

***SOCIAL RELATIONS AMONG MIGRANT LABOURERS: A STUDY IN A MIGRANT
SETTLEMENT OF TRIVANDRUM***

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that the work embodied in this dissertation entitled *'Social Relations among Migrant Laborers: A study in a migrant settlement of Trivandrum'* has been carried out by ALOYSIUS T. ANTONY of Fourth semester, Master of Sociology under my supervision and guidance, that is here by approved for submission.

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DECLARATION

I, ALOYSIUS T. ANTONY do here by declare that the Dissertation titled

‘SOCIAL RELATIONS AMONG MIGRANT LABORERS: A STUDY IN A MIGRANT SETTLEMENT OF TRIVANDRUM’ is based on the original work carried out by me and submitted to the University of Kerala during the year 2016-2018 towards partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree Examination in Sociology. It has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title of recognition before any University or anywhere else.

Thiruvananthapuram

ALOYSIUS T ANTONY

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Abstract

In recent years, Kerala has experienced an unprecedented flow of migrant workers from different parts of India. Higher wages, large employment opportunities and shortage of local labourers, make Kerala an attractive job market for workers from outside the State. Migrant workers in Kerala are a social reality. They have been subjects of various studies. Studies bring out different problems they face, highlight the impact of government policies and social security schemes on them and also tell about the reasons for lack of integration to the local people which include difference of language and culture, increase in crime rates by migrants, isolated settlements etc. However, their social life among themselves remains underexplored. There are greater dynamics at play when it comes to the social life of these migrant workers, hailing from different states and cultures, working and living together in isolated settlements leading to an intensive interaction among them. A qualitative study using the phenomenological approach was best suited for this study because the researcher seeks to understand and document the lived experiences and perceptions of migrant labourers living and working together. It tries to capture the phenomena of 'co – existence' and to know how they make sense of the world they live in. This *intra migrant study* is an effort to capture and understand the dynamics of the social relations and interactions among migrant laborers i.e. their attitude, feelings and behavior towards fellow co-migrants, to assess how they overcome the linguistic, regional and cultural barriers and analyze the result of such intense inter ethnic interactions.

INTRODUCTION

**REVIEW OF
LITERATURE**

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AND

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OF DATA

**FINDINGS,
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REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION- WORLDWIDE

In today's world, migration occurs naturally, people migrate from place to place. They are intrigued by the process and they want to ask questions about why people move. Since time immemorial people are migrating from one place to the other in search of employment and livelihood. In the present scenario migration has continued unabated in spite of development and planning pursued in the country that assures equitable distribution of gains of development throughout the country (Hiskey, 2008). Migration is a complex decision and it does not happen suddenly. Individuals in Mexico do not wake up and think, *today I will go to the United States*, nor do Pakistanis arise one morning and decide, *Okay, it is time to leave for London*. As a complex decision, the choice to migrate is influenced by many factors. Migrants are often motivated by economic opportunities to find a better quality of life, to improve employment opportunities, to support families back home. Other includes personal safety and security and opportunities to gain empowerment or education that may be unavailable at the place of origin owing to factors such as poverty, lack of infrastructure and discrimination. In addition to these factors, forced and displacement migration also continues in variety of forms. For refugees, migration decisions are made out of necessity owing to factors such as conflict, persecution or environmental conditions. It must be emphasized that migration is not only a trans-national process but can also be rural–urban. Any such process involves not only leaving social networks behind (which may or may not be well established) but also includes experiencing at first a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation, which will lead to processes of acculturation.

International migration, movement of people across national borders, and internal mobility, movement of people within the state of the country, are a way of addressing the growing demographic, and persisting economic, disparities. Population mobility will continue from youth to aging societies and from poorer peripheries to richer urban agglomerations. Poor people migrate internally, but also internationally. While international migration has received more attention in recent debates on migration, internal migration is far more significant in terms of the numbers of people involved and perhaps even the quantum of remittances and poverty reduction potential of these (Jansen, 1970). A recent Human Development Report estimated that

the number of internal migrants is about four times the total number of international migrants (UNDP, 2009). Internal migration, especially in large countries such as India and China, can be across very substantial distances. In turn, the distance over which international migration occurs can be shorter compared to internal ones and can become as important for poor people, especially when pre-existing social networks are strong or when income are higher compared to those in the area of origin.

The study of internal and international migration is dichotomous in a sense that most research is either focused on the one or the other. This distinction might be justified if the two subjects would not have much in common. This however, is not the case since the underlying forces initiating and perpetuating both types of movement are mostly the same and only different in their relative weight. The core difference, however, is to be seen in the role of the state and regulations to control international flows of people. Beside this, internal and international influence the migration decision-making process of individuals and group such as households or kinships.

INDIAN CONTEXT

Migration is a worldwide phenomenon, but according to Dreze and Sen (1995), the number of migrant workers is larger in India than any other Asian countries. India is a country with vast diversity in its built. The population is divergent in their capability and achievement in development. The differences in the development have induced the mobility of the people across country and outside country in search of the living. The mobility was taking place from the olden days; it gathered its momentum in the British period, where we can see mobility to the large cities. During that period, we can see a gaining pace in rural urban movement which is mostly development induced (Davis, 1951). Migration is defined as a move from one migration defining area to another, usually crossing administrative boundaries made during a given migration interval and involving a change of residence (UN, 1993). The change in residence can take place either permanent or semi permanent or temporary basis (Premi, 1990). Internal migration involves a change of residence within national borders (Dang, 2005; Census, 2001; Bhagat and Mohanty, 2008).

Migration patterns in India are increasingly reflecting the economic divide in the country, with more migrants over the last decade heading to the Southern states, which have grown at a faster clip during this period. From ancient time different groups of people migrated to India and they established their kingdoms. Before and after independence, India has seen migration of people to other countries and to India. Later on the poverty and lack of opportunities in rural areas lead to rural to urban migration which is very prevalent in India. National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) shows a marginal decline in population mobility between 1987-88 & 1993. This decline is attributed to the process of economic liberalization which implies the greater movement of capital and natural resources and growing immobility of population (Kundu and Gupta, 1996). Migration in India is predominantly short distance, with around 60% of migrants changing their residence within the district and over 20% within the state while the rest move across the state boundaries. Another category of movement is involuntary movement. Married women usually migrate to their husband's place; village or city, children also migrate with their parents.

In India shifts of population and workforce co-exist with the circulatory movement of populations between developed regions and between rural and urban areas, mostly being absorbed in the unorganized sector of the economy. India can still be characterized as a rural country with more than 70% of its population still living in non-urban areas. More than a quarter of all households in India have reported on a former household member as out-migrant.

Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata are the largest destinations for internal migrants in India. Many of the migrants to these cities are from rural areas of Maharashtra and West Bengal. These cities absorb large numbers of people from other states across India. Seasonal flows of migrants vary by area and industry. Significant numbers of people from drought-prone regions including areas of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra migrate seasonally to work in construction, tile factories, crop-cutting operations and brick making. Circular migrants are also prevalent. Longer-term migration flows tend to be male-dominated, circular or seasonal flows in India is among the poorest and tribal populations. Micro surveys on individual migrants show a significant clustering in the 16–40 year age group (Conell *et al*, 1976). This is even more the case with poorer semi-permanent or temporary labour migrants (Srivastava, 1999). With respect to education, migration level changes it is high among the highly educated and least educated

and with seasonal migrants there is a high preponderance of illiterate people (Connell *et al*, 1976; Rogaly *et al*, 2001; Haberfeld *et al*, 1999).

Migrants are mostly visible in low paid sector or informal economy, often working as construction workers, agricultural labourers, hawers and vendors, domestic servants, rickshaw pullers, plumbers, masons and security personals etc. Devoid of poor social security and legal protection, they work in the poor conditions and faced real discriminations.

KERALA CONTEXT

Kerala is the land of cultural diversity, is a complete whole made up of a blending of various religious, communities, regional cultures and language variations. Kerala culture can be compared to a chain made of different colored beads and the thread through which the beads are strung is the Malayalam language. The culture of Kerala is created by its unique geographic features as it lies between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats. Rich in rain forests, its ancient trade relations with foreign lands, entry of immigrant communities during different periods, agricultural tradition, cuisine and its tradition of art literature, science and all these make the land, Kerala (Zachariah, 2001).

Kerala state in the recent past has been witnessing an increasing trend of migration of blue collared labour from various Indian states. Migration to Kerala has by and large been side lined as the state for the last few decades has demonstrated remarkably high out-migration and emigration rates. There are a number of studies on out migration and emigration from Kerala whereas the migration to Kerala from other states has been largely ignored. Analysis of in-migration to the state exploring census data also points towards increasing in-migration to the state. Discussing the economic consequences of emigration from Kerala, Zachariah and Rajan (2004) noted that, taking into consideration the emerging wide-spread impact of replacement migration on Kerala's employment sector, especially on unemployment and wage rates, a high level research on the length, breadth and socio-economic depth of replacement migration in the state be undertaken on an urgent basis and underlines that this has to be a major undertaking in view of its importance and technical requirements. There have been micro efforts which also identified the need for in-depth analysis of labour migration to Kerala acknowledging

the presence of workers from beyond neighbouring states (Prasad, 2006; Moses and Rajan, 2012; Surabhi and Kumar, 2007). Government of Kerala (GoK) noted that migrant workers, seeking employment in Kerala from other states like West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand etc. apart from the workers already present in this state from Tamil Nadu, are increasing. This influx is viewed as an emerging ‘social hazard’ (GoK, 2009).

Migration plays a pivotal role in the economy of the southern Indian state of Kerala. The demographic advancement of Kerala’s population has resulted in a situation where in the state has a Diasporas of the size of nearly three million while for the domestic requirements it depends on a migrant workforce of almost the same size. Workers from beyond south India take care of most of the low-skilled, low-valued jobs at present. Construction, hospitality, plantation, iron and steel, wooden furniture, marine fishing, mining and quarrying, plywood, textile and apparel, seafood and footwear are the major economic sectors in Kerala that heavily engage migrant workers. Valapattanam in Kannur, Vellimadukunnu in Kozhikode, Kanjikode and Pattambi in Palakkad, Kandanthara, Adivadu, Vathuruthy and Ambalamugal in Ernakulam district, Aroor in Alappuzha, Paipad in Kottayam and Kazhakkootam in Thiruvananthapuram are the major areas of concentration of migrant workers. Their jobs in Kerala called for arduous physical labour and put workers at elevated risk of exposure to accidents, injuries and even death. Depending on the temporary or permanent nature of their work, migrants were found living in pukka structures, makeshift facilities or even on pavements. Even in Kerala, akin to most of the major migrant destinations in the country, migrant workers experienced discrimination, harassment and exploitation. Although the Government of Kerala has taken proactive measures for the welfare of migrants, they are yet to be pragmatic enough and firmly rooted in grassroots realities to benefit these workers. Kerala has emerged as one of the most promising destinations among the Indian states for migrant workers from many of the major states known for out-migration in the country. Given the demographic scenario of the native population, shortage of labour, current penetration of migrant workers in the state and the precarious state of human development in the source regions, this migration is only likely to increase. Labour migration is more a requirement of the state than that of the migrant workers themselves, and it is fundamental to create awareness about this among the key stakeholders. For Kerala to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the state needs to usher in migrant

inclusive development. The inclusion of migrant workers needs to be construed as a collective responsibility rather than that of the government alone. Migrant inclusive programmes and policies are important although targeted interventions are strategic in the initial phases.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years, Kerala has experienced an unprecedented flow of migrant workers from different parts of India. Higher wages, large employment opportunities and shortage of local labourers, make Kerala an attractive job market for workers from outside the State. According to a study conducted by Joseph, et. al (2013) on behalf of the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation for the Department of Labour and Skills of the Government of Kerala, there are over 25 lakh domestic migrant labourers in Kerala from different states of India, as well as from Bangladesh and Nepal. In 2016 this figure stood over 40 lakhs (*The Caravan : A Journal of Politics and Culture, 18 November 2016*), out of which 4 lakh are in Trivandrum, which is second in accommodating migrant workers after Ernakulam. (*Mathrubhumi Mar30, 2016.*)

Migrant workers in Kerala are a social reality. They have been subjects of various studies. Studies bring out different problems they face, highlight the impact of government policies and social security schemes on them and also tell about the reasons for lack of integration to the local people which include difference of language and culture, increase in crime rates by migrants, isolated settlements etc. However, their social life among themselves remains underexplored. The diverse studies fail to shed light on their lives within these isolated settlements, on how they relate and connect with each other. Even though collectively called “*Bengalis*” by the locals, the migrant labourers are a diverse and heterogeneous group, belonging to different states like Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha etc. and having different ethnic identities.

