and even lend money to their friends etc. However when they believe a certain resource to be limited and also that the smaller the numbers the better the chances are to acquire said resource, they start competing with each other. In that context we can make a differentiation within the insider networks. Still it is considered to be an important asset for the migrants, because in the host society most of the migrants (un-skilled and semi-skilled workers) need to live without their family. In that context, their friendship networks facilitate them to overcome psychological and other problems.

Besides, migrants also develop weak ties and distant networks. It has already been discussed in the previous chapter³⁵⁴ that there were two factional groups amongst the Bangladeshi migrants of the study areas. Less privileged Bangladeshis were found either as followers of the 'Noakhali' group or as members of the opposite ('Barishal') group. Besides, another group was found that portrayed their group changing attitudes with the comment "*anybody who works*". Not only this group, but also members of 'Noakhali' and 'Barishal' groups cited that they wanted to find "*a real well-wisher*" who might want to assist them honestly. They had the desire to find a real protector in a foreign society, but most of them failed at this. Having failed to develop a paternalistic vertical relationship, they repositioned themselves as followers of two businessmen cum political leaders' established factions. They needed to act in that way, because the labour brokers cum businessmen demanded it from them as proof of their trust (towards their patrons). At the same time, poor migrants also mentioned that when emergencies arose, for example, dismissal from job, expiration of work permit, remittance sending to home country etc., they visited their patrons so they could solve it.

Consequently, though the followers did not mention that they changed groups often, they did express their desire for doing so (once they had realized they were exploited). Their everyday discourse regarding the well-off entrepreneurs, for example, "*Bengalis try to do harm to other Bengalis*" or "*they are very proud of themselves, if they have any need to do so they will talk to us, otherwise they won't*" etc. can be added here to assess their perceptions of their powerful patrons. Towards their intimate social networks, however, both at home and abroad all migrants expressed concern and worry. Maintenance of regular correspondence, taking care of them through sending remittance, lending money, providing information etc. were presented as proof of their intimate relationships.

In fact, when I asked the leaders of the 'Noakhali' and 'Barishal' groups on what condition poor migrants were assisted and whether they preferred some of them over others, they all emphasized conditions such as, (1) they assist them as country brothers, (2) they take service charges, because they need to deal with the authorities of host and origin country through bribing, (3) as manpower and "*hundy*" business are parts of their businesses, poor migrants are their clients, (4) since they shoulder risks for them (through providing forged work permits & bringing them in on student visas), they expect loyalty from their clients, (5) they expect their group members not to quit the group, because they may inform their rivals about

³⁵⁴ Please see section 'areas of origin, formation of different ties and negotiations' of chapter three.

secrets etc. Thus, on the one hand, we can see that within vertical networks poor migrants consider their patrons to be exploiters and consequently, do not want to continue the relationship forever, on the other hand, better-off people try to present it as an instance of paternalistic patron client relationship.

Multiplicity and Diversity – I have explored whether there exists any overlapping sources that link some individuals to each others in more ways than with other participants. For instance, Bangladeshis associated by a common working niche may also be linked by neighbourhood, group memberships, kinship bonds, or political affiliations. As I have postulated that these overlapping sources might regulate the strength of ties in a network, I have tried to reveal their nature of embeddedness. See a table based on this information below.

Table 4.5: Multiplicity and Diversity of Networks

Occupational Variations	House mates (%)		Living with families (%)		Co-workers (%)		
	<i>'E'</i> ³⁵⁵	<i>'I'</i> ³⁵⁶ and <i>'E'</i>	<i>'Y'</i> ³⁵⁷	<i>'V'</i> ³⁵⁸	<i>'E'</i> ³⁵⁹ and <i>'I'</i>	<i>'E'</i> ³⁶⁰	<i>Not fixed</i>
Manufacturing	63.6	31.2	22.2	66.7	100	0	0
Construction	38.5	53.8	0	11.1	100	0	0
Restaurant	72.7	27.3	22.2	3.7	100	0	0
Transport	37.5	62.5	0	6.2	100	0	0
Workers, vendors and agent	42.8	28.6	0	5	100	0	0
Businessmen and agent	60	30	100	0	100	0	0
Professional, Businessmen and agent	51.1	42.9	100	0	100	0	0
Professionals	66.7	0	100	0	100	0	0
Unemployed	85.7	0	0	4.9	0	0	100

Source: Survey data

The table shows that Bangladeshi migrants not only live and work among themselves, but also among the inter-ethnic populace. The house-mate section depicts that with the exceptions of

³⁵⁵ 'E' refers to ethnic members.

³⁵⁶ 'I' refers to inter-ethnic members.

³⁵⁷ 'Y' stands for yes.

³⁵⁸ 'V' means void. They are not allowed to bring their families in Malaysia.

³⁵⁹ 'E' refers to ethnic members and 'I' refers to inter-ethnic members

³⁶⁰ 'E' refers to ethnic members.

professionals and unemployed workers, all other migrants are living with purely same ethnic (only) as well as mixed ethnic members. Unemployed migrants live with intra-ethnic friends and relatives in order to hide themselves from the police. Staying under the shelter of documented and comparatively well-connected (local police and inter-ethnic neighbours) Bangladeshi migrants, they try to save money for their house rent. It also helps them to find a dwelling place as landlords are not allowed to rent their houses to the undocumented migrants.³⁶¹

Married professionals, on the other hand, are allowed to bring their families in (to Malaysia) and hence we can see them living with their intra-ethnic spouses. Moreover, businessmen and professionals cum businessmen are not prohibited from bringing their elementary family members in (as well). Consequently, among them some are living with intra-ethnic consanguine and affine and the rest with their intimate inter-ethnic social networks.

Let us concentrate on the second category, which is, whether migrants are living with their family members or not. We may notice that all the professionals, businessmen and professionals cum businessmen are living with their family members. Apart from a few unskilled and semi-skilled workers, most of them say that they are not permitted to do so by the Government. The few respondents (unskilled and semi-skilled workers) who answered positively had been able to do so through inter-ethnic marriage. This information may demonstrate the nature of the migrants' embeddedness in the host society. These are, (1) besides the few exceptions (married to other communities), most ethnic and inter-ethnic housemates are co-workers of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers. They are not each other's consanguine and affine. It is stated on the grounds that workers' marriage with locals is not allowed. They are not permitted to bring their families with them. Besides, it is already known to us that the allocation of accommodation for workers is organized by their employers. Therefore, we may write that housemates are not only linked through their living environment, they also work together, (2) all the inter-ethnic housemates of businessmen and professionals cum businessmen are each other's relatives. Due to economic solvency their marriage with locals is allowed and that's why we notice that all the businessmen, professionals and professionals cum businessmen are living with family members. That

³⁶¹ The Immigration Act (1959/63, amendment 2002) prohibits landlords renting their houses to the undocumented workers. This rule implements that they will be liable to fines and jail if any undocumented worker utilize their houses as shelter.

means, the housemates of well-off Bangladeshis are not co-workers, rather they are their close social networks and consist of their consanguine and affine.

Concerning workmates all the migrants work with locals and other migrants (as co-workers). Here, in this case, there is no fixed work partner for unemployed workers. Being unemployed they actually converted into undocumented migrants and hence did not find any work mate (ethnic or inter-ethnic). As a result, they needed to depend solely on intra-ethnic networks. These instances of inter and intra-ethnic work mates and housemates may remind us two facts, such as: (1) migrants are embedded in their multi-ethnic working and living niche and (2) in most cases not only workmates, but also migrants' (semi-skilled and un-skilled labourers) housemates are determined by their employers.

The presented information may show how migrants are embedded in the institutional structures of the host society. It depicts that the well-off migrants receive better opportunities for the maintenance of strong ties with their families than their poor migrant counterparts. They are also provided chances for the development of hybrid Bangladeshi-Malaysian offspring, since their marriage with locals is allowed by the authorities. Apart from these types of strong ties, they also develop friendships with their colleagues and maintain homeland interactions. The less privileged migrants, on the other hand, are provided more chances for interactions with their co-workers because of the same living and working niche. Consequently, as a part of their coping strategy in the host society, they develop friendships with their co-workers. The multiple ways of interactions as well as the common realities as housemates, workmates and the general experience of migration mould them into groups of strong ties. Since most of their consanguine and affine live outside of the host society, they maintain frequent interactions with them depending on modern mediums of communication (e.g. mobile phones).

Thus, we can see two different pictures concerning the nature and frequency of the strong tie interactions of the better-off and poor migrants. We have seen that the nature of their embeddedness (neighbourhood, working environment and immigration rules and regulations) in the receiving society regulates their strong tie situations and capabilities for the maintenance and development of new networks. Most of the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers' friends become their strong ties in the receiving country, while for the skilled professionals and businessmen, inter and intra-ethnic relatives (blood related or marital)

become close social networks. Or in other words, the actors form their networks as potential strategies (action) for survival guided, motivated and controlled by their embeddedness (in their own social setting, transnational contacts and duties as well as the socio-economic, political and institutional structures of origin and host country).

Besides these everyday networks (housemates, co-workers as well as consanguine and affine), membership in different groups also enables Bangladeshis to adapt there and find a way for higher social mobility. For example, well-off migrants created the two factional groupings called 'Noakahli' and 'Barishal' while poor migrants joined them as followers. These factional groups were formed by the businessmen and professionals cum merchants because of the competitive relationships between them (in the horizontal level). Poor migrants, on the other hand, became part of this conflict due to striving for higher social mobility.

However, in order to understand how the poor actors (less privileged migrants) perceive their vertical networks, I tried to emphasize the content of networking. Regarding this, their everyday discourses, proverbs, gossip, nature and causes of community get together as well as related expenditures were investigated. Moreover, I tried to verify whether or not there was any one school, ethnic enterprise or religious organization that functioned as a symbol of community integration and cohesion (like "Chinatown") and if so, how it was operated (by the migrant Bangladeshis). These queries facilitated my understanding of the nature of (pseudo) patron client relationships (vertical networking) and factional conflicts (horizontal level) within the well-off migrants. But before starting exploration on how the migrants perceive their society, I would like to investigate one more aspect of networking in the light of Granovetter's writings. This on the other hand will solve the dilemma of embedded versus "disembedding" economic activities that have been raised earlier in this chapter.

In fact both in our general part as well as in Iqbal's case we have found that migrants' actions (their migration to a foreign country, their search for formal and informal sources of income, networking etc.) are guided and regulated by their types of embeddedness. Depending on their social networks they try to negotiate with the embedded realities. The anti-integrating immigration policy of the host country, for example, is circumvented (in order to stay there for more than ten years) by un-skilled and semi-skilled workers through vertical networking (weak ties). Granovetter also emphasizes embeddedness for understanding human action ("economic behaviour"). The question how behaviour and institutions are affected by social

relations and whether people's actions can be analyzed independently separating them from their embeddedness is the subject matter of his writings.³⁶² According to him,

“A fruitful analysis of human action requires us to avoid the atomization implicit in the theoretical extremes of under and oversocialized conceptions. Actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations.”³⁶³

Moreover, his arguments on networking³⁶⁴ show that people develop weak ties for higher mobility, since they fail to deal with their realities depending only on strong ties (because of limited capabilities and information). In the same way, we have seen that apart from the maintenance of trust based intimate social networks Bangladeshis formulate distant or weak ties. Being motivated by their neighbours' migration they developed weak ties as they can migrate and find alternate sources for higher income and integration in the receiving country. The question is whether all of them (Bangladeshis) are able to utilize their weak tie for higher social mobility and if so, on what grounds it is identified as exploitative in nature. Or in other words, in the next sections we will check whether the situation of the study areas resembles Granovetter's conception (that the weak ties help to stimulate community cohesion and integration connecting micro and macro levels).

2.3 Revisiting Granovetter's Conceptions on Strong and Weak Ties

In his two articles entitled 'The Strength of Weak Ties'³⁶⁵ and 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited'³⁶⁶ the author sets forth some arguments on the functions of interpersonal networks, such as: (1) work as a micro (small-scale interaction) and macro (diffusion, social mobility, political organization, and social cohesion) level bridge, (2) two way interactions and feedback (of micro and macro levels) through networking, (3) identifications of the nature of ties depending on their strength (time, emotion, intimacy, and

³⁶² Mark Granovetter. 1985. The University of Chicago. Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness. AJS Volume 91 Number 3, p. 481-510.

³⁶³ Ibid: p- 487.

³⁶⁴ Mark S. Granovetter. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. AJS volume 78, 2 Number 4 and Mark S. Granovetter. 1983. The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. Sociological Theory, volume 1.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Mark S. Granovetter. 1983. The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. Sociological Theory, volume 1.

reciprocal services), (4) strong tied groups are more or less similar to each other (unlike weak ties), (5) if any information is passed through weak ties it will reach a larger number of people and also cross more social distance than if same is attempted by strong ties (restricted to a small group of friends), because weak ties bridge different groups of people from different levels, (6) a person who has few or no weak ties is less likely to manage a way for upward mobility. Individuals with numerous weak ties can overcome this constraint. Since strong ties possess the same type of information that he already has, (such as, information about appropriate jobs openings at the exact time etc.), he fails to achieve his goals unless he increases his stock of information through forming weak ties, (7) through providing more information, influencing actions and connecting people, weak ties play a significant role to open “possible mobility opportunities” for individual levels and also macro level “social cohesion”, and (8) in the development of a sociological theory great significance should be awarded to the micro-macro level ties as the life and experience of every individual person is beyond his control and fundamentally is motivated and regulated by the broader aspects of social structure.³⁶⁷

Amongst these points let us consider the first, second and the last one at first. Micro and macro level contacts and influences (through networking) are already proved in chapter three, especially in the section of mixed embeddedness. How Bangladeshis’ lives in the host society are influenced and controlled by (1) the structural micro and macro level aspects of the host and origin countries, (2) their (migrants’) own socio-economic capabilities, characteristics and nature of embeddedness (in their own community), (3) their embeddedness in the multi-ethnic living and working environment of the receiving society (4) institutions (multi-dimensional migration policy of both countries) and also (5) through trans-border contacts and liabilities---are now known to us.

Through the analysis of these structural conditions we have noticed that migrants’ everyday realities in the receiving society are influenced immensely by their nature of embeddedness. Their embeddedness in their social system determines their obligations and reciprocal relationships with each other along side expected socio-cultural role models. We have come across their host society based ties and also transnational networks. These diverse networks

³⁶⁷ Also find Mark Granovetter. 1985. The University of Chicago. Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness. AJS Volume 91 Number 3, p. 481-510.

were formed to fulfil duties to their kin as well as to survive and find sources for upward social mobility. Their embeddedness regulated the strength and length of their ties in this regard.

Besides, as an outcome of the class and status based hierarchy of the community, amongst the migrants some achieve more than others in the host country. For example, concerning assimilation and integration-- well-off migrants are granted more rights than the rest of the migrants. Thus, micro level migrants' lives are regulated by macro level state policy. Moreover, the internal organizational structure of the community was also shaped by this macro level state policy. For an instance, owing to the owners of legitimate power for integration, (sustained by the host society's migration policy), the better-off groups become more powerful than the poor ones.

The poor migrants on the other hand strive after weak ties with them to overcome constraints concerning integration. To sustain their power and also achieve more competence the well-off people maintain and form networks with the higher level authorities (central political parties of Bangladesh, officials of Malaysian immigration department and Bangladesh High Commission etc.) of host and origin countries. Micro level individuals' lives are thus connected with the macro level authorities through different types of networking that in itself is motivated and shaped by migrants' embeddedness in the ongoing social relations and power structures. Therefore, let us shed light on the other categories under the following sub-headings:

- Identification of the Nature of Existing Relationships and the Characteristics of the Members of these Ties (categories 3 and 4)
- Individual Upward Mobility and the Functions of Weak Ties (5 and 6)
- Community Cohesion and the Roles of Weak Ties (7)

Identification of the Nature of Existing Relationships and the Characteristics of the Members of these Ties (categories 3 and 4)

We may already know from the discussions of previous chapters that mainly two types of networking can be found amongst the heterogeneous groups of respondents, such as, (1) horizontal networking and (2) vertical networking. These two types of bonds (comprised of

consanguineal and affinal relatives as well as friends on the one hand and on the other hand, networks developed by commercial relationships) are established by the migrants to cope with the everyday realities and for upward mobility. Their realities are influenced by their embeddedness. The socio-economic, political and institutional structures of host and origin countries, their own socio-economic background as well as transnational contacts and duties are the areas, where Bangladeshi migrants are embedded in.

Whilst for emotional sharing and primary adaptation in the host society the roles of friendship and kinship (consanguineal and affinal relatives) are emphasized, a kind of fictional relationship is also found that mainly develops on the basis of commercial networking. We have come across in our discussion on chapter three and also here in Iqbal's case that through commercial networking with middlemen most of the migrants managed their immigration in Malaysia. Depending on that they also found alternative ways for shadow economic activities that enabled them to overcome their low general income. Granovetter's argument that people like to pass more time with their friends and possess emotions for them rather than acquaintances and maintain weak ties (associates) only for positive mobility may also be identified as true if we consider the cross tab discussed below. His argument that strong tied groups are (1) restricted to a nucleus of friends and (2) comprised of people of the same socio-economic background also reflect the situation of Bangladeshi migrants. Let us discuss this elaborately.

During the survey on being asked whom the migrants would consider their friends, most of them identified people of their same socio-economic background. For example, 90.7% respondents preferred other Bangladeshi workers (semi-skilled and un-skilled workers) and local friends (neighbour), while 6.7% (professionals and professionals cum businessmen) mentioned the names of other professionals and businessmen as their friends. Only .7% identified none but the employer as his/her close friend. The chi-square test between migrants' occupational variations and friendship circle in the receiving society also shows significant relationship between these variables. The null hypothesis was (H_0) that there was no relation between friendship and profession, but Pearson's chi-square for p (significance) value is .000, which means the null hypothesis can be rejected at 1% level of significance, so the conclusion is that friendship is developed more or less among same socio-economic and occupational group.

Moreover, one of our previous findings of chapter three which is, that migrants' living areas are distributed according to their occupational statuses enables us to assume that friendship is developed not only in same occupational group, but also based on neighbourhoods. The same living and working niches help them in this regard. Besides, if the moral obligation of kinship, its responsibilities, relatedness and prescribed role models are considered accordingly, then we may see that strong ties also exist outside the state boundary of the receiving society. Elementary family members and hometown based friends are the transnational strong ties of the migrants. Regular correspondences through modern means of communication as well as the flow of remittances, gifts and occasional visits can be delineated here as the indications of frequent network maintenance.

The roles of strong tied groups were found to be very significant on the grounds that it assisted them to survive and adapt in a foreign environment and also to overcome loneliness (as they were living without their family members). Concerning risk management, e.g. threats and attacks by locals or conflicts with some of their country mates, the roles of both strong and weak ties were emphasized. The differences between the functions of strong and weak tied networks are, however, (1) strong tied groups support each other within their working and living niche, while for weak tied networks-- the assistance crosses the boundary of the neighbourhoods and also the class and social statuses, (2) for strong ties the reciprocal relationship is developed from common realities resulting from the mixed embeddedness in the broader social structures of host and origin societies, their (migrants) own networks and transnational ties, on the other side for weak ties, along with mixed embeddedness in most cases, commercial relationships and monetary reciprocity were found more crucial than the other factors, (3) trust and moral obligations are significant elements of a strong tie, while for weak ties money and business are the main factors.

For example, if we consider Iqbal's case, we can see that he bought a "*PC passport*" utilizing his weak ties, whereas from strong ties he collected money for the purchase of his passport. Before his travelling to Malaysia he had long wished to migrate, but he had lacked the appropriate information, contacts and influence before he got the contacts of the "*dalal*", a distantly related relative. Since he got the contacts through his wife's (strong tie) network, he trusted the "*dalal*" and risked becoming destitute (through using up his last capital). He even permitted his middleman to change his original name so that he (middleman) could put his photo on another person's credentials. Thus depending on his wife's words and contacts he

became courageous enough to borrow money from his friends (strong ties), obey his broker's suggestions about changing his original addresses (to correspond to the person's identity, who was fundamentally unknown to him).

It is found that most of the migrants manage to travel to their foreign country through monetary reciprocity with the labour brokers (this is known to us from the previous chapter). There through strong ties, as we may see in Iqbal's case, they come into contact with the local middlemen. It also provides them with economic and moral support for migrating alone (without family members). In that context their strong ties required no financial reward or reciprocity. They only promised their strong tied networks (before their departure) that they would try to make it possible for them to migrate next time. They tried to conform to their expected social roles by maintaining regular contacts with their home land and performing their responsibilities as kin.

On the other hand, migrants need to purchase services from their weak ties. It is found that undocumented workers receive forged work permits, jobs and shelter from their well-off weak ties as long as they provide free services for their weak ties' business enterprises. They not only pay their required service charges but also enlist as followers of their informal political parties and spokesmen (as well). To impress their so-called patrons or weak ties clients work as helping hands. After pleasing them they try to get assistance to bribe the police as they can then stay even without possessing a valid work permit. They also visit their well-off weak ties in order to send remittance back home or to bring relatives (strong ties) abroad. Or in other words, in order to assist the strong ties and for their own necessity they maintain weak ties with better-off entrepreneurs.

However, that sending money through "*hundy*" network and working as manpower agents are one of the ways among others that are utilized by the businessmen as parts of their income sources, is found less explored to the poor migrants (who are comparatively newcomers). Migrants who managed to find out their weak ties were making money on them, still continued those networks unless another (better) one was found. Since it was not possible for them to transfer remittance back to home country as well as continue work without possessing a (forged) work permit, they maintained weak ties. Through their assistance they also provide "*tips*" to the local police on a monthly basis.

In fact, if anybody wants to transfer money to his home land he needs to show his ID card to the authorities of the bank. But undocumented workers, of course, cannot do this and therefore they need to use a “*hundy*” channel. Some migrants also believe banking services to be time consuming and are hence less likely to apply. They continue that counting the probable losses, what might happen at work during their absence, their employers became reluctant about granting them leave (to transfer money home through the banking system). They argued that if it was performed by “*hundy*” networks then day or time was not that big a deal. Rather, they could transfer money along with gifts during their holidays.

Moreover, a common fear is noticed among un-skilled and semi-skilled (both documented and undocumented) workers, whatever their educational background is, concerning “*filling up forms in English*”. In order to avoid that fear they prefer the “*hundy*” system. Besides, as undocumented workers, they consider venturing outside of the factory compound during working hours as “*very risky*”. The police might suspect something and ask them to show their ‘jalan card’ as proof of their documented status. To avoid these “*hazards*” (*jhamela*) they think spending money on weak ties is wise. These (weak ties) might gradually help them with their upward mobility (as was quoted by them). They imagined that they might be supported by their weak ties concerning information of better jobs and ways and contacts of shadow economic activities. They thought that weak ties would offer them chances as they could stay and work more years (and possibly ultimately integrate). Thus they constructed their imagination concerning the role models of weak ties. Regarding this when they were disappointed they criticized their well-off patrons or weak ties.

It is noteworthy that unlike the formation of strong tied groups a variation is noticed among members of weak ties. While for strong ties along with the consanguineal and affinal bonds, more or less the same occupational background, neighbourhood, fictive kinship bonds as well as experience (resulting from the embeddedness in their existing realities) played significant roles in developing non-commercial reciprocal relationship, for weak ties a kind of class and status based hierarchy was noticed. For example, when the respondents were asked where they went or who they preferred as reference group for better jobs, renewal of passports and work permits etc., then 84% confirmed that Bangladeshi well-off people (businessmen, professionals cum businessmen and agents) running business enterprises in the host society where the ones they preferred. Amongst the others 11.3% of the respondents disagreed about

maintaining any weak ties in this regard and rather spoke about self initiatives through strong ties, 4% emphasized employers and .7% said that they had no reference group.

The cross tab between the occupational groups and preference of reference groups provide us with the following results: (1) all the professionals focused on 'strong ties', (2) among professionals, businessmen and agents, the majority (85.7%) emphasized the roles of 'strong ties', while a few (14.3%) said that they had no reference group, (3) 94.8% of the workers of the manufacturing sector preferred 'Bangladeshi agents' (weak ties) and 5.2% said they 'asked their employers', (4) all the unemployed respondents highlighted their necessity to maintain weak ties with 'Bangladeshi agents', (5) 40% of the businessmen maintained weak ties with 'Bangladeshi businessmen and agents', while the 60% of the merchants of this category glorified the roles of strong ties, (6) workers who used to provide service in the transport sector, all confirmed the roles of weak ties as a way of upward mobility, (7) among workers, vendors and agents, 66.7% respondents depicted that they had weak ties with the 'Bangladeshi agents' for shadow economic activities, while the rest (33.3%) of this group tried to depend on strong ties to find a way of better survival and finally (8) amongst the workers who worked as employees in construction sites and hence belong to the construction sector group, 90% confirmed about the importance of weak ties and the other (10%) respondents said that they followed their employers' orders and suggestions concerning this.

From the examination of the above results it becomes now clear that the nature of networking for upward mobility (in the host society) varies according to the class and status based differentiations of the respondents. Along with unemployed respondents, most of the semi-skilled and un-skilled workers maintain weak ties to manage a way of better survival, but for the well-off professionals and professionals cum businessmen groups, instead of weak ties, strong ties are vital.

In fact, if we consider their (professionals and professionals cum businessmen) ways of immigration into the country, which has already been discussed in the previous chapter, we may see, they got information about opportunities of a bright career and Malaysia's quality of life through friends (via modern communication systems, e.g. transnational contacts through telecommunication, internet etc.) already present there as professionals. Since apart from direct contact it was only the way for them to acquire information on job and life standard (resemble to their status), so they followed that. They did not contact others, like labour

brokers or semi-skilled and un-skilled workers, because of the class, status (education, legal status etc.), and network based differentiations. The situation reminds us Sassen's arguments, where it is posited "that immigrants have very specific job search paths and channels of access to information about jobs."³⁶⁸

In the host society, the continuation of this type of separate network of strong ties (with professionals) can be seen in their informal monthly gathering.³⁶⁹ They arranged these either at their own house, or university compound and clubs, where only professionals, professionals cum businessmen, their same status family members and relatives were invited.³⁷⁰ Discussions on family matters, the current political and immigration policy of the host country, philosophical and theoretical issues, as well as prospects and career opportunities in Malaysia or in another country were considered as the subject matters of these meetings. The participants were entertained cordially with food, drinks. Also any unknown person was not welcomed there. As an outsider the researcher herself did not manage to get invitations from there, unless a strong tie link was developed through one of the neighbours.³⁷¹

On the contrary, during informal chats ("*adda*") with the un-skilled and semi-skilled undocumented workers of the research areas, issues related to their security and possible ways for overcoming it--- were given preferences as the topics for discussion. Moreover, when I used to visit two Bangladeshi restaurants of the 'Bangla Bazaar' and also the courtyard, situated in front of a nearby restaurant of Bangladesh High Commission, I often met documented and undocumented as well as unemployed workers. They were there to find possible opportunities and to collect information on new jobs, work permits and finally to buy or renew their passport. They also went there to get in touch with the labour broker and businessmen.

Though some businessmen followed weak ties, the majority preferred strong ties. While on the one side, no worker focused on strong ties for upward mobility, a few of them avoided maintaining weak ties with Bangladeshi well-off people and delineated the importance of

³⁶⁸ Saskia Sassen. Immigration and Local Labour Markets, p- 102. In Alejandro Portes (Ed) The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995.

³⁶⁹ Please find appendix 7 to see the photographs of informal get togethers (of different groups of the migrants).

³⁷⁰ It is learned while interviews were conducted with the professionals. It is also observed through participating in some of their meetings and cultural celebration.

³⁷¹ He was one of the nearest friends of the researchers' research assistant.

inter-ethnic weak ties with their employers. Though some parts of the worker cum vendors emphasized strong ties, still the majority of them focused on weak ties. And through field experience as well as interviews with the businessmen it is found that they construct weak ties with some of the country men (Bangladeshis) to then establish inter-ethnic ties. Their commercial relationship (weak ties) with other businessmen can be named as “bridging weak ties” between people from different ethnic communities and themselves (businessmen) via other businessmen. The rules of the host society regarding immigrant business entrepreneurs oblige them to act in that way.³⁷² As a result, they attempt to develop these intra-ethnic ties with other Bangladeshi businessmen (who are doing business through inter-ethnic ties), to create links with inter-ethnic businessmen. And the rest of the merchants manage to do business through inter-ethnic marital relationship (strong ties). In the same way, the vendors depending on strong ties apart from weak ties with the country men, these were nothing but inter-ethnic intimate relationships with the natives of the research areas.

The result also indicates that for the vendors, unemployed migrants and for poor workers, well-off businessmen and professionals cum businessmen converted into weak ties (so-called patrons). While for their own (well-off people) along with the maintenance of strong ties (with the other affluent country men), intra and inter-ethnic weak (business relation) and inter-ethnic strong ties (marriage) were options for a better survival strategy. It is noteworthy that other networks or groups were not in their position; rather these better-off people converted into the ladders for the (upward mobility) poor migrants. While for the poor economic group, weak tie means vertical relationships with the well-off migrants, there for well-off people’s weak ties are found to be a “node” among same economic and status groups. Or in other words, among better-off respondents both strong and weak ties are formed in the horizontal level for upward mobility, while for opposite groups’ weak ties are found only in the vertical level. The poor migrants develop vertical level weak ties as a “*better survival strategy*”.

The question is----- amongst strong and weak ties which one performs more significant roles than the other and whether or not Granovetter’s argument that “a person who has few or no weak ties is less likely to manage a way of upward mobility than to others who are the owners of more weak ties”, is applicable (regarding Bangladeshi migrants). So let us check whether weak ties contribute in any meaningful fashion towards the higher income mobility of the migrants (in the next section). Before proceeding it is necessary to mention that apart from

³⁷² The Registration of Business Act 1956.

finding a way of integration (in the host country) Bangladeshi migrants also attribute higher social value upon income. They migrate to Malaysia for higher income (which in turn might assist them for higher social mobility). Even higher income migrants are found embedded in inter-ethnic strong and weak ties apart from the maintenance of intra-ethnic ties. Therefore, applying statistical analysis I will verify if strong or weak ties contribute more to the higher income mobility (of the migrants).

Individual Upward Mobility and the Functions of Weak Ties (5 and 6)

The hypothesis of the following statistical analysis is migrants with weak ties have higher income mobility than others with strong ties.

I made some proxies here to define weak and strong ties, e.g. respondents were asked how they passed their leisure time? Their answers are coded as:

Weak tie: visiting ‘Bangla Bazaar’ of Kotaraya, going to pubs and shopping centres, attending religious and political discussion and community get togethers.

Strong tie: watching movies using satellite (with the housemates), visiting local friends (neighbours) and gossiping in a restaurant (local).

We have regressed their monthly wage with both quantitative regressors: job alteration, length of stay in years in Malaysia and qualitative or dummy regressor: weak or strong tie.³⁷³

The results show that the dummy variable and length of stay have a statistically significant relationship with the wage. Duration of migrant life in the host country has the strongest positive effect on wage. Keeping all other variables constant, the average monthly wages of migrants with weak ties are RM 363.78 higher than those with strong ties.³⁷⁴

³⁷³ Please find appendix 3 for the detailed regression with ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) model.

³⁷⁴ Our data in this study is cross-sectional one where heteroscedasticity may involve frequently. So, we assume that:

u_i (error) is normally distributed with mean zero and variance σ_i^2 , i.e. $u_i \sim N(0, \sigma_i^2)$. We test by graphical method and White’s general heteroscedasticity test (H. White, “A Heteroscedasticity Consistent Covariance Matrix Estimator and a Direct Test of Heteroscedasticity”, *Econometrica*, vol.48, 1980, pp. 817-818) with the null hypothesis: H_0 : There is no heteroscedasticity in the error variance and found H_0 may be rejected. For detail discussion please see appendix 4.

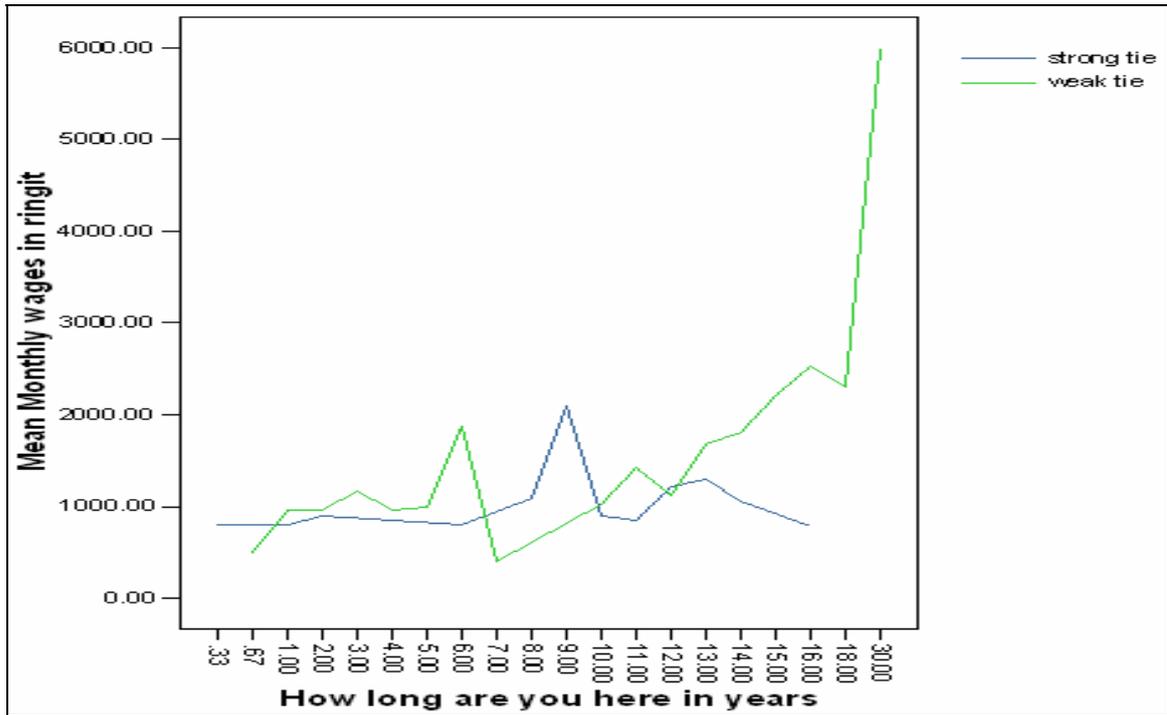
Our regression result shows that job alteration is insignificant and is very much related to the other realities of the study areas (of Peninsular Malaysia). It was noticed that migrants changed their jobs or were forced to quit it not only for higher earning, but also for other causes. Such as: (1) dismissal from job by the employer, (2) to find a permanent job (though sometimes the new one is not highly paid), (3) being arrested (as undocumented workers) they lost their job, (4) for security, (5) to prolong their duration of stay they change jobs (to bypass law that imposes a restriction on the un-skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers saying that they are not allowed to work for more than ten years), (6) due to sickness (caused by a hard working job), (7) some workers identified some jobs as “*risky*” (immigration police might come and want to check their ‘jalan card’) and not preferable (e.g. working under sun or in open space, mostly, in the construction site) and changed jobs etc.

Consequently, it is not likely that job alteration always introduces a chance for higher earning; there are other underlying causes of that. For example, if we consider Iqbal’s case study (that we already discussed), we may see that he lost his first job in a plantation company of Perag due to the immigration laws. The immigration laws in Malaysia indicate that employers will be punished if any undocumented worker is found appointed in his/her factory or enterprise. Therefore, he was sacked by the employer just before the immigration raid.³⁷⁵ He changed his second job from a restaurant worker in Kuala Lumpur to a highly paid occupation in a plantation company in Penang. But again he was sacked from the job on the grounds that he had no valid work permit. And finally he managed to continue work in a plastic factory when he changed his status from an undocumented worker to a documented one. He was able to continue that after the host government provided him with an opportunity to convert into a documented worker from his previous position. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the regression analysis job alteration is found insignificant.

However, the above result regarding the contributions of weak ties on the higher income mobility of migrants can also be shown through the following line graph:

³⁷⁵ “Any person who employs one or more persons, other than a citizen or a holder of an Entry Permit, who is not in possession of a valid Pass shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction, be liable to a fine of not less than ten thousand ringgit but not more than fifty thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months or to both for each such employee.” [Am. Act A 1154] and “Where in the case of an offence under subsection (1), it is proved to the satisfaction of the court that the person has at the same time employed more than five such employees that person shall, on conviction be liable to imprisonment for a term of not less than six months but more than five years and shall also be liable to whipping of not more than six strokes.” [IAM. Act A 1154] Source: Immigration Act 1959/63 (Act 155), 55B. Employing a person who is not in possession of a valid Pass [Ins. Act A 985], p. 47.

Figure 4.2: Contribution of Strong and Weak Ties for Higher Income Mobility



Source: Survey data

The line graph depicts that migrants with weak ties have higher income mobility than those with strong ties. Though we do not see a smooth line graph, the average monthly income rate nonetheless shows that weak tied groups on average manage to stay longer and earn RM 6000, whereas for strong tied groups the highest income rate is around RM 2000 in their 9th year. The line graph does not indicate that strong tied networks help them to earn this amount. Rather, it is known to us that documented migrant workers' wages are increased by the factory authority according to their level of work experience. They allow them to work for a maximum of 10 years and provide them increments on the basis of their work experiences.

As a result, the highest amount of income (of the strong tie groups) shows that they managed to earn this amount in their ninth year according to the employment act of the country. After that, concerning strong ties we can see a decreasing rate of earning until their 11 year of stay. In their 12th and 13 years they slightly increased their slim earnings, but in the end were not successful at this. They even failed to reach their previous rate of income (RM 2000), though they had stayed in Malaysia for more than 10 years. Or in other words, their length of stay did not assist the strong tied groups to earn more. Though they had stayed more than 10 years, they had restricted themselves to their own (ethnic) domain. Limited capabilities and

information (which in any case they already possessed) failed to show them paths for higher income mobility.

On the contrary, regarding weak ties though we notice a lower income rate at the very beginning, it finally helps the migrants to reach their peak. Migrants who migrated depending only on weak ties (commercial labour brokers) could not adapt to the foreign environment in the beginning. As they lacked the strong ties, necessary to cope (with foreign customs, language, ways of working etc.) with their immigrant life, they failed to earn more. But after staying a while they gradually achieved local knowledge on “*what to do, where to go*” and also managed to develop new networks, necessary for upward mobility. These new ties not only provided them with the opportunities for higher income mobility, but also incorporated risks. Therefore, the decreasing rates of income of the followers of weak ties can be explained highlighting risks.

