

Historical Emergence of Social Networks and Shared Identities in Immigrant Communities

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the historical and geographical ties that led to the formation of a social network of Malayalis in Pune in the decades following Independence. It locates certain characteristics of the Malayali migrant community in the historical context of their migration to Pune, from which emerged certain specific identities of migrant workers including working women in the public sector. The article shows that by the late 1960s up until the early 1980s Pune had a well-connected and influential migration network that imagined itself as largely “educated, hardworking and sincere”, and therefore confident of its employability and deserving of formal employment in the public sector. Stronger communal bonds existed among the early migrant community due to communal nature of the society, widespread poverty and similar class backgrounds and which was characterized by the concept of helping others. The concept of helping or ‘saving’ (*rakshapadutuka*) was crucial in strengthening this migration network. Within the concept of ‘helping’ or ‘saving’, migrants who made a foothold in the city and those in influential positions became sources for finding employment for new migrants. The female migrants drew from these collective values and imaginations of the community to define their social identities in the workplace and within and outside the immigrant community. The imagination of the migrant community projected certain characteristics on to its migrants that defined their roles as migrant workers in offices. Within this migrant community, individuals identified themselves as hardworking and sincere, qualities which they noted as crucial in deserving the job opportunities and positions that were made available to them through the influence of these networks. The female migrant workers drew their social identities from their communal identities of the migrant worker. The research advances knowledge on social networks and social capital in the migration process and reveals the gendered nature of its functioning.

Key Words : Migration, Social networks, Women, Workers, Kerala, Pune

INTRODUCTION

Social networks are critical in sustaining the flow of migrants to a region and in “providing a structure” that helps potential migrants to access “resources such as material assistance or useful information” and thereby reduce “the financial costs of migration” (Nawyn, 2010, p.754-755). Moreover, social networks decrease the risks involved in migrating while also facilitating “integration and adaptation to the host society” (Nawyn, 2010, p. 755). This research specifically explores the historical emergence of a particular social network of immigrant

Malayalis at the destination of migration, Pune, and how it was instrumental in shaping the identity of migrant workers including women.

This social network initially comprised of educated caste Hindus from Tamil Nadu and Kerala regions. The presence of a social network of south Indian immigrants in Defence establishments under colonial administration in British India enabled the development of an immigrant Malayali migration network in postcolonial India and significantly shaped the lives of many potential migrants. The existence of such a migration network in Pune formed the social capital for migrants.

A combination of educational attainment, unemployment and widespread poverty led to the development of internal migration from Kerala by the 1940s (Joseph, 2000). Pune became an attractive destination for migrants from Kerala during the early decades of Independence and formation of the state as the city also had the presence of an influential caste, class and kin-based migration network especially in the establishments under the Ministry of Defence. The particular nature of educational growth in India and gendered communal norms made public sector employment desirable to Malayalis including educated Malayali women who aspired for such jobs as a way to ensure their economic independence and ensure social mobility and status. The emergence of a network of south Indian migrants in Pune had a colonial history and the preference for labour from caste superiors in postcolonial periods made these migration networks influential and organized.

METHODOLOGY

The database of this study mainly comprise of migrant interviews collected over a period of three months in 2017. The main method used in this research is semi-structured, in-depth interviews of 33 respondents comprising 23 female and 10 male respondents. Additionally, also used are participant observations of community activities over three years including informal interaction with immigrant community members, narrative analysis of a fictional work written by a migrant Malayali, and archival data from Maharashtra State Archives/ Directorate of Archives in Mumbai and National Archives of India, New Delhi.

The study examines three board areas: the emergence of a migration network that had connections to Pune's military history, the values and ethos of the community and their equation to the natives, and the identities of the community that influenced working migrant women. This research is centered on migrant women as historical subjects to understand internal labor migration in India through life narratives.

Historical and structural context of migration networks:

In developing countries migration as a social

phenomenon acquires a more complex meaning due to its collective nature. Guilмото and Sandron observe that “the migration cycle of a region or a social group is an historical phenomenon that depends, at each step, as much on the structural changes in the environment as on the preceding steps” (2001, p.138). This section explores the historical and structural contexts that led to the emergence of communal, caste-based networks of Malayali immigrants in Pune, particularly in the Defence establishments. It shows that the south Indian¹ migration to Pune, including that of Malayalam-speaking immigrants, has a long colonial history, which is closely linked to the city's significance as an important colonial and postcolonial Military centre. It tries to establish that historical association of south Indian community's labour migration to various Military establishments in Pune became the structural backbone for the female labour migration under study.

Defence establishments and history of migration to Pune (1800 to 1960s):

Colonial legacy had established Pune, or *Poona* as it was commonly known then, as an important military centre for the colonial British Army and later for Independent India.

South Indian migration to the city also dates back to the period of its initial colonial encounters. The city's earliest known or recorded association with south Indian migrants was in 1803 when “Sir Arthur Wellesley in his campaign to restore Baji Rao II to the Peshwaship from which Yashwantrao Holkar had driven him” appointed a few south Indians as “military contractors and labourers” in “commissariat arrangements” (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158). South Indian migrants began following these original immigrants to the city when Pune gained prominence as one of the main headquarters of the British Indian Army. Consequently by 1893 there were nearly 200 south Indian families who had settled down in the city and cantonment areas (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158). Due to the great plague of 1897-1900, many of these families were expected to have “returned to their original homes in the south”, leaving behind fewer than

1. As per the census of India 1951, among the south Indians, the Kannada, Telugu, and Tamil speaking people had a more significant presence in Pune than Malayalis. The other prominent non-Marathi speakers were Gujaratis, Sindhis and Hindi and Urdu-speaking population. (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p. 71)

60 families² in the city (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158). These may have been the migrant pioneers from the southern regions including Kerala.