As Peter Berger wrote in his book, “*things are not what they seem*”, there are greater dynamics at play when it comes to the social life of these migrant workers, hailing from different states and cultures, working and living together in isolated settlements leading to an intensive interaction among them. This *intra migrant study* is an effort to capture and understand the dynamics of the social relations and interactions among migrant laborers i.e. their attitude,

feelings and behavior towards fellow co-migrants, to assess how do they overcome the linguistic, regional and cultural barriers and analyze the result of such intense inter ethnic interactions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Migration has been a significant catalyst in Kerala state's economy. With a diminishing Diasporas of the size of nearly three million in 2016, the state is increasingly dependent on migrant workers from the rest of India, the volume of which appears to be growing beyond three million. The state has evolved as one of the most prominent destinations for migrant labourers from other states in India. In the present scenario, when migrants are becoming an integral part of Kerala society- socially, culturally, economically, such a study would give an in depth knowledge about the migrant's perspective towards fellow migrant workers. This would add insights to the ongoing migration and ethnic studies. Moreover, today when the government is planning and implementing various policies for them, such a study would bring forward their interests so that their interests and viewpoints could also be accommodated.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Migration's role in economic development is widely recognized. The heart of the economic development problem is generally considered to lie in a gradual reallocation of the labour force from the agriculture to the industrial sector. To get a better insight into the problem, a brief review of available literature on migration has been presented below. The review intends to identify research gaps on the topic which would help to raise some issues for detailed discussion in the study.

Reading in the Sociology of Migration (1970) is a collection of essays by Clifford.J.Jansen. It deals with migration as a major symptom of social change, with emphasis on internal migration than international migration. It is a collection of 16 essays on a specialized aspect of migration written by eminent persons. Some of the sociological problems of migration are discussed, along with theories of migration: push-pull theory, differential migration and motivation for migration. Internal migration is discussed with the social composition of migrants: mass migration, economic migration from underdeveloped country. The various problems face by the migrants in various countries such as Great Britain, United States, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Japan, San Salvador is considered. The monograph will be a useful resource for the study of migration.

Todaro's *A Model of Labour Migration and Urban Unemployment in Less Developed Countries* (1969) tried to explain migration in developing countries in terms of push and pull factors respectively. Therefore, the motives of migration are classified as push factors and pull factors. Unemployment, flood, earthquake, drought (i.e., natural calamities) etc, are the push factors. Pull factors that determine migration such as attraction of city life for education, health, development of backward community, job opportunities and training facilities and so on.

Migration, Sociological Studies II (1969) by J.A.Jackson is a collection of specially commissioned papers developing the theory of both long and short distance migration there are 10 articles in this book which discusses about the concepts of migration not only the problems associated with migration but also the range and variety of types of migrant and forms of migration. Articles deals with the theory of migration- Everett, Lee giving emphasis on the

push pull and rural urban migration, sociological features of migration applying Merton's theory, discusses the various reasons for migration, migrant types with motivational characteristics and also various theories relating to immigrant. These articles suggest there is an encouraging clustering and crystallization in the development of both appropriate new concepts and emphasis on significant pattern of migration. The analysis of migration potential has considerable importance for manpower planning and regional development.

Lok Raj Baral in his book *Regional Migrations, Ethnicity and Security: The South Asian Case* (1990) very significantly intended to explore various emerging issues of inter-state migrations in South Asia. The author, on the basis of news reports, interviews, official and unofficial documents, investigated the migratory trends and their implications in South Asia. No country in the region experienced bitter ethnic conflicts and clashes between immigrants and local people. All forms of conflicts originated from within the countries and their causes were basically economic, political and psychological. It was found that the trend of immigration had negligible contribution to the growth of population in these countries but the aspect of national security was increasingly becoming a field of immediate concern for the countries of the region. The anti-foreigner slogan, however, was more effective and catchy for mobilizing the people. The main thrust was to analyze the impact of inter-state migrations on maintenance of internal socio-political equation and on aggravation of ethnic tension in the region. Hence, the internal aspect of population growth was found more dangerous than the overplayed problem of immigrants. If the level of population growth was continued, the security of South Asia was likely to be threatened.

Land of Strangers (2012) by Ash Amin is concern with sense of togetherness in a society of relative strangers. It focuses on the sociology of ties at workplaces communities, urban spaces or transnational spaces relationships between strangers are problematized and inhuman. It explores the moral and material basis of how to nurture a sense of togetherness in a society of relative strangers.

Zygmunt Bauman's *Strangers at Our Door* (2016) explores the fear arising out of the migration crisis in Europe. Bauman analyses the origins, contours and impact of this moral panic. It also focuses on how politicians have exploited fears and anxieties among those who

have already lost so much. But the policy of separation, building walls rather than bridges, is misguided. We are faced with a crisis of humanity, and the only way out is to recognize our support to each other as a species and to find new way to live together in solitary and co-operation with strangers who have opinions and preferences different from our own.

Exodus: How Migration is Changing Our World (2013) by Paul Collier presents a simplified model of migration which focuses on people's decisions to migrate, mechanics of migratory flows and its social and economic effects. It examines migration from 3 perspectives the migrants themselves, the people they leave behind (their family) and host societies (the present area where they are living). He argues that culturally distinct people reduces the level of co-operation in the host societies. Discuss the effect of migration from the above 3 perspectives. Migrants leave their home to earn money separation from family to an unknown culture.

Tasneem Siddiqui's important work on reason for migration *Impact of Migration on Poverty and Development* (2012) aims at finding linkages between migration and poverty, and between migration and development. Both internal and international migration can have major development and poverty implications for individuals and their families, for origin and destination areas, as well as for national economies. The aim of this paper is to review existing literature, and find evidence on these linkages. For the reviews of literature on migration the places selected are South Asia, Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, East Africa and West Africa in order to highlight the complexity of migration patterns and impacts. It is also accompanied, where relevant, by evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean. It draws attention to the many types of migration including: internal migration; short-term international contract labour; cross-border mobility and regional migration and the different impacts that they have at the household level and beyond. The findings are presented under five broad headings: the impact of migration on individual migrants; left behind family members; community; local economies; and national economies of origin.

Can Rural-Urban Migration into Slums Reduce Poverty? Evidence from Ghana (2014) by Mariama Awumbila, George Owusu and Joseph Kofi Teye is a study which examines the livelihoods of poor migrants living and working in two urban informal settlements in Accra: Nima and Old Fadama. Poverty in urban areas in Ghana is partly attributed to net migration of

poor people to cities. The study suggests that, despite living in a harsh environment with little social protection, an overwhelming majority of the migrants believes that their overall well-being has been enhanced by migrating to Accra. Using their own ingenuity, the migrants build houses and create jobs in the informal sector and beyond in order to survive and live in Accra. The migrants are also contributing to poverty reduction and human capital development back home through remittances and investments. Yet, official assessments and perceptions of urban poverty do not take into account the fact that poor people are attracted to urban areas to utilize the multiple economic opportunities there, but instead only focus on head count measures that do not recognize these dynamics. This paper also show that urban slums are not just places of despair and misery, but places where migrants are optimistically making the most of their capabilities and are trying to move out of poverty, despite the obvious difficulties. Therefore, the need for a more nuanced understanding of the connections between the migration of the poor to urban areas and the impacts that this is having on their long term prospects to exit poverty is very important area to be looked forward.

William Joe, Priyajit Samaiyar, U.S. Mishra's *Migration and Urban Poverty in India Some Preliminary Observations* (2009) deals with migration decisions to urban areas that are backed by economic rationale and attempts to understand gains accruing to individuals from migration, in terms of poverty outcomes. Decision to migrate is mostly a choice - except in compelling circumstances of conflict and insecurity - and therefore needs to be examined in terms of its economic outcomes. The analysis is based on the 55th round survey data on Employment - Unemployment Survey 1999-2000 (EUS) provided by the National Sample Survey Organization. We undertake a broad descriptive socio-economic profiling of the migrant households in urban India and explore the dynamics of poverty among interstate as well as intrastate migrants to urban destinations. Further, we evaluate the impact of migration on the economic status of migrants by analyzing the characteristic of 'duration since migration'. Considering migration as a transition, this exercise makes a broad comparison of change in economic status of migrants at the destination as against the origin. The analysis reveals that migrants disadvantaged in terms of caste, education and residence earn poorer returns to migration. While returns to migration have proved to be positive with increased duration at the

destination, the characteristic endowment like education and social group identity seem to make a further difference.

Marina Faetanini and Rukmini Tankha's report on *Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India* (2013) aims to provide an overview of existing innovative practices that increase the inclusion of internal migrants in society and act as a living document that would inspire and assist professionals and governments officials in their attempts to facilitate the social inclusion of migrants. The study demonstrates that in India, internal migration accounts for a large population of 309 million as per Census of India 2001, and by more recent estimates, 326 million (NSSO 2007-2008), nearly 30 per cent of the total population. Internal migrants, of which 70.7 percent are women, are excluded from the economic, cultural, social and political life of society and are often treated as second-class citizens. The constraints faced by migrants are many - lack of formal residency rights; lack of identity proof; lack of political representation; inadequate housing; low-paid, insecure or hazardous work; extreme vulnerability of women and children to trafficking and sex exploitation; exclusion from state-provided services such as health and education and discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, class or gender. In the absence of proofs of identity and residence, internal migrants are unable to claim social protection entitlements and remain excluded from government sponsored schemes and programmes.

Migration, Identity and Conflict: India Migration Report 2011(2011) by S.Irudaya Rajan is an edited volume in the next India Migration Report 2011 which is organized into 19 articles by different eminent scholars to assess the various facets of internal migration and into economic, social and political consequences. This deals with migration migrant identity and conflict in the context of internal migration. It focuses on state-level and district level analysis on trends and patterns of migration, short-duration migration and Northeast region migration. It also discusses the broad politicization of internal migration by some political parties and the inability of law to protect migrants and grant protection. There are some case studies in recent field work done. It also examines mere aspect of the problems of nurses, reports of CDS Goa migration survey 2008 and KMS 2008 are also included. Discussion on the emerging trends of skilled migration and their economic implications for India is also included.