It is found that in the host society migrants encounter different types of risks ranging from intra-ethnic tension to inter-ethnic conflict. For example, while some of the poor migrants identify their weak ties or patrons as exploiters, they also express their fears of Tamil Indians. However, to overcome these drawbacks they need to find another weak tie (a well-connected person both with the local power structure and other well-off countrymen). They try to find a better one who likewise possesses the necessary capabilities, links (networks) and who is also knowledgeable in combating risks. To find a “*risk free*” & better strategy they form new weak ties so they can stay longer in the study areas and also manage opportunities for higher income mobility.

Though they consider weak ties as commercial and exploitative, they still do not prefer to depend only on their trustworthy strong ties. Their strong ties represent their own workmates, housemates as well as relatives (who possess more or less same level of information and networks that they themselves already have). Having failed to find a suitable job at home, they migrate to Malaysia to make their fortunes (within a short time frame). They also want to earn more for a “*better future*”. They know, if they fail to earn enough money, they will be unable to maintain their expenditures both at home and abroad. As a result, even though they consider their weak ties exploitative they depend on them unless better ones are found. Through criticizing them they feel psychological relief. They also express their expectations towards well-off country men. For example, “*He is rich, but very polite! Not like others.*”

This single sentence denotes how through discursive practices migrants are expressing their experiences and expectations towards well-off people. According to Moerman,

“In every moment of talk, people are experiencing and producing their cultures, their roles, their personalities.”³⁷⁶

However, though weak ties are identified as exploitative, the line graph nevertheless shows that respondents with weak ties have higher income mobility than those with strong ties. At the same time, it also demonstrates that the Bangladeshi migrants of the study areas do not restrict themselves only to their close social networks; rather they develop distant networks for higher social mobility. Thus the migrants of a certain area remain connected with other migrants from different parts of the host society. They thus get opportunities to construct interpersonal networks through weak ties, because most of the less privileged migrants visit either ‘Noakhali’ group or ‘Barishal’ group for their higher social mobility. Through their transnational business activities the better-off merchants assist poor migrants so that they can maintain transnational networks with their kith and kin.

These entrepreneurs also maintain networks with the immigration authorities of the host country and with the central political parties of their home land. They nurture their networks with this political power structure in order to attain and sustain existing powers they utilize for their business purposes. They apply their capabilities to assist clients or poor migrants (after taking charges for it) when they (the poor migrants) visit them to counter risks or find strategies for higher income mobility. Thus, the micro level migrants are linked with the macro level power structure through their distant networks / weak ties. The question is, whether these micro and macro level contacts initiate greater community cohesion. Let us discuss this in the next section.

Community Cohesion and the Roles of Weak Ties (7)

The individual’s life remains beyond his control, rather regulated by the greater macro level aspects. Hence said aspects need to be emphasized as central aspects of sociological theories-- as has been argued by Granovetter in SWT. In his social networking theory the functions of

³⁷⁶ Michael Moerman. 1988. University of Pennsylvania Press. Talking Culture. Ethnography and Conversation Analysis, p. preface xi.

weak ties are conceptualized as bridges and thus as being able to connect different groups. This concomitantly unites micro and macro levels which of course is useful for community integration and also the individual's upward mobility. Thus he criticizes others, such as Wirth (1938)³⁷⁷, who considered the existence of weak ties as an indication of isolation within the members of the community. Not only this, but it is also cited in SWT that strong ties create local cohesion by restricting the individual's life in certain confined (local) groups that consequently initiate overall disintegration.

In fact, though it is noticed that weak ties work as information pools for consequent upward mobility, concerning community integration or cohesion we need to consider some further factors. As a matter of fact, weak ties support migrants mainly in two ways, such as: (1) they provide **necessary information** on jobs, accommodations etc., (2) they **manipulate contacts and influence** to provide new passports³⁷⁸, work permits (both forged and original) or even migration to a foreign country. At the same time, however, they also incorporate a power hierarchy. This power relation is noticed within so-called patron client ties in the vertical networks of rich and poor migrants that are considered weak ties. This power hierarchy is further fortified by the unequal capabilities of the different Bangladeshi migrants.

Through their embeddedness in the existing regulatory frameworks of the origin and host countries some migrants became powerful than others. They convert into so-called patrons or try to act so considering it a profitable way of business, in their clients' words, "*money making*". By utilizing their gained power and capabilities they provide facilities and support for the less privileged groups of migrants or would-be migrants. These groups depend on this "*shajjo*" (help) having failed to find other ways of survival. They also try to change their fortunes relying on weak ties. For example, the Emigration Ordinance 1982 (a key regulatory law for overseas manpower employment) and the three major laws of this ordinance, such as the Emigration Law of 2002, the Law for the Conduct and Licensing of Recruiting Agencies of 2002 and the Law for Wage Earners' Welfare Fund (of 2002), gave a power monopoly to

³⁷⁷ Wirth, Louis. 1938. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." *American Journal of Sociology* 44 (July): 1-24.

³⁷⁸ In order to manage new job (as they can stay longer in the host society) migrants visit Bangladeshi brokers. These brokers submit applications to the High Commission of Bangladesh on behalf of their clients in the name of "missing passport". Concerning these clients' are given new name, address and other relevant credentials in order to avoid the records of the immigration department. Migrants, on the other hand, after getting new passport, try to manage new job or continue their previous job, if their employer agrees. It was confirmed in time of interviews that all the steps were known to their employers. They continued that the employers did not disagree if they found their workers efficient and obedient.

the Government to grant manpower business licenses through its executing agency BMET³⁷⁹. As sole authority, BMET hands out licenses to individuals and also to agencies that intend to engage in overseas manpower employment as labour brokers (Section 10).³⁸⁰

It is written clearly in the ordinance that un-skilled and semi-skilled workers are not allowed to migrate directly to a foreign country, as immigrant labourers.³⁸¹ They need to be recruited through manpower agents and contractors after which calling visas are issued to them. Thus the institutional structures of the origin country oblige the poor migrants to develop vertical links or weak ties with central manpower agents. The future migrants, therefore, rely on their village based middlemen or “*dalal*” to gain access to networks with manpower agents in Dhaka. In fact, it is found that the majority of the migrants have migrated to Malaysia depending on these types of governmental and non-governmental manpower agents (what we already discussed in the previous chapter).

Instead of considering this relationship as a life long patron client bond, poor migrants show their awareness of the underlying exploitation and try to overcome it when an alternative bond is managed. Their perceptions regarding the intrinsic motives of well-off people’s assistance, their patron changing mentality and their negotiation processes can be conceptualized as an instance of their agency against their powerful patrons. Instead of bearing positive emotional feelings (gratitude), something they usually feel for their strong ties, they pretend to consider it distant or weak tie. Thus the heterogeneous situation and unequal capabilities of migrants create patron client bonds in the very beginning and are not free from domination, exploitation and also negotiation. These bonds are also commercial on the ground that migrants need to buy services from their so-called patrons (something we don’t see within strong tie networks). Or in other words, instead of bestowing assistance towards their poor country men, well-off Bangladeshis utilize their vertical ties as a way of business – something altogether different from the characteristics of the classical patron client relationship. Hence it is considered a weak tie.

³⁷⁹ The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) is the executing agency of the Ministry of Welfare and Overseas Employment.

³⁸⁰ See also Tasneem Siddiqui. 2005. International Migration as a Livelihood Strategy of the Poor: The Bangladesh Case in Tasneem Siddiqui (ed.) Migration and Development. Pro-Poor Policy Choices, p. 90-91.

³⁸¹ See also Justice Naim Uddin Ahmed. Avibashi Sramikder Banchana. The Daily Prothom Alo. September 24, 2006 at <http://www.prothom-alo.org/fcat.news.details.php?fid=OA==&nid=OTey>

But, if it is a fact that migrants preserve moral obligations only for their close social networks and maintain distant networks as the means of upward mobility (poor migrants) and business purposes (better-off migrants) and there is no place for nationalist sentiment there, can we say that the community is loosely structured? We will come to this point later on. Rather, let us now see why weak ties fail to introduce an integrated Bangladeshi community. We will analyze this through empirical evidence and also reviewing a case study, conducted in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ of Kotaraya.

‘Bangla Bazaar’, a Case Study among Migrant Bangladeshi Businessmen of Kuala Lumpur³⁸²

Anniversary of the Death of a Bangladeshi Leader

Speech 1

“You see we are living here, but we are taking care of our family and relatives at home. We work here and we send remittance back for the well-being of our home town and country. I am rich, but I don’t forget you, my fellow brothers, because I know you are making money on your toil, like me. I do business here, but I sell Bangladeshi food items, clothes, ‘biri’ (cigarettes), ‘sayur’ (vegetables), fishes that you can’t get abroad. I recruit not only Malaysian workers, but also my brothers are working here, in my shop. You see, here on this stage, some of my friends, who bring Bangladeshi workers into Malaysia. Some of you came here through these channels. Please let us know if you want to bring anybody here. I take care that you can get Bangladeshi food in my restaurant. My cook who is a Bangladeshi brother ... has prepared a nice ‘daging lembu’ (beef curry) for you mixing green chilli, pepper, coriander seed and other spices. You will not find it sweet because no ‘santan’ (coconut milk) and ‘gula’ (sugar) is added here, you will eat and you will feel that you are enjoying a profoundly Bangladeshi dish. Please have ‘minum’ (drinks) while seated. I know my brothers you have come here after finishing your duties in the factory. Some of you have come here after working overtime. So I have slaughtered a cow for your convenience. Please don’t go without having ‘makan’ (food). We will pray in the ‘Bangla surau’ (a Muslim prayer house named ‘Bangla’) for the victory of our party in the coming election of Bangladesh and we will also pray for our great leader, who formed this party. Today is the anniversary of his death; I am so sad that he is no longer with us. He gave his life for the sake of his country.

³⁸² This case study has already been published at ZEF A (University of Bonn) as a working paper.

Maybe, some day some of us will become a great leader like him. After earning a lot, maybe some of us will go back and take responsibility for our country.”

Speech 2

“Bismillah Hir Rahman Ur Rahim. We are here because this is the day when our great leader was killed by assassins. This is not a celebration; this is a day of mourning for the entire Bangladeshi nation. We are here to make our fortunes, but we cannot forget this day. We formulated a branch of that party in Malaysia based upon his ideals. We pray for the party and also for our great leader. We are here after a full day of working, because we love him. We are here, because we want to make our family happy. Some of us are making so much progress that they can move to another country. Last month, one of our Bangladeshi brothers went to Poland, my friends. He spent RM 30 thousand for it. The amount he spent he had earned here himself. I brought him here from Bangladesh as a factory worker and now look at him. Here some of us are students, technicians, engineers and some also workers. We are doing business, but we sell not only local (Malaysian) items, but also Bangladeshi goods. We not only have local partners, but our country brothers also assist us as agents. We have gathered here because we are Bangladeshis. We will assist each other if we have any problem in Malaysia. My brothers, a nice meal was prepared for you, an entire cow slaughtered for your convenience (...).”

The above speeches were delivered by two Bangladeshi businessmen named Kalim Miah (pseudonym) and Dabir Miah (pseudonym). They were remembering the death anniversary of a national leader in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ of Kuala Lumpur, who was one of the former Presidents of Bangladesh. Instead of one gathering, two meetings were arranged. Since without registering in the ‘Registration of Societies Department’ any kind of association or organization (of seven or more members) is forbidden in Malaysia³⁸³, these meetings officially took place as religious prayers (‘Milad Mahfil’ in Islam).

The orators spoke as the leaders of two non-registered political branches that were developed based on a national political party of Bangladesh. In the study area the respondents were found (mainly) divided into members of these two branches of a common political party. As the leaders of each branch wanted to be respected as well as benefit by holding major posts of the party (and also found them prestigious) they actually separated into two segments of the

³⁸³ Please see ‘Societies Act 1966’ and ‘Societies Regulations 1984’.

same party. In each meeting a stage was prepared for the leaders, while the other migrants, for example the workers and the students, sat lower in front of the stage. On the stages were businessmen, manpower agents, lecturers of different private colleges and officials of different organizations. Among them some were staying in Malaysia as 'PR' (permanent residents) holders. Some had even stayed for more than fifteen (15) years on business or spouse visas. They were affluent; they paid the expenses of the meetings and therefore got the opportunity to sit upstairs on the stages (of the two mentioned separate meetings). They were the speakers while the general workers and students were silent listeners. They became honourable persons to the listeners and (they) were addressed by others as "*boro vai*" (elder brother), "*Sir*" or "*boss*" (leader).

These competitive styles of meetings and expenditures may motivate the reader to return to a very old debate of human history, which is the "struggle for recognition"³⁸⁴. In fact, along with the economic interpretation of human action if we refer to Hegel's non-materialist account of history, we may explain the competitive relationship of Bangladeshi leaders. Party leadership is a prestigious position and a way to achieve recognition from fellow country mates and remind them of one's success. This recognition helps them to be acknowledged as "dignified human beings", something they expect from their country mates, both poor and well-off. It is already known to us that in Bangladesh people attach higher social value to migration and after becoming a successful immigrant entrepreneur they want appreciation from others. The post of party president is one way (among others) to achieve that goal. Bearing the cost of political meetings they try to prove their success to the other migrants and also home-based kith and kin. In fact, as merchants, they have the capacity to spend money in political meetings and through it they attempt to win acknowledgement from the members.

Besides, they spend money in political meetings in order to prove their generosity and brotherly feelings to the other sojourners that may help them to "accumulate cultural capital" (Bourdieu, quoted in Gerke 1997). This cultural capital is necessary to hide the underlying exploitation of the patron client relationship and to justify their economic profits. In this way, utilizing their party leadership status, they attempt to show their mercy and kindness to poor country men and identify manpower and "*hundy*" businesses as instances of "long distant

³⁸⁴Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. First published Thu Feb 13, 1997; substantive revision Mon Jun 26, 2006 at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/> retrieved June 12, 2007.
See also <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/fukuyama.htm>

nationalism". They state that they conduct these business activities not for their own profit but rather for the well-being of their country men.

Moreover, they manipulate their party leadership posts in order to get contracts from BMET (for manpower supply to different countries, including Malaysia). However, attaining these contracts utilizing political lobbying shows another instance of patron clienteles; we will come to this point later on. Rather, let us now return to the point where we were discussing whether weak ties introduce a greater possibility of community cohesion. Concerning this we may consider the following points:

1- Migrants, both well-off and poor, have their own reasons why they maintain weak ties. Poor migrants develop weak ties so they can live longer in the host society. They also depend on said ties to migrate to another country. In order to increase their earnings through shadow economic activities or to find a new job they try to remain connected with well-off entrepreneurs. Higher income groups spent money because of their respective competition with other well-off businessmen in the horizontal level. They compete with each other (1) to gain leadership in the branches (Kuala Lumpur based) of their national political parties. In Bangladesh, this political party ascended to a central position in the cabinet and formed the Government through a victory against other political parties in the national election, and (2) to prohibit their followers from leaving their groups for the other one, because these group members are also their business clients. They (clients) visit them to transfer money back to their home country, to renew their work permits or to bring their relatives and friends from Bangladesh. Consequently, the more they get members, the better their chances are for economic profit. As a result, a kind of factional competition is developed among well-off businessmen as a by-product of vertically formed weak ties.

2. They try to be nominated as leaders of a political party considering it a prestige issue and also as an informal help for their manpower businesses. Imagining that political leadership may empower them or their selected middlemen to get nominated by the Government of Bangladesh as their labour brokers for Malaysia, they compete with each other. They also form coalitions against their opponents. The expenditures of Kalim and Dabir Miah for an informal political meeting are noteworthy in this regard.

3. In fact, it is noticed when studying the daily newspapers³⁸⁵ (of Bangladesh) and also interviewing manpower agents that in Bangladesh an informal bureaucratic rule for manpower businesses is to enlist the maximum amount of contracts and authorities for labour supply (to foreign countries) to their well-to-do (wealthy/resourceful) followers cum businessmen. The politicians and their respective ministries³⁸⁶ become biased expecting that these businessmen may assist them during elections, when they (the politicians) need manpower (employees) and huge amounts of money for campaigning.

The businessmen, therefore, assist political leaders sending their own employees (from their industries) and providing money in the form of donations (“*chanda*”). At the same time, they mobilize their employees’ and families’ vote to these political leaders.³⁸⁷ The transnational businessmen cum manpower agents of the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ not only support these leaders, but also compete among themselves so they may receive licenses for their own agencies (“*adam babsha*”). They try to include their agencies either as a member of BOESL³⁸⁸ (public limited company, established by the Government) or in BAIRA (non-Governmental association) in order to gain a maximum number of contracts of labour supply. Since both of these associations are governed by the Government, they try to show their obedience to the authorities. Thus, we can see that though vertical level weak ties are significant in bridging contacts between micro level actors and macro level state power via middlemen cum manpower agents, in the horizontal level, it also initiates competition between different interest groups.

In this context, the arguments of Brown³⁸⁹ concerning Moroccan politics can be taken into consideration. Exploring the existence of patron client relations in Moroccan bureaucracy, he

³⁸⁵ Justice Naim Uddin Ahmed. Avibashi Sramikder Banchana. The Daily Prothom Alo. September 24, 2006 at <http://www.prothom-alo.org/fcat.news.details.php?fid=OA==&nid=OTEy>. See also Daily Inqilab. September 29, 2006, March 12, 2007 and June 2, 2007 at <http://www.dailyinqilab.com/september29/>, <http://www.dailyinqilab.com/June2/> and <http://www.dailyinqilab.com/March 12/>

³⁸⁶ The Ministry of Labour and Employment (until 2001), the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment (from December 2001 and onwards).

³⁸⁷ Ideally, Bangladesh is a parliamentary democratic country. Prime Minister of the country is the head of the government and needs to be elected through national election, arranged after each five years. The national cabinet of Bangladesh thus was supposed to be comprised of directly elected representatives of the people. The leaders of the majority party possess the right to form government, accountable to the *Jatiya Sansad* (national cabinet). The constitutional head of the state is President, who is nominated by the *Sansad*. Thus, *Jatiya Sansad* converts into the centre of national politics.

Find more at <http://www.idea.int/publications/sod/upload/Bangladesh.pdf> retrieved June 10, 2007.

³⁸⁸ Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd. (BOESL).

³⁸⁹ Kenneth Brown. Changing forms of patronage in a Moroccan city, p- 317-318. In Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (ed.) *Patrons and Clients*. In *Mediterranean Societies*. Duck worth, London. 1977.

sets fourth several examples where the reigning sultan and his Government determined the “fates and fortunes” of their officials and followers. In return for loyalty, wealth transaction and other support, the Government distributes positions (“office”) and honour to its beneficiaries. The supporters, on the other hand, enjoy special power and influence within the city because of their close connections with the authorities. Consequently, they gain followers as they can bestow rewards and other facilities to their clients due to said special connection to the powerful and consequent power of their own. Moreover, in the horizontal level, the officials compete with each other for the accumulation of power, wealth and prestige that is given to them by the authorities. This situation can be explained highlighting the different forms of power dimensions in patron client relationship and also conflicts within factional groups. Daniel Stiles’ (who worked on the issues of environmental and cultural survival in Palawan province of Philippines) comments are noteworthy in this regard. According to him,

“A politician with ambitions needs financial support. The support comes from wealthy and influential people who need political backing for their commercial activities. The forces of order, the military and police, support those in power, who are also those who can help enrich them. Resources are needed to operate the system, and the tropical forest provides them. It is a system that is fueling deforestation around the world, but will only stop when there is no more forest or when governments develop the will to stop it.”³⁹⁰

However, concerning Bangladeshi migrants, instead of tropical forests, competition arises out of the struggle for scarce social resources, like manpower and “*hundy*” business and also for the accumulation of cultural capital. Moreover, they fight to achieve recognition from their fellow country mates of their success. On the one hand, all these social and cultural resources are necessary to nurture their businesses, to let them be continued smoothly through political back up and influence and on the other hand to keep the high socio-cultural valuation of migration intact. In fact, in Bangladesh, labour migration is highly appreciated not only in the micro but also in the macro level. Manpower exporting is one of the major foreign currency earning sources of the country. For example, in 2006, Bangladeshi immigrant labourers from different parts of the world contributed around six billion dollars in remittance (35% of the gross national income).³⁹¹ In this regard, let us consider Babar Ali’s (pseudonym) following

³⁹⁰ Daniel Stiles. July 31, 1991. Cultural Survival Quarterly Issue 15.3. Power and Patronage in the Philippines: Environmental and Cultural Survival in Palawan Province.

³⁹¹ The Daily Ittefaq. June 11, 2007.

comment, an entrepreneur who is one of the Bangladeshi manpower agents in Malaysia and also a member of BAIRA:

“Manpower is a multi million dollar business. It developed as a mafia controlled business back in Bangladesh. Not only Bangladeshis, but also influential people from other countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Singapore etc., to which we export labourers, involved themselves in this business. In Bangladesh, there are many ministers who possess their personal agency for labour recruitment. We need to compete and also convince them in order to manage contracts. We also need to buy orders from the employers of the respective country, something that is usually addressed as demand notice. For this we compete with other agencies in the local level and invest money to convince our employers. Besides, we need to bear risks associated with labour supply.

Now you see Bangladeshis everywhere in Malaysia, but it was we, who brought them here even before any formal recruitment procedures were in place. Sometimes we recruited middlemen to interact with the populace and needed to pay our employees (middlemen). As a result, labourers needed to spend a lot of money; otherwise we could not pay our own costs. For example, I am staying here on my own costs and (I) am afraid of risks. I have other competitors, who are doing the same thing (...).”

4. Though we may notice that weak ties connect micro-macro levels both in national and transnational surroundings, but we cannot postulate it as an example of primordial cohesion. Rather, it stimulates already existing competition and creates conflicts among rich (ethnic) entrepreneurs, especially in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’. For example, they competed on providing donations for the building of a mosque in Taman campus (Johor Bahru), because they all wanted to be respected. In the same way, they (Kalim Miah and his friends) constructed a new “*surau*” (Muslim prayer house) in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ area, though within a very short distance there were already two other “*suraus*”, a Bangladeshi (Dabir and his friends’) and also a local one. Therefore, we may identify their religious fervour as a symbol of their contested relationship. Since they also struggle for limited cultural capital (which they need to justify their economic profit) they donate for religious purpose. Their rivalry can be understood taking into account their criticism towards each other. Let us consider two conversations between this researcher and the group leaders Kalim and Dabir Miah. The interviews were conducted separately in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ at their business enterprises at

different times. Maintaining the succession of the talks, at first some parts of the discussion with Kalim Miah will be presented and then Dabir Miah's, accordingly.

Conversation (1)

R³⁹²: So you came as a worker.....and what about your brothers?

Kalim: *Yeah, in 1991, on a calling visa. I brought them here as my employees.*

R: How did you manage to start your business?

Kalim: *It's a long story. My wife was the one that finally helped me to get it started. She is a local, Melayu. I did not continue my work, after our marriage. You know, I started a business with a Bangladeshi, who also came from my home town Noakhali. In fact, I introduced him with my uncle, who helped me come to Malaysia (...).*

It was a joint partnership along with my wife, Khalil and me. But he cheated me! My wife was pregnant then and I was in Penang with some other workers (he was working as a middleman of a manpower agent). He took that chance! I had no money. My in-laws tried to solve the problem, but they could not, because he had a relationship with a Melayu lady even though he was married to a Bangladeshi lady. He had conveniently not disclosed that.

Whenever, we invited him to meet in order to find a solution, he avoided us. Rather, he joined with Dabir. Actually, I don't have any trouble with locals or people from other communities. Only Bengalis are creating trouble. We do not have any love left for our country brothers. Khalil came from my home district, but he joined with Dabir, one of my rivals. I tried a lot to set up an organization for our mutual well-being. But some of the businessmen don't possess a cooperative mind at all. Even the Bangladeshi High Commissioner! (...) any way, did you visit them?

R: No, but what is your problem with Dabir? Why did he assist Khalil?

³⁹² 'R' means researcher.

Kalim: *Because I defeated him in the election, while we were competing for the party President post. He wanted to be leader. But he could not. We had come here and established ourselves in Malaysia before his arrival. He was still in Barishal and we were already in Malaysia.*

He was jealous at my wealth and connections. He tried to bring in workers, but he could not manage this task. No employer could rely on him. He did not even have a license for this. Before me, my friend was the party leader for three years, then my turn came, but he disagreed. I have contributed a lot of money to the well-being of the party. Besides, I am one of the influential businessmen here and have local contacts. I have three vehicles. Among these one is for my personal use. For that one I spent more than one hundred thousand RM. Besides that I have two vans for my business. I have also applied for PR. Last year when our finance minister came to an opening ceremony of the Agrani Remittance Bank, I was invited.

But Dabir did not want to consider these factors. We are 531 people in our committee and their committee has only 8 to 10 members. Then an informal election was arranged where he could not prevail against my popularity. He could not accept this and formed another branch of our party. Khalil assisted him on the ground that he could support him against me. None of them even possessed any valid license for manpower recruitment. They sold forged chops to the poor workers and they also tried to plunder our business. They informed local police and Tamils about my followers, who had not yet managed documented status. Being afraid of further attacks some of my workers joined his shop, even though I brought them here. He occupied everything very quickly through un-lawful practices and political influence.

Conversation (2)

R: I have just arrived from the party president Kalim's shop. How are you? I have been informed about you by workers and also some students.

Dabir: *Not well. How can we prevail against people that have no shame in blowing their own trumpet? You call him party president! Who told you that? We don't acknowledge him, not even our High Commissioner. The Bangladeshi Prime Minister's son supports us.*

R: Why? Why do people boycott him?

Dabir: *Because he is a wrong-doer. He is married to a local lady. We are from a poor country. Our country needs remittance from us. But he is married here and even proud to be recognized as a Malaysian! If he cannot be considered a patriotic Bangladeshi, then why should we respect him as our leader?*

R: But he said that he contributed a lot to the welfare of the party (...)?

Dabir: *Maybe, but all of that help came from illegal hundy businesses. You don't know how much he is earning from this source! His official business is a fake one. He earns his income through hundy businesses and by providing forged chops now. Utilizing their dependence on visas he is making money, he habitually bribe the police, because he is smuggling goods from Bangladesh avoiding taxes. We complained about him to our finance minister, but he did not pay heed to us; rather, he advised us to be harmonious country brothers. But why should we?*

R: How do you prove your dedication to the migrants and also to being a Bangladeshi?

Dabir: *I bring them here from Bangladesh. Some times I send people to other countries like Poland, Australia, people who can afford the costs there and also provide corresponding service charges. You know it is very risky. I need to worry about the immigration police. I have some friends there. But I need to use this friendship very carefully, because I have many enemies both amongst the ranks of Bangladeshis and other communities (-----), for example, in order to send workers to other countries I need to prepare PC passports, which is not only an expensive, but also risky business. People may kidnap or physically assault me or my people. They may inform the police.....*

Still I love my country mates. We try to celebrate our Independence Day, Bengali New Year together so the migrants feel they are not alone (...).

The above account on two ethnic entrepreneurs' history of integration and assimilation (in the receiving country) shows us a picture of factional conflicts. Their criticism against their competitors demonstrates that the conflict arises from the competition of scarce social and cultural resources. These scarce resources are their business clients (poor migrants), who are already identified as weak ties. On the other hand, the scarce cultural resources, over which

they squabble with each other, are prestige, honour and recognition. For example, Kalim expressed pride about his large number of followers - something at which Dabir could not stand or compete with him. This instance of gratification due to the large number of manpower again reminds me of examples from Brown's³⁹³ work. He discusses in the Moroccan context that according to the predominant social ethics companionship and size of followers are highly relevant factors in the evaluation of a patron's social standing. It is perceived that without any follower a respectful person cannot move to any place and he cannot eat alone. The patron's social status and honour largely depend on the number of his clients.

Moreover, utilizing and referring to examples of manpower and "hundy" businesses, both of them try to attain economic (through commercial reciprocity) and cultural resources (here, in this case they try to manipulate nationalist sentiment). At the same time, they also compete for achievement of political power (which in turn is needed to accumulate economic and cultural capital). Therefore, we can say that instead of providing platforms for a united Bangladeshi community in the host society, weak ties are related and become the causes for factional conflicts in the horizontal level.

Besides, within the vertically formed weak ties, we already found exploitation, negotiation and agency of the less privileged groups (something we discussed earlier). That poor and would-be migrants are exploited by their brokers is described not only by the migrants, but also appears in the daily newspapers of Bangladesh.³⁹⁴ The wealthy entrepreneurs cum brokers became successful in exploiting these migrants, because they left no way for these workers to come abroad and also to find a potential survival strategy for integration in the host society on their own. Their helpless situation and the better-off migrants' power and capabilities are the outcome of the institutional structure (emigration and immigration policies) of the origin and receiving country, in which migrants are embedded.

Along with this, the socio-cultural differentiations that exist between poor and well-off migrants, contribute significantly in this regard. In fact, if we take into account the recent

³⁹³ Kenneth Brown. Changing forms of patronage in a Moroccan city, p- 319. In Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (ed.) Patrons and Clients. In Mediterranean Societies. Duck worth, London. 1977.

³⁹⁴ The Daily Ittefaq. 14th July 2007. Four hundred Bangladeshis are suffering in dense forests of Malaysia at http://ittefaq.com/get.php?d=07/07/14/w/n_zkzvyx.

statistics, published in a daily newspaper of Bangladesh, we may presume their (the poor migrants) helpless situation. The newspaper provided some information on the current economic circumstances of the country, such as: (1) at present, around half of the total young labour force of Bangladesh, which is 80.843 millions, is unemployed³⁹⁵, (2) almost 80% of these unemployed people live in villages³⁹⁶, (3) they are not highly educated and (4) they maintain their livelihood depending on agriculture. This data more or less resembles the socio-economic conditions of the poor migrants. On the other hand, the opposite group of migrants, though few in numbers, are better-off, well connected and (some of them) educated. They are also supported by the institutions regarding assimilation and integration in the receiving country. Therefore, poor and well-off migrants' embedded realities are not the same.

Hence, their coping strategies, aims and interests are different as well. Motivated by these diverse realities and interests, they develop weak ties. Consequently, though weak ties enable migrants to remain connected with distantly related people apart from their close social networks, it fails to create any cohesion. Their weak tie is not long lasting; it incorporates negotiation and the members do not interact or meet frequently. Migrants' perceptions concerning the organizational structure of the community also delineate that there is hardly any cohesion within the different groups of the migrants.

Or in other words, it seems to be found from the “mental map”³⁹⁷ of the poor migrants (concerning the organizational structure of the community) that weak ties (between the well-off and poor Bangladeshis) are nothing but a reflection of the class based exploitation expressed in disguise through patron client relationships. For example when the respondents were asked about the nature of community cohesion in the host society all mentioned instances of internal conflicts and exploitation. Though they claimed that they had contact with each other almost everyday, they also provided me with information about intra ethnic conflict. According to them, “*There is no harmony; if we are fifteen people you will find fifteen groups*”.

³⁹⁵The Daily Ittefaq. 18th February 2007. Exporting Manpower in Malaysia at http://ittefaq.com/get.php?d=07/02/18/w/n_ztxxvm

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Gould and White. 1974 (Reprinted 1986). Mental Maps. See also Evers. 1977. The Culture of Malaysian Urbanization, p. 211.

They expressed that exploitation is practiced by their so-called patrons along the lines of class, status, and gender ideology. Concerning competition and confrontations within the community they illustrated that their well-off protectors wanted their clients to remain in the same group (always); otherwise they were threatened and attacked. They provided information of factional confrontation among rich labour brokers of the 'Bangla Bazaar'. They continued that well-off patrons converted into each other's rivals as each of them wanted to be elected as party leader of an informal political group (the idea of these political groupings was borrowed from Bangladesh) of Bangladeshis. Under these circumstances, let us summarize the findings in a few points:

- Weak ties provide opportunities for higher income mobility, but there exist no moral obligations.
- Weak ties are commercial and instrumental.
- Weak ties connect micro and macro levels, because migrants develop these ties to remain connected with the macro level.
- Weak ties help migrants to fulfil their interests, but they fail to create cohesion and integration. The migrants' very diverse social statuses, realities and interests are the causes for this.
- There exist factional conflicts, exploitation and negotiation among migrants. Weak ties are related and become the causes of this anti-harmonious organizational structure of the community.

In fact, we have shown in the previous sections that the entire discordant aspects and actions of the migrants rise from their (mixed) embeddedness in the institutions, their social relations, neighbourhood, working niches, transnational networks and responsibilities. Motivated and controlled by these factors migrants sustain and develop both intra and inter-ethnic strong and weak ties. Or in other words, migrants' economic actions and survival strategies are embedded in their social, cultural, institutional and transnational realities. As a result, in order to understand whether the community is loosely or tightly structured and in what context weak ties fail to create greater community cohesion, we need to focus on their embedded realities.

However, in the above sections we have seen that intra-ethnic weak ties fail to create an integrated community in the host society. At the same time, it is already known to us that

migrants also develop inter-ethnic strong and weak ties in the host society because of their embedded realities. In the next part we will see on what level they manage to manipulate or negotiate with the realities and conditions of the receiving society (as part of their survival strategies) and how migrants' identities are shaped or motivated by inter-ethnic networking. Therefore, I shall carry on discussion focusing on two aspects, such as:

- Formation of Inter-ethnic Networking- The Nature of Migrants' Embedded Realities and Their Survival Strategies
- Integration into the Multi-cultural Society---Inter-ethnic Marriages and the Development of Hybrid Identities, as in the Case of Kalim Miah

3. Formation of Inter-ethnic Networking- The Nature of Migrants' Embedded Realities and Their Survival Strategies

Floya Anthias in her seminal article entitled 'Evaluating Diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity',³⁹⁸ proposes alternative ideas about diaspora. Evaluating the existing writings, she identified some drawbacks and criticized (these) as essentialized. Concerning transnational migration and ethnic relations, she noticed that most of the writings emphasize the conceptions of "deterritorialized ethnicity", where primordial networks with home based ties (bonds) are prioritized. She intends to focus on the arguments of globalization, non-nation based solidarities and the intersectionality of different aspects, especially class, gender and "trans-ethnic" solidarities, while at the same time arguing for a less essentialized concept of diaspora.

To authenticate her arguments she proceeds discussing the major literature (on diaspora), for example, Hall³⁹⁹ (1990), Gilroy⁴⁰⁰ (1993), Cohen⁴⁰¹ (1997), Clifford⁴⁰² (1994) etc. Regarding

³⁹⁸ Floya Anthias. August 1998. *Sociology*, v32 n3 p557 (24). British Sociological Association Publication Ltd. Evaluating diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity.

³⁹⁹ Stuart Hall. 1990. *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishart. Anthias argues that Hall over emphasizes a black subject, while he was historicizing ethnic and cultural identities. Thus, according to Anthias, preferring "sameness than difference" he weakens de-essentialized concepts of diaspora.

⁴⁰⁰ Paul Gilroy. 1993. *The Black Atlantic*. London. Verso. According to Anthias, like Hall, Gilroy also criticizes essentialism in understanding diaspora. However, concerning this, as identified by Anthias, he fails to take into account gender dimension and give women any agency. Rather he highlighted male gaze.

⁴⁰¹ Robin Cohen. 1997. *Global diaspora: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press. Regarding Cohen's work Anthias shows that the author conceptualizes diaspora emphasizing primordial bonding, though he intends to shed light on new forms of ethnic organization and migration. Cohen criticized previous conceptualizations of ethnic and national boundaries, where static political and territorial boundaries were the main focus. But, in

these she finds some dissimilarity with the real world situation (empirical realities) and hence proposes guide lines for further research. She thinks that in the conventional understanding of diaspora, race and ethnic relations are the main focuses, whereas historical and analytically informed vocabularies are not properly addressed. Thus she attempts to open a scope for a less essentialized concept of diaspora – something she claims to be very much related to the modern styles of transnational migration.

Referring to our discussion in the previous sections (concerning intra-ethnic networking) it is safe to say that Bangladeshi migrants are not homogeneous. Along with gender, religion, age, home based differences we have seen occupational and status (education, legal status, marital status, means of immigration etc.) based differentiations. Along with institutional differentiations (concerning integration and assimilation in the host country), their living and working niches are not the same. Some migrants are found living among co-ethnics, while others dwell in inter-ethnic communities. They also encounter threats or attacks from natives and other migrants (both ethnic and inter-ethnic).

Or in other words, migrants' embedded realities are not homogeneous and consequently, these lead to the introduction of a power hierarchy within the community. To combat risks and to cope with these realities, different forms of networks are developed by the migrants. Concerning this, we have found exploitation within vertical networks and also factional conflicts in the horizontal level. Hence, it can be posited that the arguments of long-distance nationalism and primordial solidarity are not hundred percent true regarding Bangladeshi migrants. There are trust based strong ties (fellow feelings, moral obligations to their kin and friends) within more or less the same status groups as well as weak ties or distant networks, something most migrants identify as exploitative (though it helps them regarding upward mobility). In the same way, migrants develop inter-ethnic strong and weak ties to find ways of

Anthias's accounts, (still) he became unsuccessful to prohibit himself from the essentialized conceptualization of diaspora on the ground that he thought that in the host society, the members of diaspora integrate (ethnic solidarity) within themselves against the harsh realities and the experiences of difference. She continued that Cohen did not explore why the discomfort experiences of migrants would introduce automatic co-ethnic solidarity. Therefore, according to her, Cohen is also biased in the sense that he did not incorporate "inter-ethnic processes and the intersectionalities of class and gender."

⁴⁰² James Clifford. 1994. 'diaspora', *Cultural Anthropology* 9: 302-38. Clifford denotes that shifting and fluid identities replace the primordial ethnic ties and the demarcation of rigid (unchanging) boundaries. However, Anthias criticizes his work on the ground that it fails to incorporate the insights of class and gender perspectives in analyzing migration, settlement and manoeuvring space in the host country. Besides, according to Anthias, Clifford's work has difficulties regarding primordiality, because he also focuses the preservation of bonds to the homeland, like Cohen.

settlement and upward mobility, to combat risks and to manoeuvre institutions (rules, norms). Consequently, we can say that apart from the home based primordial networking, Bangladeshi migrants have non-notation based ties that are developed as strategies for survival in the host society. Regarding this let us have a look at the following table.