Another significant work *Dynamics of Migration in Kerala Dimensions, Differentials and Consequences* (2003) by K.C.Zachariah, E.T.Mathew and S.Irudaya Rajan is the first systematic study on migration, impact of migration on Kerala's economy and society. In this work the authors reveals that migration from Kerala to other states of India and abroad has become a burning subject and its effect is felt in every aspect of life in the state. It also studies the causes and consequences of migration from Kerala with its demographic situation, measurement of the magnitudes and dimensions of migration from and returns migration to Kerala. An attempt is also made to assess the consequences of migration on different sections of society such as the elderly and married women whose husbands are away. The study is based on survey of 10,000 households representing all the districts and taluks of Kerala. The results provide first hand information on the volume and direction of migration, and encompass both measurement and analysis of the various types and facts of internal and international migration. The study also found that migration has affected the state's demographic trend, led to the decrease of unemployment and poverty; Further leading to scarcity of labourers and escalation of wages increase in the education standards and also improvement in the standard of living.

A.S.Oberai and H.K.Manmohan Singh's *Causes and Consequences of Internal Migration: A Study in the Indian Punjab* (1983) focuses on the process of internal migration in the Indian Punjab from a number of different and complementary perspectives so that it may add to the knowledge base from which the Indian planners can develop appropriate policies and measures to deal with the problems arising from and contributing to migration. The main focus of this study was on the determinants of migration, and on the analysis of the interaction between rural-urban migration and socio-economic changes, emphasizing, in particular, the functions of migration in the transformation of rural and urban economies and the effect of migration on productivity, technological change, population growth, structure and level of employment and income distribution between and within rural and urban areas. The study is the reports of the main findings of the 2 surveys conducted in Green Revolution belt of the Indian Punjab during 1977. The study is based on the primary data generated in two comprehensive surveys in Ludhiana district carried during 1977. Overall this study suggests that migrants do succeed in increasing their individual and household welfare as a result of migration. Migration is beneficial to the individual migrants, and that it will continue unabated until the underlying basic factor

causing wide rural-urban and inter-urban differentials in wages and employment opportunities are altered.

Labour Migration in Indian States (1983) by N.D.Kamble is a study to know about gross and net volume, type and direction of both in and out migration, their educational levels and employment patterns. The data on migration from Kerala and to Kerala was mainly collected from the census of Indian Report 1961 and 1971. The study was based on the quantitative secondary data hence; simple statistical tools of analysis were used. The focus of the study is on labour migration to Kerala and from Kerala, explaining about the size population in a region is the net result of births over death and in-migration over out-migration. Migration is determined by economic opportunities the need to have job to earn a living. He explains that migration of labour in India was from rural to rural areas, rural to urban areas, urban to urban areas and urban to rural areas. He also found that levels of education of migrant's are higher than those of non-migrant workers. Migration form Keralites is relatively less than non-keralites. Most of the migration in Kerala is from neighbouring states.

Another notable work in this regard is the one written by K.S Mathew, Mahai Singh, and Joy Varkey titled *Migration in South India* (2005). This is an edited volume of 16 papers presented in the national seminar on Migration in India and its Impact on tribal societies by scholarly persons in their respective field. It deals with various forms of migration in South India with focus on Malabar migration and its impact on tribal societies few other studies include emigration from Goa, cultural aspects of Gujarati migration in Kerala; their cultural aspects discussing the religions, economic, political, intellectual and cultural life of the people in the state, study relating to Malayali migration to Bangalore and life style of the migrants in the city. It also include essay on Malayali employees in Mysore illustrates the socio-cultural aspect of Malayalis. A lucid analysis of social, economic, political and cultural factors that facilitated migration to Malabar. It deals with the special case of peasant migration. It also discusses the Syrian Christian migrants settled in Malabar felt the urgent need for their own ecclesiastical organization.

Jabir Hasan Khan's work on *Socio-Economic and Structural Analysis of Internal Migration (A Micro Level Study, 2010)* deals with the concepts patterns, causes and consequences of internal migration. The studies focus on the structure of socio-economic traits of various types of migrants categorized on the basis of distance, community of origin and destination duration and migration defining boundaries and their comparison with non-migrants. The analysis of migration is made at micro level; the impact of migration is analyzed in depth, on agriculture in rural areas. The study based on 2 comprehensive surveys by questionnaire to the respondents in Shahjahanpur district of U.P. it gives an idea of effect of internal migration on rural and urban areas, economic social, natural determinants and a brief study of the theories of migration are also mentioned.

Arjan De Haan's '*Inclusive Growth? Labour Migration and Poverty in India*' (2011) discusses the relationship between labour migration and poverty in India. This is placed against the on-going debates on changes in patterns of employment and job creation in India, during the periods of economic liberalization, under the inclusive growth policies since 2004, and under the impact of the global financial crisis, and growing inequalities. The paper focuses on the migration patterns of deprived social groups, analyse whether migration form a routes out of poverty, and what specific policies for these groups exist or should be recommended. The paper first discusses general findings on the links between poverty and internal labour migration. These stylized facts are used to structure the insights into the changes in migration patterns in India, highlighting the under-recording of migration of most vulnerable groups. The third section discusses the implications of these insights for a notion of Inclusive Growth, concluding there is a need to address the invisibility of migrants and to review common policy aspirations to reduce migration. The conclusion reflects on the analysis of migration and policies to enhance migrants' well-being and ability to participate in India's disequalising growth.

Another important work on migrant labourers is by S.N.Tripathy and C.R.Dash's *Migrant Labour in India* (1997). This study is concern on type of interstate and intrastate migrant labourers of Odisha. This work is a pioneering effort pertaining to Odiya Migrants their magnitude, trend, characteristics, causes and consequences, addresses itself to the problem of the rural-urban migration confirming to Ganjam district of Odisha. The study focuses on the volume and direction of interstate migrant workers like datan out migrants, Surat migrants and all other

types of labour migrants along with their demographic socio-economic features. The analysis yield insights concerning population distribution and effect of migration on population growth. The analysis part has been based on data collected from sample surveys. The study is general and regional analysis in particular, provides a necessary base for the research into the underlying reasons of migration and its socio-economic sequel.

In the area of exploitation on migrant labourers, Toby Shelley's *Exploited Migrant Labour in the New Global Economy* (2007) is a notable work. Exploited is a study about the exploitation of migrant workers in the global economy focused on Britain. It shows that current unprecedented flows of migrant workers are a direct result of economic liberalization. It pictures the faces of the migrants through the products and services people are likely to encounter in their everyday life salads and tomatoes, construction sites and domestic, hospitality and entertainment services. They are also portrayed as the victim and villain in relation to trafficking. Empirical analysis on the extend of exploitation in six sectors- food cleaning, construction, transport, domestic work and the sex industry are highlighted in the chapters. At last focuses on government responses and responsibilities government is not only turning a blind eye towards the exploitation of migrant workers but also complicit in their abuse, their law and order approach on immigration being part of this complicity.

Migration Settlement and Ethnic Associations (1992) by K.P Kumaran is a study of Telugu migrant to Pune, which seek to understand the role of ethnic association in the process of Indian urbanization, ethnic associations have been studied from a historical perspective taking into account the process of Indian urbanization during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. These associations consist of organizations created by migrants in urban areas on the basis of caste, region of origin, language, or religion. Mass migration of people to cities leads to the formation of ethnic settlements in certain ecological niches. Pattern of settlement may vary according to the nature of migration. The dynamic role played by ethnic associations in the backward classes' movement.

Another important work by the same author K.Gopal Iyer on the distressed problems faced by the migrant labourers in India *Distressed Migrant Labour in India Key Human Rights Issues* (2004) is also an edited volume. It highlights the distressing conditions

faced by the migrant labour both in the state of origin and destination. The articles by distinguished scholars provide a valuable insight into the issues involved. It focus on understanding the problems and issues of distressed migration of intra state and inter-state migrant labour mainly in the north-west region of the country covering states of Haryana, Punjab and Delhi and intra state labour in Andhra Pradesh. The study begins with the concept and theoretical perspectives and overviews on the trends in migration studies. Next is about the problems faced by the migrants at the state of origin, the factors responsible to push them to migrate, the nature of distress migration there socio-economic profile and other associated aspects at the place of origin. The next few articles deal with problems faced by the migrants at the place of destination mainly Punjab, both in agriculture and industries, giving reason for the main pull factors in the areas. Another section analyzed rural to rural migration in Andhra Pradesh giving basic reason for the factors responsible and the problem faced by the migrants. Last few articles are analyzing the effectiveness of legislation in tackling the problems of the inter state migrant labour, the role played by the trade unions movement in Himachal Pradesh; bondage less payment: protection in Punjab, consequences of migrants and families at origin and destination; also discuss cases of release and rehabilitation of bonded labour in Haryana; crime by migrants in Punjab; welfare measures to mitigate migrants problems; plight of the woman worker in Punjab.

Another work on the laws and welfare measures for migrant workers is Gurdeep Singh's *Migrant Workmen and Law Identification: Motivation Legal Awareness Wages and Welfare Measures Social Security* (2002). The objective is to map the magnitude and the pattern of interstate migration in India. He relates migration to economic factors, with the dawn of industrialization there has been attraction of rural population to urban areas in the form of labourers for better working environment and economic considerations thus causing problems for urban growth and development. This creates an imbalance in the supply of labour as well as exploitative tendencies. As migration take place from less developed states to developed states the regions become victors. The problems of migrant workmen are multifarious as well as magnitude. Migration is natural process and it is associated with high growth and high per capita income of many states. Therefore all barriers to migration should be removed. It needs to have a central scheme to implement the interstate migrant act effectively. This is a study relating to law

concerning interstate migrant workmen. The interstate migrant workmen legislation aims at protecting the interests, entitlements, rights and conditions of the migrant workmen who though move from their parental place to migrant place to seeking conducive job, yet they suffer continuously. The main focus of the study is to analyze to process underlining the interstate migrant workmen legislation in Indian Jammu and Kashmir form a different and complimentary perspective. The policy planner can culminate policies and measures to deal with the problems arising and contributing to interstate migrant workmen. This study throws light on the functional approach of the law relating to migrant workmen.

In the area of migration K.C.Zachariah, and Irudaya Rajan's *Migration and Development: The Kerala Experience* (2009) is considered as a very significant work. The study is based on the second Kerala migration survey conducted in 2004. It provides information on the social and economic consequence of emigration including the measurement of the size, trend, geographical distribution and socio-economic composition of emigrants. It also focuses on the impact of remittance which the emigrants send home to Kerala economy. At the same time the remittances- induced employment expansion was partially offset to some extend by educational expansion and replacement migration, both a result of emigration. The intention of this book is to point out that although emigration has many positive effects on employment it could also have some negative effects.

The first migration study for Kerala by K.C.Zachariah, E.T.Mathew and S.Irudaya Rajan *Impact of Migration on Kerala's Economy and Society* (1999).This research is first of its kind for Kerala, being the first it covers the entire state and encompasses both measurement as well as analysis of the various types and facets of migration. Migration has been the single-most dynamic factor in the otherwise dreary development scenario of Kerala in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Kerala is approaching the end of the millennium with a little cheer in many people's homes, a major contributing factor for which has been migration. Migration has contributed more to poverty alleviation in Kerala than any other factor, including agrarian reforms, trade union activities and social welfare legislation. The study shows that nearly 1.5 million Keralites now live outside India. They send home more than Rs.4,000 million a year by way of remittances. Three-quarters of a million former emigrants have come back. They live mostly on savings, work experience, and skills brought with them from abroad. More than a

million families depend on internal migrants 'earnings for subsistence, children's education and other economic requirements. Whereas the educationally backward Muslims from the Thrissur-Malappuram region provide the backbone of emigration, it is the educationally forward Ezhawas, Nairs and Syrian Christians from the former Travancore-Cochin State who form the core of internal migration. The paper also analyses the determinants and consequences of internal and external migration.

Labour Migration to Kerala: A Study of Tamil Migrant Labourers in Kochi (2007) by Surabhi K.S and N.Ajith Kumar is an important work in the field of migrant labourers in Kerala. In this paper the authors studied the migration of Tamil migrant labourers to Kochi in search of higher wages and employment. The shortage of local labour lead to massive influx of migrant labour to Kerala. Higher wages and large opportunities of employment attract these unskilled labours. The study was based on limited sample of 100 casual workers from Tamil Nadu seeking work on day to day basis in Kochi. Their study conclude that migrant get much higher wages than in their native but they work for longer hours, live in shanty houses/rooms, limited access to sanitation facilities etc. their working and living conditions and habits make them suffer from a number of diseases. They enjoy limited protection from labour law also face problems of social integration.

Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation's (GIFT) study focusing on the explosive growth on the number of migrant labourers in Kerala *Domestic Migrant Labourers in Kerala* (2013).They adopted a unique train-based survey of migrant labourers to estimate their stock annual flow. It covered 63 long distance trains entering the state through Kasaragod and Palakkad. The data points to a stock of over 25lakh, yearly arrival of 2.35lakh and remittance of over Rs.17500 crores. Over 75% come from 5 states- Uttar Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. They are entirely male workforce aged 18 to 35 years and are highly mobile within Kerala. The main channel of migration being friends and relatives is another notable finding. They work under contractors and are engaged for 6 to 7 days a week. 60% employed in construction sector and the rest in hospitality, manufacturing, trade and agriculture. The skill range from unskilled to skilled carpentry, masonry, electrician, among others 70% earn daily wages above Rs.300. The study recommended a series of measures like voluntary registration of migrant workers so that they can avail benefits provided by the state. Welfare measures should

be undertaken to improve housing and living conditions of the migrants. There is also a need to address social security, labour and health issues of migrants in the state. Initiatives like starting a helpline in different languages should also be mooted.

Vulnerability of Migrants and Responsiveness of the State: The Case of Unskilled Migrant Workers In Kerala (2011) another important work by N.Ajith Kumar. This study examines the dimensions of vulnerability of migrant labourers in Kerala. It discusses about the inflow of migrants from neighbouring states (Tamil Nadu and Karnataka), from East India (West Bengal and Odisha), North India (Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand) and North East (Assam and Manipur). It studies how the state and other agencies responded to reduce the vulnerability of migrant labourers in Kerala. It points that due to limitations in portability of entitlements they are not able to enjoy the benefits from central and state governments. It also observes that a strategy to reach out to migrant workers coming from diverse backgrounds and speaking different languages has to be introduced as the present strategy.

Prakash's study on *In-Migration of Workers to Kerala: An Enquiry Into Cause and Consequences* (2011) is an enquiry into the flow of in-migration to Kerala a region known for out-migration. It traces the economic, social and demographic circumstances that necessitated them into Kerala. The factors responsible for demand for labour, problem of educated unemployment and consequent Gulf-migration are also discussed. The study is based on a sample survey micro level confined to 200 individual migrants from sites in a single taluk. In Kerala there is high unemployment. The educated worker seekers are not prepared to accept the employment opportunities that the state offers, namely farm labour and construction labour. The shortage of unskilled labour and large scale in-migration that Kerala is experiencing is the consequences of Kerala model of Development. This shortage resulted large scale in-migrants from the neighbouring states to enter the occupational sectors of Kerala. The migrants are unmindful of the unsatisfied working and living conditions in the state because their situation back home is worst. They are not happy with the higher wages paid to the local labour and their superiority but there is no visible discrimination, though they feel they are isolated by the local community. They still work hard in Kerala and are becoming a part of Kerala. The findings of the study have important implications for the formulation of policy by the Government and local-self government.

Labour Migration and Integration in Kerala (2012) by Jonathon W. Moses and S.Irudaya Rajan is an article employs survey data from the most recent Inter-State Migrant Survey in Kerala (ISMSK) to show how out-of-state migrants are kept isolated from the surrounding community. Migrant workers to Kerala are unable to integrate with local workers and residents to gain important information about local wage levels, worker rights and working standards. Worse, local labour unions are not trying to integrate these workers into the labour market or inform them about local conditions. This lack of integration poses a long-term threat to the strength and viability of the Keralite labour movement, and the larger social model in which it is embedded.

There have been a plethora of studies in the field of migration – international, national, interstate, internal, external etc. However most of these works and studies have been quantitative in nature and have focused on the economic, cultural, employment, exploitation, discrimination, social security aspects of the migrants. There is a dearth of studies that explore the social life of these labourers who are so important to our state. This present study is such a qualitative study which looks into the social life of migrant labourers behind the walls and boundaries they are left into. Definitely there is a need for an in depth analysis. At the same time, it is hardly to find a phenomenological case study approach which would bring to light their world view and perspective of the fellow workers with whom they work and live with. So the present study has a scope to fill the gaps between the existing knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic. Thus in this chapter we go through how the research was approached - the orientation of the research (epistemological and ontological), the topic under study, the design employed to study the topic, the general and specific research questions the data collection techniques etc.

Title of study:

'Social Relations among Migrant Laborers: A study in a migrant settlement of Trivandrum'

The study seeks to explore the dynamics of social relations among migrant labourers, i.e. how do they relate and connect with each other, what they perceive about each other, what are their experiences as they live and work with one another, what levels of interactions do they engage in etc. Clearly, these questions reflect the subjective logic and approach of the study.

Thus, the topic was approached **qualitatively**, due to its subjective orientation.

According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research seeks to collect an in-depth insight into human behavior and the causes that direct that behavior. Qualitative research has its heredity in social science and is more concerned with finding out why people behave as they do. It is concerned with the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, fears, etc. of people.

A qualitative approach to research employs various kinds of designs, but for the particular study the researcher uses phenomenology research design.

Design – Phenomenological Case Study

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that is used to describe how human beings experience a certain phenomenon. A phenomenological study attempts to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about human experiences, feelings, and responses to a particular situation. It allows the researcher to delve into the perceptions, perspectives,

understandings, and feelings of those people who have actually experienced or lived the phenomenon or situation of interest.

This design is interpretive epistemological and constructivist ontological paradigm. This implies, stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants (*interpretive epistemology*) and that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (*constructivist ontology*).

The research aims at an in depth analysis of the type and forms of social interactions and relationships migrant labourers go through with each other. Therefore, the researcher used phenomenological case study:

- To capture the phenomena of *'co – existence'*.
- To capture the *inter subjectivity* and know how they relate with each other.
- To know what *'living together and working together'* means for them.
- To know how they make sense of the world they live in.
- To know how do they perceive *'the other'*.
- To identify the *'us' and 'them'* between them, if present.

Because the researcher seeks to understand and document the lived experiences and perceptions of migrant labourers living and working together, a qualitative study using the phenomenological approach was best suited for this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

General Research Question:

What is the dynamics of social relations among migrant labourers?

Specific Research Questions:

1. What forms of socialization exist among the migrant workers?
2. What kind of acculturation takes place due to inter ethnic interaction?
3. Do they face social exclusion or segregation among themselves? If yes, in what ways?
4. How do they overcome the linguistic, regional and cultural barriers?

SELECTION OF CASES

As isolated houses, where a few people of the same village, district or state live together, can't be taken as cases due to homogeneity of language and culture of the migrant labourers, a major settlement in Trivandrum city was selected as a case and studied. A settlement where labourers from different states live together was preferred in order to bring in the scope of maximum heterogeneity and diversity on linguistic, regional and ethnic grounds among migrant labourers living together and capture the forms of social relations they undergo.

DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected from a major migrant labour settlement in Trivandrum - A construction site of OCEANUS HEIGHTS, Manvila, Trivandrum.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Interview Guide (unstructured) and Non participant Observation were used as tools for data collection.

Unstructured interview is an interview in which questions are not prearranged. The questions are basically open ended. Open ended questions have no prepared response choices which enables and empower the interviewee to shift the direction of the interview and to bring forth in depth information. Thus, an unstructured interview guide was used.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data was analyzed thematically by identifying different themes and sub themes. It emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns (or "themes") within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to specific research question. The themes and subthemes are the product of a thorough reading and rereading of the transcripts or field notes that make up the data. The researcher has tried to put them in the theoretical framework of “us” and “them”, “in – group” and “out – group” discussed by many sociologists, but the researcher mainly gains influence from famous sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

“Us” and “Them”

The concepts of “us” and “them” has been discussed by many sociologists and psychologists under the theories of identity but for this study the researcher gains influence from Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May. They distinguish "between 'us' and 'them'. One stands for the group to which we feel we belong and understand. The other... stands for a group which we cannot access or do not wish to belong" (Bauman, Z. and May, T. 2000).). And argue that the solidarity of the "in-group" is dependent on the "imaginary opposition" of an "out-group". "An out-group is precisely that imaginary opposition to itself that the in-group needs for its self-identity, for its cohesiveness, for its inner solidarity and emotional security" (Bauman, Z. and May, T. 2000)

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The researcher carried out intense field work in the construction site at Manvila, Trivandrum. Migrant labourers from Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Bihar work there. The researcher tried to capture their experience of living and working together to understand the dynamics of social relations among the migrant labourers. The labourers, who are basically outsiders and live in secluded and isolated settlements, have a world of their own. Behind the walls and boundaries of the settlement and construction site they have their own world and it is they who give meaning to this world. They are often discriminated, exploited and left in their own world. Lack of integration and interaction with the local people, limited contact and connection with the Malayalis, long duration of living and working together and having only themselves in their immediate surroundings make the intra migrant interaction and relations very unique and dynamic. To know more and have a deeper insight into the world they live in, and to make sense of the meanings they give to the world they live in, to the day to day activities and their life world, the researcher interviewed all the migrant labourers of the selected settlement and tried to know what co-existence, living and working together actually means to “them”.

The researcher has identified different themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes are the product of a thorough reading and rereading of the transcripts or field notes that make up the data. The researcher has tried to put them in the theoretical framework of “us” and “them”, “in – group” and “out – group” discussed by many sociologists, but the researcher mainly gains influence from famous sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Tim May. They distinguish "between 'us' and 'them'". One stands for the group to which we feel we belong and understand. The other... stands for a group which we cannot access or do not wish to belong" (Bauman, Z. and May, T. 2000). And argue that the solidarity of the "in-group" is dependent on the "imaginary opposition" of an "out-group". "An out-group is precisely that imaginary opposition to itself that the in-group needs for its self-identity, for its cohesiveness, for its inner solidarity and emotional security" (Bauman, Z. and May, T. 2000)

The data is divided into five major themes which try to bring forth the dynamic and unique nature of the social relations and interactions the migrant labourers engage in. These themes mainly focus on the forms of socialization, acculturation, segregation and the barriers

they face during their course of living and working together. The migrant labourers come from different states, but in the following data their pseudonym has been used, keeping in mind the confidentiality of the data.