Table 4.6: Potential Factors for Generating Inter-ethnic Networking between Bangladeshis and other Ethnic Communities

Embeddedness	Everyday realities and experiences	Types of ties	Actors of the ties	Survival strategies
Neighbourhood	Relatedness through living space, common niche	1-Strong ties among the same economic and status groups (friendship)	Nepalese, Tamil Indian, Indonesians and Malays	1-To combat inter-ethnic conflict 2-Being afraid of sudden attacking or stealing of goods by non-ethnic members
		2- Weak ties with well-off people (business partnership)	Malay, Indian Muslim, Tamil Indians	1-To increase their sources of earning 2- To cope with the existing institutional framework of the host society (for immigrant entrepreneurship) 3-To find a way of integration for upward mobility
Co-workers	Common working environment, experience and principles	Strong ties (1-marital or friendship ties, 2-working as a group of small scale vendors and 3-business partnership)	Malay, Indian Muslim, Indonesians	1-To combat inter-ethnic conflict 2-Being afraid of sudden attacking or stealing of goods by non-ethnic members 3- To increase their sources of earning 4- To cope with the existing institutional framework of the host society for immigrant entrepreneurship 5-To find a way of assimilation for upward mobility 6-To by-pass law about short-term recruitment of migrant workers
Common religious ideology (construction of 'Muslim brotherhood')	Similar notions of "halal and haram" (sacred/legal and impure/forbidden according to Muslim rites) and moral obligations to other Muslims, more or less	1-Strong ties (marital and other kind of intimate relations)	Malay, Indonesians, Indian Muslims	1-To combat inter-ethnic conflict 2-Being afraid of sudden attacking or stealing of goods by non-ethnic members 3-To find a way of integration or assimilation for upward mobility 4- To by-pass law about short-term recruitment of migrant workers

common rituals of
prayer, food, attire,
festivals, duties etc.

2- Weak ties (business
relations)

Malay,
Indian Muslims

1-To increase their sources of earning
2- To cope with the
existing institutional framework of the host
society (concerning immigrant entrepreneurship)

Source: Semi-structured interviews, group discussion and observation

The table indicates that Bangladeshi migrants meet their inter-ethnic (both local and other migrant communities) counterparts and develop ties on the basis of neighbourhood, working niches as well as common religious identities, into which both (inter and intra-ethnic actors) are embedded. They (the respondents) develop these ties as strategies for survival in a foreign society, where they need to compete with co-ethnic members, other migrant workers and local people as well. They compete with each other for scarce resources like jobs, wage increases, housing etc. They also need to develop networks so they can protect themselves from their rivals. To ease their settlement in the host country, they attempt to strengthen their bargaining power and manoeuvre the existing institutions (norms, values on the code of conduct, dress, food, drinks, social interactions etc., policies about their permanent resident status, inter-ethnic marriages, ethnic enterprises etc.) that are imposed on them as foreign workers.

In fact, if we concentrate on the everyday discourses of the host country about its multi-ethnic communities, we may notice that the society bears some common perceptions regarding Bangladeshi migrants. These common notions appear in daily newspapers as well as literature on the migrant workers. Besides, through their talks and behavioural attitudes, both experts (immigration authorities, some officials of Bank Negara, N.G.O officials, officials from Bangladesh High Commission, representatives from MTUC⁴⁰³ etc.) and administrators (factory managers, supervisors) express their thoughts regarding Bangladeshi migrants, especially referring to un-skilled and semi-skilled workers. The Bangladeshis on the other hand, helped me find out the common proverbs and images of them, while they were interviewed. Exploring these discursive practices it is found that the provided space for this community (Bangladeshis) is very limited and they are disgraced in the society. Most of them (un-skilled and semi-skilled workers) are allowed to stay there only as workers.

Branding them (the un-skilled and semi-skilled workers) as “*social problem makers*” their marriage with locals was prohibited (by the Immigration Act). For example, it is mentioned that there are many cases where Bangladeshi workers get married with local ladies, though they are already married in Bangladesh. Later on, they leave their host wife and children when they determine to leave the country. They also provided me with instances of single mothers in Malaysia, who were left behind by their Bangladeshi husbands. Bangladeshis on the other hand, maintain that there is no way for them to stay with their Malaysian wives and children. They are deported by the authorities as soon as their work permits expire. Highlighting the

⁴⁰³ Malaysian Trade Union Congress.

cultural differences between Malaysia and Bangladesh, some of them stated that their Malaysian wives were unwilling to go with them to Bangladesh, if they were requested to do so during deportation. For example, when Yunus Miah was asked whether he would bring his Malay wife to Bangladesh, he said,

“No. Nurmala does not want to go. She is afraid of Bangladeshi family life. She thinks that my parents and other relatives will torture her. That she will not be permitted to work. Besides, she knows nobody there. Rather, I am trying to settle down here. She is assisting me through her local relatives and friends. My daughter is a Bumeputera; managing a PR will not be a big deal for me.”

The case of Yunus is not a unique one; rather assimilation into the local culture is a common practice of Bangladeshis in the study areas, where inter-ethnic marriages are solemnized (between Bangladeshis and other communities). For example, Kalim Miah, one of the central Bangladeshi entrepreneurs of the ‘Bangla Bazaar’, preferred to assimilate into the local culture. For his adaptation and upward mobility, he emulated local (Malay) customs (“*adat*”), instead of nurturing Bangladeshi cultural patterns (we will find more on this in the next section). In fact, it is seen that Bangladeshis need to follow their inter-ethnic wife’s customs, if they prefer to settle down on spouse visas, because the alternative one is not possible. Their Malaysian wives are unwilling to conform to Bangladeshi culture considering it exploitative towards them. As a result, when the system does not work properly, Bangladeshis need to go back facing criticism, such as being branded “*social problem makers*”.

Moreover, the home ministry and immigration authorities continuously suggest to “flush out”⁴⁰⁴ undocumented migrant workers. “Ops against illegals soon”⁴⁰⁵ is often in the headlines of the daily newspapers of Malaysia. There they refer to instances of Indonesians and Bangladeshis and criticize the presence of so many undocumented workers. These headlines may help us to find out that migrants are seen not as human beings, rather as instruments for production. Instead of mentioning the deportation or expatriation of undocumented workers, they use the derogative term “flush out” of “illegals” as if they are “rubbish” (!) that needs to be cleaned. The term “illegal” is also inhumane on the ground that migrants are treated as criminals (!).

⁴⁰⁴ The Sun, 14th August 2004. “.... Flush out workers without permits.”

⁴⁰⁵ N12: Nation, 4th February 2006.

As a matter of fact, if we analyze the Immigration Acts of Malaysia, we can find that undocumented workers are considered criminals in the host society. The Immigration Act⁴⁰⁶ (especially Section 6) provides tough penalties including whipping and imprisonment for migrants, lacking valid work permits ('Jalan card') and other important travel documents, like passports. Thus, undocumented migrants are criminalized for an administrative problem. It also protects the migrants from working for different employers except the one that is mentioned in their work permit. Consequently, there always remains a risk for converting into undocumented workers (for all of the migrant workers) if they are sacked or lose their job due to bankruptcy of the company. Besides, it ruins the workers' freedom of job selection. As a result, they convert into "*bonded labourers*" and consequently are at an increased risk of harassment and exploitation. The following statements of the Home Affairs Minister (of Malaysia) as well as some common lore and sayings will depict how Bangladeshis are perceived in the host society.

Statement of the Home Affairs Minister:

*"The abuse is glaring because Bangladeshis are not allowed to work here...They have blue eyes. They look like Hindi film actors and they create social problems here."*⁴⁰⁷

Common Morals, Proverbs and Talks:

1-Tamil Indians: "*We don't know any Bangladeshis in the Port Klang area*".

2-Bangladeshi Workers of Port Klang: "*Tamils are jealous; they don't want to see us here. They lost their bargaining power to us.*"

3- Malay business partner: "*Real Muslims can stay here and will be respected.*"

The above statements and phrases may remind us of Foucault's arguments in one of his classical works, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.⁴⁰⁸ In order to provide a "pure description of

⁴⁰⁶ Immigration Act (1959/63, amended 2002). According to the amended Immigration Act, undocumented workers will be punished imposing a (maximum) fine of RM 10000 or five years (not higher than five years) jail or both. Mandatory whipping (not more than six strokes) is also fixed as a penalty for the undocumented workers.

⁴⁰⁷ It was mentioned by the Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmed, which was quoted in *New Straits Times*, 13th March, 2006.

discursive events” he proposed a guideline. He wanted to know not only a concrete description of discursive events, but also the underlying causes of that. According to him,

“The description of the events of discourse poses a quite different question: how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?

It is also clear that this description of discourses is in opposition to the history of thought. There too a system of thought can be reconstituted only on the basis of a definite discursive totality. But this totality is treated in such a way that one tries to rediscover beyond the statements themselves the intension of the speaking subject, his conscious activity, what he meant, or again, the unconscious activity that took place, (.....); in any case, we must reconstitute another discourse, rediscover the silent murmuring, (.....), re-establish the tiny, invisible text that runs between and sometimes collides with them.”

Let us summarize the main arguments from the above citation. Through the analysis of discourses he wanted to explore (1) the social context, (2) embedded realities, (3) tacit and explicit consciousness of the actor (speaker) and the surroundings, (4) the hidden or intrinsic meaning of speech, (5) institutions, conditions and socio-cultural boundaries that regulate the contents of speech, types of cognition and knowledge on a specific issue, (6) power relations among subject (knowledge on a specific topic), speaker and their respective networks etc.

Applying the above points (for discourse analysis) if we explain the statement of the Home Affairs Minister, we may identify the anti-integrating aspect of Malaysian migration policies as **realities** in which Bangladeshis are **embedded** in. Though institutionally Bangladeshis are not welcomed to integrate socially these migrants nonetheless possess chances of assimilation into the society. We may presume that local people (natives) prefer Bangladeshis as their strong and weak ties. These ties create a **social context** for inter-ethnic marriage and business relationships - especially so if we consider the comment of a Malay business partner (of a Bangladeshi businessman), “*Real Muslims can stay here and will be respected*”.

Common religious ideology, for example, fortifies the consciousness of ‘Muslim brotherhood’ within different ethnic groups. Though they belong to different ethnic groups⁴⁰⁹ (in the sense

⁴⁰⁸ Michel Foucault. 1972. Tavistock Publications Limited. The Archaeology of Knowledge, p27.

⁴⁰⁹ For conceptual discussion we may see Alan Barnard and Jonathon Spencer (Eds.) Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology, p-190-191. Routledge. 1998.

of primordial attachments, history and culture), all the Muslims have common beliefs and perceptions regarding *Allah* (as the only creator), *Quran Sharif* (the holy Quran), *Makka Madina* (pilgrimage to sacred places) and Islamic rituals in their everyday life. In fact, while Cohen⁴¹⁰ describes how religion might provides “additional cement” for the rise of “diasporic consciousness” even within members of different ethnic groups, Metcalf⁴¹¹ focuses on “Muslim space” created through rituals and “sanctioned practice” (s). Her conception of “Muslim space” does not demand any sovereign land (“juridically claimed territory”); rather she describes the concept adding three more ideas, like (1) “social space”, (2) “cultural space” and (3) “physical space”.

It is found that the religion of Islam not only works as a platform for the rise of consciousness within the Bangladeshi, Indonesian and Tamil Muslim Diasporas, it also unites Bangladeshis with Malay Bumiputeras. Along with the faith in (the only one) “*Allah almighty*” and his prophet Muhammad, the most obligatory duties (“*salat*”/five prayers per day, “*zakat*”/giving alms to the poor, “*sawm*”/fasting during Ramadan and “*hazz*”/pilgrimage to Mecca), the common Islamic rites and ceremonies (relating to pregnancy, child birth, naming, schooling, initiation, sacrifice, marriage, death etc.), common festivals (like “*Eid*”) as well as the conceptions and practices of sacred (“*halal*”) and profane (“*haram*”) are the arenas of social, cultural and ideological engagement for the Muslims of the study areas.

The respondents meet Malays, Tamil Muslims or Indonesians not only as their workmates, housemates or neighbours, but also interact with them in the local “*surau*” and mosque, because all of them are Muslims. Consequently, owing to the same religious background as well as regular correspondences through common living and working atmospheres, these groups get chances of network building. Or in other words, their “every day forms of engagement”⁴¹² provide them the opportunities for network building. While Bangladeshis develop networks with them as survival strategies and for upward mobility, the other ethnic

⁴¹⁰ Robin Cohen. 1997. Global Diasporas: An Introduction. London: UCL Press. In Steven Vertovec. WPTC-01-01. Religion and Diaspora, P-10. This paper was presented at the conference on ‘New Landscapes of Religion in the West’, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, 27-29 September 2000.

⁴¹¹ Barbara Metcalf. 1996. Introduction: Sacred words, sanctioned practice, new communities. In Steven Vertovec. WPTC-01-01. Religion and Diaspora, P-19. This paper was presented at the conference on ‘New Landscapes of Religion in the West’, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, 27-29 September 2000.

⁴¹² Ashutosh Varshney. April 2001. World Politics 53. Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society. India and Beyond, p-362-398.

communities are motivated by religious ideology as well as business interests. Besides, according to the respondents,

“Local ladies like us, because we care for our wives and children. They are fond of our attire, something they cannot get from their co-ethnic counterparts. We work and we enjoy. We provide them with gifts. We do lots of shopping at a time, but the locals only buy small quantities of fish, one or two potatoes, one onion etc. They are very miserable and lazy (‘malas’).”

However, exploring **the hidden or intrinsic meaning of the speech** of the Home Affairs Minister, “they have blue eyes; they look like Hindi film actors” we may demonstrate the **tacit and explicit consciousness** of the speaker (Minister) and the respective authorities of host country. Through his statements he wanted to regulate the integration of Bangladeshis in Malaysia that consequently would reconstitute a new discourse emphasizing intra-ethnic rather than inter-ethnic procreation. However, though they imposed **social and legal boundaries**, they failed to control the **thoughts** of local people and the **social context** associated with inter-ethnic ties (between Bangladeshis and local people).

Therefore, the authorities of the receiving country try to warn local people by establishing a new discourse, one in which they highlight the negative impact of assimilation. At the same time, they also refer to the **institutions** (migration policy) of the country. They highlight that a ban is imposed on the immigration of Bangladeshi migrants and speak in defence of it considering them (the Bangladeshi migrants) as social trouble makers. Thus, the authorities of the host country utilize their institutional power to deport Bangladeshis from the study areas and on the other hand, through discursive practices they manipulate people’s views (**knowledge**) regarding the consequences of assimilation. Both these institutional and social dimensions of discursive practices demonstrate the hierarchical **power relationships** among authorities of the receiving country (the Home Affairs Minister, for example), local people and migrant Bangladeshis, in which respondents of this study are **embedded in**.

Moreover, the statement is regulated by the dominant discourse of anti-integration migration policy that determines the contents of speech. This discourse of discourses may require to make a reference to Foucault’s work, where he tries to figure out power relationships with

“discursive formations”⁴¹³ in society that control the flow and types of knowledge. He proposes to view statements in the context (“field”) of discourse and the related networks (“relations”) that makes the hay of these (statements) to come out. Now, if we refer to the statement of the Home Affairs Minister, we may postulate that he represents the outlook (discourse) of the receiving country regarding its migrant workers (mostly un-skilled and semi-skilled workers). They require the presence of migrant workers as a cheaper means for production (and nothing more), since the locals are reluctant to do these jobs.

In fact, through a closer look at their migration policies it is known to us that migrants are not allowed to stay in the host society for more than ten (10) years. Referring to our discussions of the previous chapter (chapter three) we may cite that migrants are prohibited from bringing their families in or having them settle down on spouse visas or as permanent residents, if they are not well-off and lack high social status (for example, university teachers and engineers are allowed to settle down). They maintain this discriminatory rule in order to control the “*extra pressure*” on their economy⁴¹⁴.

As a matter of fact, Mentioning Azizah’s⁴¹⁵ arguments Abubakar⁴¹⁶ (2002) wrote about this differentiation in migration policy, something already discussed in the previous chapter. Among other points it was mentioned that the high presence of un-skilled and semi-skilled labourers created job competition between migrant workers and the local poor, especially after the 1997 financial crisis. Based on the above argument and also evaluating the quoted statements of Bangladeshi migrants (“*Tamils are jealous; they don’t want to see us here. They lost their bargaining power because of us*”) and Tamil Indians (“*We don’t know any Bangladeshi in the Port Klang area*”), we can make presumptions about the conflicting situation between Bangladeshis and Tamil Indians.

Besides, it has already been presented in the previous sections that the docile attitude of Bangladeshi migrants regarding poor wages as well as their eagerness for overtime work

⁴¹³ Michel Foucault. 1972. Tavistock Publications Limited. The Archaeology of Knowledge, p-31.

⁴¹⁴ Find more discussion in chapter three.

⁴¹⁵ Azizah Kassim. 1998. Profile of Foreign Migrant Workers in Malaysia: Towards Compiling Reliable Statistics. Paper read at a Conference on ‘Migrant Workers and the Malaysian Economy’ organized by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

⁴¹⁶ Syarisa Yanti Abubakar. 2002. Migrant Labour in Malaysia: Impact and Implications of the Asian Financial Crisis, p. 16.

generates a disadvantageous situation for the Tamil Indians. It was mentioned by the Bangladeshi workers (of the Merching Plastic factory in the Port Klang area) that before Tamils used to bargain with their Chinese employers for higher payment, but after Bangladeshis were recruited, they lost that chance. In their own words,

“In the past Tamils used to work as production supervisors and line leaders. But now, few are still here, all others have been sacked. Maybe, it was in the beginning of 2001, there was a clash between the Chinese manager and the Tamil workers. They were large in numbers and all did not want to work overtime. Rather, they wanted higher payment than us. Actually, until now they have always gotten more money than us. But they wanted an increase of their salary on a yearly basis. The manager said that the factory was less profitable than in earlier times. Therefore they did not increase their salaries. On the contrary, the Tamils were told to leave their job if they did not like their work. After that the Tamils started working carelessly. The manager became angry and sacked them. We then introduced some of our Bangladeshi friends to the manager for the vacant posts, because they were unemployed. The Tamils did not like that. They started to harass us if they found us alone in narrow lanes, especially at night.”

Under these circumstances, instead of avoidance, Bangladeshis try to develop strong (friendship) and weak ties (business partnership) with Tamil Indians so that they can convince other ethnic members on behalf of them. They depend on other Tamil Indian friends and business partners in order to combat conflicts with Tamil Indian rivals, since they are incapable to manage this depending only on intra-ethnic networks. Concerning this, Varshney’s conceptualizations on how to minimize ethnic conflicts is noteworthy. Identifying inter-ethnic networks as “agents of peace”⁴¹⁷, he states that if communities only remain within themselves and do not interconnect with other ethnic communities except their own, it may create more ethnic tensions and violence. Consequently, Bangladeshi migrants’ networking with Tamil Indians can be identified as a positive step to minimize ethnic conflict between Tamil Indians and the Bangladeshi Diaspora.

In point of fact, on the one hand, they perceive their well-off intra-ethnic weak ties as exploitative, while on the other, their strong ties are not so well-off. They are also less connected with the macro level authorities and hence do not possess enough power and

⁴¹⁷ Varshney. 2001. P- 363.

information for upward mobility. Moreover, their embeddedness in the discriminatory immigration rules and anti-integration policies of the host country influence them to develop inter-ethnic ties mostly with other Muslim communities and partly, with Tamil Indians. Thus, they try to combat risks and by-pass laws to find ways of settlement and upward mobility as well. Therefore, the dominant perception on primordial networking⁴¹⁸, that states that migrants become organized solely within themselves because of the harsh realities in the host society, cannot be conceptualized as a general fact for all diasporas. On the contrary, we need to focus on the empirical and embedded realities as well as the historical aspects (if there are any) that regulate the types of networking.

And here we find the reflection of Anthias's arguments, where she intends to focus on globalization, non-nation based solidarities and also on a less essentialized concept of diaspora. In fact, through this study we have found that Bangladeshi migrants have non-notation based ties that open scope for the development of hybrid Bangladeshi-Malay identities and (hybrid) culture in the receiving country. In the next section we will proceed on this topic.

4. Integration into the Multi-cultural Society---Inter-ethnic Marriages and the Development of Hybrid Identities, as in the Case of Kalim Miah

Gerke⁴¹⁹ in her article on inter-ethnic marriage in East Kalimantan, Indonesia states the following:

“As soon as Aneu was brought to her husbands place in Kota Bangun she became a Muslim and married him according to Muslim custom. She is quite amused about the fact that after undergoing the religious ceremony, which had probably no deeper sense for her, she was accepted as a Kutai. This process of ‘masuk Melayu’ is a standard practice of assimilating other ethnic groups. Wee (1984) has described this process of assimilating sea nomads (orang laut) to Malay society in the Riau Archipelago.” (Gerke 1997: 179)

⁴¹⁸ Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fournon. 2001. Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. See also Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim. 2001. Formation, Consolidation and Diversification of the Ethnic Elite: The Case of the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United States.

⁴¹⁹Solvay Gerke. 1997. "Ethnic Relations and Cultural Dynamics in East Kalimantan: The Case of the Dayak Lady", Indonesia and the Malay World, Oxford University Press, No.72, p- 176-187.

Referring to Nagata, she continues: “There are three aspects of this process, namely accepting Islam, Malay custom and Malay language” (Nagata 1974, quoted in Gerke1997⁴²⁰).

Since inter-ethnic marriages and the other forms of inter- ethnic ties are one of the significant coping strategies of Bangladeshi migrants, along with other areas of research, the issue of assimilation and integration through inter-ethnic marriages as well as religious, cultural and ethnic pluralism of Malaysia should be seen as a significant part of this study. In continuing this, experts are often found exploring the state of religious and ethnic pluralism in Malaysia referring to Article 153 of the Malaysian Constitution. For example, Yeoh⁴²¹ quoted this article when he was explaining the religious pluralism of Malaysia. Mentioning Article 153 he stated that people who “profess the religion of Islam, habitually speak the Malay language, and conform to Malay customs” are permitted “special reservation of quotas in three specific areas: public services, education, and business licenses, without harming the rights of other ethnic groups”.

Like him, other studies also consider this article part of an “ethnic bargain”. It is described that the motivation for “mutual tolerance and respect” can be ascertained by this. Eventually, he thinks it will remove violence and stabilize the ethnic and racial diversity of Malaysia. To understand the advent of Islam in Malaysia as well as the “mutual tolerance and respect”, manifested among different ethnic groups, he emphasizes historical perspectives and scrutinizes the pre and post-colonial history of Malaysia. Besides that, he also focuses on hybrid identities. This pre and post-colonial history provides a good insight to understand the status of integration and assimilation of Bangladeshi migrants into the receiving society, especially in Muslim communities. In the next section we will address it.

Our discussion will show how Islam became the dominant religion of this region. Along with that, we will see the causes of peoples’ immigration into the country from different parts of the world. This in turn will help us to notice the voluntary forms of assimilation and integration that is practiced by different ethnic communities and religious groups. Additionally, it will explain on what context people prefer to change their previous religious identities and convert to Islam.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Christopher Rodney Yeoh. August 2006. Malaysia, Truly Asia? Religious Pluralism in Malaysia (2006) at <http://www.pluralism.org/research/profiles/display.php?profile=74415> , p-2-5.

4.1 Advent of Islam in Malaysia, the State of Malaysians' Culture and Identities and the Integration of Bangladeshi Diaspora

Malaysia was a centre for trade and commerce during the tenth century AD⁴²². At that time, Buddhist and Hindu (ancient) Malay kingdoms ruled the northern peninsular region of Malaysia. Due to its unique geographical location, between the Chinese and Indian Empires, it turned into a busy area. Islam was not a native religion of Malaysia until the 14th century. Rather, it was brought (into Malaysia) by Arab traders from the Middle East. After the establishment of the Sultanate of Malacca in the 15th century, Islam became a dominant religion in the Southeast Asian region. At this time, businessmen from Europe used to visit Malacca to buy Asian spices which they could not get in their home countries. Asian traders on the other hand, mushroomed in this trading zone in order to obtain foreign goods from the European merchants after selling their own products, including spices. However, sometimes, European traders needed to wait in Malacca for a couple of months for good weather conditions, necessary for their being able to sail away. It was mentioned in the study⁴²³ that during severe monsoon winds Malacca helped travelling merchants to survive. Its strategic position next to Sumatran contributed in this regard. Thus Malacca converted into a busy cosmopolitan city.

When the first ruler of Malacca, Parameswara, converted into a Muslim by getting married with the Muslim princess Malik Ul Salih of Pasai, Islam turned into the dominant national religion. At this time, Islam entered into all territories of the sultanate (Sumatra in Indonesia and Thailand in the north). The local populace and traders gave up their previous religious identities and adopted Islam in order to benefit through their affiliation with the ruler's religion. Nevertheless, there were also followers of other religions in Malaysia. According to Yeoh, Islam was not imposed on them; rather they practiced their own beliefs - something that can be identified as an instance of "ethnic and religious pluralism in Malaysia".

Apart from that there are many other cases, where foreign traders such as Europeans and Chinese integrate themselves into the local Malay culture. They tried to accustom to the Malay customs and learned Bahasa Melayu. Along with this, said merchants settled down in Malaysia through inter-ethnic marriages with the local people of Malacca. Showing the

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid.

example of “*Peranakan*” culture, where a hybrid or “syncretic blend” of Malay and Chinese culture is still practiced (even nowadays) by their descendents, Yeoh provided an instance of cross-cultural marriage, solemnized between the sixth ruler of Malacca, Sultan Mansur Syah and the Chinese princess Hang Li Po. Consequently, even today (August 2006), there remains a group of ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, who speak the Malay language and maintain a Buddhist tradition at the same time, as depicted by him.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the cases of Bangladeshi migrants’ integration and assimilation in the receiving country can be identified as another example of hybrid culture. This will be analysed in the next section referring to the case of Kalim Miah. Regarding this, we will explore following aspects:

- Inter-ethnic Marriages and the Malay Customs
- Inter-ethnic Marriages and the Rise of Hybrid Culture and Identities

4.2 Inter-ethnic Marriages and the Malay Customs

Kalim Miah of the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ lives in Malaysia after having married a Malay lady. In order to assimilate and integrate himself into Malay society, Kalim Miah had only to conform to two aspects: Malay language (Bahasa Melayu) and custom. Religion was not a topic, seeing that he already was a Muslim. Their wedding ceremony took place in Malaysia maintaining Malay customs. Due to both being Muslims and sharing the same religious faith, though there were similarities regarding marriage customs there were still differences between Bangladeshi and Malaysian marital patterns.

For example, in Bangladesh there is no system of an obligatory marriage certificate something we have seen in the case of Malaysia. Through mandatory courses the groom and the would-be bride can learn about their respective duties towards each other. After the successful completion of their classes both the bride and groom achieve certificates for marriage. This is a totally unknown issue in Bangladesh. On the other side, in Bangladesh providing dowry to the husband and his family is very common among less privileged classes of the migrants.

This is not the case in Malaysia. Though illegal⁴²⁴ in Bangladesh, the practising of and asking for dowry as part of the matrimonial ceremony takes place in many sections of the society.

The idea that the unemployment and underemployment of young males, especially in rural Bangladesh, are the main reasons for the practice of dowry⁴²⁵ is found true concerning migrant Bangladeshis, married to other Bangladeshis. Since the required items and amount of cash for dowry payment are fixed depending on the grooms' family's demand, it helps to reduce the costs for the (groom's) family. Moreover, through the interview-survey it is found that among different ways of earning the required amount of money to migrate to Malaysia, the dowry (2.7%) from the wife's side was one of the sources⁴²⁶. Besides, it also works as a symbol of economic solvency for the bride's family, whereas on the other hand, for the groom and his family, dowry acts as a proof of their higher social status and qualifications. Or in other words, it helps the groom and his family to accumulate cultural capital (honour/prestige) within the networks of neighbours, friends and relatives. This argument is substantiated on the ground that it supports one of the social value systems which is, the higher the qualifications and social status the groom has, the higher the dowry payment that is demanded from the bride.

Referring to the rise of dowry practice in Bangladesh over the last 20-30 years Kabeer⁴²⁷ depicted two major causes, such as, (1) males' (from all classes) integration into the "wider cash economy" and (2) devaluation of women's productive roles within the household. As a matter of fact, Kabeer's argument reminds us of our experiences in the field. There Sanda, one of the female respondents was divorced on this ground. Like her, there are other cases where the bride's parents cannot contribute the whole amount of dowry at once and consequently this makes it possible for the husband to divorce his wife. In fact, since Sanda's parents failed to pay the full amount of dowry immediately after her marriage, she was reminded to do so several times by her husband and parents in-law. Having failed to pay the due she had to accept divorce. Later on, in order to protect herself from her neighbours' criticism (because of

⁴²⁴ According to The Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, a husband and his family will face death penalty or life imprisonment if his wife is murdered (or they attempt to murder her) for dowry.

⁴²⁵ Md. Awal Hossain Mollah. *Combating Violence against Women in South Asia. An Overview of Bangladesh* at <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN020004.pdf> retrieved 2nd August 2007.

⁴²⁶ The other sources were, (a) selling arable land (37.3%), (b) borrowing money from friends and relatives (40%), (c) father's provident fund (18.7%) and respondent's provident fund (1.3%).

⁴²⁷ Naila Kabeer. *New Left Review*, No.168. March 1988. "Subordination and Struggle: women in Bangladesh", p. 106.

divorce) she decided to migrate to Malaysia. In this she was supported by her parents. As a result, it is not surprising that female migrants' parents try to save remittance in order to buy "gifts" (dowry) for their daughters' marriage (something we already discussed in chapter three).

Now if we compare the above situation with the Malaysian marital system for Muslims, we will find that there the husband needs to pay "*mahr*" to the wife, instead of the opposite way around. Moreover, economic solvency is one of different assets that helps the groom to obtain permission for marriage. Otherwise, he will be unable to get registration for his marriage and hence the couple living together will be considered "*illegal*" from the point of view of "*Shari' ah*."⁴²⁸ However, even though there are so many constraints regarding wedding practices in Malaysia, especially in the case of inter-ethnic marriages, some⁴²⁹ male respondents nonetheless engaged in inter-ethnic marriages. They developed inter-ethnic strong tied networks in order to find a way of upward mobility and to settle down permanently (something already discussed in the previous sections). Regarding this let us consider Kalim Miah's following statement, in which he emphasises the dissimilarities between Bangladeshi and Malay marital customs. According to him,

"A few dissimilarities existed. We could not get married before obtaining a marriage course certificate. I had to pay her the full mahr immediately upon our marriage ceremony. Still I felt relief hoping and expecting a better future. I know my children will be Bumiputera, as they contain the blood of a Bumiputera. Yeah--sister, my wife is a Bumiputera."

Actually, according to Muslim customs the wife deserves the "*mahr*", which we see in Malaysia. Since through marriage she will be totally subjugated under the authority of her husband, the "*mahr*" is considered as her right. It is also explained as a symbol of respect shown by the husband to his wife. The property or money provided as "*mahr*" remains bride's property and hence it is not comparable to a bridal price. Kabeer argues that the provision of

⁴²⁸ The Shari' ah is the holy law of Islam based on Quran and Sunnah. In Malaysia Muslims are administered by Islamic law. Though Islamic laws are governed both by Shari' ah and Civil Courts, but the Article 121 (1A) of the Constitution of Malaysia sanctioned special power and authority to the Shari' ah Courts for the management of Islamic laws. The Shari' ah law is confined only for Muslims. For more information please find Zaitoon Dato Othman. Islam in Malaysia Today and its Impact. "The Practice of Shari' ah Laws in Malaysia" available at <http://www.muslim-lawyers.net/news/datoothman.html/> retrieved 3rd August 2007.

⁴²⁹ Amongst the married respondents 9% migrants are married with locals. The others were already married before their migration to Malaysia.

“*mahr*” was also common in Bangladesh in the past. Identifying it as the bride’s property she continued that the bride and sometimes her family used to receive gifts, such as jewellery and clothes, from the groom’s family. Moreover instead of full payment part of the “*mahr*” remained unpaid. This was done so that the wife could claim the rest of the amount in cash, if she was divorced without reason. Thus, according to Kabeer, the earlier “*mahr*” acted as a divorce restraint.

However, through this study it is found that though an amount was fixed as “*mahr*” (for Sanda) in the “*kabin nama*” (marital contract), it was not a handsome amount in comparison to the sum of dowry that she was supposed to pay to her husband. Moreover, it was mentioned (by Sanda) that her “*mahr*” was totally unpaid and it failed to protect her from divorce. Rather, on having failed to pay the dowry she had to accept divorce. Consequently, it can be stated that Sanda’s (intra-ethnic marriage) case is not similar to Kalim Miah’s (inter-ethnic marriage) one. On the contrary, it is found that in Bangladesh amongst these systems of payments, demand for dowry (wife needing to pay her husband) is obligatory, whereas the “*mahr*” (husband being supposed to pay his wife) is done in the form of a symbolic payment. Consequently, the roles of dowry are stronger than “*mahr*” in Bangladesh, though most of its citizens are Muslims. While in the case of Malaysia payment of “*mahr*” to his bride is not only obligatory for the Muslim groom, but he also is not allowed to ask his wife for any dowry.

Since Kalim Miah was trying to assimilate into Malay community in order to benefit as the husband and father of Bumiputeras (the right of Malay Bumiputera is protected under Article 153 of the Constitution of Malaysia), he followed Malay customs in his nuptial ceremony with a Malay lady. In fact, the Malay wedding ceremony is a combination of Islamic rites and traditional Malay rituals. For example, Kalim Miah’s marriage ceremony lasted for seven days which can be seen as an instance of Malay customs. Among members of Malay community a grand wedding ceremony is performed and hence Kalim needed to follow this ritual. Kalim, therefore, spent “*a lot of money*” for the entertainment of his guests at his wedding ceremony. For the feast, one cow, two goats and one hundred twenty two chickens were slaughtered and not only Malays, but also some of his Bangladeshi friends were invited. Besides, he needed to follow different Malay rituals in several phases of his wedding ceremony. In Kalim Miah’s following words,

“Before marriage, representatives from my side, my village mates and brothers went to her parents with ‘hantaran’ (an odd number of gift boxes are taken to the bride’s house during the proposal ceremony). A local ‘Qadi’ (religious marriage celebrant) conducted the ceremony. We are bringing up our children according to Malay customs. My son speaks Malay and when Ayesha is grown up, we will give her a ‘hejab’ (a piece of cloth to cover the head).....not like ours.”

This statement indicates that Kalim Miah tries his best to adopt Malay custom in order to find a way of integration and assimilation into the Malay community. He emphasizes Malay customs not only in marital rituals, but also in his post marital life through parenting his children according to Malay rituals. In this context it is noteworthy that though Kalim adopted Malay customs, he had no clear-cut idea about the fundamental meaning of any custom. He pursued his course of action in order to find a way of integration into the receiving country that might enable him to become a rich man. Kalim’s integration process, therefore, requires us to quote from Gerke’s work, where she was explaining how Aneu converted into a Kutai without having any deeper understanding of the standard practices of “masuk Melayu”.

In fact, Kalim Miah tried his utmost to incorporate himself into Malay community through inter-ethnic marriage. In that context, without raising any questions he followed Malay customs. Even, after his marriage he tried to maintain Malay customs while he was with his wife and children. Their (Kalim and his wife) similar religious background and his adoption of Malay customs were the means that created a “social space of networks (inter-ethnic strong and weak ties) and identities”⁴³⁰ (hybrid) outside of his (Kalim) home country. His religious background as a Muslim and the acceptance of Islamic rites and Malay customs as well as Bahasa opened a “cultural space”⁴³¹ in the host country, where he interacted and nurtured his inter-ethnic strong and weak tied networks to find ways of permanent settlement and consequent upward mobility in the receiving country.

⁴³⁰Barbara Metcalf. 1996. Introduction: Sacred words, sanctioned practice, new communities. In Steven Vertovec. WPTC-01-01. Religion and Diaspora, P-19. This paper was presented at the conference on ‘New Landscapes of Religion in the West’, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, 27-29 September 2000.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

For the interaction with his inter-ethnic networks and to determine the native language of his son though he preferred Bahasa, he still could not prevent the mixture of Bengali and Bahasa (in his own case). In the same way, his attempts of assimilation into the Malay community have resulted in a hybrid identity and (hybrid) culture. This hybridism can be seen at his newly created “physical space”⁴³² surrounded by inter-ethnic strong and weakly tied networks and also at his business enterprise in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ area, among Bangladeshi migrants. Therefore, rather than fully echoing Metcalf’s ideas of “imagined maps of Diaspora Muslims”⁴³³, the situation of Kalim’s integration rather reminds me of Vertovec’s following accounts on diasporas,

“Diaspora has arisen as part of the post modern project of resisting the nation-state, which is perceived as hegemonic, discriminatory and culturally homogenizing. The alternative agenda—now often associated with the notion of Diaspora—advocates the recognition of hybridity, multiple identities and affiliations with people, causes and traditions outside the nation-state of residence.”⁴³⁴

Let us discuss the issue of hybridism in the next section.

4.3 Inter-ethnic Marriages and the Rise of Hybrid Culture and Identities

Example One:

Through his staying and working in a factory of Kuala Lumpur, Kalim Miah managed to learn Melayu even before his marriage. As his wife was a native Melayu speaker, he adopted this language as well. His children are native Melayu speakers and with his wife he also speaks Melayu. Hence, at home, he speaks only Melayu and follows Malay customs. Thus he was trying to assimilate into Malay community at the expense of his own mother-language, Bengali.

⁴³² Ibid. By the term “physical space”, the author intends to mean the dwelling and community houses founded in the new settings, away from homeland.

⁴³³ Ibid. By the term “imagined maps of Diaspora Muslims” Metcalf indicated those spaces of Muslims that are created in a new setting through the combinations of social, cultural and physical spaces (of Muslims).

⁴³⁴ Steven Vertovec. WPTC-01-01. Religion and Diaspora, P-5. This paper was presented at the conference on ‘New Landscapes of Religion in the West’, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford, 27-29 September 2000.

However, outside his home, in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’, among his Bangladeshi friends and brothers he speaks Bengali. His restaurant’s name is in Bengali and Melayu language – ‘Prabashi Kedai Makanan’ (foreign restaurant) – and the place where they go for prayers is also named ‘Bangla Surau’. A type of hybrid language can be found among these titles. His attempt was to use Bengali vocabulary, but with added Melayu words. For instance, the words ‘Kedai Makanan’ and ‘surau’ are collected from ‘Bahasa Melayu’ (Malay language). The word ‘Kedai Makanan’ means restaurant and ‘surau’ means Muslim prayer house. Even, when he was delivering a speech in front of his Bangladeshi brothers (this was narrated in the previous section entitled ‘community cohesion and the roles of weak ties’), besides Bengali he mentioned Melayu words, such as, “*makan*”, “*minum*”, “*daging lembu*” etc.