“When ‘We’ Come Together” (Forms of Socialization)

The migrant labourers of the settlement usually have a tough and tiring day. But despite this they have some leisure and fun whenever possible. These are small moments when they come together, have inter- ethnic interaction, mingle and get to know each other. They may not undergo a typical institutionalized process of socialization where the societal structure plays a role in socializing, but find their own ways. When asked regarding ‘what they do during their free time...’

Ajith from Assam says, *“We rarely have free time. Six days of work from morning to evening. When work finishes we have to start preparing for food... but **we** go to drink tea at a nearby **tea stall**... we get samosa there”*

Bhola from Orissa too stated, *“The day is very tight, what free time you are asking about? The work finishes by 5pm... **we all go to have tea or coffee**... then I watch movie or talk with my family over phone” ... So you have a tight day, as in work all day... like from morning what time around 8 or 9? “We have to start work by 9... we can start early also. And this work goes all the way till evening 5. Our work is also hard labour. Not easy. After these 10 to 11 hours of work we get tired.”*

Whenever you go out like for tea or something else, do you all go together?

Raju says, *“Yes, most of us **go together**... some don’t want to **have tea** they sit in the room”*

According to Suresh, *“After a tiring day, a little relaxation is **at the tea stall**. I go there every day. Meet other people. During work **we don’t get time to relax and talk to each other**. The same work... everyday... sometimes*

*feel boring. But, what to do if something has to go in stomach we have to work. Last day, **at tea stall we celebrated a birthday of a worker.** He bought tea and samosa to us”*

*Dinesh wonderfully recollects, “**We** can’t go to roam around like you people. The hotels are also far and expensive. So we have this **tea stall, I go every day.** People from other work sites also come here...the daily wage workers. **We** get to know about work. The work in this site will finish soon... so we need to look for new work. Yesterday, **I met a friend there... at the tea stall,** he was telling about some work in kzhkootam... wage is also good there. So after this I may go there”*

*Hari also having a similar view point said, “I used to **go with my friend, to the nearby tea stall,** but he has gone home and will return next week. These are some good moments during the whole. Rest full day is work , work and only work, either in the site or off the site - making food, washing clothes etc.. So, going out for tea and stuff, is not just for tea alone its also for relaxation, for seeing and meeting people etc.”*

Well, the **tea stall** does form an important place of socialization where they have some relaxation and fun after a tiring day. They go together there, most of them. Strangers are not strangers anymore. As they see them every day, not only people from the work site - working at different levels and positions but also workers living or working nearby. It doesn’t simply remain as a place for having tea, but the only few moments in the day when they see other fellow migrants not only working in their own site but also workers staying and working nearby. Here they get to know about the ‘other’ migrant workers. They get to connect with each other at a primary level is here. They get to know they are not the only strangers, they have ‘others’ for them too. They internalize the ‘migrant culture’ and also the some aspects of the host society. The inhibitions towards themselves and others are slowly broken down as they connect with each other.

“So, what else do you do... .. rather than simply sitting in your room? You have been here since quite some time... you might have friends from other states... or may be go out together? Sunday is a holiday, right? What do you do on Sundays?”

Manu says, *“What else... what to say? Our lives are not very colourful and happening. We have mainly come for work. So basically we focus on work. But, **we go for shopping**. By shopping I don’t mean buying clothes and stuff... we have to buy grocery items... rice etc. Then we need fish everyday so everyday someone goes and buys fish or chicken.”*

Libu beautifully records his experience by saying, *“In Kazhkootam side a big shop is opened... you can get everything there. It is some 3 storeyed ...I guess. **We 6 people from our settlement went there last week. Didn’t buy anything but it was nice to see. We spent two to three hours together.**”*

Dinu stated, *“I don’t like tea... Sometimes the people who stay with me don’t have time or interest to **go to buy vegetables or fish** so I go with Bittu, from Assam,... he too doesn’t like going to tea... on the way **we drink coke and sometimes cigarettes** and come back.”*

Gopal says, *“One week ago **we three Bengalis and two Assamese went to a bar nearby**... we drank two bottles of beer. We usually don’t... but that day everyone started talking about it so we simply went and had two bottles”*

Frequent **moments of shopping and going to the nearby markets** for daily shopping allows the migrant workers to hang out and think, talk and relate with each other. It becomes the platform for discussing what they are cooking in their own particular settlements, getting to know each other a bit more.

“Have you gone to visit some places in Trivandrum? It’s a beautiful city... and you have been here for quite some time now. Do you like to roam and explore new places?”

Vishwa says, “**We went to Kanyakumari last year.** *It was a wonderful experience. It was hot but it’s a nice place to visit. There was this big temple and famous Vivekananda rock etc. most of us from our site went together. We took a train and got down at Kanyakumari.*”

Zubed recollects, “*Deepu forced me one Sunday to go to this big temple at East Fort. I called some other friends of mine and **we all went the temple.** At first there was lot of confusion, the people at the temple were saying many things ... shouting like anything but we didn’t understand anything. Then one person in some broken Hindi tried to make us understand that **we** are not allowed to enter the temple wearing pants and jeans. Then we went and bought a dhothi and only then they allowed us to enter the temple. At first, **I thought because we are from outside, not Malayalis** that we are not allowed to enter the temple...but I was wrong”*

Parth says, “*On Sundays **we** used to play cricket together. **We all from the settlement... Bengali, Assamese, Orissa played cricket together.** We had a ground nearby but now it has been used for construction purpose. It was a good time.*”

Vishnu says, “*Its IPL these days, so by that time, **we all come to Gopal’s (Bengali) room and watch cricket at night.***”

In a room where 4 Bengali’s and 3 Assamese live together ...Vishwa says,

Kindher says, “**We cook food.** *One person will cook for others. The person keeps changing. If today I prepare food, tomorrow someone else will prepare. While preparing food, we don’t just think what I like I have to think*

about everyone in the room. We try and give the materials needed for making food, rest it is upon the person who is cooking food, what to cook.”

*According to Jaggu, “Last year we celebrated Diwali together. We bought a big sound box...put light everywhere...but the photo of Goddess Devi and had pooja. The contractor also came. He gave **us** some money. Usually, I celebrate Diwali at my village but this time there was important work here so thought of celebrating here itself.”*

*Chandan says, “I am the only Christian here in the settlement. So this time I gave everyone cake in Easter. Some of us also went to a church in Nalanchira. ...At home we have plum cake... I guess here also...but I gave them cream cake... They **all like cream cake**.”*

*Bagchi states, “For Durga pooja... when I first came here in Trivandrum, we bought bottles of beer and went to this open place outside our settlement and we all drank... It was a good sight. **We all enjoyed**. It was my first time I was drinking.”*

The migrant labourers have tough and tiring day. This monotonous and draining work life leaves them with little energy and time to actually spend time for themselves, to spend time with people like them, to know them, connect and relate with them. The tea stalls, the movies, the IPL matches, the outings and the celebration of festivals are the very moments that add colour to their life. These may not happen every day, not even every month, may be once in a while, but it is through these bits and instances of life that they get to know and connect with the other. All these fulfill the latent function of knowingly or unknowingly inculcating the ‘we’ feeling in them. They all come from different ethnic backgrounds but still they relate and connect with each other at a certain level. They are aware, that despite being from different districts and states there is something that unites them and separates ‘them’ from ‘us’ (the host community).

Thus the question arises, *what is it...?* What is it that unites them, what are the factors that help them relate in some way and a certain level with the other despite of being different from each other linguistically, regionally, culturally? This leads us to the second theme- what makes the migrant labourers “us”, what are the factors that unite them despite the many differences.

“What makes us... “Us” (Factors that unite ‘them’)

Even though belonging to and coming from different parts of the country having different ethnic backgrounds, there is something that makes them, “Us”, “We”, ‘in group’ and the host society, “Them”, “the Other”, an ‘Out Group’.

When asked, “All of you belong to different states and districts, speak different languages, have different culture, how do you stay connected? You are so different from one another.”

The common reply... “We are all “*hindi – kar*” or what you people call us ‘*Bhai*’.”

Akhil from Orissa says, “We may be different. But do you see the difference? We come from different places but for you we all are ‘Bengali’s. From whichever state we come from, for you people we are all from Bengal, we are all Bengali’s. You people don’t know the difference, so we too don’t mind it. How do these small things matter?”... .”... That’s true. I am from Delhi and people call me ‘bhai’ or ‘Bengali’ all the time. I have other friends also with me from Delhi and Bombay. When we come together, we start speaking in Hindi, automatically. But then, our Malayali friends start making fun.

Odin from Bengal asks, “Different? Yes... everyone is different (laughs). In this construction site I am Bengali living with the Assamese and working with Biharis and Odias. But when we go out from this construction site we are all ‘hindi kar’ or what you call us ‘Bhai’... ‘Bhaiya’ and what not.

We all speak Hindi and I must say, better than you people (laughs), so we somehow connect with each other.”

*Tejas elaborately states, “**Language and our look as in the way we are, the way we look and appear, our body shape, colour, skin texture etc plays an important part in uniting us, if you would ask me.** When I was new here I didn’t know your language, your culture etc. so I obviously looked up to and relied on people who are similar to me, in some way of the other. Yes, we are different from each other in the construction site, I agree, but you should also consider that we are very much different from you people, the Malayalis. They don’t look like us, don’t speak like us, and most importantly, it’s **their land, their home** and we are just here for work and making money. **We are temporary and they are permanent** members of this land and culture.”...so do you feel as an outsider, like you don’t belong here or you shouldn’t be here? ... “It’s not that I feel that I shouldn’t be here. Kerala is a good place and we get a good pay here. But at the end of the day, it’s their land and culture. We are different from each other. I know that I am an outsider, and just like me all of us who work here, you can’t change the fact. I can’t feel the same like I feel at my home.”*

According to Juned, “Yes, we are different. But it’s ok. I have come here to work. If I don’t work I can’t support my family. Just like me all the ‘others’ have also have family and are here to support their family”

*Nandu exclaims, “Different! What do you mean? If that’s the case we are different from Malayalis also. Why don’t you consider that too? We work here. Just like me other people have also **left their home for work.** This place is new to me and same for others too. So, what is the point in focusing on our differences?”*

*Mohan says, “Differences don’t matter. **I am from outside,** the people who work with me, are also from outside, why don’t you see that?”*

Nikhil says, "If I speak for myself, I came here with a person from my own village. He introduced me to some of his friends and slowly I connected with them."

*"Well, we all **speak a similar language**; I guess that makes a difference. When we come to a new place the basic problem we face in relating and connecting to others is that of language, if we want to go somewhere or ask something we need to know the language. So even we locally speak different languages, we connect with each other in Hindi, and I guess that helps us relate with each other"*

Language and physical features, as in racial characteristics, forms an initial platform for them to come together. They look very different from the Malayalis, speak a different language and thus what immediately unites them is not their differences within themselves but their differences from the host Kerala society. The migrant labourers living in secluded settlement have only other migrant workers in their immediate vicinity, so knowing and talking a similar language helps them relate with each other and develop a 'we' or 'us' feeling within them.

Many of them have stated that they know and feel that they are an outsider. Their prime force of motivation is that they have come here to work. The fact, that they are all here '**out in a strange land**' for work, also unites them together. Even though they have many differences the common thread that connects them is that they all have '**left their homes**' in search of work. As quoted above and a very important observation made by a migrant laborer, '**it's our (Malayalis) land and culture and not theirs (migrants)**' and that they may be different from each other but what also matters is that they are unanimously different from the larger section of the society. They acknowledge the fact that they are only temporary members of the society. They are '**strangers in a strange land**'.

They say, "*We won't get anything if we keep concentrating on the differences. **We are all here to work**"... "And whatever we do, we will always be different from... and **never be equal to Malayalis.**"*

Dheeraj states, “I was **worried** so much before coming here. I love my family very much, and wanted to stay around them. I wanted to work in the farm we have. But my father from his experience said that agriculture isn’t a stable income. If there is rainfall in excess there is problem, if it is less, there is problem. We had a loss two years back and are still recovering from it. So it was my father who pushed me to come here. I was **scared**.” ... “What were you the most worried about”, I asked. “Well, it’s a new land and culture. A travelling distance of three days, thus you can imagine how far it is. I have always been near my house, in my village, with my friends and family. So I was **worried** about leaving them, worried about how the new place will treat me, will I be able to manage etc. Now it’s okay. I am adjusted. But the initial days were difficult”

Yusuf says, “I have been here living in Kerala for the last 10 years, I still remember the day when I first came here. It was very strange. I was in search of work. I had to support my family. My father had died. I was the eldest son, so it was my responsibility to run the family. I was 17 years back then. When I came here, I had no one with me, I knew no one. All I knew was that I wanted work. It was a very difficult time then. After a few days of struggle, Abdul, another migrant labourer, helped me. It was a very touching experience for me. Only because he was from outside, he was a migrant could he understand and help me. Since then, I consider the migrants working here as connected to me in some way. We can only relate with each other. The Malayalis here have a good comfortable life. They can’t understand us even if they want to. They look us with suspicion. They are not wrong on their part. **We are from outside**, so it’s normal not to keep a distance from us. So even though we are different, I guess, we connect, just because we are not like you.”

Leaving their homes is not easy. They have their own baggage when they come to this new strange land. All they think about is, ‘How will the new land be, how will the new work be,

will the people accept me, will I be able to get a good and decent work, will the people there cheat me, will I be able to adjust etc’. Their aspirations and anxieties, worries and fear, is what that connects them. In fact, it’s their differences – ethnic, linguistic, cultural - from a larger whole (the host society) that brings them under one umbrella.

If such is the case, that despite being different from each other in many ways, they relate and connect well with each other because they are different from a larger part of the host society, then there is a certain possibility that they may learn and adapt from each other. Living in closed and secluded settlement and having a sense of unity that they are different from Malayalis, the migrant labourers might have a dynamic inter cultural interaction and exchange. This leads us to the next theme.

What ‘We’ learn from ‘the Other’ (Forms of Acculturation)

Living and working together, the migrant labourers learn and adapt from the other labourers from other states. This acculturation and inter mixing of habits and preferences happens gradually, over a period of time.

“You having been living with each other since a long time... not just living but also working and spend most of the time together. You see each other all day. So, you might see some good things in other people, their culture, may be their food and dress that you like... what do you learn or adapt from each other? ”

Jatin from Bengal says, *“I have been working in this site since the last 10 months and am living with Assamese in the same room since then. Well, we Bengalis and Assamese have a lot in common, like we are neighboring states so have a lot of cultural and linguistic similarities. But if we see, even though we both speak Bengali, as language our dialects are different. When I came first and met some Assamese, it was a bit difficult for me to understand them. There is a difference in usage of some words. Some words mean completely the opposite in both the languages. But slowly we picked up each other’s dialects and style of speaking.”*

Mithun from Orissa states, “*We communicate with each other in Hindi. But our Hindi in Orissa is different from what they speak in Bengal and completely different from that of Assamese. They have some tribal touch in their language is what I feel. Over the period of time we learnt from each other and somehow reached to a common understanding of Hindi.*” ‘I can understand what you say; here in Kerala too we have different dialects of Malayalam. The one spoken in Kannur is completely different from that of Trivandrum. Sometimes I get confused, like are they even speaking Malayalam.’

*Bhola from Bengal says, “So what did I learn? I definitely **learned the ‘other’ language.** We work together, so I thought of learning some language. I learned some Odia and in return taught some Bengali. As of now I might not be able to respond or talk in Odia but if I hear I can understand what they are speaking.”* Is the language similar? How much time did you take? Was it easy? ... “*I won’t say it was easy nor have I mastered the language. Since we have been living together since a long time and I have heard them speak Odia, I somehow felt curious to learn what certain word mean. So I would just ask their meaning. That’s it.*”

*Fateh from Bengal, “There are some old people in the site... from Assam. At first they were speaking some tribal language, I don’t know. I didn’t understand the language. It seemed like Bengali but it certainly was not. But as you said, living and working together, we learnt each other’s language. I can’t say ‘learnt’ in its true sense. But we met in a middle way. We somehow could make sense what they said and over the course of time they also **learnt the language we spoke**”*

Abhiram from Odisha says, “I have started working here only a few months ago. What did I learn..? Well, not much. People from my own village are here. So if there is any difficulty in communication I tell them. However, I like the Bengali language and I would love to learn it. I have already started

learning some words and sentences from them... words like 'Bhalo', 'Apani kemana achena', 'Ami bhala achi' etc." 'That's great. What do these sentences or words mean, I enquired out of curiosity'.... "Well, Bhalo means good, nice fine, etc, Apani kemana achena means how are you and ami bhala achi means... I am good or fine."

Yatin from Bengal states, "I tried to pick up other languages. It makes work much better and simpler. But now I think it was a big mistake. I am now not able to speak my own native language (laughs). I mean, I went home last month, while conversing with my friends and family there, **I use Assamese words in between unknowingly.**" 'Well that's interesting. So now what you speak is a mixture of language! Is that bad or good?... "It's both, good because then I can talk to the people here and bad because it made my conversation with my parents difficult. But anyway, the situation isn't that bad. It's fine. Last time I had this problem. And you asked so I just said"

Anurag from Orissa says "I have been working in Kerala since a long time and have worked with 'Bengalis' most of the time. In this site also Bengalis are more in number. By working with them I have **learnt somewhat Bengali**... I may not be able to speak Bengali but I can understand it to a large extent." 'I believe it's good that you know each other's language or at least understand the other language. This will help you connect with the other.

The same goes with B from Assam also... "We also speak Bengali in our place... but its different way... some usage of words is also different. But after coming here, within a few months I picked up 'their' Bengali... now when I go home, I sometimes unknowingly speak the 'other' dialect."

Mohan from Assam says, "I am new here, came from Assam two weeks ago only... we live here with Bengalis so somewhat broken Bengali I have learnt. "Is it easy?"... "Yes, it is sort of easy, though not that easy, but easier than Odia. It's similar to our language. So, it's easier to learn.

Thus, **language** is an important factor that they learnt from the other during their course of stay here. Due to close proximity with each other for a long period of time they got accustomed to the other language. But does this exchange and learning from the other stay just at the primary level or does acculturation takes place in other realms of culture also? When I asked what all things you love about people from other state living with you, or what other things have you learnt from them, they replied...

“I love the Bengali way of wearing ‘dhoti’.” says Zubed from Assam. I was surprised. I asked why was that so?... “I don’t know why, but it’s interesting. We are living in these small spaces, so dhoti is very good for us, we can work freely.” he replied smilingly.

*... “The Bengalis have a **different style of dressing**... I have seen in movies... the girls there, wear sari in a different way and here also the workers wear dhoti in a different style from ours... I like it. Rohit, one who sleeps next to me taught me last week.”*

Diler from Assam says, “Last week Bhola (from Bengal) made sabzi for evening... he made ‘Labda’ (a Bengali dish)... we all liked it and requested him to teach me also and in return I will teach him how to make ‘Niramese’ (a Assamese dish).” ‘So what is the difference between the two dishes?’... “I can’t explain like that. Both the dishes are kind of mixed vegetable dish. But the ingredients are different. Our Niramese is more dry and good with roti but Labda is more gravy type. It is better with rice.”

Sameer from Assam states, “Last week when Rahul returned from home he brought some tasty Bengali sweets with him for us. I really liked it. He said it was easy to make and that he will teach me. I will learn it and then I can make it whenever I like and also make it at home. Benagli food is also good. The way they prepare fish is very tasty. I like that too.”

As they come from different states, the migrant labourers, due to inter ethnic interaction, **adapt and learn languages** in its various forms. No one speaks the actual language. It's all an **amalgamation of the local dialects and languages** of their native states. Neither Hindi nor Bengali nor Odia nor Assamese is true to in its form. Language is the basis of interaction and communication. So the very first thing that they have to adapt is language. They knowingly or unknowingly get accommodated with the other language.

Beyond language, they adapt and acculturate food habits and tastes, dressing style etc. The 'Odias' adapt the 'Bengali' **way of dressing** 'dhoti', and also some "**broken Bengali**" during the course of work. They also reach to a **common dialect of Hindi and Bengali**. Also the food preferences and ways of cooking see some change due to inter ethnic interaction.

Although living, working and staying together for a long period of time in secluded, isolated settlements, there should probably be intense inter ethnic interaction which would lead to a great level of acculturation. But "**things are not what they seem**". As seen above, the **Bengalis and Assamese** having some commonalities in culture and language, **show great levels of interaction, adaptation and acculturation**, while workers from other states don't easily adapt 'other culture'. It's not just about their stay here at this particular site but this includes the long stay in Kerala – working with people from different states.

A quick scan through the above data will show us evolving themes of 'us' and 'them' within the migrant community. Statements like "*Our Niramese... The Bengalis have a different style... working with them ...etc*" shows that even though they have an 'us' and 'them' between the Malayalis and the migrants, but they also have the sense or identity of us and them within themselves. Within the small world of their own the workers have an 'in group'- the group to which we feel we belong and understand – and an 'out group' – the group, which, in some ways is different. Within this small group they develop an identity of 'us' and 'them'.

So what factors contribute to such identity formation?

“US” and “THEM” (Levels of segregation and exclusion)

Even though the migrant labourers are different from the larger community that accommodates them, which was discussed in the earlier theme, one can't deny the fact that they are also different within themselves. There may be factors that unite them but despite this unity and connection they show limited levels of inter ethnic interaction and adaptation. Therefore, living in the same settlement they knowingly or unknowingly develop the identity of “us” and “them” within themselves through various **levels of segregation and exclusion**. In this theme we see what divides and segregates them as a group living and working together.

So, when they were asked – ‘ what are their perceptions about the ‘other’ people (people from other states), how much they know the ‘other’ , how do they feel working and living with ‘them’, how often do they go out with ‘them’ and spent time with ‘them’....