Example Two:

Kalim Miah and his wife have two children, one son (5 years old) and one daughter (3 years old). Although in Bangladesh, there is no system of affixing father’s name and title with the offspring’s name, two words have been added to his children’s names. His son’s name is Foyzal bin Md. Kalim Miah and the daughter’s name is Ayesha bint Md. Kalim Miah. Here ‘bin’ means son of and ‘bint’ means daughter of. Attaching these two words makes it clear they are the son and daughter of Kalim Miah. This Malay style of naming is the outcome of Kalim Miah’s inter-ethnic marriage with a Malay lady.

He feels proud to parent his children following Malay customs, while at the same time, he has contact with his relatives in his country of origin and tries to proof his “distant nationalism”⁴³⁵ through meeting his country mates on the national day of Bangladesh⁴³⁶.

However, these instances of spending money for get-togethers can also be explained as a business strategy to find customers for his manpower business. This argument can be made based on the fact that he is not bringing workers in without taking a fee. Rather, weak ties are developed there based on commercial networking or in other words, by monetary exchange.

⁴³⁵ Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001

⁴³⁶ Please find section ‘community cohesion and the roles of weak ties’.

Besides, not all Bangladeshis get assistance, only his followers who support him in his competition with members of the other group, even though they are Bangladeshis too. In the case of Kalim Miah moreover, the term 'long distance nationalism' can be ignored as well, since in his family life he follows Malay customs. In fact, for his integration into the host society he tries to assimilate, while for business purpose he nurtures Bangladeshi nationalism. In other words, a kind of 'hybridism' is being formulated following his adaptation process.

As a matter of fact, Kalim Miah is one of the representatives of the Bangladeshi migrant businessmen of the 'Bangla Bazaar' in Malaysia, who has managed to receive permanent residency status. He came as a temporary worker looking for economic wealth. Later, through inter-ethnic marriage with a 'Bumiputera lady' he became able to start a business. Within a short time span he reached his vantage point and became successful enough to vastly increase his fortune. Instead of then cutting all contacts with his homeland, he converted into a manpower agent and brought his fellow village mates, family members and relatives to Malaysia. In other words, for upward social mobility, he is nurturing nationalist and multi-ethnic networks ceaselessly that pave the way for a hybrid Malay-Bangladeshi culture in the receiving society.

However, though in this section we have explored a well-off Bangladeshi entrepreneur's successful integration into the host country, this does not entirely resemble the true reality. Rather, the representation includes a small portion and excludes a larger part of the survival strategies and embedded realities of Bangladeshi migrants. It is noteworthy that the arenas of engagement among Muslims, both Diasporas and Bumiputera Malays, not only create peaceful co-existence, but also in some contexts, generate tensions between powerful locals and migrant Bangladeshis.⁴³⁷ In fact, apart from successful integration, there are also other stories that represent migrants' unequal capabilities, intra and inter- ethnic exploitations as well as the anti-integration migration policies of the receiving country.

Consequently, in order to explore the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora, we have tried to notify the micro and macro level socio-economic, cultural, political,

⁴³⁷Please find section 'Formation of Inter-ethnic Networking- Nature of Migrants' Embedded Realities and Their Survival Strategies'.

institutional and ideological frameworks and realities, in which migrants are embedded in and try to cope with. Moreover, their nature of embeddedness in transnational networks and liabilities are also explored here (partly) and in chapter three. Therefore, reviewing (1) the nature of (migrants') embedded realities, (2) examining the roles (as survival strategies and for upward mobility) of inter and intra-ethnic networks and (3) assimilation processes of Kalim Miah, we may come up with the following point, namely 'Understanding the Organizational Structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora at this Age of Globalization', which will be discussed in chapter five. But before that, let us write the concluding remarks (of this chapter) in the next section.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter we posited three central queries. These are, (1) whether the community is loosely or tightly structured, (2) how their identities are shaped or motivated by inter-ethnic networking and (3) on what level they manage to manipulate or negotiate with the realities and conditions of the receiving society (as part of their survival strategies). In this context, it goes without saying, though posited separately, all three questions demand exploration in order to find the answer of question '1'. In fact, through our discussion (in this chapter) we have shown that along with intra-ethnic networking, respondents also develop inter-ethnic ties as strategies for survival and for upward mobility. There their actions are motivated and regulated by their nature of embeddedness. Within intra-ethnic networks we have observed not only morally obliged trust based strong ties, but also the existence of commercially motivated weak ties and distant networks. Concerning inter-ethnic ties we have seen the formation of hybrid identities and culture as well as the existence of inter-ethnic weak ties.

Though it is usually perceived that people act according to their dominant socio-cultural models (ideals on social systems), in the case of the Bangladeshi Diaspora we have seen that apart from taking into account socially constructed dominant role models, migrants need to develop different actions as survival strategies. Sometimes they even avoid these normative models in order to cope with a foreign environment and also for upward mobility. Or in other words, migrants' actions are guided not only by the dominant socio-cultural models, but also by the surroundings, they are embedded in. Besides, they have their own evaluation of other peoples' activities and realities. We have managed to observe this exploring the respondents'

perceptions or mental maps. Therefore, in order to understand whether the community is loosely or tightly structured we have taken into account (1) migrants' actual behaviour and actions, (2) the nature of embeddedness that regulates their actions, (3) their perceptions concerning their social system as well as the (4) dominant socio-cultural model of the community that is usually emphasized to understand community organizational structure. The findings are discussed below under two major headlines:

- Conceptualization of the Social Systems: Loosely and Tightly Structured
- Embedded Realities, Migrants' Actions, their Perceptions of the Social System and the Dominant Socio-cultural Models of the Bangladeshi Diaspora

Conceptualization of the Social Systems: Loosely and Tightly Structured

In order to identify whether the Bangladeshi Diaspora is a loosely or tightly structured social system, we have tried to understand in what context a society can be defined as loosely or tightly woven, apart from the investigation of the Bangladeshi community organizational structure. Concerning this matter we have reviewed Embree's classical work on the Thai social system and on others, Ever's⁴³⁸ conceptualization, where he posits questions about whether it is wise to judge all social systems applying the same concepts, ideas and findings ignoring each of the case's (country) specific context, time and models. Therefore, in the next part we will at first review their works briefly and later compare it to the situation of Bangladeshi migrants.

Conceptualization One:

In John F. Embree's⁴³⁹ account Thai culture is an example of a loosely structured social system. There we may see a sanctioning of a wide range of variations concerning individual behaviour. Exploring the cultural context of the Thai society he stated, though in some respects Thailand shares a few common characteristics with other South-east Asian countries, there exist significant cultural diversities that can be considered as unique features of the

⁴³⁸ Hans-Dieter Evers. Models of Social Systems: Loosely and Tightly Structured, p-115-127. In Hans-Dieter Evers (ed.). Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand In Comparative Perspective. Cultural Report Series No. 17/ Yale University/Southeast Asia Studies. 1969.

⁴³⁹ John F. Embree. Thailand—A Loosely Structured Social System, p- 3-15. In Hans-Dieter Evers (ed.). Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand In Comparative Perspective. Cultural Report Series No. 17/ Yale University/Southeast Asia Studies. 1969.

loosely integrated social system. Regarding commonalities with other South-east Asian culture he presented examples like “wet-rice agriculture as a basis of subsistence, roasting of the mother just after childbirth, chewing of betel and blacking of the teeth, playing of kickball and the piston bellows”. Nevertheless, the specific cultural traits due to which he defined the Thai society as an example of loosely structured society are summarized below:

- Substantial disparities of individual behaviour can be seen in Thai society.
- In tightly structured societies cultural patterns will be clearly marked, where maintenance of reciprocal obligations and rights prevail in greater degree than in loosely structured societies.
- A loosely integrated society like Thailand lacks regularity, discipline, neatness and any industrial time sense.
- To substantiate his arguments he posited, that when a few Thai people walk together they do not keep pace with each other. Each of them walks as if he were alone. Providing Western European, American and Japanese examples he cited that walking behaviour is not a mere representation of a cultural aspect. Rather, observing walking behaviour we may understand which culture emphasizes punctuality and regularity in life. Since Thai people do not concentrate on regularities, he thinks they belong to a loosely structured social system.
- In the same way, he provides example from the Thai family life. He thinks in comparison to Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese societies the absence of any strict sense of obligation and duty can be seen in Thailand. Though in family life the father is theoretically the head and children therefore need to obey their parents, in reality they do not practice this. Instead of giving preference to social pressure, individuals act according to their own will. It is not uncommon that families have to adjust to the desires of individual will etc.

Conceptualization Two:

Hans-Dieter Evers sets fourth his arguments on the “structure of social system” criticizing Embree’s generalization tendency concerning the Thai social structure. Supporting Levi-Strauss’s assertion he continues that in order to understand the “social structure”, instead of focusing only on empirical reality one needs to highlight the models that are constructed on it. To understand the structure of social systems he attempts to differentiate three types of

models. These are, (1) “the perceptive model” (perceptions of people concerning their structure of social system), (2) “the normative model” (people’s expectations or ideals about the structure of their social system) and (3) “the statistical-behavioural model” (the actual behaviour of people that is collected based on “observations and measurements of frequencies of interaction and behaviour”).

Identifying both normative and perceptive models as “folk models” he states that in most cases instead of emphasizing on actual behaviour of people, social scientists “translate” folk models into their own academic (“professional”) language. He continues, when anthropologists publish “models of social structure” along with their own observations, they usually convert their field notes into that, collected through interviewing “knowledgeable informants”. According to him, these field notes are nothing but the folk models of society. However, he regrets that albeit sociologists intend to focus on the frequencies of actual behaviour, they also produce folk models contrary to their objectives because of their dependency on verbal interviews.

He thinks that the folk models of social structure work as guide lines for social actions that may vary from culture to culture. In some cultures “considerable variation of individual behaviour is sanctioned”, whereas in other cultures reciprocal rights and obligations are defined strictly. Consequently, according to these folk models the social actions of individuals differ from culture to culture. Moreover, it may not be always true that all the people have the same perceptions about the strict maintenance of folk models. Some may behave in different ways and think differently with regards to cross-cousin marriage or in the case of age-based hierarchies, though the rigid rules are known to them. Besides, apart from normative and perceptive models, he also emphasizes the actual behaviour of people that may be grasped focusing on the frequency of specific types of human action in the same social situation (s). Thus he intends to show that researchers should take into account all three actions if they want to measure the “looseness” or rigidity of a culture.

Demanding for empirical research he cites that we can even find variations concerning the definitions of “looseness” from culture to culture. Over time a society may come to uphold strict rules though earlier the opposite was true. Variations of behaviour may be allowed in some cultures, while in some cultures people may consider these variations to be a “deviant” behaviour. He also states that it is also not surprising that real behaviour does not necessarily

reflect the normative models of the society though it prescribes strict rules. Whether or not “looseness” of social structure and deviant behaviour are linked need to be investigated (says he).

So, reviewing these two different conceptualizations let us now take a glance at the situation of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia.

Embedded Realities, Migrants’ Actions and the Dominant Socio-cultural Models of the Bangladeshi Diaspora

Through this study we have come to notice a dilemma concerning migrants’ perceptions on weak ties and their actual behaviour. On the one hand, most of the poor migrants perceive their intra-ethnic weak ties as exploitative and on the other hand, they depend on them for higher income mobility and for long term settlement in the receiving country. In fact, (albeit trustworthy) their strong tied networks are noticed as poor (not so well-off) and less connected with the macro level authorities. Hence they lack the necessary power and information, required for upward mobility. Therefore, they need to depend on weak tied networks in order to overcome economic insolvency and achieve higher social status and prestige both in the origin and receiving countries.

The well-off businessmen cum manpower agents, who make up the weak ties of these poor migrants, also try to continue the relationship because of their business interests. Nurturing nationalist and kinship ideology, they attempt to sustain the relationship. Though apparently within this so-called patron client relationship nationalistic sentiments are emphasized, through the analysis of the networking behaviour, factional conflicts, discursive practices and the mental maps (perception) of the community, this relationship is found to be a weak tie or distant network. Consequently, instead of moral obligations, durability and reciprocal bonds that are ideally considered as the criteria of patron client relations, the opposite i.e. ‘network behaviour’ like commercial necessity, fragility, mistrust etc. is found closely linked with intra-ethnic vertical ties.

Nevertheless, the instance where nationalist ideology is emphasized regarding vertical relations enables me to explore the ideal socio-cultural models imagined and expected concerning primordial ties. For example, the manpower agents cum ethnic entrepreneurs

spend money in political meetings in order to prove their generosity and fraternal feelings to the other sojourners (which may help them to accumulate cultural capital). This cultural capital is necessary to hide the underlying exploitation inherent in the patron client relationship and to justify their economic profits. As a matter of fact, through this study it is found that harmonious relationships (within primordial bonds) are a partial reality. Along with kinship based strong ties, it also incorporates weak ties, where profit maximization, conflicting interests etc. are major concerns. Or in other words, though the ideal socio-cultural model emphasizes community cohesion (something that can be conceptualized as an example of a tightly structured social system), the actual behaviour of the migrants indicates a loosely or disintegrated social system.

On the contrary, the well-off professionals and professionals cum merchants mainly depend on trust based strong ties, since these networks possess enough information and contacts required for upward mobility. Besides, the immigration policies of the host country grant them more facilities than the others regarding assimilation and integration. These well-off manpower agents cum businessmen, additionally, maintain and form networks with higher level authorities (central political parties of Bangladesh, officials of the Malaysian immigration department and Bangladesh High Commission etc.) of the host and origin countries to sustain their power and to achieve more capabilities. To continue their manpower business, for example, they need political back up. This of course motivates them to remain connected with the central political parties of Bangladesh. They, therefore, maintain connections with these parties through transnational networking and also by initiating political activities in the receiving country. Micro level individual's life is thus connected with the macro level authorities, while the migrant's embeddedness in the ongoing social relations and power structures regulates the nature and strength of these ties.

Therefore, within the Bangladeshi migrant community we find diverse forms of ties that are all controlled by the existing socio-economic, political, institutional and transnational realities, in which migrants are embedded in. While on the one hand, poverty and political turmoil of the origin country are found as the wider aspects that motivate people to migrate (as a common livelihood strategy and for upward mobility, having failed to manage an appropriate way in their home country) and develop weak ties with the manpower agents, on the other hand, the anti-integration migration policies of the receiving country exaggerate the necessity of weak ties (for poor migrants). Albeit they live geographically apart, their dreams

for the common well-being of their consanguine and affine remain intact due to regular transnational contacts (through phones, letters, remittance, gifts etc.). Moreover, the discriminatory emigration policy of the homeland generates a more severe condition, where the poor and (relatively) uneducated (in comparison to the skilled professionals) migrants (or would-be migrants) need to depend on labour brokers cum manpower agents to enable themselves to migrate (to a foreign country). In fact, while the socio-economic and political background and emigration policy of the origin country increase the urgency of male migration, at the same time, the gendered emigration policy (of Bangladesh) has decreased the flow of female migration (to Malaysia), where the (Bangladeshi) cultural construction of gender (concerning female migration) is found as the main regulator.

Alongside the expected socio-cultural role models (within intra-ethnic networks) that ideally emphasize intra-ethnic networks and criticize inter-ethnic close ties, their (the Bangladeshis) nature of embeddedness in the multi-ethnic social setting of the host country (as workmates, housemates, neighbours etc. or as Muslims) determines their survival strategies, obligations, reciprocal relationships with inter-ethnic counterparts. In this study we have come across their host society based strong and weak ties as well as transnational networks that open a scope for the rise of hybrid transnational identities and culture. For example, their embeddedness in the discriminatory immigration rules and anti-integration policies of the host country influence them to develop inter-ethnic ties mostly with other Muslim communities and partly, with Tamil Indians. Thus, they try to combat risks and by-pass laws. Therefore, this study does not akin the dominant perception on primordial networking, which states that intra-ethnic ties are the only survival option for the migrants (who are) passing their lives within the harsh realities of the host society.

In fact, here on the one hand, we discuss the issues related to globalization, transnationalism, non-nation based solidarities and integration (as well) in the receiving society that will be explored (in detail) in the next chapter and on the other, the necessity for the exploration of the diverse forms of (socio-economic, political, institutional and transnational) realities of origin and host countries, in which migrants are embedded in and in consequence need to initiate different actions as survival strategies. Migrants' survival strategies vary according to the living niches and realities they are embedded in and need to cope with. In this regard, along with the political, institutional and transnational realities of host and origin country, their class, status and gender contribute a new dimension to their modes of networking.

Therefore, in order to understand whether the community is loosely or tightly structured we have explored (1) the ideal socio-cultural models, (2) the migrants' mental maps or perceptive models on different forms of networks and (3) the migrants' actual behaviour as strategies for survival and also for upward mobility pursuing Ever's conceptualization, depicted in "Models of Social Systems: Loosely and Tightly Structured." Based on those findings it can be stated that there exists a contradiction between the ideal socio-cultural models of the Bangladeshi social system and the actual behaviour of migrants. While according to the ideal socio-cultural or "folk model" the community can be identified as tightly structured, there, based on their actual behaviour it can be perceived as loosely structured.

Chapter Five

Understanding the Organizational Structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora at this Age of Globalization

1. Introduction

“We have defined transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Immigrants who build such social fields are designated “transmigrants”. Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1992, p 1-2)⁴⁴⁰.

“How do we come to terms with phenomena such as Thai boxing by Moroccan girls in Amsterdam, Asian rap in London, Irish bagels, Chinese tacos and Mardi Gras Indians in the United States, or ‘Mexican schoolgirls dresses in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isidora Duncan’(Rowe and Schelling 1991: 161)? How do we interpret Peter Brook directing the Mahabharata, or Ariane Mnouchkine staging a Shakespeare play in Japanese Kabuki style for a Paris audience in the Theatre Soleil? Cultural experiences, past or present, have not been simply moving in the direction of cultural uniformity and standardisation” (Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 1994, p- 169)⁴⁴¹.

In the previous chapters (chapter three and four) while exploring the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora as well as the socio-economic profile of the community, we found some concepts such as globalization, transnationalism, non-nation based solidarities etc. applicable for the analysis of the survival strategies and embedded realities of the respondents. Through the investigation of their nature of embeddedness in the micro and macro level socio-economic, cultural, political, institutional and ideological frameworks as well as their coping strategies, we noticed trans-boundary networks that tied together both the origin and host countries.

⁴⁴⁰Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (eds). 1992. *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration. Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered*. The New York Academy of Sciences.

⁴⁴¹Jan Nederveen Pieterse. 1994. *Globalization as Hybridisation*, p- 161. *International Sociology*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp.169.

In fact, apart from the formation of intra and inter-ethnic socio-economic, political and business networks in the receiving country, migrants maintained different forms⁴⁴² of transnational networks to fulfil liabilities to their home-based consanguine and affine and also as a better survival strategy. Modern means of communication (letters, land phones, mobile phones, faxes, emails, internet etc.), mass media (newspapers, television, satellite connections etc.) and the transport system facilitate migrants in this regard. Thus the constant flow of information, money, goods and migrants within and outside the state boundaries become part of their survival strategies and contribute to the formation of the hybrid organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora. Along with this, migrants also transfer knowledge and ideas to their families and friends in their home country so they can initiate multiple ways for higher socio-economic mobility.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that respondents' embeddedness in the micro and macro level transnational networks and micro level (migrants' families, neighbours and hometown) liabilities enable them to generate transnational spaces and identities (as well) in the receiving country, that are a necessary part of their survival strategies and hence could not be ignored (at all) during my field research. The current chapter, therefore, will be a description of the flow of ideas, goods, money and migrants sustained by transnational networks as well as its contributions towards the formation of hybrid transnational spaces and identities in the receiving country. Consequently, in the next section of this chapter I shall continue discussion under the following sub-headings:

- Transnational Networks, Dissemination of Information, Goods, Money, Migrants and Political Organizations
- Formation of Transnational Spaces, Development of Hybrid Culture, Businesses and Identities in the 'Bangla Bazaar' of Kuala Lumpur—A Case Study among Bangladeshi Migrants
- The Manpower, "*Hundy*" and the other Business Networks of Kalim Miah

This discussion will provide a scope to understand the community organizational structure and its dynamism in the "age of migration" (Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, 1993), where migrants' survival strategies, steps for higher social mobility, contacts, correspondences etc.

⁴⁴² Please find section 'Marital status, homeland contacts and integration into Malaysia' of chapter three.

simply cannot be regulated (and understood as well) by state mechanisms. Instead ‘quasi formal trans-boundary networks’ play significant roles.

2. Transnational Networks and the Dissemination of Information, Goods, Money, Migrants and Political Organizations

That transnational networking facilitates migrants to remain connected with the origin and receiving countries simultaneously, are now known to us from our discussion in chapter three. We have noticed that “transnationalism is a multifaceted and multi-local process⁴⁴³.” Apart from the maintenance of transnational “familial” (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992), social, political, and business networks, we have seen diverse means and forms of transnational correspondence that are executed through the letter, phone, internet, newspaper as well as the channels of remittance, manpower and other forms of transnational business networks.

It is found that migrants’ nature of transnational networking varies according to their socio-economic position, legal status and gendered identity. Accordingly, the disseminated information, ideas, money and migrants, that are transferred and brought through these various forms of networks reflect that diversity. Moreover, while within these diverse forms of networks poor migrants’ networks are developed personally and maintained as well in an unorganized way, on the other hand, to continue their transnational business dealings, the well-off merchants construct an organized pattern of transnational contacts and networks. For example, they develop manpower and “*hundy*” business networks not only within the origin and host countries, but also outside of these countries, where employees receive salaries for their services. In this case to keep their jobs, employees need to obey the orders of their employers unquestioningly. Utilizing these networks, the entrepreneurs on the other hand, not only play roles as the medium of transnational contacts for poor migrants, but also accumulate social and economic capital that support them to ensure their privileged (social, economic and political) status within the multi-cultural social setting of Peninsular Malaysia. Or in other words, the various forms of transnational practices create a power relationship between the

⁴⁴³ Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith. The Locations of Transnationalism, p- 6. In Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith (eds.) Transnationalism From Below. Comparative Urban and Community Research, V6-1998. New Brunswick. Transaction Publishers.

well-off and comparatively poor migrants that influences and shapes the organizational pattern of the Bangladeshi Diaspora.

Therefore, in order to understand the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in this present age of globalization, we need to explore these diverse forms of transnational practices, the consequences and the realities, in which actors are embedded in and due to which they have to develop different strategies for their adaptation. While in the previous chapters we discussed the embedded realities of the migrants, here in the next part we will see how these diverse forms of transnational networks are maintained and along with money and migrants, what type of information, ideas and goods are circulated within these transnational hubs. To clarify these queries we may focus on the following aspects that have been collected through an intensive field study among former and present migrants in the study areas of Bangladesh (origin) and Peninsular Malaysia (host):

- Diversity in Transnational Practices
- “Flow” of Ideas and Information
- “Channelling” Money, Migrants and Goods

2.1 Diversity in Transnational Practices

Through a careful observation on the proliferation of literature on transnationalism we may notice the existence of two major types of approaches, such as: (1) “transnationalism from above”⁴⁴⁴ and (2) “transnationalism from below”⁴⁴⁵. Both these approaches explain how national culture and the state have been intruded by global and local actors. The global aspect explains the flow of transnational capital, global media as well as “supra-national political institutions”⁴⁴⁶ into every corner of the nation state and also bears a kind of “homogenisation”⁴⁴⁷ (Jan Nederveen Pieterse 1994) tendency in showing the outcomes. The local aspect, on the other hand, focuses on micro level transnational practices like international migration through social networks and the concomitant results such as cultural hybridism, informal economic activities etc. In pursuing these cross-border informal practices

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid: p-3.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid: p-3.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid: p-3.

⁴⁴⁷ Jan Nederveen Pieterse. 1994. Globalization as Hybridisation, p- 161. International Sociology, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp.161-184.

of the masses, authors like Bhabha (1990), Appadurai (1990, 1996), Glick Schiller et al. (1992), Portes (1996), Hannerz (1996) and many other theoreticians highlight the agency and resistance of common people against the domination of the nation-state.

However, apart from these views we may notice another perspective, one that emphasizes not only local aspects, but also takes into account the underlying multi-dimensionally embedded realities of the common people. Authors like Luis Eduardo Guarnizo (1998), Katharyne Mitchell (1993, 1996) and so on have demonstrated that albeit hybridism and transnational practices resemble anti-hegemonic behaviour, they do not necessarily always indicate deviant behaviour against the domination of the nation-state and capital “from above”. Instead, sometimes the transnational economic activities enable the entrepreneurs to accumulate economic capital, while in other cases the transnational networks of common people, cultural hybridism, informal economic practices and so on stand out as conscious resistance against the hegemonic behaviour of the nation-state and the multinational capital. In fact, Guarnizo and Smith have nicely depicted the situation in their conceptualizations:

“A main concern guiding Transnationalism from Below is to discern how this process affects power relations, cultural constructions, economic interactions, and more generally, social organization at the level of the locality. We try to unpack the deceptive local-global binary that dominates a significant segment of current academic discourse.”⁴⁴⁸

Now, looking back to the field situation of the current study and based on the above arguments we may criticise bounded notions and conceptualizations, where concepts like ethnicity, nation or race are usually emphasized in explaining the organizational structure of diasporas. In fact, we have seen and discussed in the previous chapters that migrants act on the basis of their embedded realities and develop different strategies to cope with their situation. This may not resemble conventional nationalist discourses, where always a tendency to “construct bounded cultural objects”⁴⁴⁹ can be noticed. While primordial perceptions on diaspora emphasize the formation of “long distance nationalism”⁴⁵⁰ due to

⁴⁴⁸ Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith. The Locations of Transnationalism, p- 6. In Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith (eds.) Transnationalism From Below. Comparative Urban and Community Research, V6-1998. New Brunswick. Transaction Publishers.

⁴⁴⁹ Richard Handler. 1988. Madison. University of Wisconsin Press. Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec, p- 27.

⁴⁵⁰ Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fournon. 2001. Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home, p. 17-21.

common homeland, culture, history, national symbols like maps, anthem or identity, through this study we have explored the “mixed embeddedness”⁴⁵¹ of migrants.

These diverse forms of embedded realities act against the notions of “imagined political community”⁴⁵² on the ground that the primordial attachments and identities of migrants as Bangladeshis fail to create a cohesive Bangladeshi Diaspora community against the backdrop of the harsh realities of the receiving country. Actually, all migrants do not belong to the same socio-cultural, legal, political and economic position. They encounter different realities and hence their interests, capabilities and coping strategies are not the same. Or in other words, all of them do not act in the same way against domination by the state, because some are in a privileged position, while others are not. For example, if we concentrate on the Emigration Ordinance (1982) of Bangladesh⁴⁵³ we may see that there are some restrictions regarding the migration of un-skilled and semi-skilled workers, while the professionals or businessmen do not face this hindrance if they want to migrate. It is written clearly in the ordinance that un-skilled and semi-skilled workers are not allowed to migrate directly to a foreign country, as immigrant labourers. They need to be recruited through manpower agents and contractors after which a calling visa is issued to them. Thus the migration policy of the origin country obliges poor migrants to develop vertical links or weak ties with the central manpower agents. And this in turn enables the well-off migrants to be more powerful than others.

As a result, the transnational activities of the poor and well-off migrants are not the same and not necessarily all of these activities are performed as resistance. In fact, referring to the discussion of chapter four we can state that through their embeddedness in the existing regulatory frameworks of the origin and host countries some migrants become more powerful than others. They convert into so-called patrons while they conduct cross-border manpower and “*hundy*” business and try to accumulate economic and cultural capital. By utilizing their achieved power and capabilities they provide facilities and support the less privileged groups of migrants or would-be migrants. This support is also commercial on the grounds that migrants need to buy services from their so-called patrons (something we do not see within

⁴⁵¹ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun and Jan Rath. 1999. Mixed Embeddedness: (In) formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23 (2), pp. 253-267. See also Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath. 2001. Immigrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies: mixed embeddedness further explored. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 27, No.2: 189-201.

⁴⁵² Benedict Anderson. 1983. Verso. London. New York. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.*

⁴⁵³ We have discussed on it in chapter four.

strongly tied networks). Or in other words, instead of bestowing assistance towards their poor country men, well-off Bangladeshis utilize their vertical ties to make money through transnational businesses. This is quite different from the characteristics of a classical patron client relationship and also the conceptions of an integrated diaspora community. Poor migrants, on the other hand, show their awareness of the underlying exploitative nature of their so-called patrons' behaviour with regards to migration policy. Their perceptions regarding the intrinsic motives of well-off people's assistance, their patron changing mentality and negotiation processes are conceptualized as an instance of agency against their powerful patrons.

As a matter of fact, through our discussion of the previous chapters we have come to see that Bangladeshi migrants are not a homogeneous body and their embedded realities and survival strategies vary according to their class, status, religious and gendered identities. Their networks and activities, moreover, are simultaneously embedded both in the formal and informal socio-cultural, political, legal and economic surroundings of their countries of origin and reception. They contribute to the formation of a hybrid pattern of transnational space, culture and identity among Bangladeshi migrants of the study areas in Peninsular Malaysia. Therefore, to explore the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora at this age of globalization, we need to scrutinize and explore the multi-dimensionally embedded realities of the migrants that are dealt with by the formation of transnational as well as intra and inter-ethnic strong and weak ties. Regarding these diverse modes of networking as well as hybrid forms of coping strategies I shall continue discussion consulting the following examples:

Example One: Gendered Dimension of Transnational Practices

Table 5.1: Cross Tabulation between Gender and Sending of Remittance to Home Country

		How do you send remittance to home country?			Total	
			Through 'hundi' system of local businessmen	Through May bank	Through Agrani remittance bank	
Gender	male	Count	110	19	14	143
		% within male	76,9%	13,3%	9,8%	100,0%
	female	Count	0	1	0	1
		% within female	,0%	100,0%	,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	110	20	14	144
		% within Gender	76,4%	13,9%	9,7%	100,0%

Source: Survey among the Bangladeshi Migrants in Peninsular Malaysia

If we closely observe the above table we may notice a gendered-division in the practice of remittance transfer back to the home country. These are: (1) among males and females, the statistics of females is lower than males, (2) though the male respondents follow both the formal and informal channels in this context, the female respondents mention only formal ways of remittance transfer. Like her, on being interviewed in Bangladesh, all of the returned female migrants (twelve respondents) confirmed this and argued along the same lines that they depended solely on the public banking system for their remittance transfer to their homeland.

Albeit the opinions⁴⁵⁴ on female labour have become increasingly positive (“feminization of labour”) due to female workers being cheaper than native and male foreign workers and hence more suitable for the export-oriented industrial and service sectors, in the case of Bangladeshi female migrants we see the opposite situation. In fact, it is known to us that amongst the 150 sample respondents in Peninsular Malaysia only two were females, one woman having immigrated on a calling visa and the another one on a spouse visa.⁴⁵⁵ In comparison to their male counterparts the amount of female worker was small, because migration of Bangladeshi workers to Malaysia was banned by the authorities of the host country. Though males were welcomed by their families and relatives to by-pass these restrictions, for females the situation was quite the opposite. They could not do that due to the reflection of patriarchal ideology on

⁴⁵⁴ Petra Dannecker. 2005. *Current Sociology*, Vol. 53 (4): Sage Publications. *Transnational Migration and the Transformation of Gender Relations: The Case of Bangladeshi Labour Migrants*, p-656.

⁴⁵⁵ Please find discussion of chapter three under the heading ‘Gender balance: a community without females.’

the migration of female workers from origin to host country. Besides, referring to the qualitative data and emigration policy we discussed in chapter three that the gendered ideology of Bangladesh does not encourage women, especially semi-skilled and un-skilled workers to migrate to another country for income purposes.

In the same way, even though female workers maintain regular transnational networks and transfer remittance, gifts etc. to their parents and relatives (their strong ties) they follow the formal channels for all of their communication, instead of looking for the “*hundy*” networks of entrepreneurs. It has become known to us through our discussion in chapter three that female workers’ movement outside of their living and working areas is controlled by their employers (who allow them to venture once a week to the nearby shopping centres and banks for their necessary shopping and remittance transfers). For this they have to rely on vehicles provided by their factory. Besides, gendered ideology prohibits them from developing ties with male merchants cum brokers. Since these businessmen set up their enterprises in the market areas (which are usually considered as restricted spaces and insecure as well for female workers) their interaction with the female workers is not so common. Thus, we may notice that these local forms of transnational practices not only help the migrants to cope with the realities in which they are embedded, but are also guided by the “cultural construction of gender”.⁴⁵⁶

As a matter of fact, albeit these migrant workers live outside their home country, the dissemination of Bangladeshi gendered ideology in the receiving society still continues through transnational networks and other practices of the common people. On the one hand, emphasizing gendered international migration policy we may try to explain the lower presence of Bangladeshi female workers in Malaysia (which is highlighted as well by Boyd⁴⁵⁷ in her essay over Portuguese female would-be migrants’ hazards to obtain official visas in Portugal). On the other hand we can also see the diffusion of stereotypical gendered notions regarding space allocation as well as the role models of men and women.

Through the regular transnational correspondences as well as the everyday discursive practices on ‘what to do’, ‘which way is good or bad’, ‘what should be considered as right and

⁴⁵⁶ Sherry B Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Eds.). 1981. *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁵⁷ Boyd, Monica. 1989. ‘Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and New agendas,’ p. 659.

what as wrong' etc., expected behaviour as well as culturally constructed roles are imposed on the Bangladeshi male and female workers in Peninsular Malaysia. For example, female migration and their movement in the bazaar areas (market areas) is not praiseworthy, because in Bangladesh a woman's role is ideally conceptualized as mother inside the house. The ideal role models for them are to play roles in the construction and reproduction of national identity along the line of culturally constructed femininity. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis,⁴⁵⁸ write-up is pertinent in explaining this. They discussed that apart from the biological reproduction, women's role is also glorified as bearer and transmitter of the authentic culture of a nation. They are expected to show this by behaving 'properly'.

In the Bangladeshi context, this ideal behaviour can be found as a mixture of Islamic rites on "*parda*" (veil) and a common culture in which the women's social role is drawn as the mother living and taking care of the domestic sphere of the house. Regarding this, she is not only expected to preserve her femininity as the mother, but also through the adoption of Islamic rituals. Migrants' home-based relatives and the society set fourth some guide lines as well as draw socio-cultural boundaries on the "*free interactions*" between male and females according to the Islamic norms of curtain ("*parda*"). During my research in Bangladesh and also in Peninsular Malaysia any kind of violation of these norms seemed to be considered shameful among believers. The close connection between the norms of "*parda*" and the perception of shame (as well as femininity) in Bangladeshi context is also emphasized by Naher⁴⁵⁹. Quoting examples from rural Bangladesh she argues that any kind of disobedience of "*parda*" brings a shame to the family and the woman as well. She further argues on the basis of her field research that in the rural Bangladesh women's movement outside of the house ("*bari*") is disgraceful for the family.

Consequently, emphasizing the concepts of "*parda*" (veil), we may explain why female workers, both returned and current migrants, only follow formal channels to transfer remittance to their homeland and at the same, referring to their low presence in the study areas we can also state that migrants' transnational practices are guided and regulated by their gendered embedded realities. However, apart from this gendered dimension of transnational

⁴⁵⁸ Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis. 1991. *Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle*. See also Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell, Carol Wolkowitz (1997) edited *A Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory*, p. 146.

⁴⁵⁹ Ainoon Naher. 2005. Ph.D. dissertation. Department of Ethnology. South Asia Institute. Heidelberg University. *Gender, Religion and Development in Rural Bangladesh*, p-131.

practices, there are also other forms of transnational activities that are guided as well by their heterogeneous socio-economic position. I will discuss this in the next section.

Example Two: Heterogeneous Pattern of Transnational Networks and the other Practices

That migrants' transnational practices take shape along the line of their socio-economic position, is noticed in the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia. For example, while undocumented workers (only males) mainly try to get information and home-based connection with a potential labour broker to arrange jobs and other securities in the host country, the documented workers (both male and female) attempt to send gifts and remittance to their home country. They (only males) also collect information on how to bring their relatives and friends into the receiving country in order to fortify their home based intimate relationships which are defined by them as strong ties. In order to do this, both of them visit the well-off Bangladeshi entrepreneurs and try to fulfil their desire through the access of this "strategic variable" (Saskia Sassen, 1995).⁴⁶⁰

In the same way, male migrants' economic transactions affect, perpetuate and are regulated by the existing power relations between well-off and poor migrants that reflect on the organizational structure of the community. The businessmen and professionals cum businessmen, for instance, play roles as one of the means of transnational communication for the unprivileged male migrants. For this, they extract high rates of service charge from the "business clients" and thereby enrich their businesses. Therefore, it can be stated that these businessmen maintain their bonds with poor male migrants because of the business purpose, instead of delivering assistance to them on the ground of primordial bonds. Consequently, the relationship is not stable and the poor migrants consider their so-called patrons as "exploiters". The situation may remind us of Guarnizo and Smith's arguments where "the enduring asymmetries of domination, inequality, racism, sexism, class conflict, and uneven development"⁴⁶¹ are identified as the realities in which transnational practices are embedded.

⁴⁶⁰ Saskia Sassen. Immigration and Local Labour Markets, p- 98. In Alejandro Portes (Ed) The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995.

⁴⁶¹ Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith. The Locations of Transnationalism, p- 6. In Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith (eds.) Transnationalism From Below. Comparative Urban and Community Research, V6-1998. New Brunswick. Transaction Publishers.

As a matter of fact, we found weak tie relationships between well-off and poor migrants (discussed as well in chapter four) where it was argued that due to their instrumental relationships they were linked to each other like distant networks. In fact, though the ties were defined by the well-off migrants as patron-client relationships, through the analysis of their networking behaviour, everyday discursive practices and “mental maps” (Gould and White, 1974) of the migrants regarding the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora, we discovered a ‘pseudo-patron-client’ relationship or in other words, weak tie networks between the well-off entrepreneurs and poor migrants. We noticed that the relationship between poor and well-off migrants is not morally articulated and also lacks durability.

The clients of manpower agents perceived their relationship with the agents as exploitative. Still poor migrants maintain these so-called patron client relationships and purchase services from their well-off weak ties because of their embeddedness in the migration policy of the host and origin countries. For example, ranging from migrating to Malaysia to the renewal of work permits and visas, these diverse patterns of necessities are mitigated along the lines of weak tie relationships with the well-off merchants. Poor migrants depend on their weak ties since they are prohibited by the emigration ordinance from travelling to foreign countries on their own. In the same way, I was told by the semi-skilled and un-skilled (mail) workers that they needed to visit “*hundy*” businessmen, because they were not given enough time by their employers to go to regular banks and transfer money utilizing public services. Regarding this they relied on modern communication technology such as mobile phones to know whether the intra-ethnic ties of their home country received the amount of money that they had transferred through “*hundy*” networks of businessmen.