Jaipal from Bengal quotes, *“We all had once gone to Kanyakumari together... at least most of us. It was a great time. We went to the beach and saw the sunset. When we all went together, yes it was good, a large group went together. But after reaching there we all got divided into different groups. Some went for shopping; some went to the beach and others to the temple. We all had a good time but I like to roam and **go out with my “own” people**. I can be free with them. There is no barrier of language and thus can connect with each other. The ‘others’ be it Assamese or Odias are fine... but they **are different.**”*

Madan states, *“It’s easy and comfortable to roam around with people of our native place. We can say whatever we want. When we all go together, we automatically get divided on the basis of our native land. So, you see, it’s not just me I guess. It is the case with others too. You can take your case, you are from Delhi and you speak Hindi. When you go out, I believe you too will prefer people of your language and culture. Don’t you think?”* “My case is different. I am a part of both the cultures, but yes I like speaking in my own language, in which I am comfortable.”

Karan from Bengal says, “I don’t as such have problem with the ‘other’ people. We work together. But at the end of the day, **it’s on my people** whom I can rely and depend.” “What do you mean? Don’t other people help you or ...?” “I didn’t mean that. But if I have a problem my own people will be the ones I can turn to. I don’t mean other will not help me but we can trust each other. If today I ask you for money and tomorrow I run away with that money, you won’t come chasing after me to Bengal. So it’s comfortable and easy to ask help and also help people from my area. I know they won’t cheat me.

They hold certain views about people from certain states (Ideological segregation)

“Assam is close to our land. But it is a state where always fighting and riots going on. Full time fights and quarrels. I don’t like that place. There ‘gundas’ are more. Every day we can read in newspaper about them. Why are **they** always in some sort of violence? The people who work in the site also... what to tell... think they are boss or something. They have some sort of attitude.”

“I have worked with people from Nagaland. Good that **we** don’t have any one here. It’s full of tribal people. They are very and completely different from us. What I don’t like is they eat dogs too... can u even imagine? **They** are low caste people. Don’t know from where these people come from.”

“We have Biharis working in the sight. It’s very difficult to live with them. **They** are very unclean and unhygienic. It seems they don’t have any culture. They are always angry. Whatever **we** ask they give a disinterested reply. They are always limited to their work. They don’t like to cooperate with us. So I too don’t give much attention to them. ”

*“The Odias have a different culture. **They** are different from **us**. They are very quiet, busy with their own world. We don’t talk much with them. They full time talk in Hindi or some other language, which is different.*

Apart from this (Work and Economic segregation)

*“I don’t know much about them... yes they work with me but our work is different. **We Bengalis** have ‘mestri’ work. **‘Other’ people** have other work like wiring or painting... the Odias do the painting work and the Biharis the wiring.”*

*“We live and work together, yes. But within this same working site the work is divided between us. We have different contractors for every department, like for painting, wiring, cementing work etc. So even though we work together, **we are not in contact with each other during work**. However, our work is interdependent.”*

*“**We don’t get to talk much** ... full time we have work, after work we have our personal works... and why should I be involved with ‘others’ lives. They have their own lives and we have ours. After work, sometimes I go and see IPL match there some what I talk with ‘them’.”*

*“In our work site, we Bengalis are more in number. Then we have Assamese and Odias. **Biharis work with us but they don’t live here**. They live separately ... somewhere near Kulathoor. They used to live here with us in the beginning, but then we had some issues and they decided to live separately. They contacted their contractor and got shifted to a house at Kulathoor, somewhere near Kazhakootam. They leave right after work. So I have no idea about what and who they are.”*

*“The **Biharis are of low caste**. Here they work with us. We have no other option. But in our village and native place these Biharis are the ones who do jobs ‘coolie’ and cleaning jobs there.”*

“During the starting of the work here, only we Bengalis were working here. It was good at that time. Then, as work increased other people (people from other state also started coming. During the initial days it was difficult. Some or the other day we will have some quarrel with them. Some fight every now and then. Now it’s better.”

“Since you all live together, do you have food together or may be share food with each other?” Well, the answer was unanimously ‘NO’.
(Cultural Segregation)

“We cook our own food. Why do we need to go and sit with others and have food?” said Gopal.

“We are from Odisha. They are all from Bengal. Why will they have food with us? They are different from us.”

Tarun from Odisha says, *“It’s **not in our culture** to ask for food. If in any case food is less or if we have prepared fish and they have prepared chicken we won’t ask them. Why should we? We may better go to a hotel and eat chicken. They may come and ask us for chicken or fish or some curry but we never go there.”*

According to Jaggu, *“Last year we celebrated Diwali together. We bought a big sound box...put light everywhere...but the photo of Goddess Devi and had pooja. The contractor also came. He gave us some money. But **the Bengalis are very dominant here. We celebrated the festival together but it was according to their terms or desires. We were not even asked.**”*

*“The **Bengalis are more in number here** and Gopal, the one who has T.V. is also Bengali. So, it’s like they rule here. If anything happens they all are one group. The Biharis when they used to stay here had problems with the Bengalis. They both think they are right, but since the Bengalis are more in number, the Biharis could do nothing. Finally they left this place.”*

*“When we watch T.V. the **Bengalis are given preference**. What I mean is that only if they don’t want to watch anything Bengali we can watch what we want.*

For roaming around in the city or for going to outings they **prefer to roam with their “own” people**. Here the people of one’s own state becomes ‘us’ and the rest ‘them’.

They are not just segregated in the ideal realm, having different perspectives and prejudices about the ‘Other’ but they also face economic and work segregation. The Bengalis do the ‘mestri’ work, Odias are painters, Biharis have painting and wiring. This leads to a gradation in their pay scale. There also exists a caste dynamics at play where one is above the other in social hierarchy. There also exists a **level of exclusion**. The dominance of Bengalis in the site in both number and privileges like T.V. they somehow tend to exclude the others in celebrations or other occasions when they come together. All such celebration happens as they like it, T.V programs are selected according to their preference. Thus, all this widens the segregation, building an invisible hierarchy between them.

As we glance through the data, the identity and of ‘us and them’ isn’t rigid and can’t be described as black and white. The **identity formation is twofold**. At a macro level, where we have the Malayalis and the migrant labourers, the host **Malayali society forms ‘them’** and the **migrant labourers collectively form ‘us’**. The ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic differences within the migrant community don’t matter then. What matters is that the migrant labourers are different from the larger Kerala community. For them, they are all strangers in a land that is not theirs, living and working in a culture that is not theirs. They realize, “I (Bengal) too am an outsider just like him (Odisha)”. This sense of difference from a large community unites them. Now the migrant labourers together form an “us” (the group they feel they belong to.) and an “in – group” (due to the presence of an imaginary opposition- the Malayali community) from which they gain support, inner solidarity and emotional security. And the host Kerala or Malayali community forms a “them” (a group which we cannot access or do not wish to belong).

However, at a micro level, where we have only migrant labourers from different states working and living together, the factors that united them at the macro level disappear and the

differences between themselves become important and vivid. Within their small world and community, the people from their own village and native land and village become 'us' and the all others from other states become 'them'. There are various reasons for such identity formation, starting from the socio – economic background they come from, the socialization process they undergo through which they internalize and form thoughts and perceptions about people from other states which later during their work life here hinders them from accepting 'the other'. Such barriers can be overcome through dialogue. But the segregation and compartmentalization in their living and working spheres makes it difficult for such a dialogue to take place. Their personal motivation also acts as a hurdle. As seen in the above data, most of them have quoted that they are here just for work and making money. So what happens with others, what the others are doing, where they are going, what they are cooking, etc. doesn't matter. And obviously the lack of interest and initiative from the host society, their attitude and perception about the migrant labourers adds its bit to the social phenomena.

Thus the fluid boundaries of 'us' and 'them' unite them and at the same time disintegrate them. So we need to explore what factors act as barriers between the migrant labourers, what factors stop them from knowing more about the other, is language the only reason. This leads us to the next theme which answers...

So what stops them from accepting and knowing the 'Other?'

What hinders 'Us' from accepting 'Them'

Hailing from different backgrounds, the migrant labourers face certain barriers which make it difficult for them to accept the 'Other'.

"You all come from different backgrounds, culture and language, so you must have faced some problems at the beginning and may be facing some even now... What are the difficulties you face in communicating with the other?"

*"**Language** is not that big a problem. Most of us know Hindi. So we communicate in Hindi. We talk to each other in Hindi, that too only when needed. With OUR own people we talk in OUR language."*

"At first there was a language problem. I didn't understand Malayalam at all, but I also didn't understand Hindi. So if during work some communication with 'other' people from Odisha or Assam is needed I used sign language... meaning, if I want something I will point toward it. I would say 'Bhaiya yeh, Bhaiya voh' (and point towards it) or else ask for help"

"We Bengalis talk in Bengali, Assamese also somewhat talk in Bengal, but their dialect is different. Initially I had problem but after a period of time it was ok."

"You are saying about the difference between Assam and Bengal? There are variations in dialect in Bengal itself. Like, the Bengali spoken in Murshidabad is different from that spoken in Kolkata"

Certainly, **language** is one of the basic and initial barriers they face. Speaking different dialects of Hindi and Bengali, some who don't know either Hindi or Bengali refrain from engaging in interaction, if needed will seek help of people who know both languages. This **barrier of language is overcome** by speaking either in Hindi or any other common dialect learned over the years due to interethnic interaction. Those who find hindi difficult or are new to

the place use sign language as in point to the things they want or use somebody else's help in communication.

*Being **culturally different** also acts as a hindrance in letting 'us' accepting 'them'.*

Suresh from Odisha says, *"The Bengalis and Assamese eat Beef. But we worship cow. **How can we eat something we worship?** So we never ask food from them. They sometimes come and ask for curry if we have made chicken etc. but we never do so..."* "So what makes you work with them?"
"Well, it appears, I have no choice. I have come for work, so I will have to adjust."

Gaurav from Bengal says, *"I don't like Odias food. Their chapatti is very thick and ours is very thin and soft. We can eat five to ten chapattis and we will not know. But if we eat their one chapatti, it will be very heavy. It is like rubber. I don't like it."*

Also prejudices about people from certain states discussed in the previous theme, becomes a reason.

*"Assam is close to our land. But it is a state where always fighting and riots going on. Full time fights and quarrels. I don't like that place. There 'gundas' are more. Every day we can read in newspaper about them. Why are **they** always in some sort of violence? The people who work in the site also... what to tell... think they are boss or something. They have some sort of attitude."*

*"I have worked with people from Nagaland. Good that **we** don't have any one here. It's full of tribal people. They are very and completely different from us. What I don't like is they eat dogs too... can u even imagine? **They** are low caste people. Don't know from where these people come from."*

*“We have Biharis working in the sight. It’s very difficult to live with them. **They** are very unclean and unhygienic. It seems they don’t have any culture. They are always angry. Whatever **we** ask they give a disinterested reply. They are always limited to their work. They don’t like to cooperate with us. So I too don’t give much attention to them. ”*

*“The Odias have a different culture. **They are different from us.** They are very quiet, busy with their own world. We don’t talk much with them. They full time talk in Hindi or some other language, which is different.*

Apart from these underlying barriers of language and culture, the working and living set up does no good in removing the blocks.