In this context, if we take into account Dabir Miah’s (a businessman of the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ and the leader of the ‘Barishal’ group⁴⁶²) statement of account, as depicted in the following table and in the associated text, we may notice that the conventional service charges for different types of transnational business activities vary according to the nature of a job and the underlying risks of the task.

⁴⁶² See chapter four.

Table 5.2: Transnational Business Activities

Activities	Risky or not	Partners/Assistants	Nature of business	Business clients
Manpower business	High	(1) Bangladeshi agents in home land. (2) Bangladeshi brokers in Malaysia. (3) Local Malaysian partners in the host society. (4) Bangladeshi partners in other countries.	Transnational	(1) Semi-skilled and unskilled workers. (2) Students cum workers.
Hundy business	Low	(1) Bangladeshi counterparts in home land. (2) Bangladeshi businessmen in Malaysia.	Transnational	(1) Semi-skilled and unskilled workers. (2) Students cum workers.
Renewal or preparing new passport	Low	(1) Bangladeshi businessmen or brokers. (2) Some staffs of Bangladesh high commission.	Host society based	(1) Semi-skilled and unskilled workers. (2) Students cum workers.
Work permit renewal	No	(1) Bangladeshi businessmen. (2) Some staffs of Malaysian immigration department.	Host society based	Semi-skilled and unskilled workers.
Making (forged) work permit	High	(1) Bangladeshi businessmen. (2) Some staffs of Malaysian immigration department. (3) Local police. (4) Rohingya agent.	Host society based	(1) Undocumented semi-skilled and unskilled workers. (2) Undocumented students cum workers.
Making (forged) visa	High	(1) Bangladeshi businessmen. (2) Tamil Indian dalal. (3) Rohingya dalal. (4) Local police. (5) Some staffs of Malaysian immigration department.	Host society based	(1) Undocumented semi-skilled and unskilled workers. (2) Undocumented students cum workers.

Source: Interview with Dabir Miah, 'Bangla Bazaar'.

From the table we notice that along with the manpower business, supply of forged visas⁴⁶³ and work permits⁴⁶⁴ are narrated as the most risky tasks. Out of these three tasks, the manpower business is a transnational activity that connects not only origin and receiving countries, but also many other peoples from Asia, Europe and Australia. Since this business

⁴⁶³ Migrants spend BDT sixty thousand or more for purchasing a forged sticker of Malaysian visa.

⁴⁶⁴ Migrants pay BDT sixty thousand or more to the manpower agents when they buy forged work permit from them.

covers a wide range of people from different countries and is risky as well, migrants need to pay very high charges for it. As has been described depending on the distance of the destination country service charge is taken from the prospective migrants. It is risky on the ground that manpower agents need to pay service charges not only to their local agents, but also to the immigration authorities of the country of origin and receiving to convince them. Otherwise, they will be arrested and jailed. Consequently, for their migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia, Singapore or some other Asian countries, the would-be migrants need to pay around BDT two hundred thousand whereas the manpower agents receive around BDT⁴⁶⁵ seven hundred thousand (or more) for helping the migrants of Malaysia travel to Australia, Germany, Poland, Italy etc.

In fact, in the Malaysian scenario businessmen are found bringing in migrant workers as the employees of their enterprises and also continue that manpower business in even at times when manpower importing from Bangladesh is prohibited. The importation of these workers (by the agents) on tourist and student visas was noticed during the field visit. Since this manpower business occupies a large and significant space within the transnational activities of the Bangladeshi respondents, I shall elaborate the discussion on it later under the sub-heading 'transnational business space.' Besides, the entrepreneur's two other jobs namely the supply of forged visas and work permits, though not transnational, are nonetheless examples of a joint business. These types of tasks are conducted mainly in the 'Bangla Bazaar' area as joint business ventures of Bangladeshis, Tamil Indians, and Rohingya agents under the protection of the local authorities.

Though not as risky as the initially mentioned three jobs, there are still two other host society-based tasks, for which poor migrants need to visit business enterprises. The renewal of old passports or the speeding up of the issuing process of new ones is considered a less risky job by the businessmen. Since migrant workers are not provided enough time by their employers for the renewal of their passports or work permits, they come to the well-off and well-connected country men for help. For this service they pay the merchants BDT ten thousand. In the same way, they request their service for the supply of new passports and pay BDT thirty six thousand, in case it is lost or if they intend to stay more than ten years. To by-pass the immigration law that intends to "limit labour migration, the duration of migration and

⁴⁶⁵ In time of field visit the currency gap between Malaysia and Bangladesh was 1RM=17 BDT that can be counted as 1 Euro=4 RM.

integration”⁴⁶⁶, in the new passport, a new name is given to the customer or the information of his actual arrival date (in the host country) is falsified. Thus the workers try to work and stay in the host country for more than ten years. According to Dabir Miah,

“All need money. For our business we need to maintain good relation with the officers from Malaysian Immigration department as well as some staff of the Bangladesh High Commission. To renew passports, issue new passports and even to collect forged stickers, we visit them. In exchange of their service we provide them service charges, say for example, to buy a single sticker from the Immigration department we pay like RM 100/150. So, if they can assist us to get ten stickers a day, count how much they are able to earn by this.”

The service charge for “hundy” business, however, is counted and described as the lowest amount by the word “lump sum”. It was argued that profit was counted on the basis of the money exchange rate. Senders do not need to pay bank charges and on the other hand, businessmen do not need to buy currency whenever they travel to different countries for their import-export businesses. It is also defined as a risk free as well as transnational job. That migrants depend on the entrepreneurs for remittance transfer due to the fast service system, is already described in the previous chapters (chapter three and four). It is also evaluated as a cheaper means of money transfer than the other existing systems. Emphasizing modern telecommunication systems, migrants and the entrepreneurs both identify it as a tension free job and hence it requires low service charges. However, how Bangladeshi businessmen conduct this transnational activity and the reasons why they consider it a profitable job, will be described in the next portion under the sub-heading ‘transnational business space’. On the contrary, let us now at first discuss the nature and likelihood of dissemination of ideas and information between home and receiving countries that are sustained by transnational networks.

2.2 “Flow” of Ideas and Information

“It is not only anthropologists who talk about ‘flows’ these days. Rather, the term has become transdisciplinary, a way of referring to things not staying in their places, to mobility and expansion of many kinds, to globalization along many dimensions.”⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Lian Kwen Fee and Md Mizanur Rahman. Asia-Pacific Population Journal, April 2006. International Labour Recruitment: Channelling Bangladeshi Labour to East and South-East Asia, p- 86.

Depending on their transnational contacts, businessmen, in fact, import the ideas of their political clienteles into the receiving country and continue that for their manpower and “*hundy*” business (something we have described in chapter four). Diverse forms of political groupings and lobbying were noticed during the field visit. These can be listed as ‘B.N.P’ (17.5%), ‘Awamileague’ (17.5%), ‘Jamayat Islami’ (25%) and ‘Tableague Jamayat’ (30%).⁴⁶⁸

In fact, these political parties were nothing, but an informal extension of Bangladeshi political groupings in the study areas. According to the proceedings of the Bangladesh-based central political parties, these Malaysia-based branch leaders arrange different meetings and get together in their enterprises in order to convince the central party leaders cum ministers of Bangladesh (to allow and facilitate their manpower and “*hundy*” business). To celebrate the different national and political programmes in the host society, donations are collected not only from the local party members, but also from the main political groups of Bangladesh. Therefore, on the one hand, we can see the formation of transnational political organizations in the host country and on the other hand find active political initiatives, arranged by these receiving society-based political organizations (branches). Though informal in nature, these programmes are solely arranged along the line and ideology of the Bangladesh-based central political parties. There the celebration of the birthday of the chairman and the remembrance of the party-founder’s death anniversary etc. are given preference along with the celebration of the national days of Bangladesh.

Besides, these parties also express their concerns about the well-being of the (party) members. For example, members visit their party leader if they need a job or have to renew their work permit or visa. Moreover, they collect donations for the burial of their fellow members if any kind of accidental death occurs in the study areas. However, the rest of the poor migrants, that are not members, receive nothing from these parties.

⁴⁶⁷ Ulf Hannerz. WPTC-2K-02. Department of Social Anthropology. Stockholm University. *Flows, Boundaries and Hybrids: Keywords in Transnational Anthropology*, p-4.

⁴⁶⁸ Among 150 sample respondents total 40 (26.7%) respondents mentioned that they belonged to different political and social organizations. Apart from these groups another form of assemblage is noticed in the study areas. The name of this informal organization is ‘Professionals of IIUM’ (10%). Since it is not transnational in character, rather, only the teachers of IIUM and their families belong to this group, so its name is not provided in the text. Moreover, it is a social grouping and network of expatriates.

The professionals (mainly university teachers and IT specialists), often defined as “human capital”⁴⁶⁹, try to transfer information about the possibility of a bright career in the host country. Utilizing different channels of the information and communication technology like phones, internet etc. they share their achieved knowledge with their students, friends, and colleagues back in their home country and inform them about the possibility of getting scholarships for upcoming conferences and seminars in the receiving country.

In fact, the interview-survey revealed that all the expatriates (comprised of 2% professionals and 4.7% professionals cum businessmen out of 150 sample respondents) maintain transnational contacts depending on information and communication technology. They transfer ideas to their home based social networks on ways of how to come abroad to study and also as professionals that may gradually convert into future human capital for their home country. Though their contributions in the field of economic remittance to the home country are found to be zero (0) in comparison to other respondents, some reasons why these professionals can still be considered human capital for Bangladesh should be brought fourth:

- Professionals work as an information pool for their social networks and provide them with information about chances of better jobs or scholarships in the host country. In other words, though they are living abroad with their families and (hence) do not send economic remittance to Bangladesh, they still maintain transnational contact and assist the networks of their home country to fulfil their desire of becoming expatriates in Malaysia.
- Professionals bring pride to their home country through their contributions in the science and technology field of the receiving society. Consequently, it is not likely that Bangladeshi migrants work only as semi-skilled and un-skilled workers; rather Bangladeshis also contribute in the knowledge sector of the host country (where knowledge is considered as the “main driving force of innovation and development”⁴⁷⁰ to become a developed country by the year 2020). The arguments of a Bangladeshi

⁴⁶⁹ International Migration of Talent, Diaspora Networks, and Development: Overview of Main Issues, p- 3. In Yevgeny Kuznetsov (Ed) Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills: How Countries Can Draw on their Talent Abroad. WBI Development Studies. May 2006.

⁴⁷⁰ Hans-Dieter Evers and Solvay Gerke. ZEF working paper series 1. Closing the Digital Divide: South-east Asia’s Path towards a Knowledge Society, p- 4.

skilled-migrant, who used to deliver his services to a Malaysian university, can be remembered in this regard. According to him,

“I enjoy the moments where I am surrounded by relatives and friends on my occasional visit to Bangladesh. I miss them sometimes. Still I live here, because I can utilize my knowledge. They know how to evaluate a learned person. You know, our contributions are highly recognized here. Though after 2000/2001, un-skilled and semi-skilled workers’ migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia was banned, professional migration remains unaffected.”

- Since Bangladeshi professionals’ contributions are appreciated in the receiving society, they are able to work as “bridges”⁴⁷¹ between the home and receiving society. Their good reputations create a demand for Bangladeshi students and professionals and gradually many Bangladeshi expatriates as well as students receive scholarships, research grants and jobs as well mainly in three fields of receiving country. These fields are: (1) Academic (university and colleges), (2) Medicine (hospitals) and (3) Construction and development sectors (as experts). The situation can be explained from the point of view of Kuznetsov (2006) et al. who nicely explained the contributions of expatriates. According to them,

“Expatriates do not need to be investors or make financial contributions to have an impact on their home countries. They can serve as ‘bridges’ by providing access to markets, sources of investment, and expertise. Influential members of diasporas can shape public debate, articulate reform plans, and help implement reforms and new projects.”⁴⁷²

- Though not all, still the information about direct contributions of many Bangladeshi scholars and expatriates in the capacity development of Bangladesh was found during the field research. Once they return, they assist their home country to learn the “new way of doing things”⁴⁷³ they have learned in Malaysia as skilled-migrants. In fact, in

⁴⁷¹ Mark S. Granovetter. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. AJS volume 78, 2 Number 4.

⁴⁷² International Migration of Talent, Diaspora Networks, and Development: Overview of Main Issues, p- 3. In Yevgeny Kuznetsov (Ed) Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills: How Countries Can Draw on their Talent Abroad. WBI Development Studies. May 2006.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

order to compete and ensure their survival in the world economy⁴⁷⁴, this new knowledge is regarded as a must for developing countries and therefore, returned skilled-migrants can be considered human capital for their origin country.

- On behalf of their origin country, these professionals also negotiate with the receiving society regarding any kind of investment in the development sector of Bangladesh. For example, through the interviews with Bangladeshi engineers in Malaysia I found out that they mediated and negotiated as well with the 'Petronas Company of Malaysia' for the construction of an electrical tower, bridge etc. in Bangladesh.

Therefore, if we consider the definition posited by the World Bank, "Knowledge is like light. Weightless and tangible, it can easily travel the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere." (World Bank 1999:1)⁴⁷⁵, we may state that expatriates are maintaining transnational contacts and contributing both in the development sector of host and origin countries through their "social remittances"⁴⁷⁶. In fact, the (transnational) flow of ideas, information as well as knowledge transferred by these expatriates can be defined as social remittances on the ground that these enable their social networks and the states (of the origin and receiving countries) as well to initiate a better survival strategy and to step forward towards development. Consequently, though we have not seen any kind of monetary transaction from the receiving to the "sending-country communities"⁴⁷⁷ by these skilled-migrants, their contributions are still pertinent because of the quality of the transferred objects (ideas, information, knowledge etc.).

The arguments of Sassen⁴⁷⁸ that the quality of collected information has a specific impact on the type of job and other facilities possessed by the immigrants in the receiving society, may assist us to conceptualize the knowledge- networks and the flow of ideas and information as social remittances transferred by the professionals. These are social remittances on the ground that utilizing these assets the friends and relatives of professionals manage to obtain good jobs and convert into expatriates (pekerja iktisas) in Malaysia, whereas the un-skilled and semi-

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ World Bank 1999:1 in Hans-Dieter Evers and Solvay Gerke. ZEF working paper series 1. Closing the Digital Divide: South-east Asia's Path towards a Knowledge Society, p- 5.

⁴⁷⁶ Peggy Levitt. Working paper series. Number 96.04. October 1996. Harvard University. Social Remittances: A Conceptual Tool for Understanding Migration and Development.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Saskia Sassen. Immigration and Local Labour Markets, p- 99. In Alejandro Portes (Ed) The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995.

skilled workers lack these types of job, even though some of them are university graduates. Regarding this if we refer to our discussion of chapter three (continued under the sub-heading 'Education matters in some cases') we may notice that even though not all, still a good number (12.6%) of the graduate respondents used to work in Malaysia as un-skilled and semi-skilled workers; even some (6.3%) graduates were noticed as unemployed during the field visit. Since their networks and information-pools consisted of other semi-skilled and un-skilled workers (strong ties) as well as labour brokers (weak ties), they received and managed jobs according to that level⁴⁷⁹. However, within these two forms of contributions (economic and social remittance) that are preformed through the transnational flow of ideas, information and knowledge, the question which one contributes more is a matter of further research.

Nevertheless, like professionals and businessmen, poor migrants transfer ideas to their home land and also collect information and ideas for their sojourned-lives in Malaysia. Less privileged or poor migrants' disseminated information to the homeland can be defined as the "place-based"⁴⁸⁰ local knowledge that helps their relatives to find better survival strategies such as setting up cyber cafés, beauty parlours etc. within their living niches deciding to become would-be migrants in Peninsular Malaysia.

In the same way, poor migrants collect information regarding the ways of survival in a foreign society. For example, they learn from their wives, sisters and mothers how to reap Bangladeshi vegetables, fruits or culture fish within their surrounding areas. Learning from their female relatives, male migrants prepare their meals on their own – something that is defined as the stereotypically gendered role of women and hence quite unusual for males in the home land. However, after staying a while, male migrants learn that they are forced to spend a large amount of money if they always eat at restaurants. Therefore, using their mobile phones they maintain homeland contact and learn the technique of cooking from their female relatives. And for frequent phone calls, they use cheaper calling cards after purchasing them from nearby Bangladeshi shops or those of the 'Bangla Bazaar' area. Thus they attempt to overcome their costs as well as earn extra money. Along with earning (extra) money they also try to make their abroad life a "little bit homely" through the cultivation of Bangladeshi food in their homes and hence make themselves free from mental and social agony.

⁴⁷⁹ Please find detailed discussion in chapter four.

⁴⁸⁰ Saskia Sassen. Immigration and Local Labour Markets, p- 107. In Alejandro Portes (Ed) The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995.

Accordingly, we may state that the flow of ideas and information between home and receiving societies has a class specific manifestation. While the low skilled migrants consider transnational networking as a means of survival, the well-off businessmen maintain this option for profit maximization in their business dealings. And for the professionals, transnational networking is nothing but a form of social remittance through social networking as well as ideological and knowledge-based (science, technology) attachments with their home based ties.

In fact, we have noticed (in the above discussion) that migrants' transnational practices are embedded in their socio-economic position and so to combat and bear these realities, diverse survival strategies are initiated. Consequently, the fact is-- migrants' transnational practices and survival strategies are diverse, because all of them do not encounter the same kind of reality and hence their coping strategies are not the same. In this context the argument of Luis Eduardo Guarnizo which we have discussed earlier in this chapter is relevant. That the transnational activities of common people not necessarily always incorporate resistant behaviour towards the domination of the nation-state and also that migrant' activities are often guided by their multi-dimensionally embedded realities are supportive in explaining the (transnational) flow of ideas and information between the origin and host societies. Though in some context, for example, male migrants' culinary practices are seen as an anti-hegemonic behaviour with regards to the dominant notions of the cultural construction of gender, in that case it is unworthy to define these as a resistant behaviour towards the stereotypical roles of men. In fact, based on their transnational contacts with their home based strong tied networks, male migrants try to fulfil their 'culturally constructed economic duties'⁴⁸¹ more fruitfully. They cook on their own, because they want to save money that then can be sent as remittance to their home country and even invested in the host country to develop a better survival strategy for the well-being of their strong tied networks.

Apart from the poor migrants we have also discussed the transnational practices of the professionals and businessmen. We have seen that the nature and likelihood of the flow of ideas and information performed at this level are affected, controlled and guided by the dominant socio-cultural models, cultural constructions and power relations. While on the one hand, the pseudo patron client relationships or weak ties between the businessmen and poor migrants are nurtured by the flow of ideas on political clientele in the host country, the

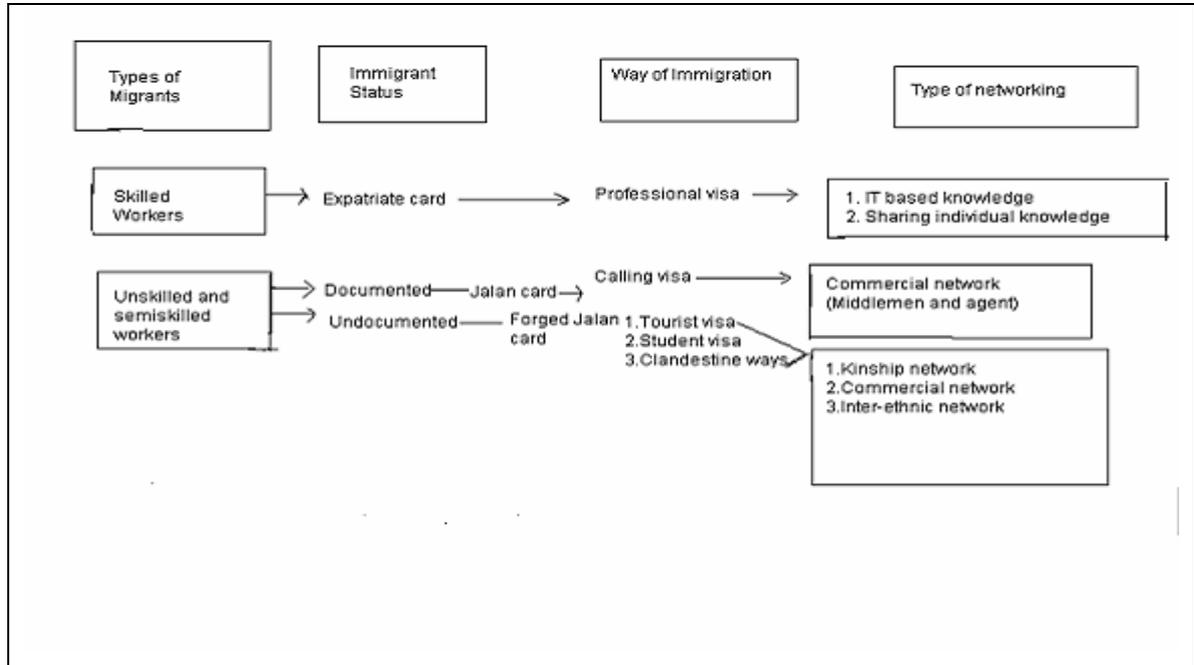
⁴⁸¹ Henrietta L. Moore. 1995. Polity Press. *Feminism and Anthropology*, p-12-15.

professionals on the other hand, sanction their domination and contribution as well in the field of science and technology utilizing IT based transnational contacts and networks. Since within these diverse pattern of transnational practices along with the flow of ideas and information, money, goods and migrants are also brought and transferred as well pursuing both the formal and informal networks, we will try to unpack the nature of these in the next section.

2.3 “Channelling”⁴⁸² Money, Migrants and Goods

Figure 5.1 depicts some channels that are followed by migrants to gain entrance into Malaysia. In fact, we have already discussed in chapter three⁴⁸³ the five ways that are followed by the Bangladeshi migrant respondents to immigrate into the receiving country. These are: (1) calling visas (49%) managed by manpower agents, (2) tourist visas (33%) managed by manpower agents, (3) student visas (7%) managed by manpower agents, (4) tourist visas (10%) managed by kinship networks and (5) professional visas (2%) obtained through ICT based networking.

Figure 5.1: Transnational “Flow” of Migrants



Source: Own Compilation from survey and interview data

⁴⁸² Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico, p- 153.

⁴⁸³ Please find the discussion of chapter three under the sub-heading ‘Migrants’ Ways of Immigration and Networking’.

Out of these diverse patterns of immigration the first three points denote the roles of commercial networking that are regulated on the basis of monetary transaction between the transnational actors of origin and host country. It has already been described and analysed in the previous chapters that the emigration act forces semi-skilled and un-skilled documented workers to obtain calling visas through their weak tied networks with nearby middlemen and agents of their homeland (Bangladesh). Thus networks, developed through monetary exchange in the home country assist these migrants to immigrate to Malaysia. In this scenario merchants play the roles of “transnational liaisons”⁴⁸⁴. In this case both the merchants and the workers form ties out of commercial necessity. In fact amongst the documented respondents, 85% were noticed to have spent more than two hundred thousand BDT⁴⁸⁵ in order to buy services from their weak tied networks cum manpower agents. In fact, it can be observed that manpower agents utilize their manpower businesses as one of their sources of income, while workers contact them to improve their economic situation.

Apart from immigrating on calling visas, migrants also manage student and tourist visas as well as migrate to the host country through clandestine ways. Their weak tied networks (mostly manpower agents cum businessmen) play a pivotal role in this regard. Unlike the previous one, in these cases migrants stay in the receiving country as undocumented workers. They are considered as undocumented workers due to their lack of work permits (these are supposed to be obtained through immigrating on calling visas). Since they enter into the country without having any legal work permit, they therefore continue their dependency on the manpower agents cum businessmen to purchase forged work permits and also visas. They rely on these commercial labour brokers in order to bypass migration policy.

Manpower agents not only manage tourist visas and play the role of guarantors of their clients, but also help some respondents to come and work on student visas. In the later case they contact with their ethnic and inter-ethnic business counterparts of different private colleges who assist clients to obtain student visas, even though some of them lack any educational attainment from their home country. It is noteworthy that instead of developing transnational cement through the primordial bonds of country brotherhood, all these transactions are organized through monetary transactions within the transnational channels of

⁴⁸⁴ Min Zhou and Rebecca Kim. 2006. The Paradox of Ethnicization and Assimilation: The Development of Ethnic Organizations in the Chinese Immigrant Community in the United States, p. 232, retrieved http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/zhou/pubs/Zhou_Kim_Paradox.pdf.

⁴⁸⁵ Bangladeshi currency.

manpower agents, their associates in different institutions (e.g. ethnic enterprises, private colleges in Malaysia, the immigration department, the Bangladesh high commission etc.) as well as the networks of semi-skilled and un-skilled workers.

Besides, there is another option in the figure that represents those migrants that manage their entry into the country on tourist visas via kinship networks. Most (73%) of them stay and work in the host country as un-skilled and semi-skilled workers. Bangladeshi relatives and friends, who are already there in the receiving country, assist them in this regard and also strong tied transnational networks between origin and host countries play significant roles. However, instead of commercial transaction, kinship based moral obligations enable these respondents to come. It is remarkable that though at present most of them (80%) are documented workers, in the very beginning they entered on tourist visas with their relatives' assistance and started a life as undocumented workers. In the interview-survey it was found that though kinship networks showed them the way to migrate, said networks failed to provide jobs directly. Referring to the discussion of chapter three it can be memorized again that the relatives who have brought them into the receiving country, also introduce them to Bangladeshi agents and then after paying service charges⁴⁸⁶ they receive their jobs. They also help them to develop inter-ethnic networks with the local people of the receiving country.

Consequently, the entry into the host country on tourist visas via kinship networks also involves the flow of money (like the previous instances). In all these cases we notice the roles of manpower agents or in other words weak tied networks that minimize the emigration and immigration policies of origin and host countries and open scope for the migrants to come and work in exchange of monetary transactions. Or in other words, they act as a transnational node between the Bangladeshi workers and Malaysian employers pursuing documented and undocumented channels in which the flow of money within these transnational hubs plays crucial roles.

However, the skilled migrants who have arrived and managed jobs in the host country on the basis of the ICT based networking with the other professionals of the host country do not resemble the channels and the associated costs followed and maintained by un-skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers. Instead of the flow of money the flow of ideas and information

⁴⁸⁶ 84% respondents agreed that they paid service charge to Bangladeshi agents for their job, work permit and passport renewal.

between the origin and receiving countries have contributed significantly in this case⁴⁸⁷ (which was defined as social remittance in the previous section).

Therefore, we notice that modern technology adds a new dimension to the transnational migration of skilled workers and their initiatives for higher socio-economic mobility are guided by their embedded realities. In fact, not only the knowledge networks of professionals, but also other clusters of the respondents' transnational practices are noticed and explained as the result of their multi-dimensionally embedded realities. It is noteworthy that along with money and migrants, different types of goods are also brought and transferred within these transnational hubs that significantly impact the lifestyles and "lifestyling"⁴⁸⁸ of the migrants and their families and friends of the origin and receiving countries.

The idea that the rising middle class (of Indonesia) pursues a "consumption-oriented lifestyle" and emphasizes Western consumerism for the accumulation of prestige and social status has already been argued by Gerke in her seminal article. Providing empirical evidence she explains that within the Indonesian social context the consumption pattern is considered a more significant criteria than any of the other socio-economic characteristics to monitor any one's social ranking. Evaluating "modernity and urban lifestyles" as significant social resources for self and collective identity she compares the situation of Indonesia with the developed countries and shows some differences regarding the culture of consumerism. Being the citizens of an underdeveloped country even though this particular class (of Indonesians) was too poor to maintain a standard livelihood along the lines of global consumerism practices, they still could not refrain themselves from evaluating others on the basis of their consumption pattern. And those who failed to uphold a middle class life could not avoid social ideology and hence tried to maintain the symbolic lifestyles of that class. Applying the term "lifestyling", Gerke explained the symbolic dimension of consumerism in which the persuasion of "virtual" consumerism instead of the real one is more prominent due to their shaky economic position.

In fact, this type of consumption oriented lifestyle and lifestyling is also seen during the field research. There migrants and the families of their homeland try to accumulate social honour

⁴⁸⁷ Find section 'flow of ideas and information'.

⁴⁸⁸ Solvay Gerke. 2000. *Global Lifestyles under Local Conditions: the New Indonesian Middle Class*, p- 137, in Chua Beng Huat (ed.), *Consumption in Asia*. London: Routledge.

through the adoption of cosmopolitan goods and commodities into their life. It is found that the goods are brought into the receiving society and sent to the homeland as well for the personal use of migrants, as gift items and even for business dealings. For example, migrants bring seeds with them while they travel from Bangladesh to Malaysia or inform the new migrants to bring these items along with Bangladeshi spices, clothes and other goods. To buy these required items they sometimes visit Bangladeshi entrepreneurs and also sell their produced goods and food items at a cheaper rate, if they have enough supply. The businessmen, on the other, know the tastes and ideology of Bangladeshi migrants because they are also Bangladeshis (by birth). Besides, they have been socialized and brought up in Bangladesh. Consequently, they import Bangladeshi spices, pickles, puffed rice, different types of cakes, ready-made garments like “*panajabi*”, “*fotua*”, “*salwar kamij*”, “*shari*”, “*churi*”, items for religious practices like “*tasbih*” or amusement items like movies, dramas, music videos etc. utilizing formal and informal channels.

They also send Malaysian food items like “*noodles*”, “*paratas*”, “*rotichanai*” (hand made bread) and spices for the preparation of “*nasi lemak*” (a kind of rice, normally eaten at breakfast), “*tom yam*” (a kind of soup), “*nasi-goreng ayam*” (fried rice with chicken) etc. to Bangladesh. Both Bangladeshi and Malaysian agents are recruited by well-to-do businessmen for this kind of import-export business. Through the maintenance of regular correspondence with their Bangladesh-based local agents over phone they update themselves regarding the market condition and taste of Bangladeshi buyers. Thus, utilizing transnational networks, these businessmen not only continue business, but also contribute to the development of a hybrid or mixed pattern of cultural practices in Bangladesh. This situation may remind us of Appadurai’s notes on Transnational Anthropology. According to him,

“Yet most residents of Bombay are ambivalent about the Arabs there, for the flip side of their presence is the absent friends and kinsfolk earning big money in the Middle East and bringing back both money and luxury commodities to Bombay and other cities in India. Such commodities transform consumer taste in these cities.”⁴⁸⁹

Since in Bangladesh the local people, for example, migrants’ families, relatives and neighbours put a high social value on international migration to Malaysia due to its better

⁴⁸⁹ Arjun Appadurai. 1998. University Of Minnesota Press. Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, p- 49-50.

economic position (relative to their home country), they attempt to apply Malaysian food practices in their everyday lives. They believe if they incorporate Malaysian culture into their lives, it will enable them to accumulate cultural capital without being converted into actual migrants because they have followed the food habit of a country where their nearest and dearest ones are living and working for a better future. Therefore, through the persuasion of symbolic migration or in other words, “lifestylying” migrants help themselves to be considered more knowledgeable, globally oriented persons in comparison to their surroundings of relatives, friends and neighbours who fail to buy these goods for consumption. Thus, without changing their identities as real migrants some of the homeland residents still find ways to convert into virtual migrants and remain connected with two countries simultaneously. Consequently, they are able to achieve social honour for themselves and for their strong tied networks.

Therefore, on the one hand we notice that transnational migration for higher socio-economic mobility creates cultural mobility, concomitant diversity as well as hybridization within the Bangladeshi migrants and their inter-ethnic counterparts of the host country. On the other hand, we also see the reflection of Jan Nederveen Pieterse’s arguments that the conceptualization of globalization in the plural sense assists us to avoid essentialized interpretations of globalization as Westernization.⁴⁹⁰ In fact, we have noticed that a hybridization process is ascertained as the outcome of transnational migration, social networking and other forms of transnational correspondences between Bangladesh and Malaysia. This process enables me to presume that globalization not necessarily means Westernization in every corner of the world.

Instead in the case of Bangladeshi respondents, hybridization is being developed and nurtured through diverse forms of transnational engagement, networks, inter-ethnic marriages as well as flow of information, ideas, money, migrants and goods within the transnational hubs of origin and receiving countries. And at the same time, we have also found that hybridization is not always an indicator of resistance or anti-hegemonic behaviour towards the domination of the nation-states (both origin and receiving countries) and the powerful socio-cultural models. Rather it (hybridization) is found as the outcome of an adaptation process (of poor migrants)

⁴⁹⁰ Jan Nederveen Pieterse. 1994. Globalization as Hybridisation, p- 161. *International Sociology*, Vol. 9, No. 2, p-163.

and strategies for upward mobility (of well-off entrepreneurs) against their embedded realities. Consequently, highlighting the case of the ‘Bangla Bazaar’, in the next section we will try to explore the nature of the hybridization processes of the Bangladeshi Diaspora more vividly.

3. Formation of Transnational Spaces, Development of Hybrid Culture, Businesses and Identities in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ of Kuala Lumpur—A Case Study among Bangladeshi Migrants

Referring to the discussion of chapter three the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ can be depicted as a “hotspot” of Bangladeshis, in which a certain form of transnational business system has been developed. The presence of Bangladeshis, from workers to professionals, for economic, social and recreational purpose, is very common in this area. Migrants visit the Bazaar at any time of the day, especially in holidays. They do this for upward social mobility and also to find alternative ways of survival in the host country. The place is noteworthy not only for intra-ethnic weak ties and business dealings, but also for inter-ethnic strong and weak tied relationships.⁴⁹¹

A type of commercial networking is developed there within and outside the community, where well-off migrants set up their quasi formal enterprises by the assistance of local people. Though the actual owners of these enterprises are Bangladeshi well-off immigrants or businessmen because of the local institutional framework⁴⁹² on ethnic enterprises, they establish this business as a joint venture. In this context, on what ground these enterprises are addressed as quasi formal businesses, readers may want to know. We will come to this point later while explaining transnational business dealings and their organizational patterns under the heading ‘transnational business space’.

The term ‘Bangla Bazaar’ has been coined by migrants; it indicates the market place of Bangladeshis. In Malaysia, the local term for Bangladeshi migrants is ‘Bangla’ and in Bangladesh the word ‘bazaar’ means a hotspot where the flow of people, goods and money is very frequent. Peoples visit this place for necessary shopping and also to say ‘hi’ to their

⁴⁹¹ Please find appendix 7 to see the intra and inter-ethnic get togethers of the Bangladeshi Diaspora.

⁴⁹² Foreigners can be the owners of property, but they have to take a local partner (at least 51% share of Bumiputera), who is a citizen.

friends whom they may not find in any other place. Outside the state borders of Bangladesh, in the busy city of Kuala Lumpur, where local transport enterprises and many kinds of communication systems are very common, Bangladeshi migrants have opened up business centres. Starting from collecting Bangladeshi newspapers to the probability of the withdrawal of ban on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, all kinds of information can be gathered here.

The display of Bangladeshi music videos, cinemas or dramas in the Bangladeshi-Malay or Bangladeshi-Indian joint-ventured shops is also very common.⁴⁹³ A kind of combative and collaborative liaison is developed between and within the groups, where business dealings through the utilization of networks and dissemination of information play major roles. These businessmen always try to update themselves about the ongoing situation of their home country and the families of the migrants. Through this they try to prove their concern for the well-being of the motherland. They also sell Bangladeshi goods along with the continuation of the “*hundy*” and manpower businesses that help the powerful merchant cum labour brokers to enrich their business.

Moreover, a kind of restaurant business has been developed by these entrepreneurs, targeting the Bangladeshi workers and students. These restaurants are also utilized as spaces of celebration for Bangladeshi national days and religious and other cultural festivals. Migrant Bangladeshis flock together to free themselves from the feelings of loneliness, to arrange better jobs, renew their work permits or to find ways to bring their relatives and friends (as workers) in through the assistance of manpower agents and middlemen (businessmen).

The ‘Bangla Bazaar’ is transnational, because migrant Bangladeshis have created a social field outside the geographic, cultural and political borders of Bangladesh that connect both the origin and host societies. Although it is outside the national boundary, the immigrants have formulated a kind of business network and social relationship that binds together both the country of origin and the receiving country. This process of two-way relationship is sustained by the regular flow of information, remittance, goods (through businesses), people (either as migrant workers or through short visits), communication channels (through phones, letters,

⁴⁹³ Please find appendix 7.

internet, newspapers etc.) and cultural practices (celebration of Bangladeshi national days like death anniversary of national leader, Independence Day, and cultural festivals like the first day of Bengali new year etc.).

In this transnational space the maintenance of social, political, economic and ideological attachment both with the receiving and home countries can be seen. Though the well-off (businessmen, professionals) migrants are affiliated to the host country through business partnerships with the locals, inter-ethnic marriages and concomitant family bindings, they are still attached to their families, neighbours and hometowns of Bangladesh. At the same time, for the sake of their business enterprise, crossing the border of community cohesion, networking increases the incorporation of local people of that particular social setting. As has been noticed before (during my field research) the introduction of hybrid identities and culture among well-off migrants and their next generation is highly plausible.

The semi-skilled and un-skilled labourers (or unemployed migrants), who are not legally allowed to integrate in the local society and are forced to live without their family members, appeal for the compassion of their strong tied networks and visit this place for the maintenance of regular transnational correspondences. They sometimes visit the 'Bangla Bazaar' to send remittance and gift items to their relatives and friends and sometimes also to collect information.

This type of regular transnational correspondence and anti-integration policy of the host country, however, cannot prohibit them from socio-culturally integrating into the receiving society. From the discussion of chapter four it is known to us that their every day arenas of engagement with the local people and other migrants as room-mates, house-mates or co-workers create a space, where they can share their values and participate in every day cultural practices. And hence they get the chances to influence each other's lifestyles, language and even, religious practices. Moreover, the common religious background (which we already discussed in chapter four) adds a new dimension in this regard.

Along with these everyday forms of local integration, their visit to the 'Bangla Bazaar' as strategies for survival and also for transnational correspondences facilitates the formation of

hybrid culture because of the hybrid nature of this transnational space. For more clarification, let us consider some examples explained under the following sub-headings:

- Case one: Transnational Physical, Social, Cultural and Mental Spaces
- Case two: Transnational Business Space

3.1 Case One: Transnational Physical, Social, Cultural and Mental Spaces

“Flux, mobility, recombination and emergence have become favored themes as globalization and transnationality frequently offer the contexts for our thinking about culture. We now look for test sites of theory where some, at least, of the inhabitants are creoles, cosmopolitans, or cyborgs, where communities are diasporas, and where boundaries do not really contain, but are more interestingly crossed. Borderlands are often where the action is, and hybridity and collage are among our preferred words for characterizing qualities in people and their products.”⁴⁹⁴

In fact, if any one “strolls around” (Petra Dannecker, 2005) within the hot spots of the Bangladeshi migrants, like for example, their living areas, common places for religious practices, restaurants or enterprises, he or she may notice that actually Hannerz is right in defining the state of culture and people today by the notions of hybridity and “creolisation”. These transnational spaces can be defined as hybrid on the ground that these have been constructed by the reflection of the Bangladeshi lifestyle and its combination with local lifestyles, though migrants live geographically apart. Actually, Bangladeshi migrants not only change their residences and try to adjust to a new country, they also bring along with them Bangladeshi social and cultural lifestyles and continue these through the maintenance of regular transnational contacts. Therefore, a ‘mixed or hybrid migrant culture’ has developed which is noticed as well in the study areas that on the one hand help Bangladeshis to adapt and survive in a foreign country and on the other, provide opportunities for long-term stay or settlement (as they can enrich their future life).

Migrants belong to and visit these hybrid transnational spaces in order to accumulate local knowledge on the probable options for survival and upward mobility, where some of them become successful, while others remain unsuccessful. Consequently, in this section we will engage in a description of the physical, social, cultural, and mental forms of transnational

⁴⁹⁴ Ulf Hannerz. WPTC-2K-02. Department of Social Anthropology. Stockholm University. *Flows, Boundaries and Hybrids: Keywords in Transnational Anthropology*, p-2.

spaces and in the next section transnational business spaces to explore organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora at this age of globalization.

In fact, albeit, physically migrants live in houses provided by the factory or rent Malaysian houses adjacent to their factory compounds, however, inside the house they address each other applying Bangladeshi kinship terminology like “*soto vai*” (younger brother), “*boro vai*” (elder brother), “*chacha miah*” (uncle) etc. Within their house-based intra-ethnic intimate networks that can be defined as strong ties, they show respect to the elders and affection to the juniors. This resembles the Bangladeshi social life. For example, after visiting a house of Bangladeshi migrants in Penang, it was found that the junior migrants helped their aged housemate to make the rooms clean, wash utensils and even taste Bangladeshi cooked food although there was no contribution from that person to accomplish those domestic tasks. In this context, if we refer to the discussion of chapter four we can see that based on the close social networks, migrants try to adapt to the new environment and develop tacit knowledge on how to combat any kind of risk that may come from the Tamil Indian robbers or Indonesians or even, from Bangladeshi opponent group members. This instance of fellow feelings for friends and close relatives and the developed cultural practices within these networks are common in the Bangladeshi social life⁴⁹⁵.

These kinds of kinship ideology are nurtured and transferred to the study areas through regular correspondence with homeland. There people are morally and socially obliged to fulfil duties to their close ties (comprised of consanguine and affine as well as friends and neighbours). Since in the receiving country migrants are obliged as well to ensure the accomplishment of responsibilities for their strong tied networks as they are in Bangladesh, we may state that the geographical distance cannot destroy the Bangladeshi pattern of social and cultural life. On having noticed its (Bangladeshi social and cultural life) reflection on the close ties of migrants, we may identify their homes in the receiving country as the domains of a ‘transnational physical, cultural and social space’. Their psychological state, moreover, can be defined as ‘transnational mental space’. In their mind they connect home and abroad together while emphasizing the kinship ideology of Bangladesh and practicing this ideology within their networks of strong ties (in the receiving country).

⁴⁹⁵ This can be remembered here referring to our discussion of Iqbal’s memories on his migration to Malaysia (in chapter four).

Within their (transnational) physical space migrants enjoy Bangladeshi food, attire and amusement items along with the maintenance of strong tie based kinship networks. They bring Bangladeshi newspapers, magazines, novels, clothes, utensils, spices and other food items with them or buy some from Bangladeshi enterprises that not only represent a transnational physical, cultural and social space, but also a business space. In the same way, the interior design of migrants' houses, restaurants and other enterprises represents Bangladeshi social, cultural and religious life. For example, some of the migrants decorate their homes displaying their parents' photographs and Bangladeshi landscapes over the wall, while in their business enterprises the businessmen display photos of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet of Bangladesh. The Exposition of Bangladeshi maps, citations from the holy Quran or speeches of Bangladeshi national leaders (like "Banga Bandhu"⁴⁹⁶ or Ziaur Rahman⁴⁹⁷) are also not uncommon in these physical spaces.

Nevertheless, these spaces not only stand for transnational contacts and their reflection on the lifestyle of Bangladeshi migrants but also represent hybridism in their everyday cultural, social and religious practices. In fact, if we pay attention to the survey data we may notice that Bangladeshi migrants not only live and work among themselves but also with other ethnic communities. Their everyday interactions with Tamils, Pakistanis, Indonesians, Nepalese and even Malay workers as housemates, neighbours or work mates open different paths for the introduction of hybrid identities and culture. This type of hybridization occurs on the ground that the migrants' social relationships, religious behaviour and everyday livelihoods are influenced by these common interactions (inter-ethnic) and embedded realities.

Regarding this if we concentrate on the spoken language of Bangladeshi workers we may notice a mixture of Bengali, Malay, Hindi and Urdu dialects that may remind us of examples of the "creole languages and linguistics"⁴⁹⁸. It is found that migrants address the local police as "*mamu*", Tamil Indian "*halal*" (sacred) restaurants as "*mamu restaurant*" having been influenced by Tamil dialects. These denominations not only represent a mixture of words from different languages but also bear an internal meaning which is very relevant for this

⁴⁹⁶ Literally the word "Banga Bandhu" refers to such a person who can be considered as a real friend of the country Bangladesh and its citizens. In Bangladesh this term indicates Shekh Mujib Ur Rahman, the father of the nation. In order to memorize his contribution in the Liberation war of 1971 and the establishment of the country as an independent nation through a victory in that war against West Pakistani rulers, he is addressed as the friend of mass people of Bangladesh.

⁴⁹⁷ Ziaur Rahman is one of the former Presidents of Bangladesh.

⁴⁹⁸ Jan Nederveen Pieterse. 1994, p- 170.

particular social setting. When a restaurant is described as “*mamu restaurant*” people understand that the restaurant is owned by Tamil Muslims and only “*halal*” foods are sold there. In the same way, the word “*mamu*” is uttered by migrants (both Bangladeshis and Tamils) to warn their co-workers about the presence of police who may want to see their work permits or ask for a bribe if they fail to show the required documents. Consequently, when the term “*mamu*” is mentioned within these transnational spaces, undocumented workers try to leave the place as soon as possible to avoid any kind of unwanted “*hassle*” (“*jhamela*”).

In fact, in Bengali the word “*mamu*” stands for the maternal uncle. Within the Bangladeshi kinship system the relationship with the maternal uncle is very close. He is considered to be a protector of his sister(s)’s children. But in the context of these transnational spaces the original meaning of the word is changed having been motivated by Tamil workers. Rather, it takes a distinctly satiric form with regards to the local police. This can be defined as a kind of resistance of the poor and less privileged migrant workers against any kind of harassment.

Since these workers remain in a helpless situation because of their undocumented status and have no way of avoiding immigration rules they follow this strategy. Like this, two words from Bahasa Melayu are utilized by workers as a symbolic survival strategy that may be defined as a “virtual”⁴⁹⁹ survival strategy of the poor undocumented migrant workers. To indicate an immigration raid, workers say “*angin-panas*” (scorching wind). In Malaysia these words refer to the warm weather, but within these transnational hubs the original meaning is transformed (by the migrants) into another one. Bangladeshi and other workers utter these words (while they talking in their mother tongue or in Bahasa) to assist all of their strong tied networks so that they can rescue themselves from unwanted deportation or jail. In fact, like the symbolic consumption of poor Indonesians, engaged in to enjoy the “middle class touch”⁵⁰⁰ in their life, as we see in Gerke (explained under the term “lifestyling”), the virtual survival strategies enable these migrants to overcome their helpless situation with regards to the immigration authorities of the receiving country. As a result, we notice creolisation within the language of the migrant workers, where not only Bangladeshis but also undocumented workers from different nationalities jointly participate, preserve and transfer these creole words within the transnational hubs of origin and receiving societies.

⁴⁹⁹ Gerke. 2000, p- 137.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid: p- 146-147.

In the same way, the Bangladeshi version of Islamic rites take the shape of a hybrid or mixed pattern of Islamic practices due to its combination with cultural practices of the other Muslim communities of that particular social setting, such as Malays, Indonesians, Indian Muslims and Pakistanis. For instance, if we concentrate on Kalim Miah's marital practices we see a mixture of Malay rites along with Bangladeshi ones (something already discussed in chapter four). Like this businessman other Bangladeshi workers who conduct inter-ethnic marriages, have to follow this type of combined pattern of marital rituals such as attending 'courses on marriage', paying the full "*mahr*" to their wife, wearing "*baju kurung*" (traditional dress) etc.

Besides, if anyone visits "*surau*" and "*halal*" restaurants he/she may notice a cosmopolitan pattern of religious practices. People come and enjoy Islamic rites together, where not only Bangladeshis, but also Pakistanis, Indonesians, Malays jointly participate. They jointly contribute to the building of a Bangladeshi mosque in the Taman campus of Johor Bahru. During "*Ramadan*" (a sacred ritual of fasting among Muslims), along with the Saudi Arabian dates, Malay cakes and "*minum*" (drinks), Pakistani desserts and Bangladeshi food items are prepared and sold as "*Iftar*" (interrupting the fasting of "*Ramadan*" after sunset with snacks and cold drinks once the "imam" has declared "*ajan*") in the "*halal*" restaurants. This can be identified as an aspect of cosmopolitan Islam.

Apart from these common forms of hybrid socio-cultural practices-- performed within these transnational spaces, there are other spaces, say market areas, where this type of cosmopolitanism can be seen. Mydin, one of the popular supermarket chains of Malaysia can be quoted here for instance. One of its branches is situated in the 'Bangla Bazaar' area, where not only Indian cosmetics, music videos and movies, Saudi Arabian Suitcases and Malaysian electronics goods are available, but also Bangladeshi dresses can be found. These types of mixed or global patterns of goods are also sold in the transnational business spaces, established by Bangladeshi entrepreneurs along with their local counterparts. Let us discuss this further in the next section.

3.2 Case Two: Transnational Business Space

Transnational business space mainly refers to the market areas of the Bangladeshi migrant community where ordinary migrants flock together in order to buy their daily groceries and other commodities. They also come here to find ways to sell their labour and earn money

more profitably. Migrants consider these spaces and its actors (comprised of entrepreneurs, their business partners and other visitors) as a significant information pool that not only enables them to find ways for upward mobility in the host country, but also facilitates them to travel to other countries and manage jobs there. They also bring their home-based relatives and friends into the receiving country through the assistance of well-off people who have constructed these business spaces and still continue their actions within these zones.

However, these spaces are visited not only for the daily supplies and other means of livelihood, but also to transfer money and gifts to the homeland. Thus we can see that albeit these markets are developed in the host country, the activities cross the border of that area and connect two or three countries concurrently. Consequently, we may define these undertakings as transnational business activities and the physical spaces, where these actions are conducted, can be labelled as transnational business spaces.

If we concentrate on the business networks of these enterprises as well as manpower and “*hundy*” businesses, we may notice that the activities fasten not only migrants and their families of the origin and receiving countries, but also many other peoples from Asia, Europe and Australia. In fact, these business dealings are performed as joint ventures. Within these transnational business spaces along with Bangladeshi businessmen, people from the host country, their counterparts in the neighbouring countries as well as recruited agents in different parts of the world function as “nodes”,⁵⁰¹(s). Modern means of communication such as improved transport, telecommunication as well as internet facilities help the actors to remain connected and continue their commercial activities. Let us explore this in detail. This in turn may enable us to understand transnational business spaces and their activities more clearly.

4. The Manpower, “*Hundy*” and the other Business Networks of Kalim Miah

It is known to us (from our discussion in chapter four) that Kalim Miah is the owner of a restaurant called ‘Prabashi Kedai Makanan’ (foreign restaurant). This restaurant is in the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ area. Kalim Miah has rented three floors of a building from one of his Malay friends. His Malay wife assisted him in this regard. The restaurant is located upstairs while an

⁵⁰¹ Stephen Vertovec. 2001. Transnational social formations: Towards conceptual cross-fertilization, p. 5.

import-export business enterprise is established downstairs in the building. The building stands near the main road of the Kotaraya bus stoppage. This consequently attracts many exhausted migrants to come, talk and have refreshments in the restaurant. In the shop and restaurant buyers enter mainly during holidays and also during weekdays whenever they have free time and feel the need.

Moreover, adjacent to the restaurant, a “*surau*”, named ‘Bangla surau’ has also been founded by Kalim to attract further people. He has been successful in this undertaking on the ground that in his “*surau*” not only Bangladeshi migrant workers but also well-off entrepreneurs, both Malaysian and Bangladeshis, come for daily prayer and to participate in religious rituals like “*milad mahfil*” (a religious assembly to celebrate birthdays, death anniversaries etc.), “*janaja*” (a prayer for pardon of a deceased soul before burial of the body) etc.

If anybody enters his business enterprises she/he may notice a mixed pattern of saleable items displayed in the separate shelves and different corners of the shop. These places contain different types of cosmopolitan goods that include Saudi Arabian suitcases and prayer-mats, DVDS of Bolly wood movies, CDs and DVDS of Bangladeshi (and West Bengal as well) dramas, movies and music, Bangladeshi (mainly Daily Ittefaq and Daily Inqilab) and Malaysian (mainly Star, New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia) daily newspapers, Indian and Bangladeshi cosmetics, ornaments and dress-materials, Malaysian noodles, green vegetables, juice and fishes, Pakistani mangoes as well as Bangladeshi spices, “*biri*” (a kind of cigarette preferred by un-skilled and semi-skilled workers), cheaper calling cards for long distance phone call etc. This situation may create the necessity to quote Appadurai who nicely describes the nature of cosmopolitanism in the markets of Bombay. In his own words,

“In these gray markets (a coinage that allows me to capture the quasi-legal characteristic of such settings), some members of Bombay’s middle classes and its lumpen proletariat can buy goods, ranging from cartons of Marlboro cigarettes to Old Spice shaving cream and tapes of Madonna. Similar gray routes, often subsidized by moon-lighting sailors, diplomats, and airline stewardesses, who get to move in and out of the country regularly, keep the gray markets of Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta filled with goods not only from the West, but also from the Middle East, Hong Kong, and Singapore.”⁵⁰²

⁵⁰² Appadurai, 1998, p- 50.

However, concerning Bangladeshi migrants though the reason for departure is also the supply of cosmopolitan goods, it still slightly differs from Appadurai's stand on the ground that in most cases the target people for these transnational business spaces are workers, whereas well-off entrepreneurs are the organizers. Through a series of interviews and regular visiting in the 'Bangla Bazaar' area I found out that goods are selected on the basis of the taste of buyers. This taste varies according to their class, status and religious identities. For example, "biri" is preferred by semi-skilled and un-skilled workers due to its low price. Consequently, instead of stocking cigarettes for the well-off migrants, the owners supply "biri" for the economically insolvent migrants and students (as well) who make up the majority of their customers. In the same way, amusement items like Indian and Bangladeshi CD and DVDS are kept in stock targeting those semi-skilled and un-skilled workers, that are preferred not only by the Bangladeshis, but also by Nepalese and Malay workers.

However, Kalim's enterprises not only have cosmopolitan market goods, but also employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds. And to get regular supply of goods he has appointed local agents in different countries. For example, he contacts his Saudi Arabian counterparts over phone to import goods from that country. In the same way, he has agents in different districts of Bangladesh who assist him to collect and transfer information, goods and money. To ease his business he has made links with travel agencies like 'Abadi aviation Services Sdn Bhd'. Along with selling air tickets these agencies also play roles as cross-border business channels. Since Kalim Miah has developed business networks with some of these travel agencies and converted into a regular customer, he receives concessions for purchasing flight tickets, which is beneficial for his manpower business. In the same way, these agencies enable him to receive a regular supply of goods from different countries at a cheaper rate.

Now, if we concentrate on the organizational pattern of these enterprises we may notice that though Kalim Miah is the only investor of these enterprises he has both Malaysian and Bangladeshi business partners. His wife is his local partner. Besides, he has brought in his two brothers as employees. His youngest brother is the managing director of his restaurant while Kalim's Malay wife runs the overall business under her business license. His immediate junior brother works as a skilled-employee in Kalim's import-export business shop, whereas Kalim's position is that of the managing director. Like his restaurant business, the owner of this shop is also Kalim's wife.

It is noteworthy that albeit Kalim and his brothers are shown as employees and his wife as the owner of these business enterprises, the actual investment has come from Kalim Miah. In order to achieve facilities from the local authorities while at the same time avoiding any kind of restrictions that are usually imposed on foreign investors, Kalim's Malay wife is formally the owner. This strategy enables them to avoid the high taxes that are normally demanded of immigrant entrepreneurs.

The strategy, moreover, helps Kalim and his brothers to achieve permanent settlement and gain profits (as well) through informal business networks. As their business license is managed under a local's name, it is considered a citizen's business. Therefore, they do not need to pay the same high charges as Dabir Miah. For an instance, Kalim's wife only pays RM 70 as yearly instalment to the government and RM 520 for the business license, whereas Dabir, another business entrepreneur, needs to pay at least ten or twelve times that amount. He has to pay this amount due to his joint business partnership with a Tamil Indian, whereas Kalim's business is conducted under a Malay partner's business license, who is actually his (Kalim) wife.

In fact, generally, tax is fixed on the basis of the total income of the enterprise after deducting each employee's monthly wages. However, in Kalim's shop the required amount of salaries for him and his brothers' posts must be shown to renew his visa. But, practically they are the owners of these organizations and (they) therefore do not demand monthly wages like other employees that are not their strong tied workforce. Having found some of the strong tied networks as employees of his enterprises, he thus manages to gain further profit. In fact, since they are connected with each other through inter-ethnic marital bonds as well as intra-ethnic strong ties, these members maintain their livelihood together under a common roof and belong to the same consumption unit similar to a Bangladeshi family. Consequently, we can state that the upper level managerial body of Kalim's business enterprise is comprised of his informal business networks. Actually, these informal networks are nobody but his intra and inter-ethnic strong ties, where kinship based moral obligations and fellow-feelings motivate them to support his business endeavours, instead of commercial necessities.

Nevertheless, it is known to us that apart from his intra and inter-ethnic kinship networks, a type of commercial networking (weak ties) is also developed by Kalim Miah to run his business enterprises. These networks not only play roles within his host society-based

enterprises, but also work as transnational networks that enable him to continue his import-export business and run “*hundy*” channels smoothly. Hence, his business enterprises can be defined as a ‘quasi formal business initiative’ that is established neither by the sole assistance of the informal networks nor by the formal networks. On the contrary, positions are distributed within his formal and informal networks according to the institutional framework of the host country and also based on the necessity of employees to perform different tasks fruitfully. In this context, employees’ ethnic identities, working abilities and connections with the respective authorities are given preferences as they are believed to carry out responsibilities more productively and to manage or avoid different kinds of hazards.

For example, Kalim’s Malay wife is able to run the business without facing any kind of police harassment. Due to her connections with the authorities she gets forewarned about any police raids that are initiated targeting business organizations. Even, some of the workers who do not have work permits can take shelter there due to her connections with the respective authorities. As a Malaysian citizen she can talk to the police in Bahasa and thus manage to convince them easily if they raise any questions concerning manpower and “*hundy*” businesses. However, apart from her, there are also two other Malay employees whom this researcher met through a regular visit in the restaurant and in the import-export shop. They are recruited in order to deal with the local (Malaysian) customers and also police when Kalim’s wife is not available. Besides, he has five Tamil Indian van-drivers who bring or transfer goods within Kuala Lumpur city and in the nearby areas on behalf of his shop. At the same time, they also help other customers like Bangladeshis and Nepalese workers to remain free from fear or sudden attacks by Tamil Indian robbers while they are on their way to Kalim’s companies. And this is how he tries to keep his business farms free from any kind of risk for un-skilled and semi-skilled workers who may feel attraction and decide to visit these enterprises to transfer money and goods in kind from Malaysia to Bangladesh and vice versa.

Unlike the upper level managerial body of the farm these employees get regular salary from Kalim Miah due to their formal recruitment into the enterprises. They are neither Kalim’s relatives nor country-mates. Besides, some of the undocumented and unemployed Bangladeshi migrants are recruited under the “*pete-vate*”⁵⁰³ system. The undocumented

⁵⁰³These workers are employed in the business enterprises of the well-off merchants where the workers do not receive any kind of regular wage for their services to that organization. Rather, they get free meal and a place to live.

sojourners work in these enterprises as cooks, waiters and also as assistants, while Bangladeshi documented workers perform roles as money collectors from the workers on behalf of Kalim's "*hundy*" business. Since undocumented workers are unable to work in their host country and hence considered "*risky people*" for the employers, they do not receive any salary. Rather, they are told that their employer has appointed them due to common country brotherhood. Kalim is not paying them any salary on the ground that he has already taken risks for them and violated immigration laws by recruiting undocumented workers. However, the documented "*hundy-walas*" and "*dalals*" of Kalim's enterprise receive a regular salary. In their work permits they are shown to be the semi-skilled and un-skilled workers of enterprises instead of addressing them as the "*hundy-walas*" and "*dalals*".

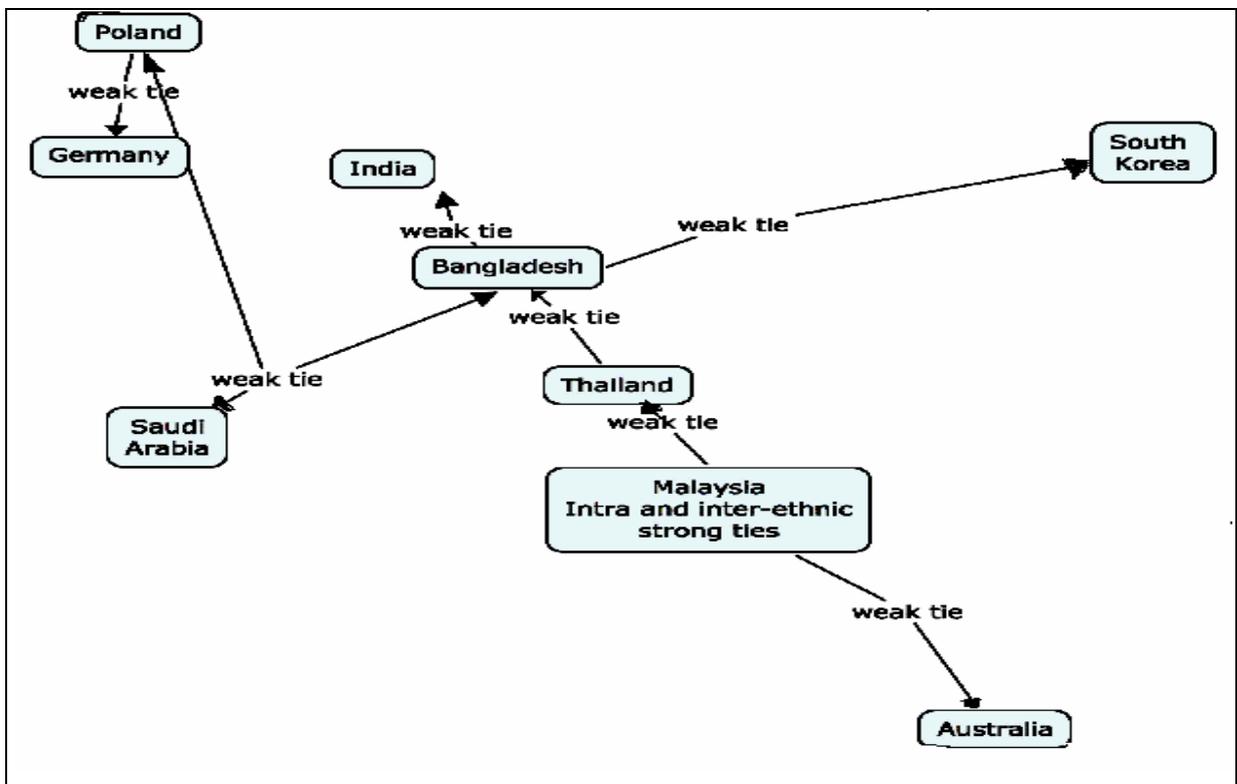
These "*hundy-walas*" and "*dalals*" act as the spokesmen and helping hands of their respective reference group (e.g. Kalim Miah, his Malay wife and his brothers). When other Bangladeshi workers come to Kalim's enterprise to transfer money to their homeland, they (the "*hundy-walas*" and "*dalals*") collect money on behalf of them. Besides, they have a monthly routine of visiting the living areas of Bangladeshi workers, mainly during their holidays, to gather money for the "*hundy*" business. On being interviewed, the respondents, moreover, informed me that whenever they decided to transfer money to their families who were left behind in home country, they visited merchants. Since these merchants had their business networks in their home country, they made phone calls to them and ordered them to deliver the amount in BDT they received from the clients in Malaysia in RM. And in the case of manpower businesses, along with their local counterparts, Bangladeshi "*dalals*" fetch newcomers from the airport and also travel to Thailand to bring workers into Peninsular Malaysia this way. Like these local "*dalals*" Kalim also has business agents in Bangladesh, Singapore, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Australia who not only support him to import and export goods, but also migrant workers from Bangladesh to Malaysia and from Malaysia to other countries. Thus, he is able to continue his shadow economic activities like "*hundy*" and manpower businesses under the label of his import-export business.

Nonetheless, (through our discussion in chapter four) it is known to us that in Bangladesh, businessmen need to develop a form of patron-client bond with the central political parties and respective ministries as well if they want to obtain manpower business licenses and contracts for labour supply to different countries. Kalim Miah, therefore, is noticed as the party president of an informal political group (in the host country) that is formed according to

one of the central political parties of (his homeland) Bangladesh. Consequently, we may notice that Kalim and his appointed employees form a ‘quasi formal transnational business network’, where Bangladeshi political leaders and ministers (those that issue manpower licenses), businessmen, manpower agents, and local agents of different countries are linked to each other like a chain.

The situation reminds me Lomnitz’s arguments concerning the incorporation of informal exchange networks within formal systems.⁵⁰⁴ The author provides empirical examples in the context of Chile, Mexico and the Soviet Union and argues that “informality” does not represent only traditional economic systems; rather it is a fundamental part of the formal economy. Regarding this she criticized the Weberian analysis that argued that the “rational bureaucratic systems” only stand for formal behaviour. However, though this study is in line with the arguments of Lomnitz, it goes a step further due to its incorporation of the hybrid pattern of transnational business networks. Let us examine these transnational business networks in the following flow-chart.

Figure 5.2: Transnational Networks of a Business Enterprise



Source: Survey and interview data conducted in the origin and host countries

⁵⁰⁴ Larissa Adler Lomnitz. *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 90, No. 1. March 1988. Informal Exchange Networks in Formal Systems: A Theoretical Model, p-42-55.

The above chart depicts the transnational organizational structure of Kalim's business enterprise. It represents the dominant business style of the 'Bangla Bazaar' area, where all merchants echo the same pattern of (joint) business initiatives due to existing business rules for foreigners in Malaysia. In fact, in our discussion of chapter three we have found out that foreigners are allowed to invest in Malaysia, but they have to engage local partners to do so.⁵⁰⁵ Accordingly, Bangladeshi entrepreneurs have set-up their business enterprises either by developing inter-ethnic intimate relationships (strong ties) or (inter-ethnic) commercial networks (weak ties) with natives of Malaysia. Though within Kalim's enterprise, intra (brothers) and inter-ethnic (wife) family members form the core structure, outside of it, his commercial networks, whom we can define as weak ties due to their instrumental relationships, are the main regulators of transnational business endeavours. These commercial ties contribute to the maintenance of the business farm. In fact, (referring to the discussion of the previous section) it is known to us that in the study areas weak ties are developed both with ethnic and inter-ethnic members. These assist the core structure to remain connected with the other commercial networks (weak ties) from different countries, outside of Malaysia.

As a matter of fact, while host society-based informal networks (strong ties) formed by the consanguineal and affinal relatives of Kalim, play the roles of major decision makers, on the other hand, commercial/formal networks (weak ties) help the organizers to transfer goods, money and migrants across different countries. For example, if we pay heed to the "hundy" and manpower businesses, we may notice that his formal networks perform roles as money collectors and labour brokers on behalf of him. Or in other words, instead of direct involvement with these transnational business activities, the businessmen cum manpower agents recruit ethnic and inter-ethnic employees who work for them and receive service charges for doing so. Consequently, the core managerial body of the business enterprise does represent informal business networks. Nonetheless the majority of the business projects rather stand for the formal business networks and therefore, altogether these business networks are defined as 'quasi formal business networks'.

These kinds of business networks moreover are found in a hybrid or creole format that traverses both the ethnic and state boundaries. Hence, instead of identifying these spaces and

⁵⁰⁵Please find the introduction section of "Mixed embeddedness": The socio-economic, political and institutional framework of both the countries of origin and destination, migrants' different social states and internal groupings and the survival strategies of the community of chapter three.

activities only as transnational, we may also mark these as cosmopolitan zones that nurture hybridism not only in business relations, but also in human behaviour, social networks and concomitant survival strategies. And here we may raise the argument of transnationalism, globalization and hybridization (which we discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter). In the light of that discussion let us write the concluding remarks for this chapter. These may assist us to find some guidelines for the understanding of the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora at this age of globalization.

5. Conclusion

Through our discussion in the previous sections we have seen different patterns of transnational activities of migrants. While on the hand, some poor migrants bypass state policies of origin and host countries as a coping strategy, on the other hand, some of the well-off respondents take advantage of it and become channels or nodes for the poor migrants that enable them to immigrate to Malaysia after receiving charges for their services. For example, manpower agents and businessmen have been found practising shadow economic activities within the transnational hubs along with their formal business. The professionals, however, demonstrate quite a different picture of transnational practices that facilitates me to draw a conclusion along the lines of Guarnizo and Mitchell. They claim that the transnational activities of migrants are totally guided and shaped according to their multi-dimensionally embedded realities. Hence, are we not arguing that within the Bangladeshi Diaspora we notice a couple of internal segments on the basis of their embedded realities and coping strategies? Or in other words, focusing on lifestyles and survival strategies can we not argue that there exist multiple diasporas such as the labour diaspora, knowledge diaspora, entrepreneur diaspora and also female diaspora within the Bangladeshi migrant community?

As a matter of fact, it is not likely that migrants always engage in similar lifestyles and develop common transnational bonds on the basis of primordial attachments. Instead, here and in the chapter four we have seen that migrants encounter diverse patterns of realities, facilities as well as obstacles both in the origin and host counties because of their socio-economic position, identities and status. They also negotiate, interact and form intra and inter-ethnic ties with each other as the result of their nature of embeddedness in the ongoing micro and macro level socio-economic, ideological, cultural, political, institutional, and transnational realities. Or in other words, instead of observing a homogeneous outcome of globalization, we have

seen the diverse forms of transnational migration, power relationship, cultural hybridism as well as quasi formal economic behaviour of the respondents. These come into existence as result of the flow of transnational cultural artefacts, ideas, information, human, social and economic capital within the transnational hubs of the origin and receiving countries.

These hybrid patterns of social networks and business endeavours, moreover, are found to be “conscious and successful efforts”⁵⁰⁶ by the merchants to cope with their micro level harsh realities and macro level structural factors (like immigration policies and business laws) of the host country, to which they migrate for a better future. But those others that have failed to develop these types of hybrid social networks need to form ties with successful entrepreneurs and hence they visit the ‘Bangla Bazaar’. Through the analysis of this pattern of vertical networks these ties have been found to in fact be pseudo patron client relationships or in other words, weak ties. Along with these weakly tied networks they also nurture and practice hybridism because of the continuous global flow of money, migrants, commodities, ideas and information within the transnational spaces of the ‘Bangla Bazaar’. Or in other words, whether it is through inter-ethnic ties or in the forms of socio-cultural and economic practices, hybridism is noticed as a common livelihood strategy in the study areas that assists them to integrate and assimilate in Peninsular Malaysia. As a result, in order to understand the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora at this age of globalization, we need to highlight the dynamism and different forms of coping strategies of the migrants as well as the multiple forms of embedded realities, with which migrants are trying to adjust and cope.

While in this chapter we have explored these various forms of embedded realities and the coping strategies of the migrants, in the following chapter we will examine a conceptual overview on the embeddedness, diaspora formation and hybridism of the migrants. The discussion will criticize those ideas that conceptualize immigrants, their social networks and survival strategies by the “closed models” of “structural functionalism”⁵⁰⁷. The idea that migrants living in the receiving society still remain primordial both in the sense of their organizational structure and cultural behaviour is found unconvincing in this study. Rather, we are emphasizing the hybrid pattern of transnational contacts, social networks, survival strategies of Bangladeshi migrants and its reflection on community formation.

⁵⁰⁶ Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith. *The Locations of Transnationalism*, p- 5. In Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith (eds.) *Transnationalism From Below*. Comparative Urban and Community Research, V6-1998. New Brunswick. Transaction Publishers.

⁵⁰⁷ A. R. Radcliffe Brown. 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. London: Cohen.

Chapter Six

Summary and Conclusion: Everyday Realities, Concomitant Survival Strategies and the Hybridization of the Bangladeshi Diaspora

1. Introduction

The subject matters of the previous chapters (chapter two, three, four and five) enable us to know that the study areas and society of the current research represent diverse forms of realities, in which Bangladeshi migrants are embedded in and try to cope with. Their embeddedness is noticed not only as a “structural” and “relational” embeddedness into their own community, but also into the institutional frameworks (such as Immigration, Emigration and Employment Acts, rules for migrant integration, business policy etc.) of the origin and host country. Apart from ideological, socio-cultural, economic, and business related attachments to their home-based strong and weakly tied transnational networks, they are also concurrently associated with the host society-oriented micro and macro level socio-cultural, economic, religious and political systems.

In the receiving society, along with the embeddedness into institutions and intra-ethnic social networks, their everyday arenas of engagement with people from diverse ethnic backgrounds (that are their workmates, roommates, neighbours or simply competitors) open diverse scopes, necessities and realities. Due to these migrants need to develop and maintain (as well) different forms of networks as strategies for survival and also for upward mobility. In fact, we have seen that on the one hand, the migrants’ types of embeddedness determine their realities and on the other, these realities regulate their coping strategies (networks). To encounter, adapt to and manoeuvre in their very diverse realities, which were defined as “mixed embeddedness”⁵⁰⁸ in chapter three, migrants originate different types of networks according to their class, status, gender and religious identities and capabilities. These ties are developed not only within intra-ethnic networks, but also beyond the ethnic and state boundaries. Consequently, their embeddedness can be located and defined as multi-dimensionally

⁵⁰⁸ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun and Jan Rath. 1999. Mixed Embeddedness: (In) formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23 (2), pp. 253-267. See also Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath. 2001. Immigrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies: mixed embeddedness further explored. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 27, No.2: 189-201.

embedded realities that are dealt with through the formation of cross-border and cross cultural (hybrid) networks between the origin and receiving societies.

Or in other words, the concept of mixed embeddedness posited by Kloosterman et al. is modified and then defined as multi-dimensionally embedded realities on the ground that Bangladeshi migrants' nature of embeddedness opens diverse magnitudes or dimensions that are neither homogeneous nor primordial. For example, unlike the entrepreneurs of the Netherlands on whom the authors conducted their study highlighting opportunity structures and informal economic activities, the Bangladeshi Diaspora incorporates entrepreneurs, professionals, semi-skilled and un-skilled documented and undocumented workers as well as unemployed migrants. Since their lives, moreover, are embedded not only in the host country and within their own community, but also outside ethnic and state boundaries, depending on the research findings, I have added two more aspects to the concept of mixed embeddedness. Whereas in the previous concept socio-economic position and concomitant scopes for upward social mobility of immigrant business entrepreneurs (in the Netherlands) was understood emphasizing (1) their embeddedness in their own social network and (2) in the host country's socio-economic and politico-institutional environment, concerning the Bangladeshi community in Peninsular Malaysia, we incorporate two further points, such as: (3) the origin country's socio-economic, politico-institutional structures and (4) the transnational liabilities, contacts and business relationships of the migrants.

In fact, at this age of globalization modern information and communication technology is utilized by the migrants to remain connected with their families and friends back in their home country. As already discussed in chapter five though they live geographically apart, migrants maintain contact with their homeland either directly by visiting or by depending on the ICT. Their contributions to their home countries are also noticed in the forms of economic and social remittances. Apart from this pattern of home-based contacts we have also discussed the 'quasi formal business networks' of the manpower agents cum businessmen that are formulated to continue their transnational businesses. On the basis of these business networks the flow of money, migrants, commodities and information within these transnational hubs becomes more sustained. These various forms of adaptation mechanisms on the one hand generate hybrid transnational identities, cultural practices and spaces among migrants and their families, relatives and friends of home and receiving country. On the other hand they

also initiate a mixed pattern of economic activities such as opening up joint-ventures, selling cosmopolitan goods or practising formal and informal economic activities simultaneously.

All these activities, however, all contribute to the formation of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in this era of globalization. This diaspora is neither a homogeneous entity nor a primordial one. On the contrary, it includes diversity, horizontal and vertical ties, power dimensions, dynamic social realities and also stands for the hybrid pattern of transnational identities and spaces, where cosmopolitan cultural and economic behaviour is nurtured. Consequently, to conceptualize the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora and its (migrants) socio-cultural, political and economic behaviour instigated as survival strategies and for higher socio-economic mobility, we need to re-evaluate existing boundary concepts of social science that usually emphasize closed socio-cultural models and primordial aspects of diaspora formation. In order to do this (1) on the basis of the current study in the next section I shall explore the major findings of this research, related to embeddedness, migrant activities and diaspora formation and (2) I will show how these results actually do not support the bounded and stereotypical categories of social science on migration, diaspora or “unique and readily identifiable culture”⁵⁰⁹. The discussion will be carried on under the following sub-headings:

- The Multi-dimensionally Embedded Realities of Bangladeshi Migrants
- Networking, Diaspora Formation and the Hybridization of the Bangladeshi Diaspora
- Conclusion: The Bounded concepts of Social Science and their Limitations

2. The Multi-dimensionally Embedded Realities of Bangladeshi Migrants

Referring to our discussion of the previous chapters it is now known to us that the respondents of this study are embedded in a wide range of probabilities, risks and realities related to their migration. Their embeddedness is noticed not only in the micro level socio-cultural processes, liabilities and ideologies, but also in the broader macro level socio-economic, political, cultural, ideological, institutional and environmental structures of the origin and host country. While on the one hand, we have found that the rapid industrialization process and booming economy of the host country create a necessity for the importation of cheap labour from

⁵⁰⁹ Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton., 1992, p-6.

different countries (such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Thailand, India and so on), Bangladeshi migrants on the other hand, both poor and well-off, consider migration a viable livelihood strategy. Besides, along with their transnational contacts and responsibilities, respondents encounter and engage in intra and inter-ethnic conflicts and competition in the receiving country.