As I walked along the site for data collection I could see that within the same working site, within the same walls and boundaries, there are small spaces like rooms compartmentalized by tin sheets and temporary structure. The workers live in **compartmentalized areas within the settlement**. Odias live together, Assamese and Bengalis live together and the Biharis only work there, in their words, they “chose” to live away from the settlement are they are different from others. I couldn’t see anyone from the other room or space or compartment going to the other. No one knows what is happening in the compartment just next to them. After the day’s work they are all in their own spaces or rooms. Each compartment has a tap nearby and a couple of tanks nearby to store water for bathing and cooking etc. So the only place they have some mingling and interaction is the work place. But unfortunately that too is divided. Odias have a different work and the Bengalis some other work. This division of labour may simply the work for the contractors but it unknowingly creates a hierarchy between them. Due to difference in work they have difference of pay. Already they have prejudice about people from other states and such hierarchy in their work space widens the gap. Even though they live together, they know they are above the other. **Segregation in the working and living spheres** and a tough and tiring day at work, after which they have time “*only for some tea, washing clothes, cooking food etc*” blocks them from actually knowing the ‘other’.

FINDINGS

Migrant workers in Kerala are a social reality. They have been subjects of various studies. However, their social life still remains underexplored. Even though collectively called “Bengalis” by the locals, the migrant labours are a diverse and heterogeneous group belonging to different states like Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha etc. and having different ethnic identities. This intra migrant study was an attempt to shed some light into their underexplored social life. The study started with the basic idea that the migrants live in secluded settlements, where they have only them as their immediate contact and thus will undergo intense inter ethnic interaction, overcoming the cultural and ethnic barriers. After intense field work and analysis of data the researcher could explore various themes and hence could categorize the data into themes and sub themes using the theoretical framework of ‘US’ and ‘THEM’ discussed by Zygmunt and Bauman.

The study attempted to explore the dynamics of relationship and interaction the migrant labourers undergo. It tried to bring forward how do they socialize with each other, what are the occasions they come together, by living together, what do they learn and adapt from each other, what levels of segregation and exclusion they face among themselves, what are the different barriers and how do they overcome these barriers.

FORMS OF SOCIALIZATION

The migrant labourers of the settlement usually have a tough and tiring day. But despite this they have some leisure and fun whenever possible. These are small moments when they come together, have inter- ethnic interaction, mingle and get to know each other. They may not undergo a typical institutionalized process of socialization where the societal structure plays a role in socializing, but find their own ways. The tea stalls, the movies, the IPL matches, the outings and the celebration of festivals are the very moments that add colour to their life. These may not happen every day, not even every month, may be once in a while, but it is through these bits and instances of life that they get to know and connect with the other. All these fulfill the latent function of knowingly or unknowingly inculcating the ‘we’ feeling in them. They all come from different ethnic backgrounds but still they relate and connect with each other at a certain

level. Language and physical features, as in racial characteristics, forms an initial platform for them to come together. They look very different from the Malayalis, speak a different language and thus what immediately unites them is not their differences within themselves but their differences from the host Kerala society. Many of them have stated that they know and feel that they are an outsider. The fact, that they are all here ‘out in a strange land’ for work, also unites them together. They acknowledge the fact that they are only temporary members of the society. They are ‘strangers in a strange land’. Their aspirations and anxieties, worries and fear, is what that connects them. In fact, it’s their differences – ethnic, linguistic, cultural - from a larger whole (the host society) that brings them under one umbrella.

ACCULTURATION

Living and working together, the migrant labourers learn and adapt from the other labourers from other states. This acculturation and inter mixing of habits and preferences happens gradually, over a period of time. Language is an important factor that they learnt from the other during their course of stay here. Due to close proximity with each other for a long period of time they got accustomed to the other language. As they come from different states, the migrant labourers, due to inter ethnic interaction, adapt and learn languages in its various forms. No one speaks the actual language. It’s all an amalgamation of the local dialects and languages of their native states. Beyond language, they adapt and acculturate food habits and tastes, dressing style etc. The ‘Odias’ adapt the ‘Bengali’ way of dressing ‘dhoti’, and also some “broken Bengali” during the course of work. They also reach to a common dialect of Hindi and Bengali. Although living, working and staying together for a long period of time in secluded, isolated settlements, there should probably be intense inter ethnic interaction which would lead to a great level of acculturation. But “things are not what they seem”. The Bengalis and Assamese having some commonalities in culture and language, show great levels of interaction, adaptation and acculturation, while workers from other states don’t easily adapt ‘other culture’.

SEGREGATION AND EXCLUSION

Even though the migrant labourers are different from the larger community that accommodates them, one can’t deny the fact that they are also different within themselves. There

may be factors that unite them but despite this unity and connection they show limited levels of inter ethnic interaction and adaptation. Therefore, living in the same settlement they knowingly or unknowingly develop the identity of “us” and “them” within themselves through various levels of segregation and exclusion. They are not just segregated in the ideal realm, having different perspectives and prejudices about the ‘Other’ but they also face economic and work segregation. The Bengalis do the ‘mestri’ works, Odias are painters, Biharis have painting and wiring. This leads to a gradation in their pay scale. There also exists a caste dynamics at play where one is above the other in social hierarchy. There also exists a level of exclusion. The dominance of Bengalis in the site in both number and privileges like T.V. they somehow tend to exclude the others in celebrations or other occasions when they come together. All such celebration happens as they like it, T.V programs are selected according to their preference. Thus, all this widens the segregation, building an invisible hierarchy between them.

The identity and of ‘us and them’ isn’t rigid and can’t be described as black and white. The identity formation is twofold. At a macro level, where we have the Malayalis and the migrant labourers, the host Malayali society forms ‘them’ and the migrant labourers collectively form ‘us’. However, at a micro level, where we have only migrant labourers from different states working and living together, the factors that united them at the macro level disappear and the differences between themselves become important and vivid. Within their small world and community, the people from their own village and native land and village become ‘us’ and the all others from other states become ‘them’.

BARRIERS

Hailing from different backgrounds, the migrant labourers face certain barriers which make it difficult for them to accept the ‘Other’. Certainly, language is one of the basic and initial barriers they face. Speaking different dialects of Hindi and Bengali, some who don’t know either Hindi or Bengali refrain from engaging in interaction, if needed will seek help of people who know both languages. This barrier of language is overcome by speaking either in Hindi or any other common dialect learned over the years due to interethnic interaction. Those who find hindi difficult or are new to the place use sign language as in point to the things they want or use somebody else’s help in communication. Being culturally different also acts as a hindrance in

letting 'us' accepting 'them'. Apart from these underlying barriers of language and culture, the working and living set up does no good in removing the blocks. The workers live in compartmentalized areas within the settlement. Odias live together, Assamese and Bengalis live together and the Biharis only work there, in their words, they "chose" to live away from the settlement are they are different from others. Already they have prejudice about people from other states and such hierarchy in their work space widens the gap. Even though they live together, they know they are above the other. Segregation in the working and living spheres and a tough and tiring day at work, after which they have time "only for some tea, washing clothes, cooking food etc" blocks them from actually knowing the 'other'. However, these blocks and barriers are overcome over the course of time especially the barrier of language, but for other barriers it's like, that they have no choice

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study started with the basic idea that the migrants live in secluded settlements, where they have only them as their immediate contact and thus will undergo intense inter ethnic interaction, overcoming the cultural and ethnic barriers.

The study examines what does actually ‘co – existence’, or living and working together mean for them? How do they make sense of the world they live in? How do they perceive ‘the other’? In short, our general research question, “What is the dynamics of social relations among migrant labourers?”

There is no denial of the fact that the migrant labourers of the settlement undergo a dynamic interaction where they do socialize and mingle, relate and connect with one another. They realize that they are one, in terms of being outsider or aliens in the society. They look very different from the Malayalis, speak a different language and thus what immediately unites them is not their differences within themselves but their differences from the host Kerala society. They acknowledge the fact that they are only temporary members of the society. They are ‘strangers in a strange land’. They share the anxieties and worries of being strangers. This unites them. But it all happens at a preliminary or primary level and doesn’t go beyond a certain level. A level after which they get restricted within their “own” people and their “own” lives.

The working and living structures, the segregation, exclusion and compartmentalization, in addition to the cultural and regional differences, never allow them to actually know the ‘other’, forget about accepting them. They come here with various aspirations and perceptions, not just about the host society but also about the people with whom they are going to work. Due to minimal inter ethnic interaction these prejudices and pre conceived notions about the ‘other’ gets deepened which in turn limits and restricts them in their approach towards the ‘other’.

The study has used the theoretical framework of ‘us and them’ by Bauman and May. Bauman explains the concept of ‘us’ and ‘them’ as not just two separate groups of people, but as “the distinction between two totally different attitudes- between emotional attachment and antipathy, trust and suspicion, security and fear, cooperativeness and pugnacity” (Bauman 1990, p. 40). Bauman compares this distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ to that between ‘in-group’ and

'out-group'. Bauman says that these two groups are inseparable and that this "mutual conflict" conditions their existence. Bauman talks of the importance of the idea of an 'out-group' for the "cohesiveness", "integration", "solidarity", "self identity" and "emotional security" of the in-group. "There must be an 'out' for the 'in' to be truly appreciated" (Bauman 1990, p. 42). Our feelings towards the "out group" are generally edged with prejudice and antagonism.

In the present study, this identity formation of us and them in the migrant community is twofold. At a macro level, where we have the Malayalis and the migrant labourers, the host Malayali society forms 'them' and the migrant labourers collectively form 'us'. The ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic differences within the migrant community don't matter then. What matters is that the migrant labourers are different from the larger Kerala community. For them, they are all strangers in a land that is not theirs, living and working in a culture that is not theirs. At this level, migrants derive emotional security, solidarity and self identity from being different from a larger whole. The migrant labourers together form an "us" (the group they feel they belong to.) and an "in – group" (due to the presence of an imaginary opposition- the Malayali community) from which they gain support, inner solidarity and emotional security. And the host Kerala or Malayali community forms a "them" (a group which we cannot access or do not wish to belong).

However, at a micro level, where we have only migrant labourers from different states working and living together, the factors that united them at the macro level disappear and the differences between themselves become important and vivid. Within their small world and community, the people from their own village and native land and village become 'us' and the all others from other states become 'them'. They identify themselves from the state they belong to. It is from them they derive security, solidarity and self identity. At this level people from different states collectively become 'them.' As Bauman says that these two groups are inseparable and that this "mutual conflict" conditions their existence. It is because they live together the demarcations of 'us' and 'them' become clear.

Thus, the underexplored phenomenon of the social life of migrant labourers was dug into. However, only the surface has been scratched and the area has enough and more possibilities for future research.

SUGGESTIONS

In the present scenario, when migrants are becoming an integral part of Kerala society- socially, culturally, economically – steps must be taken to make the working and living atmosphere more conducive for a greater inter ethnic interaction. They must be treated with due dignity and not as people who are ‘just here to work’. Effective interventions should be made to deconstruct the prejudice they have about the ‘other’. The more the inter ethnic interaction, the less the segregation among the workers. This would help the workers overcome the barriers of accepting the other and certainly help increase the work productivity which in turn would help both the communities.

Due to lack of studies in this area, lack of time and other constraints the study could be conducted in only one settlement. The social life and interactions of the migrant labourers has been looked into only from a limited scope. Thus, future research can be extensive and can explore other aspects of the social life of the migrant labourers.

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