That the migrants' embedded realities are not homogeneous and are also changed and shaped as well on the basis of their nationality, class, status (legal status, age, education, other qualifications, duration of stay in the host country, contacts with influential people, required knowledge etc.), gender and religious identities of the migrants has been noticed and discussed in the previous chapters providing empirical examples. Depending on the institutional frameworks on immigration and emigration, for example, white-collar workers get opportunities to migrate along with their families, while blue-collar employees are forced by the authorities of the host country to come leaving their family members behind etc. Thus, we can see that Bangladeshi migrants' lives cannot be separated from the institutions of the host country. At the same time, we also notice that their nature of embeddedness is very diverse.

To cope with these realities, migrants therefore, develop different forms of survival strategies, due to which some of the migrants convert into reference groups for others. These result in intra and inter-ethnic strong and weak ties in the receiving country. Besides, the migrants' everyday arenas of engagement with their intra and inter-ethnic housemates, co-workers, neighbours and powerful labour brokers in the host country as well as their transnational liabilities, networks and other practices (like business dealings or maintenance of correspondence in the form of economic and social remittance) within the transnational hubs are found as micro and macro level realities and strategies at this age of globalization, in which they are embedded in and trying to cope with.

These diverse forms of embedded realities and coping strategies all together create hybridization within the diaspora and the migrants' transnational spaces on the one hand and on the other, create economic and cultural mobility both in the origin and receiving country. This mobility, therefore questions the hegemonic concepts of social science which will be described next. But before doing so, let us first consult below summary of the major findings regarding the migrants' nature of embeddedness. Let us also take a look at the flow chart (see

figure 6.1) which will briefly describe the nature of multi-dimensionally embedded realities of the respondents. So the major findings concerning embedded realities are:

Firstly- It goes without saying that similar to other countries, international labour migration is an old and common phenomenon both for Malaysia (receiving country) and Bangladesh (origin country). It has intensified during this period of globalization due to improved technological and communication systems. Modern ICT not only facilitates the flow of information, ideas, money, migrants and commodities between the origin and receiving country, but also outside of these areas. Consequently, along with their embeddedness in the origin and receiving countries, migrants' lives and lifestyles are in fact, embedded in global realities.

Secondly- While on the one hand, rapid industrialization and the consequently booming economy of the host country create a necessity for the importation of cheap labour from different countries (for example Bangladesh), the respondents of this study on the other hand, both poor and well-off, migrate to Malaysia as a strategy of survival and also for upward mobility. In this regard, along with macro level poverty, political turmoil and environmental catastrophes, some other micro level factors such as unemployment, underemployment, family crisis, accumulation of cultural capital through migration, desire for a better career etc. are found to be push factors that also vary according to their class, status, gender and religious identity.

Thirdly- We find two opposite situations concerning immigration and integration of foreign workers into the Malaysian society. In the pre-independence British colonial period, colonial authorities facilitated the multi-ethnic composition and the multi-cultural politics due to their demand for cheap labour (for their capitalist economic enterprises). The colonial rulers moulded Malaysia into a multi-ethnic society not only through the intake of migrant workers, but also through quietly tolerating the influx of undocumented people from neighbouring (or other) countries. However, in the post-independence phases, when the documented and undocumented flow of Bangladeshi workers' migration to Malaysia started similar to other countries, we see the implementation of the Immigration⁵¹⁰ and Employment Acts⁵¹¹ to regulate their entry, rights, regulations and duration of stay.

⁵¹⁰ The Immigration Act 1959/63.

⁵¹¹ Employment Act 1955.

Fourthly- The state authorities pursue these policies in order to prohibit migrant workers, especially low-skilled and un-skilled labourers from assimilating and integrating into the Malaysian society. For the same reason, they are also recruited as short-term workers. In fact, in order to become a fully developed society by the year 2020, the government has set fourth different undertakings. In these the idea of a knowledge-based society is given preference under the term Vision 2020. It is expected that Malaysian citizens achieve the required knowledge so they can contribute solely to the development of the country. Therefore, to teach them, the immigration and integration of skilled professionals is welcomed. In this regard, it is noteworthy that for the construction of a knowledge-driven society only the participation of Malaysian citizen is encouraged. Hence, we may presume that after a certain time the current emphasis on the immigration of skilled workers will also decrease.

Fifthly- It is noticed that migrants' integration and assimilation in the receiving society is regulated and influenced decisively by the multi-ethnic environment of the host society. Besides, it is found that both the origin and receiving societies preserve divide and rule principles in their migration policies that reflect largely on their (the migrants') nature of coping strategies.

Sixthly- Bangladeshi migrants are not a homogeneous group. Owing to different forms of embeddedness in the institutional as well as socio-economic and political frameworks of both the origin and host country, in their own community in the host country, transnational liabilities and also everyday arenas of engagement with people of different ethnic backgrounds about scarce resource management, some migrants achieve more power than others. They achieve legitimacy to exercise power. This on the other hand enables them to manipulate the situation for their own sake. As a result, a kind of 'pseudo patron-client relationship' is found in the study areas. Within these vertical bonds commercial reciprocity, exploitation, fluidity and negotiation are observed as the underlying facts that contribute a dynamic factor to the relationship. In context of the host society this is very relevant, since the society is itself very dynamic due to the changing nature of migration policy and the continuous flow of migrants there, from different parts of the world.

Seventhly- Even though migrants live geographically apart, their dreams for the common well-being of their consanguine and affine remain intact due to regular transnational contacts (through phones, letters, remittance, gifts etc.). At the same time, though the dominant socio-

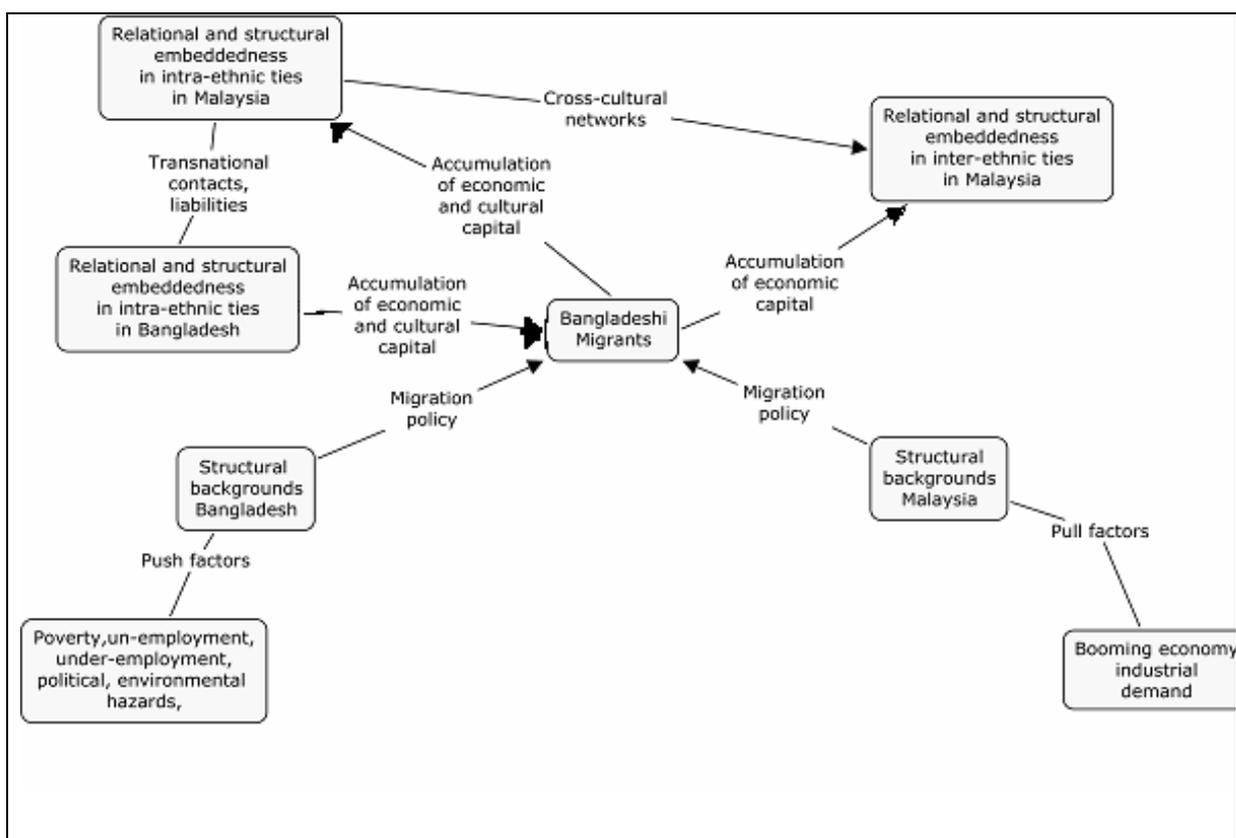
cultural role models emphasize intra-ethnic networks and criticize inter-ethnic close ties, the migrants' nature of embeddedness in the immigration policies and within the multi-ethnic social setting of the host country (as workmates, housemates, neighbours etc. or simply as Muslims) open scopes as well as create necessities for the development of inter-ethnic ties as strategies for survival and for higher socio-economic mobility.

Eighthly- While the socio-economic, political background and emigration policy of the origin country emphasizes on male migration for the development of the country, the gendered emigration policy decreases the flow of female migrants. The Bangladeshi cultural construction of gender and its combination with the Islamic religious ideology is found as the main regulator in this context.

Ninthly- It is not likely that migrants always represent similar lifestyles and develop a common transnational bond on the basis of primordial attachments. We have noticed that migrants encounter a diverse pattern of realities, facilities as well as obstacles both in the origin and host country because of their socio-economic position, identity and status. Hence, instead of observing a homogeneous outcome of globalization, we see diverse forms of transnational migration, power relationship, cultural hybridism as well as 'quasi formal economic behaviour' (of the respondents).

Tenthly- Migrants' embeddedness is noticed not only as a structural and relational embeddedness into their own community, but also into their inter-ethnic surroundings of the host country (with which they have everyday contact). The socio-economic, environmental, political, cultural, ideological and institutional frameworks of the origin and host countries, moreover, regulate (ideally) their nature of migration and settlement. Apart from the ideological and cultural attachments with the home-based surroundings and networks, they are also associated with the host society-oriented socio-cultural, economic, religious and political systems that are found transnational on the one hand and on the other, very diverse and cross cultural (hybrid) in nature. Or in other words, the Bangladeshi respondents of this study encounter multi-dimensionally embedded realities within the transnational space of origin and host country. Let us now take a look at the following figure that gives a quick overview on the nature of migrants' embedded realities.

Figure 6.1: Embeddedness of Migrants



Source: Survey and interview data conducted in the origin and host countries

From the above figure we can notice the nature of the migrants' multi-dimensionally embedded realities that are dealt with through the formation of intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic (cross-cultural) ties in the receiving country as well as cross-cultural and intra-ethnic transnational ties within the transnational hubs. Consequently, the situation reminds me to posit critical questions about the homogenization tendency of migration literature, evidenced in Pillai⁵¹² (1992), Zhou⁵¹³ (1992), Rudnick⁵¹⁴ (1996), Karim⁵¹⁵ et al. (1999), Kloosterman⁵¹⁶ et al. (1999, 2001), Zamir⁵¹⁷ (2006) and so on. In these works immigrants' lives are

⁵¹² Patrick Pillai. 1992. ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia.

⁵¹³ Min Zhou. Temple University Press. 1992. Chinatown. The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave, p-18-19.

⁵¹⁴ Rudnick, Anja. 1996. INSAN, Kuala Lumpur. Foreign Labors in Malaysian Manufacturing. Bangladeshi Workers in the Textile Industry.

⁵¹⁵ AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar. Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd. 1999. Foreign Workers in Malaysia. Issues and Implications.

⁵¹⁶ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun and Jan Rath. 1999. Mixed Embeddedness: (In) formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23 (2). See also Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath. 2001. Immigrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies: mixed embeddedness further explored. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 27, No.2.

⁵¹⁷ Zahid Zamir. Cosmic Publishers. 2006. Migrant Workers' Contributions in Malaysian Economy.

explained emphasizing only their experiences in the host country and the formulation of intra-ethnic ties in this regard.

Similarly, instead of focusing on class, status or gendered politics within the diaspora and the impact of it on the modes of networking in the host country, authors like Massey⁵¹⁸ et al. (1987) highlight community cohesion and the integration process of the “settlers”⁵¹⁹ in the receiving society. Though the authors depict different stages of integration in the host country (United States) and its relatedness to the “accumulated experience”⁵²⁰ of migrants, there is no mentioning whether this accumulated knowledge through long-term sojourning alters the existing status of community cohesion. In fact, in the previous chapters we have witnessed that one of the causes of power differentiations and disharmony within the Bangladeshi Diaspora is the acquired knowledge that is gathered on the basis of experience.

In the same way, if we compare Glick Schiller and Fouron’s⁵²¹ (2001) ethnographic work with the results of the current study, a strong emphasis on the home-based “nostalgia”⁵²² against racial discrimination in the host country can be noticed. In their work only the racial discrimination in the receiving country is shown as an embedded reality for the Haitians that becomes the cause for the rise of long distance nationalist ties and political activities within the immigrant community. Regarding this if we look back to our discussions of chapter three and four we may notice macro level anti-integration migration policies of the host country on the one hand and on the other, the development of inter-ethnic ties between Bangladeshis and locals (both Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras) on the basis of their everyday arenas of engagements as well as religious and cultural sharing. These micro level inter-ethnic ties, therefore, assist the migrants to by-pass anti-integration migration policies.

Or in other words, there exists a narrow definition of migrants’ nature of embeddedness and survival strategies that does not match the findings of the current study. Since we already summarized the nature of the multi-dimensionally embedded realities of Bangladeshi migrants we will move on and describe ways that are followed by migrants as coping strategies and

⁵¹⁸ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. *Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico.*

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid: p- 266.

⁵²¹ Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouran. Duke University Press. 2001. *Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. Georges Woke up Laughing.*

⁵²² Ibid: p- 263-265.

also for upward mobility in the next section (on the basis of our analysis in the previous chapters). The discussion will show the reflection of these survival strategies on the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora.

3. Networking, Diaspora Formation and the Hybridization of the Bangladeshi Diaspora

In the previous section of this chapter we demonstrated the multi-dimensionally embedded realities of the respondents in order to ‘find out about their ways of survival and adaptation in a foreign society’, which is after all the main research question of this study. Along with their everyday arenas of engagement within their own community as well as multi-ethnic working and living environment of the receiving society, we have conceptualized this along the lines of structural and institutional background of the origin and receiving societies. Migrants’ own socio-economic characteristics and transnational obligations cum networks, moreover, are noticed as their embedded realities (something we have discussed in detail in the previous chapters). In fact, though there remain macro level institutional frameworks for the regulation of migratory movements, common people’s social networks are found as the significant role players on the ground that based on their nature of structural and relational embeddedness migrants try to negotiate and cope with the other forms of embeddedness. Or in other words, concerning transnational migration, adaptation as well as assimilation in a new country the roles of social networks are found to be very critical in nature (in the study areas) that is itself regulated by the multi-dimensionally embedded realities of the migrants.

For example, migrants deal with the macro level institutional as well as socio-economic and political frameworks of both origin and host country depending on their intra and inter-ethnic networks. The idea of Granovetter⁵²³ that weak ties provide higher chances for upward mobility than strong ties do was found true concerning Bangladeshi migrants, though his analysis on greater community integration through weak ties did not match the findings of the current study. It is found that playing roles such as strong ties, migrants’ intra-ethnic intimate social network(s) (something we describe as “relational embeddedness” pursuing Portes’ s⁵²⁴ concepts) enable them to migrate through monetary and moral support on the one hand. On

⁵²³ Mark S. Granovetter. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. *AJS* volume 78, 2 Number 4 and Mark S. Granovetter. 1983. The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. *Sociological Theory*, volume 1.

⁵²⁴ Alejandro Portes. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995. *The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship*, p- 6.

the other hand those weak tied networks, in which they are structurally embedded, provide them with connections and assist their migration directly. Though migrants continue their immigration through weak tied networks (even at a time when un-skilled and semi-skilled workers' migration to Malaysia is officially banned for Bangladeshis) these networks are nonetheless identified as weak ties due to their commercial background.

The analysis of poor migrants' perceptive models regarding their so-called patrons' "*favour*" towards them provided me with guidelines in this regard whereas instead of moral obligations the relationship was perceived as exploitative and instrumental in nature. As a matter of fact, if we refer to our discussion of chapter four we may notice that (1) weak ties provide opportunities for higher income mobility, there do not, however, exist any moral obligations, (2) weak ties are commercial and instrumental, (3) these ties connect the micro and the macro level, because migrants develop these ties to remain connected with the macro level, (4) weak ties help migrants to fulfil their interests, but they fail to create cohesion and integration, (5) migrants' very diverse social statuses, realities and interests are the causes for that, (6) weak ties are related and become the causes of factional conflict, exploitation and other forms of anti-harmonious organizational structure of the community and hence these are also addressed as pseudo patron client relationships.

It is found that on having noticed the limitations of intra-ethnic ties in the case of investment in businesses, migrants form inter-ethnic ties. Instrumentalizing these inter-ethnic strong and weak social networks, well-off migrants develop ethnic enterprises and attempt to cope with or bypass the business rules of the receiving society that impose some restrictions regarding foreigners' investment there. Apart from the well-off migrants, poor migrants also try to find their way of integration and assimilation in the receiving society utilizing inter-ethnic networks.

Albeit un-skilled and semi-skilled workers' assimilation through marriage or their presence as IC/PR status holders is not allowed, still they strive after it pursuing their inter-ethnic ties. Regarding this we tested our data against Fan and Stark's⁵²⁵ theory on assimilation and we noticed the simplicity of their model. It was assumed that migrants would consider their host

⁵²⁵ C. Simon Fan and Oded Stark. A Social Proximity Explanation of the Reluctance to Assimilate. KYKLOS, Vol. 60-2007-No. 1, 55-63.

society a reference group, as their income levels were higher in the host society. Presuming their experience of relative deprivation it was thought that they would not bother to integrate. However, in the study areas the opposite situation was noticed to be true on the ground that the respondents considered earlier successful migrants or in other words, entrepreneurs as their reference groups and developed weak ties with them. Following the examples of successful merchants these poor migrants tried to integrate into the host society (as a reference group) through adoption of religious practices, customs, language and sometimes inter-ethnic marriage.

These inter-ethnic networks therefore remind me of the issue of the host country's ethnic and religious balance as we have already seen the hybridization of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in the study areas of Peninsular Malaysia. In fact, it is found that migrants' embeddedness in transnational obligations and duties also influence their network building. On the one hand, improved communication systems facilitate migrants to remain connected with their families and friends of their home country and maintain home-based strong and weak ties. On the other hand they are also found practising intra and inter-ethnic strong and weak tied networks in the country of destination. These activities result in hybrid networks, identities, lifestyles and 'quasi formal economic practices' within the transnational spaces of the receiving country. Consequently, the Bangladeshi migrants' presence in the receiving country is not only noteworthy for their economic contributions, but also from the perspective of the multi-ethnic context of the host country it demands further investigation.

It is noteworthy that within these transnational hubs we have seen different patterns of transnational activities of the migrants. These do not represent a homogeneous picture. Referring to the examples of poor migrants we already discussed in chapter five where we talked about that some migrants evaded migration policies as a survival strategy, whereas the well-off manpower agents took advantage of this and converted into nodes for them as a part of their businesses. The professionals (for example university teachers) moreover, are found maintaining knowledge networks with their students and colleagues in Bangladesh that represent another dimension of transnational practices. As a result, we came to a conclusion (in chapter five) along the lines of Guarnizo and Mitchell that the transnational activities of migrants are totally guided and shaped by their multi-dimensionally embedded realities.

In fact, these types of differentiations and power dimensions as well as the hybridization of the Bangladeshi Diaspora that resulted along the lines of economic and cultural mobility may pose some further questions such as , (1) are we arguing towards the existence of multiple diasporas within the community? (2) Does economic and cultural mobility through migration support the notions of “disembedding”⁵²⁶ activities? We will come to these points in the next section. Before that let us briefly refer to ethnographic examples of the current study. These will enable us to perceive the nature of networking and diaspora formation.

Firstly- Bangladeshi migrants’ length of stay in the receiving country and its contribution to the integration and assimilation of migrants through networking and knowledge sharing has been found to be a significant factor. It is noticed that the longer their duration of migrant-life is the more they integrate and assimilate in the receiving society on the ground that they have then managed to develop networks as well as accumulate and disseminate local knowledge on the ways of integration and assimilation. Their strong and weak ties facilitate them in this regard. Pursuing their accumulated knowledge, in fact, migrants who have engaged in inter-ethnic marriages do not send money to home country regularly because of their newly developed inter-ethnic strong ties in the host society. Rather, they continue transnational networking depending on ICT or visit their homeland infrequently the amount of which also varies according to their class, status, gender and power (capabilities). However, migrants those are already married to their intra-ethnic counterparts, but are forced to live without them because of the immigration rules of the country, transfer economic remittance to their strong tied networks, but not that much. Instead they attempt to spend money in the host country for their newly developed intra and inter-ethnic ties to find ways of survival and integration.

Secondly- Though the amount of remittance transferred to home country decreases over time, other forms of transnational contact do not decrease. Modern communication technology enables migrants to remain transnationally connected. In fact, we have found two types of remittances namely economic and social remittances that also vary according to their class, status and gendered identities. It has also been noticed that migrants maintain contact with their homeland either by visiting or by sending money, gifts as well as correspondences through telecommunication, newspaper and internet facilities. Thus, they try to take part in

⁵²⁶ Anthony Giddens. 1991. *Modernity and Self –Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Polity Press, Cambridge.

their families' decision making processes and also attempt to perform their prescribed roles models to the extent that is possible for them and also does not go against their interest for upward mobility. Besides, we have found another group, that of manpower agents and businessmen, who convert into the weak ties of poor workers and play roles as the transnational liaisons.

Thirdly- The roles of manpower agents as transnational liaisons become manifested on the ground that apart from the documented ways, respondents also manage to immigrate into the country following clandestine ways. As a matter of fact, paying closer attention towards the flow of Bangladeshi workers into the receiving country, we come across different types of immigration. For example, it is found that along with the 'G to G' based official sources, there are also other sources that include the private sector recruitment of workers along with clandestine ways of short-term migration. Workers' entrance into the country through the Hazzai road of Thailand or on tourist and student visas was likewise arranged by the manpower agents. Besides, we notice personal initiative-based professional migration as well as migration in the form of family reunification, where the spouse and children of the well-off migrants (like professionals and businessmen) travel to Malaysia on dependence visas.

Fourthly- It is found that the nature of post-migration settlement practices and the organizational structure of the community are largely influenced and regulated by these diverse status (documented/undocumented, skilled, un-skilled or semi-skilled workers etc.) and types of migration.

Fifthly- In fact, we have already described that along with the structural background of origin and receiving countries, heterogeneous socio-economic characteristics of Bangladeshi migrants, transnational liabilities, multi-ethnic working and living environment and migration policies of both countries are the embedded realities of the migrant Bangladeshis. To cope with these realities migrants develop new ties and nurture their existing networks. Consequently, if we make a list we may notice that these ties are developed in several sectors and levels, such as: (1) in the host country-- within the community (intra-ethnic), (2) in the host country—outside the community (inter-ethnic), (3) between home and receiving societies' kith and kin (transnational networking) and (4) between home, receiving and other countries' formal and informal business networks ('quasi formal business networks').

Sixthly- These diverse networks and the associated practices are guided and regulated by their everyday realities. As a result, we notice hybrid identities, culture and economic practices within the transnational physical, social, cultural, business and mental spaces that all help us to see the nature of the Bangladeshi Diaspora integration and assimilation in Peninsular Malaysia. In fact, it is not likely that only those migrants that have inter-ethnic spouses and children, manage to integrate and assimilate into the Malaysian society. Instead, we have noticed that though some of them engage in inter-ethnic marriages, others practice hybrid culture, local religious rituals and informal economic activities with the assistance of the locals and powerful Bangladeshi settlers. Along with the Bangladeshi culture and formal economic behaviour, they nurture local customs, dialects, religion and informal economic practices to enable themselves to survive and find a way for upward mobility. Modern ICT stimulate this type of hybridization process where the flows of ideas, money, migrants and commodities are noticed not only between Bangladesh and Malaysia, but also within different countries that result in cosmopolitan social, cultural, religious and economic practices.

Seventhly- In a nut-shell migrants' integration and assimilation status can be divided into three main categories, such as, (1) marital integration (inter-ethnic marriage), (2) socio-cultural and religious integration (hybrid culture and religion), (3) socio-cultural and economic integration (hybrid culture and quasi-formal business).

Eighthly- The hybridization of the Bangladeshi Diaspora, whether conducted through inter-ethnic marriage or socio-economic, religious and cultural practices, is not an indicator of resistance or anti-hegemonic behaviour against the domination of the nation-states (both origin and receiving countries) and of powerful socio-cultural models. Instead, it is found to be an outcome of their adaptation process (poor migrants) as well as strategies for upward mobility (well-off entrepreneurs and professionals) that are also guided and regulated by their multi-dimensionally embedded realities.

Therefore, the situation of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Peninsular Malaysia can be defined as a contrast to the Chinese Diaspora in the United States. In fact, from the ethnography of Min Zhou⁵²⁷ we notice that the Chinese Diaspora is integrated within co-ethnic networks and depends only on Chinatown for their adaptation, integration and assimilation in the United

⁵²⁷ Min Zhou. Temple University Press. 1992. Chinatown. The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave, p-219-233.

States. While for the Bangladeshi Diaspora we observe the presence of intra and inter-ethnic networks and the contributions of these to the settlement and upward mobility of migrants. In the case of the Chinese Diaspora, on the other hand, we notice only the presence of intra-ethnic ties. Instead of hybridization, cultural authenticity is emphasized for the Chinese Diaspora on the grounds that it facilitates their adaptation and integration in the new society. However, during this age of globalization, which is even more expedited through modern ICT, how does a community control the spontaneous interactions and mixtures of different cultures is an issue that yet has to be explored. Instead, we notice the prevalence of bounded and essentialist notions of culture in Zhou's work that do not resemble the findings of the field research on the Bangladeshi Diaspora at all.

Under these circumstances the question is how do we perceive the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora? Is it a loosely structured social system? We will come to these questions in the next section along with two other questions like whether there prevail multiple diaspora within Bangladeshi migrants of Peninsular Malaysia and whether their economic and cultural mobility indicates "disembedding" activities.

4. Conclusion: The Bounded Concepts of Social Science and Their Limitations

The question regarding the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora was in fact raised and discussed in chapter four. If we focus on that analysis together with our discussion of previous sections we may find that there prevail essentialist ideas on the structure of social systems. For example, Embree⁵²⁸'s conceptualization of the Thai social system being loosely structured is found essentialist in this study. Instead, Ever's⁵²⁹ question whether it is right to apply the same concepts, ideas and findings for all social systems irrespective of their specific context, time and model is found useful. In this context if we refer to Embree and Ever's perceptions on the loosely or tightly woven social system once again and relate to the situation of Bangladeshis we may notice results such as,

⁵²⁸ John F. Embree. Thailand—A Loosely Structured Social System, p- 3-15. In Hans-Dieter Evers (ed.). *Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand In Comparative Perspective*. Cultural Report Series No. 17/ Yale University/Southeast Asia Studies. 1969.

⁵²⁹ Hans-Dieter Evers. *Models of Social Systems: Loosely and Tightly Structured*, p-115-127. In Hans-Dieter Evers (ed.). *Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand In Comparative Perspective*. Cultural Report Series No. 17/ Yale University/Southeast Asia Studies. 1969.

Firstly- In Embree's conceptualization, Thai culture is an example of a loosely structured social system because of the wide ranges of variations concerning individual behaviour. Despite these there remain some similarities between Thailand and other South-east Asian countries⁵³⁰. Nevertheless exploring the cultural context of Thai society he shows significant cultural diversities and defines these as the unique features of a loosely woven social system.⁵³¹

Secondly- Supporting Levi-Strauss's assertion Evers argues that instead of focusing only on empirical reality one needs to highlight the models that are constructed on it. He differentiates three types of models such as, (1) "perceptive model" (perceptions of people concerning their structure of social system), (2) "normative model" (people's expectation or ideals about the structure of their social system) and (3) "statistical-behavioural model" (statistics on actual behaviour of people that is collected based on "observations and measurements of frequencies of interaction and behaviour").

Thirdly- If we now refer to the situation of the Bangladeshi migrants we notice that according to the normative model the Bangladeshi Diaspora is a tightly woven social system, while the perceptive and statistical behavioural models of the respondents show that the community is in fact a loosely structured social system. The situation, therefore, reminds us of the explanation of Evers that real behaviour may not reflect the normative models of the society though it prescribes strict rules.

In fact, the normative models for what the Bangladeshis can be conceptualized as an example of a close knit social system are, kinship and nationalist ideology where moral obligations and

⁵³⁰ Regarding commonalities with other South-east Asian culture he presented examples like "wet-rice agriculture as a basis of subsistence, roasting of the mother just after childbirth, chewing of betel and blacking of the teeth, playing of kickball and the piston bellows".

⁵³¹ The specific cultural traits for which Thai society is described as an example of loosely structured society are, (1) substantial disparities of individual behaviour can be seen in Thai society, (2) in tightly structured societies cultural patterns will be clearly marked, where maintenance of reciprocal obligations and rights prevail in greater degree than that in the loosely structured societies, (3) a loosely integrated society like Thailand lacks regularity, discipline, neatness and industrial time sense, (4) when few Thai people walk together they do not keep pace with each other. He thinks that walking behaviour is not a mere representation of a cultural aspect. Instead, observing walking behaviour we may understand which culture emphasizes punctuality and regularity in life. Since Thai people do not concentrate on regularities, he thinks they belong to loosely structured social system, (5) in the same way, he provides example from the Thai family life. He thinks in comparison to Vietnam, China and Japanese societies, in Thailand absence of strict sense of obligation and duties can be seen. Instead of giving preference to social pressure, individuals act according to their own will, where it is not uncommon that families are adjusting with the desires of individual will etc.

fellow feelings for all the Bangladeshis, irrespective of their class, status or gender, are emphasized. For example, if we remember once again Kalim's (a manpower agent cum businessman) speech,⁵³² delivered in the 'Bangla Bazaar' in an informal assembly (to remember a Bangladeshi political leader cum ex-President's death anniversary) of Bangladeshis, we may, by focusing on the participants that range from workers and students to businessmen and professionals, find a picture of the community cohesion and nationalistic bonds.

The text, "*You see we are living here, but we are taking care of our family and relatives at home. We work here and we send remittances for the well-being of our home town and country. I am rich, but I don't forget you, my fellow brothers, because I know you are making money on your toil, like me*"--- is an example of the dominant kinship and nationalist discourse. We see that intra-ethnic ties, responsibilities and community cohesion regardless of class based differentiations, are emphasized in the text (which also represents normative models of the society). In this model the duties of migrants towards their families, motherland as well as poor people are emphasized due to their primordial attachments to their homeland, Bangladesh.

However, at the same time, if we concentrate on the statistical-behavioural and perceptive models, we notice the absence of community cohesion. In fact, a dilemma concerning migrants' perceptions on weak ties and their actual behaviour has already been discussed in chapter four. The statistical-behavioural model shows us the ties between well-off manpower agents and poor migrants. Poor migrants visit these manpower agents cum businessmen to facilitate their survival in a foreign country and also to find alternative options for higher socio-economic mobility, an example of which is to extend their duration of stay in Malaysia. Consequently, based on that data we may presume the presence of community cohesion and paternalistic patron client relationships within the diaspora (something supported by the perceptive models of the migrants).

The analysis of the perceptive models of poor migrants shows that most of the poor migrants perceive their intra-ethnic vertical ties as commercial, exploitative and also as weak ties, where there is no place for moral obligations on the basis of common origin. They perceive it as a weak tie because the relationship is instrumental. It lacks frequent interaction and is also

⁵³² For detail discussion please find chapter four.

not long-lasting. However, though these less privileged migrants' perception regarding their weak ties does not support the idea of greater community integration, they still depend on these ties failing to manage ways for higher socio-economic mobility through strong ties alone. Though their strong ties are trustworthy and possess moral obligations to help each other's close relatives they nonetheless have their drawbacks as well. Besides, due to less connection with the macro level authorities, these strong ties fail to work as information pools regarding better jobs, higher payment etc. Hence, albeit they identify their vertical ties as pseudo patron client relationships, they still try to preserve these in order to overcome economic insolvency and achieve higher social status and prestige both in the origin and receiving countries.

Studying this dilemma, we on the other hand, are able to notice that poor migrants' survival strategies are guided by their embedded realities. In fact, in order to fulfil responsibilities towards their intra-ethnic strong ties as well as overcome economic insolvency, they migrate to Malaysia. Being Bangladeshi citizens they inherit poverty, political and environmental turmoil that becomes even more severe due to their relational embeddedness within their intra-ethnic strong ties. In fact, it is already known to us through our discussion in chapter three and four that because of unemployment and underemployment they sometimes fail to fulfil their obligations towards their family. Upon noticing the prosperity of their fictive ties or in other words neighbours (which they have achieved through migration to Malaysia) they are likewise motivated to travel to Malaysia. Consequently, utilizing their weak ties, in which they are structurally embedded in due to neighbourhood or common country brotherhood, they try to overcome these limitations and accumulate economic and cultural capital for themselves and for their consanguine and affine. Therefore, emphasizing the migrants' nature of embeddedness we can explain the dilemma of statistical-behavioural and perceptive models and also argue that poor migrants' survival strategies do not support the notion of disembedding activities.

On the other hand, apart from poor migrants, we have also found the presence of well-off businessmen cum manpower agents in the study areas. These businessmen are the weak ties of the poor migrants. Though these well-off people possess enough information and networks (such as intra and inter-ethnic ties in the host country as well as transnational formal and informal networks to sustain their diverse patterns of business activities) they still try to continue their relationships with poor migrants because of their business interests. Manpower

and “*hundy*” businesses are a few examples of many, for which these merchants need to depend on their embedded networks and surroundings. As a result, they attempt to instrumentalize the normative models like nationalist and kinship ideology to convince their clients, though through the analysis of the statistical-behavioural models as well as perceptive models, we have found the relationship as fluid, exploitative and commercial in nature.

For example, if we concentrate on Iqbal’s case study (which we discussed in chapter four) we notice that apart from his insider networks there also exist other ties, where monetary interest performs the major role. We also see though commercial, the relationship is developed by the manpower agents utilizing kinship ideology. The argument that moral obligation (of kinship) has failed to play any role in these vertical relationships is substantiated on the grounds that it works under such conditions where the well-off broker’s service needs to be purchased by the poor client. In fact, the utterance of kinship terminology is nothing but an excuse to hide the exploitation and also an attempt to raise trust towards the manpower agent. This faith is necessary so the broker can continue his manpower business smoothly.

In fact, whilst poor migrants strive after vertical networking with their affluent country men as a strategy for higher socio-economic mobility, the well-off businessmen try to enrich themselves through inter-ethnic businesses and marital relationships as well as depending on intra-ethnic weak ties. Because of their embeddedness in institutional structures (like buying properties, setting up business etc. in the host country) these well-off businessmen instrumentalize inter-ethnic networking and try to by-pass anti-integration immigration policy.

In the same way, to obtain maximum contracts of labour supply (from Bangladesh to Malaysia), these businessmen try to enlist more followers to their home-based organizations such as the ‘Noakhali’ and ‘Barishal’ groups. Utilizing the votes of their followers they try to be nominated as the party president in a host society oriented Bangladeshi political party that has won the national election and formulated government. As I have already discussed in chapter four on the basis of my field research this is how manpower agents convince Bangladesh-based central political leaders cum relevant ministers to award most contracts of labour supply to them. Or in other words, the manpower agents cum businessmen’s activities are also embedded and guided by the wider micro and macro level institutional, economic and political factors of origin and receiving countries.

At the same time, the exploration of migrants' nature of embeddedness and coping strategies also shows that Bangladeshi migrants are not a homogeneous community. Some are very poor and some have managed to achieve economic solvency. Their socio-economic position, networks and status indicate a wide range of variations and these differences are utilized by the rich to accumulate economic, social and cultural capital both in the origin and receiving country. Therefore, this study contradicts other studies on migration and diaspora (such as Massey⁵³³ et al. (1987), Pillai⁵³⁴ (1992), Zhou⁵³⁵ (1992), Rudnick⁵³⁶ (1996), Karim⁵³⁷ et al. (1999), Kloosterman⁵³⁸ et al. (1999, 2001), Zamir⁵³⁹ (2006) and so on) where community cohesion and integration is emphasized ignoring class, status, religion and gender based differentiations and politics. Instead, based on the statistical-behavioural and perceptive models it can be argued here that there exist multiple segments or diaspora within the Bangladeshi migrant community of Peninsular Malaysia.

Nonetheless, the fact that kinship and nationalist ideology is emphasized regarding vertical relations enables me to explore the ideal socio-cultural models imagined and expected concerning primordial ties. We have also found that manpower agents cum ethnic entrepreneurs spend money in political meetings in order to prove their generosity and brotherly feelings towards the other sojourners. Thus they attempt to accumulate cultural capital to hide the underlying exploitation of the patron client relationship and to justify their economic profit. As a matter of fact, through this study it is found that along with kinship based strong ties, the community also incorporates weak ties, where profit maximization, conflicting interests etc. are major concerns. Or in other words, though the ideal socio-cultural model emphasizes community cohesion (which can be conceptualized as an example of a tightly structured social system) the actual behaviour of migrants paints the picture of a

⁵³³ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. *Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico.*

⁵³⁴ Patrick Pillai. 1992. *ISIS. Malaysia. People on the Move. An overview of recent immigration and emigration in Malaysia.*

⁵³⁵ Min Zhou. Temple University Press. 1992. *Chinatown. The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*, p-18-19.

⁵³⁶ Rudnick, Anja. 1996. *INSAN, Kuala Lumpur. Foreign Labors in Malaysian Manufacturing. Bangladeshi Workers in the Textile Industry.*

⁵³⁷ AHM Zehadul Karim, Moha Asri Abdullah, Mohd Isa Haji Bakar. Utusan Publications and Distributors Sdn Bhd. 1999. *Foreign Workers in Malaysia. Issues and Implications.*

⁵³⁸ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun and Jan Rath. 1999. *Mixed Embeddedness: (In) formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands.* *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23 (2). See also Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath. 2001. *Immigrant entrepreneurs in advanced economies: mixed embeddedness further explored.* *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 27, No.2.

⁵³⁹ Zahid Zamir. Cosmic Publishers. 2006. *Migrant Workers' Contributions in Malaysian Economy.*

disintegrated social system (being the outcome of the migrants' multi-dimensionally embedded realities).

On the other hand, the professionals and professionals cum merchants mainly depend on trust based strong ties. Their strong ties have enough information and contacts required for upward mobility. Depending on knowledge-networks within their strong ties they share and transfer ideas and knowledge. This does not resemble the flow of ideas and information shared within the networks of semi-skilled and un-skilled workers and businessmen. Besides, among migrants they are found to be in the most benefited position. For example, concerning integration and assimilation in the host country they are given special rights. They are not prohibited from inter-ethnic marriage and can even live with their family members after bringing them in on dependence visas. In the same way, they are given PR status (if they apply) due to the demand for science and technology of the receiving country under the development policy Vision 2020. The micro level individual's life is thus connected with macro level institutions, where the migrant's embeddedness in the ongoing social relations and power structures regulates the nature and strength of his ties.

Consequently, regarding the networking behaviour of professionals and professionals cum businessmen we see the reflection of normative models and based on that we can say that these segments of the Bangladeshi Diaspora possess characteristics of a tightly woven social system. However, the rest of the community (e.g. workers and businessmen) show the opposite characteristics because of their different kind of embedded realities.

Therefore, we simply cannot identify any culture as loosely or tightly woven (something that Embree's work does). Instead, we need to see the context as well as the actual embeddedness of the actors. These may enable us to see how their survival strategies are guided and also taken up by them to achieve higher economic and cultural mobility. Since the networking behaviour and the associated survival strategies of Bangladeshi migrants are found as the result of their multi-dimensionally embedded realities, we can consequently deny another hypothesis (namely that economic and cultural mobility initiates "disembedding" activities).

The idea that at this age of modernization and its later stage globalization our everyday relationships will be governed by abstract mechanisms as described by Giddens in his theory on modernity and self identity, does not match the current study. Under the term

"disembedding", he ignores the real social relationships and also definite time-space that is found as contrast in the current study on the grounds that the situation of Bangladeshi migrants is governed by their multi-dimensionally embedded realities. Their social relations are found embedded in three local contexts, these being (1) within their own community in the host country, (2) within the inter-ethnic social setting of host country, (3) within the transnational social setting of their home country. Modern information and communication technology as well as the roles of manpower agents, who are addressed as "coyotes" in Massey⁵⁴⁰ are remarkable in this regard. Surrounded by these three level local actors and the formal and informal institutions of host and origin country, Bangladeshi migrants take actions for their economic and cultural mobility. Regarding this they accumulate "place-based"⁵⁴¹ (local) knowledge from both the origin and receiving country and stay within their networks of transnational hubs (of origin and receiving countries). These enable them to find better survival strategies for integration and upward mobility. Consequently, it is not likely that the geographical distance from home land or their simultaneous belongingness in two nation states can dislocate them from their embedded niches, networks and knowledge.

Or in other words, we can step forward if we consider geography not only as an indicator of land, but also of "social space"⁵⁴² comprised of human beings, their society and culture. Peter Gould and Rodney White⁵⁴³ have already established their arguments on this. In them they mention "social space and physical space are so tightly linked that most people simply do not distinguish between the two". It is this geographical space of origin and host country, in which the migrants' lives, lifestyles and their survival strategies are embedded in. In this context, the roles of modern ICT and human-based transnational networks are very significant because through these migrants and their home related networks remain connected across borders.

In fact, within the Bangladeshi migrant community we have found diverse forms of ties and survival strategies that are controlled by the existing socio-economic, political, institutional and transnational realities, the migrants are embedded in. Though they live geographically apart, their dreams for the common well-being of their consanguine and affine remain intact

⁵⁴⁰ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. *Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico*, p- 278.

⁵⁴¹ Saskia Sassen. *Immigration and Local Labour Markets*, p- 107. In Alejandro Portes (Ed) *The Economic Sociology of Immigration. Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship*. Russell Sage Foundation. 1995.

⁵⁴² Gould and White. 1974 (Reprinted 1986). *Routledge. Mental Maps*, p-16.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid*: p-17.

due to regular transnational contacts (through phones, letters, remittance, gifts etc.). Consequently, their inspirations and steps towards cultural and economic mobility are the outcomes of their relational and structural embeddedness within their own community of origin and receiving country. The emigration policy of their homeland, moreover, generates such types of condition where poor and (relatively) uneducated (in comparison to skilled professionals) migrants (or would-be migrants) need to depend on labour brokers cum manpower agents to enable them to migrate (to a foreign country). In fact, while the socio-economic, environmental and political background and emigration policy of the origin country increase the urgency of male migration, at the same time, the gendered emigration policy (of Bangladesh) actually decreases the flow of female migration (to Malaysia), where the (Bangladeshi) cultural construction of gender (concerning female migration) is found as the main regulator.

Apart from the expected socio-cultural role models of their own community, their (Bangladeshi) nature of embeddedness in the multi-ethnic social setting (as workmates, housemates, neighbours etc. or as Muslims) as well as the immigration policies of the host country determine their survival strategies, obligations and reciprocal relationships with people from different ethnic communities. To cope with these, they develop host society oriented strong and weak tied networks⁵⁴⁴ as well as keep intact transnational networks that open scope for the rise of hybrid identities and culture. And this is how Bangladeshi migrants try to accumulate economic and cultural capital through their economic and cultural mobility. As a result, this study does not akin the dominant perception on primordial networking, where it is perceived that intra-ethnic ties on the basis of long distance nationalism are the only one survival option for migrants to deal with their harsh realities in the receiving country (which we see in the ethnographies of Glick Schiller et al.⁵⁴⁵ and Min Zhou⁵⁴⁶).

As a matter of fact, highlighting the notion of “disembedding” Hidle⁵⁴⁷ also tried to understand diaspora. Regarding this he followed two ways namely (1) diaspora can be defined

⁵⁴⁴ For example, their embeddedness in the discriminatory immigration rules and anti-integration policies of the host country influence them to develop inter-ethnic ties mostly with other Muslim communities and partly, with Tamil Indians. Thus, they try to combat risks and by-pass laws.

⁵⁴⁵ Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Eugene Fouran. Duke University Press. 2001. Long-Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home. Georges Woke up Laughing.

⁵⁴⁶ Min Zhou. Temple University Press. 1992. Chinatown. The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave.

⁵⁴⁷ Knut Hidle. Place, Geography and the Concept of Diaspora –A Methodological Approach, Geographi, Bergen, Nr 244 - 2001.

as “social groups with a common ethnic and national origin, who are living outside the territory of origin” and (2) hybridization of diaspora. Among these two views, the first type of explanation is also noticed in Massey, Zhou, and Glick Schiller et al. (which we have described already). According to them, the place of settlement is not an important fact in the context of diaspora on the grounds that usually sojourners preserve a strong feeling of attachment to their "homeland" from abroad and work towards the well-being of it. As a result of these fellow feelings migrants develop their social network in the same ethnic group, instead of being localized or assimilated in one particular place. However, an opposite way of understanding was also described by him. This second option is related to the postmodern conceptualization of diaspora. In postmodern understanding, for example, Clifford⁵⁴⁸ argues that diaspora "think globally, but live locally". In this context, the national and ethnic backgrounds of diaspora are ignored. On the contrary, they are treated as a single group along the lines that they have crossed their ethnic boundaries. This is how diaspora is conceptualized as hybrid and globally oriented. It is noteworthy that Anthias⁵⁴⁹ criticizes the homogenizing tendency of a diaspora and emphasizes different political projects and interests of people on the basis of generation, class, gender etc. within a diaspora.

The relevance of these different explanations and notions of diaspora in the case of Bangladeshi migrants is examined in the current study to explore their survival strategies in the transnational spaces of Malaysia. We have found dissimilarities with their arguments and based on these we have argued that Bangladeshi migrants develop not only intra-ethnic networks, but also inter-ethnic social networks. If we make a list of that we notice different types of networks like, (1) intra-ethnic strong ties, (2) intra-ethnic weak ties, (3) inter-ethnic strong ties, (4) inter-ethnic weak ties, (5) transnational strong ties, (6) transnational weak ties, (7) hybrid transnational strong ties, (8) hybrid transnational weak ties or ‘quasi formal business networks’. These are developed by the migrants as coping strategies and for higher socio-economic mobility in order to deal with their multi-dimensionally embedded realities. In this context, migrants develop strategies to overcome intra and inter-ethnic (cross-cultural) conflicts and bypass anti-integration migration policies on the one hand, and on the other, to accumulate local knowledge as well as social, economic and cultural capital for upward mobility.

⁵⁴⁸ James Clifford. 1994. *Diasporas*. *Cultural Anthropology* 9: 302-38.

⁵⁴⁹ Floya Anthias. August 1998. *Sociology*, v32 n3 p557 (24). British Sociological Association Publication Ltd. *Evaluating diaspora: Beyond Ethnicity*.

Apart from the hybrid transnational identities, we also notice hybrid culture and religious and economic practices in the study areas as the outcome of globalization. Therefore, the argument of the study is, whether it is through inter-ethnic ties or in the forms of socio-cultural and economic practices, that hybridism is noticed as a common livelihood strategy which assists them to accumulate higher socio-economic and cultural mobility for themselves and for their intra or inter-ethnic strong ties. As a result, in order to understand the organizational structure of the Bangladeshi Diaspora at this age of globalization, we need to highlight its inherent dynamism, the different forms of coping strategies of the migrants and multiple forms of realities, in which migrants are embedded in and try to adjust, cope or bypass.

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Appendices

1. Sources of Data and the Research Methods

A brief overview of the sources of data and the methods that were applied to collect these data is important to support the arguments of this study. My discussion may also work as guidelines for further research, especially if it is conducted among unknown samples and also within hidden populations, as, for example, undocumented migrants and labour brokers are. In fact, the primary and secondary data of this research was collected from June 2005 till 1st July 2006 and then later during August 2006. Through an interview-survey among 150 current Bangladeshi migrants in Peninsular Malaysia and intensive ethnographic field work (with returned and current migrants) in Bangladesh and Peninsular Malaysia, data for this research was collected. Along with the quantitative questions on their socio-economic and demographic background, some open-ended questions were also included in the interview-survey that enabled this study to chart the hotspots of their community, their modes of networking and the organizational structure of the diaspora in the host country.

Actually, these qualitative questions were added later on, as the original intention was to conduct an “ethnosurvey”. Since my plan was to get intensive qualitative information as well as to make some comparisons and generalizations on the basis of quantitative information, I decided to combine sociological and anthropological research methods. These are (1) survey and (2) ethnography. In fact, the reading of literature, for instance the work of Massey⁵⁵⁰ et al. on Mexican migrants in the United States (in which he discussed and justified his techniques for data collection referring to some other researches like Gamio (1930, 1931), Taylor (1932, 1933) etc.), influenced me to design my research methods in that way.

I intended to apply these joint techniques of qualitative and quantitative information especially after my field visit (Middle of June 2005 to October 2005) in the origin country where I met returned migrants and their different levels of networks. In that context along with 65 semi-structured interviews, some group discussions were arranged with returned migrants, their families, friends and neighbourhoods as well as with a N:G:O that was

⁵⁵⁰ Douglas S. Massey, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand and Humberto Gonzalez. University of California Press. 1987. *Return to Aztlan. The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico*, p- 7.

established by well-off repatriated migrants. I found that these people developed new ties and maintained old ones for different purposes. Their multi-dimensionally embedded realities regulated the nature of these networks. All the networks, moreover, were not equal. Some demanded specific kinship-based responsibilities, while others' demands were fulfilled on the basis of monetary transaction. In the same way, it was found that among the respondents the number of male returnees was higher than that of their female counterparts. As a result, out of 65 semi-structured interviews, only 12 were with females. Then a question came to my mind regarding the modes of networking as well as the ratio of males to females of the current migrants in the receiving country. The question was if the returned migrants' networks were very diverse then how would those be of the migrant Bangladeshis in Malaysia? Do their networks show a homogeneous picture in terms of strength and intensity? Does gendered ideology and emigration policy still play significant roles in regulating temporary migration to Malaysia? To find answers to these questions, instead of depending on only one source, I thought that the combination of anthropological and sociological research methods would be more fruitful.

However, after my pilot survey (November 2005) with 50 Bangladeshi neighbours in the Bangi and Kajang areas of Selangor, where I used to live earlier, pre-prepared questionnaires were reviewed to conduct interview-surveys. It was found that there was no clear-cut idea about the total number of Bangladeshi migrants and their "hotspots". Some mentioned that they had contacts only within Kajang, some also indicated of contacts in Kuala Lumpur, Penang etc. The contact numbers and addresses that I collected from returned migrants in Bangladesh about their friends and relatives in the receiving country were also not that supportive. In fact, it has already been described in chapter three that neither the immigration department of the host country nor the emigration authorities of the home country had any concrete information about Bangladeshi migrants. In the same way, the central statistics bureau, the local police as well as the Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia failed to provide any data about the "hotspots" of Bangladeshi migrants or their statistical figure in Malaysia. On the contrary, each of them spoke of the migrants' essentially mobile character. They also emphasized that Bangladeshi migrants used to stay and work there as undocumented workers and even, some of them could be found as husbands of Malaysians. Consequently, I had to incorporate open-ended questions in the survey questionnaires about the nature of their integration, embeddedness and coping strategies. Moreover, applying

snowball sampling⁵⁵¹ (something usually applied to find hidden population) I had to locate Bangladeshi migrants. Then I conducted interview-surveys with them and later utilizing their networks selected my interviewees for more intensive interviews.

At the phase of my interview-surveys (December 2005 to the end of February 2006), I also moved my living area to a new place in Bandar Sun way. I selected a flat in an apartment where other migrant workers as well as Bangladeshis used to stay. As a result, I had the opportunity to meet them regularly either in a restaurant situated downstairs of my flat or in the weekly 'pasarmalam' (informal markets that can be seen at night). Since this area was adjacent to some of my field sites (Subang Maoah, Subang Jaya) and also not so far from Kotaraya (Kuala Lumpur), the 'Bangla Bazaar' area, I managed to engage in regular observation and gather information. I collected information and noted in my field-note books the everyday discourses regarding Bangladeshi migrants, migrants' normative and perceptive models on the organizational structure of the community as well as statistical-behavioural models on their survival strategies. This research strategy also enabled me to locate their length, strength, nature and members of networks. For example, I found out that these Bangladeshi migrants developed ties not only among themselves, but also with members from other ethnic communities where along with religious commonalities, their everyday arenas of engagement contributed largely to this regard. In the same way, it was found that not necessarily all co-ethnic ties were very close. Instead, some were morally articulated, while others were developed instrumentally to fulfil a purpose. Neither did female Bangladeshi respondents have any close network with the male co-ethnic members. I also found out that apart from the Selangor and Kuala Lumpur areas, Bangladeshi migrants were connected with their close and distant networks in Johor and Penang and hence, research was conducted there to gain further insights and information.

It is already described that on the basis of the interview-survey, respondents, areas and subjects for further investigation (along the lines of qualitative research) were chosen. During my qualitative research (March 2006 to the beginning of July 2006 and then August 2006) some techniques like semi-structured interviews, group discussion and observations-- while living as close door neighbours with the respondents in Peninsular Malaysia, were followed to

⁵⁵¹ Goodman, L.A. 1961. "Snowball sampling". *Annals of Mathematical Statistics* 32:148-70.

gather further in-depth information. Besides, case study methods were applied to study the selective areas and phenomena. In this context, the ‘Bangla Bazaar’ area, nearby areas of the Bangladesh High Commission, adjacent areas of the “*surau*” (sacred places of Muslims where they go for their prayer), large and small scale ethnic enterprises and business dealings of businessmen and vendors, the living and working areas of skilled professionals, the weekly ‘*pasarmalam*’ areas as well as the living and working areas of female migrant workers were spontaneously visited and observed by me just as other ordinary Bangladeshi migrants did. To collect in-depth information, I sometimes used to participate in their daily livelihoods either as listener in different cultural programmes or as customer in their restaurants and often as buyer of their cosmopolitan items. This is how I tried to develop ties with the different levels of respondents that even enabled me to conduct informal interviews with labour brokers and undocumented (semi-skilled and un-skilled) workers about their channels of “*hundy*” and manpower business.

Thus, applying different research methods I tried to check the hypothesis whether or not networking assisted Bangladeshis for their adaptation in the receiving country. During my hypothesis testing it was found that the modes of networking of the Bangladeshi Diaspora were regulated by their multi-dimensionally embedded realities. Their embeddedness was noticed not only in the host country, but also within their own community in the origin country which guided their motivation for migration to the receiving country. Consequently, to fulfil these aims for higher socio-economic and cultural mobility, the migrants travelled to Malaysia utilizing their networks with labour brokers. Since these labour brokers already possessed intra and inter-ethnic networks, the new migrants attempted to contact them utilizing their so-called patron’s channel in the receiving country. Through his assistance and also depending on their living and working niches they developed new networks. In this way, dealing with different patterns of embedded realities migrants lengthen their stay, accumulate local knowledge (necessary for a better survival strategy) and bypass the institutional restrictions that are imposed to control integration and assimilation of temporary migrant workers in the host country.

Therefore, to grasp information on the modes of embeddedness, consequent survival strategies and organizational structure of the Bangladeshi migrants in the host country, I conducted field research both in the origin and receiving society. While in the origin country I tried to find the whereabouts of current migrants in Malaysia as well as attempted to learn

their modes of survival when they were in Malaysia, in the receiving country I collected synchronic information. In that context, along with 150 interview-surveys, 130 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents. The respondents were selected on the basis of stratified sampling, where the class/status, area of origin, gender and ethnic identities were observed carefully. Besides, 20 semi-structured interviews were also performed with experts and transnational agents, namely some officials of the Bangladesh High Commission, Malaysian Immigration department, Malaysian Trade Union Congress, N.G.O officials (WARBE in Bangladesh and Tenaganita in Malaysia), Bank Negara as well as central manpower agents of BAIRA.

Apart from the primary data, secondary sources of information were also used that facilitated me to collect macro level synchronic and diachronic data. For example, utilizing secondary sources I managed to reveal the context as well as history of labour migration in the case of the origin and receiving country. The sources of my secondary data were mainly reviews of different ethnographies that were written on the topic of labour migration in Bangladesh and Malaysia. Moreover, newspapers, magazines, web pages, published and unpublished journals, reports and conference papers of several institutions and organizations were also taken into consideration. These diverse sources of secondary data were also helpful in the selection of my field sites (it was there I found out that Bangladeshi migrant workers used to contribute in different states of Peninsular Malaysia). Based on that information Peninsular Malaysia was selected by me as my primary field for research.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that as an outsider in Malaysia, I had to depend on two research assistants and also some key-informants to come to terms with my respondents. For this, one Bangladeshi male research assistant and a Chinese female research assistant were chosen. They accompanied me while I visited the market areas, restaurants or nearby areas of “*surau*” and also joined me during my survey and interviews. Through interpreting the Bahasa language and also utilizing her Malaysian ID card my Chinese assistant facilitated me to gain access to national libraries and to interact with Malaysians and migrants from other communities. Utilizing the channels of my Bangladeshi research assistant I obtained the trust of manpower agents, “*hundy*” businessmen and also undocumented workers and thus got information about their complex coping mechanisms in a foreign country. We were so well-known (they used to address us as a group of “Bangladeshi sisters and brothers”) in the field sites that whenever I requested their time they readily provided it. I was also supported by my

research assistants when I cross-checked the data that I had collected through the interviews with my respondents. And thus being facilitated by their continuous support and encouragement I managed to conduct research in Malaysia, even though I was a Bangladeshi female researcher.

2. Official Migration from Bangladesh: By Country of Employment and Remittance Flow (1976-2007)

Year	K.S.A	Kuwait	U.A.E	Qatar	Iraq	Libya	Bahrain	Oman	Malaysia	Korea(S)	S.Pore	Jordan	Mauritius	UK	Italy	Other areas	Total migrants	Total amount ML US\$
1976	217	643	1989	1221	587	173	335	113								809	6087	23.71
1977	1379	1315	5819	2262	1238	718	870	1492								632	15725	82.79
1978	3212	2243	7512	1303	1454	2394	762	2877	23							1029	22809	106.90
1979	6476	2298	5069	1383	2363	1969	827	3777			110					223	24495	172.06
1980	8695	3687	4847	1455	1927	2976	1351	4745	3		385					2	30073	301.33
1981	13384	5464	6418	2268	13153	4162	1392	7352			1083					1111	55787	304.88
1982	16294	7244	6863	6252	12898	2071	2037	8248			331					524	62762	490.77
1983	12928	10283	6615	7556	4932	2209	2473	11110	23		178					913	59220	627.51
1984	20399	5627	5185	2726	4701	3386	2300	10448			718					1224	56714	500.00
1985	37133	7384	8336	4751	5051	1514	2965	9218			792					550	77694	500.00
1986	27235	10286	8790	4847	4728	3111	2597	6255	530		25					254	68658	576.20
1987	39292	9559	9953	5889	3847	2271	2055	440								711	74017	747.60
1988	27622	6524	13437	7390	4191	2759	3268	2219	2							709	68121	763.90
1989	39949	12404	15184	8462	2573	1609	4830	15429	401		229					654	101724	757.84
1990	57486	5957	8307	7672	2700	471	4563	13980	1385		776					517	103814	781.54
1991	75656	28574	8583	3772		1124	3480	23087	1628		642					585	147131	769.30
1992	93132	34377	12975	3251		1617	5804	25825	10537		313		12			281	188124	901.97
1993	106387	26407	15810	2441		1800	5396	15866	67938		1739		12			703	244508	1009.09
1994	91385	14912	15051	624		1864	4233	6470	47826	1558	391		26			1986	186326	1153.54
1995	84009	17492	14686	71		1106	3004	20949	35174	3315	3762		229			3417	187543	1201.52
1996	72734	21042	23812	112		1966	3759	8691	66631	2759	5304		196			4204	211714	1355.34
1997	106534	21126	54719	1873		1934	5010	5985	2844	889	27401		238			2046	231077	1525.03
1998	158715	25444	38796	6806		1254	7014	4779	551	578	21728		16			1986	267667	1599.24
1999	185739	22400	32344	5611		1744	4639	4045		1501	9596		139			424	268182	1806.63
2000	144618	594	34034	1433		1010	4637	5258	17237	990	11095		271			1509	222686	1954.95
2001	137248	5341	16252	223		450	4371	4561	4921	1561	9615		272			4150	188965	2071.03
2002	163269	15769	25462	552		1574	5421	3854	85	28	6856	1829	59		19	479	225256	2847.79
2003	162131	26722	37346	94		2855	7482	4029	28	3771	5304	2128		166	28	2106	254190	3177.63
2004	139031	41108	47012	1268		606	9194	4435	224	215	6948	6022	44	2055	550	14241	272958	3561.45
2005	80425	47029	61978	2114		972	10716	4827	2911	223	9651	9101	1381	2793	950	17630	252702	4249.87
2006	108671	35483	129155	7662		107	16301	8038	20452	992	20077	2798	2058	1597	1426	15390	377591	5485.98
2007 Jan- June	85716	2993	85420	6052		443	7986	9150	104045	39	16741	302	2533	450	3432	9725	335098	2043.90
Total	230710	477731	767759	109396	66343	54219	141072	257552	385399	18419	161790	22180	7486	7061	6405	90724	4889418	43451.29

Source: <http://www.bmet.org.bd/report.html>, access 8th September 2007

3. Analysis of Covariance

Our ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) model is as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 D_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{2i} + \beta_4 X_{3i} + u_i$$

where, Y_i = monthly wage of the i th migrant in RM

X_{2i} = job alteration of the i th migrant

X_{3i} = length of staying in years of the i th migrant

$D_{2i} = 1$, if the migrant has weak tie

= 0, otherwise (if strong tie)

u_i = error term

β_1 = constant

$\beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = coefficients of dummy, job alteration and length of staying respectively

The following regression results are obtained:

$$\hat{Y}_i = -7.295 + 363.779D_{2i} + 93.556X_{2i} + 83.228X_{3i}$$

se = (250.001) (173.518) (74.742) (19.806)

t = (-.029) (2.096) (1.252) (4.202)

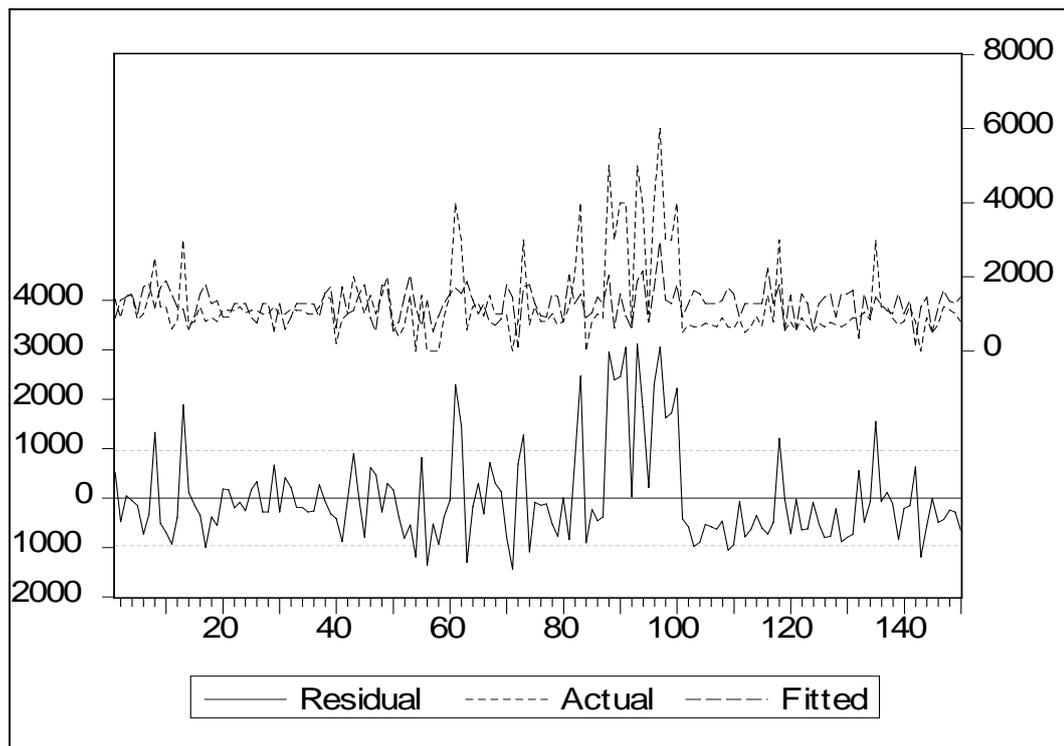
p-value = (.977) (0.038)* (.213) (0.000)*

$R^2 = .171$, n = 150

Where, se means standard error of the estimated coefficient, t is t-statistic, p-value is the probability value, * indicating p-value is significant at 5% level of significance, R^2 is multiple coefficient of determination, i.e. the 17% variation in wages are explained by the regressors and n is the sample size.

From the above results, we can conclude that the dummy variable and length of stay have statistically significant relationship with the wage. Duration of migrant life in the host country has the strong positive effect on wage. Keeping all other variables constant, the average monthly wages of migrants with weak ties are higher by about RM 363.78 than those with strong ties.

4. Depicting Heteroscedasticity in the Error/Residual Term



Source: Survey data

From the above figure, it's depicted that the residual term of the fitted regression showing heteroscedasticity for different values of the regressors. The variances of the error (according to the black line of zero value) are fluctuating for different values at different band width.

White Heteroskedasticity Test:

F-statistic	9.932964	Probability	0.000000
Obs*R-squared	38.46709	Probability	0.000000

So, we performed the White heteroscedasticity-consistent variances and standard error test for the remedy of heteroscedasticity and to get robust standard errors.

White Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Standard Errors & Covariance

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
CONST	-7.295058	279.9356	-0.026060	0.9792
Dummy	363.7786	130.4603	2.788424	0.0060
Alteration of job	93.55614	82.85140	1.129204	0.2607
Length of staying	83.22766	33.05351	2.517968	0.0129

From the above results it is depicted that standard errors are changed from the earlier estimates but the dummy and duration of abode in Malaysia remain significant at 5% level of significance. So, there is significantly and robustly higher average wage of migrants with weak ties than those with strong ties.

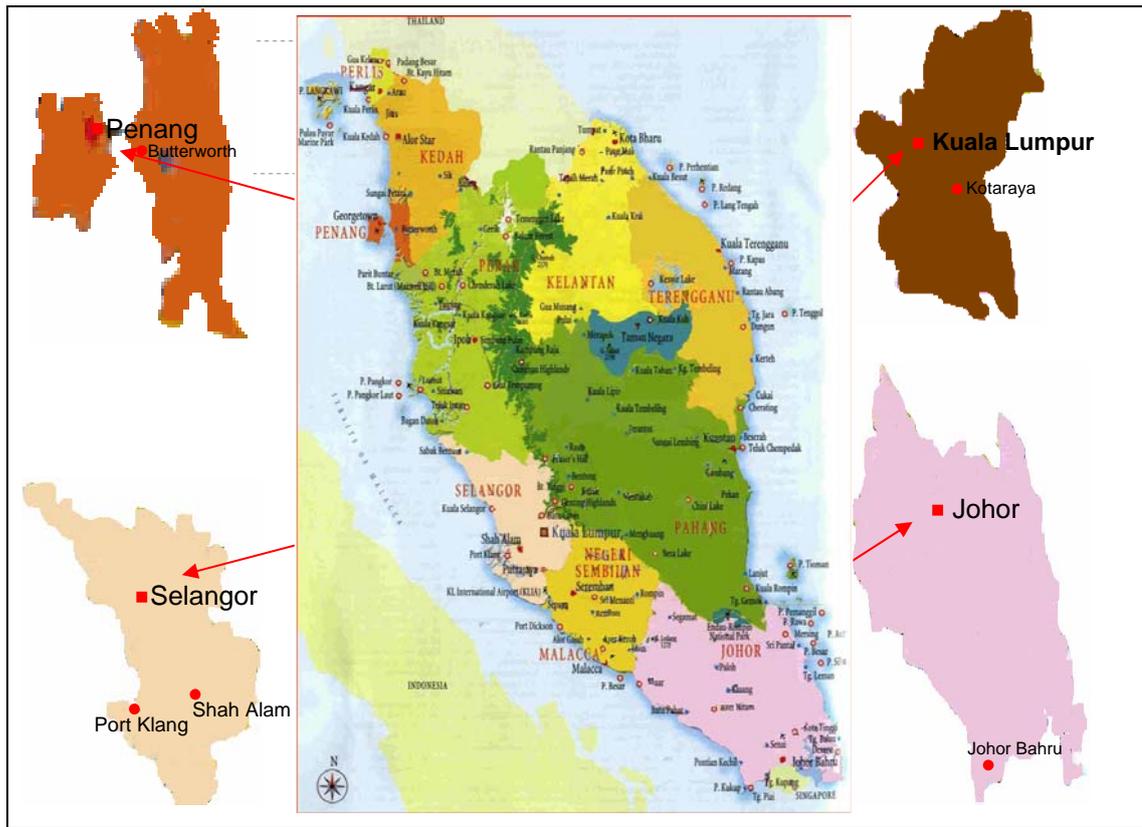
5. Table: Strength and Intensity of Networks

Ties	Actors	Reciprocal obligations	Frequency and ways of contacts	Actor's socio-economic status
Intra-ethnic strong ties	1-Consanguine, affine. 2-Friends.	1-Trust. 2-Information sharing. 3-Certainty. 4-Assistance. 5-Moral and socio-cultural obligations as kin. 6-Gift and remittance.	Host country	Consanguine, affine
			1-Almost everyday. 2-Same living and working niche.	1-Belong to same household. 2-Common income sources. 3-Common interest. 4-Same social status.
			Origin country	Friends
			1-After 2/3 days, every week or after every 15 days they talk via phone. 2-Apart from phone, newspaper, internet, letters etc. help them to remain associated. 3-Occasional Visit.	1-More or less same amount of earning. 2-Same legal status in the host society. 3-More or less same educational qualifications.
Intra-ethnic weak ties	1-Workers and professional cum merchants. 2-Workers and brokers. 3-Groups of businessmen.	<u>Workers</u> 1-Finding a way of migration. 2-Managing job, ways of higher income etc. 3-Monetary reciprocity. 4-Providing free service to their patrons. 5-Need to follow faction based groupings of their patrons.	<u>Workers</u> 1-Not so regularly. 2-When they fail to settle down their problems. 3-When they are called by their patrons. 4-Try to visit in their free times. 5-Need to visit them either by train and bus (not so adjacent to their living and working space) or talk to them through phone call.	<u>Workers</u> Different socio-economic status
		Professional, merchants and brokers	Professional, merchants and brokers	Professional, merchants and brokers

		1-Business. 2-Getting support from the workers for the leadership in political parties.	1-Not so regular contact. 2-In time of political or cultural celebration. 3-Workers make phone calls or visit them.	Different socio-economic status.
		Businessmen	Businessmen	Businessmen
		1-Forming coalitions against other rivals. 2-Getting inter-ethnic business contacts.	1-Not so regular contact. 2-If emergency situation arrives concerning business. 3-In time of national and cultural celebration.	Same status but different level of contacts and information.
Inter-ethnic strong ties	1- Consanguine, affine. 2-Friends. 3-Fiancé, fiancée	1-Trust. 2-Information sharing. 3-Certainty. 4-Assistance. 5-Moral and socio-cultural obligations as kin. 6-Finding a way of settlement. 7-Managing business visa.	Consanguine, affine	Consanguine, affine
			Everyday	1-Belong to same household. 2-Common income sources. 3-Common planning for household members. 4-Different social status.
			Friends	
			1-Almost everyday 2-Same living and working niche 3-Through phone call, local restaurants and mosque etc.	Friends
			Fiancé, fiancée	1-Same living and working niche. 2-Different social status. 3-Common religious orientation.
			1-Almost everyday. 2-Through phone call, in pub and shopping centre etc.	Fiancé, fiancée
				1-Same working niche. 2- More or less common religious orientation. 3-Different social status.
Inter-ethnic weak ties	Business Partners.	Business (instrumental networking).	Almost every day in the business enterprise.	1-Common earning sources. 2-Different social status. 3-More or less common religious background.

Source: Survey and interview data

6. Research Areas in Peninsular Malaysia



Source: Malaysia Travel Guide

7. Photographs Taken in Peninsular Malaysia

'Bangla Bazaar' of Kotaraya is a "Hotspot" of the Bangladeshi Diaspora



'The description of this place is jointly given in Bengali and Hindi language'



'Businessmen and professionals cum businessmen are the orators in this get together'



'Workers and students are the listeners'

Inter-ethnic Get togethers in front of a Joint-ventured Ethnic Enterprise in 'Bangla Bazaar'



'This type of association is common in holidays'



'Workers inside the enterprise'



'A surau and a joint-ventured enterprise in Bangla Bazaar'

Get togethers of Bangladeshi Professionals near 'Kelab Aman' of Kuala Lumpur



'Only professionals and their families are invited to join the monthly meetings '



'A friendly cricket match arranged by the Bangladeshi professionals in front of Bangladesh High Commission'

An Inter-ethnic Marriage Celebration



'Bangladeshi migrants and their inter-ethnic ties jointly arrange this celebration'



'A Bangladeshi worker, his Tamil Indian spouse and their daughter'

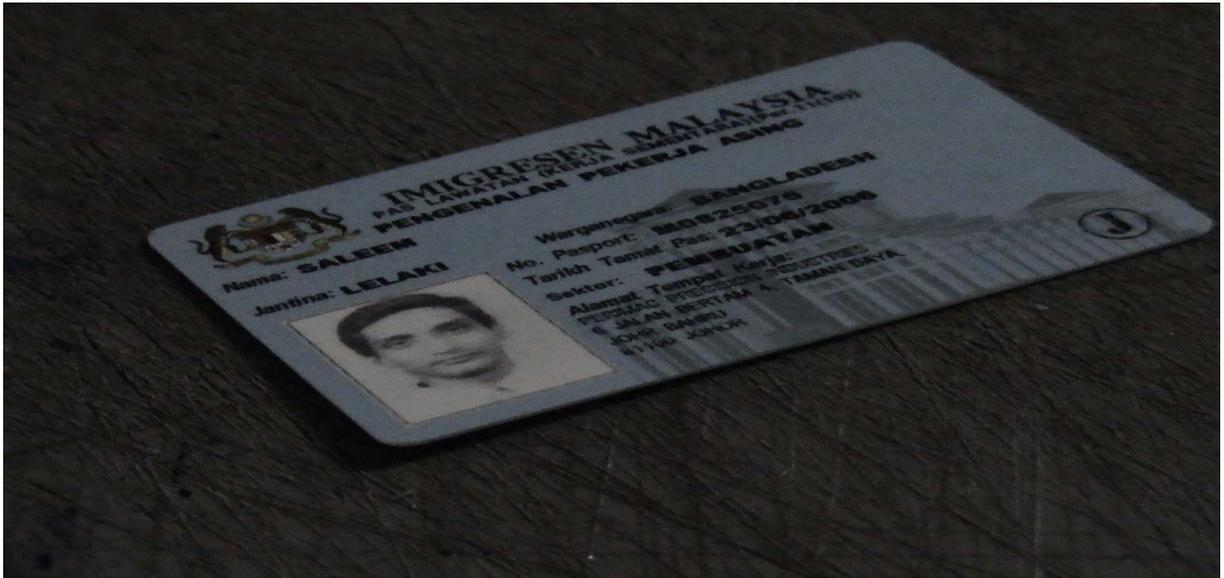
Flow of Goods and Information within the Transnational Hubs of the Origin and Receiving Country



‘Seeds of Bangladeshi vegetables are brought in by the transnational business networks of labour brokers’



‘A Bangladeshi worker in front of his vegetable garden planted in the yard of house’



'Migrants know that they should possess a *Jalan card* to stay, move and work in Malaysia'



'Kalim's call shop that helps to maintain transnational contact and the flow of information'



'Flow of Dhakaia movies in the transnational spaces'

'Pasarmalam' is a "Hotspot" of Migrant Workers and Malaysians



'A Bangladeshi fish-seller in the pasarmalam area of Butterworth (Penang)'



'Malaysians in the pasarmalam'