In a work published in 1929, colonial historian H George Franks credits the British Indian administration for turning Pune “into a strong cantonment” and for the construction of “the Kirkee railway station” (Vol II 1929, p. 2). Frank (1929) referred to “Poona” as “the town” that was “so much wrapped up in its military history” (Franks Vol I, 1929, p.3) and described Aundh as “the little village” (Franks Vol I, 1929, p. 21).

During the years of World War I (1914 – 1918) and World War II (1939-1945), “there was a considerable expansion of military establishments in Poona” (Nair, 1978, p. 41) that continued to play a crucial role in attracting migrants from south India. The migration network of south Indians that were formed during these periods in Pune shaped the nature of its south Indian immigrant community. The increase in the flow of migrants was attributed to “improvements in communication and the easiness with which south India could be reached from Poona” (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p. 158). This crucial stage of migration saw the emergence of a community of south Indian immigrants in Pune who belonged to the “educated classes”³ (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158) and upper castes of the current states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In his historical study, Nair (1978) observed that during World War I, the then Controller of the Military Accounts office in Pune was a Shaivite Brahmin called Rao Bahadoor Vengu Iyyer who recruited a considerable number of people from various districts of the Madras Presidency⁴ (1978, p. 41). This group of immigrants to Pune, distinguished as “rice eaters”, was expected to remain “a floating one” subject to fluctuations “in numbers

with the requirements of the Army authorities” (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158).

Many more south Indian migrants came to Pune as military establishments, including the Military Accounts Office, “expanded enormously” during World War II (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158). As mentioned earlier, they belonged to the educated and upper caste communities of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and mainly comprised of “the Brahmins, Iyysers and Iyyengars, Moodliars, Naidus and Pillais of Tamil Nadu, and Nairs, Menons and Pillais of Kerala” (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158).

“Many of the uneducated south Indians used formerly to be employed as butlers and bearers of the British officers of the Indian Army. These have now become drivers of motor vehicles and fitters and mechanics in Defence Workshops”. (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158)

Under colonial administration in the early 20th century, the uneducated south Indian immigrants mainly found employment as drivers, fitters and mechanics in the British Army. The caste-based networks⁵ that were formed during this period became active and were strengthened after “a second office of the Military Accounts” became functional during World War II (Nair, 1978, p. 42).

Internal migration became significant with respect to some states including Kerala after World War I (1914-1918) when many industries involved in “cotton textiles, sugar, iron and steel, etc.,” emerged and thrived in various parts of the country (Joseph, 2000, 94). Suburbanisation of Pune during this period resulted in the development of industries in its vicinity including sugar factories (Diddee, 1984). One of the attendants at the Ruby Hall Clinic

2. Although the census figures in 1911 do not show any Malayalam-speaking female or male in Pune, in 1931 there were 1,167 male and 26 female Malayalam speaking people in Poona. By 1951, these numbers were “1,513 for men and 437 for women” (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p. 71)

3. The educational qualification of these migrants distinguished them from “the original immigrants” in the 18th century who were identified as belonging to the classes of “military contractors and the labourers” (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.158)

4. Parts of erstwhile Madras Presidency included northern Kerala, popularly known as Malabar.

5. With respect to Kerala, the 1940s was the first distinct phase of migration from the state that was influenced by events such as WWII and the attainment of Indian Independence in 1947 (Zachariah et.al., 1999). The better integration of the state with other states facilitated out-migration and Kerala became a net-out migrating state for the first time where earlier it was a net in-migrating state. The main destinations for out-migration were the metropolitan centres such as Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi (Joseph, 2000, p. 124).

mentioned that his parents had migrated to Pune as far back as the 1930s to work in these Sugar factories. The presence of the headquarters of the Southern Command, and three notified and historically significant cantonments were also sources of employment for migrants.

The period of World War II (henceforth WWII) also marked an important phase of out-migration from Kerala and an increase in internal migration within British India. Joseph observed that many young men from Kerala enrolled in various military services across the country due to rise in labour demands during the years of war. The increase in internal migration from Kerala was particularly visible from 1931 to 1951 (2000, p. 105). Hence, the wars and ensuing recruitments increased labour demands, encouraging internal migration in India and out-migration from Kerala⁶ (Joseph, 2000, p. 105).

Education enabled many Malayalis to “learn about – and follow up – possibilities” in employment (Jeffrey, 1992, p. 152) in other parts of India and abroad and they began migrating in search of jobs (Jeffrey, 1992). Education was crucial in helping Malayalis “read about the opportunities and complete the paperwork” that were required for migration to various regions including the Gulf countries (Jeffrey, 1992, p. 152). Consequently, a considerable number of applicants came to Pune with the help of their relatives – who were already employed here, to respond “to advertisements for recruitment” in these establishments (Nair, 1978, p. 42). These relatives “were employed in various military establishments, for by this time the civilian jobs in these establishments had become the monopoly of the south Indians” (Nair, 1978, p. 42).

In this study, the section of Malayali migrants from Kerala who eventually became part of the public sector employment in Pune emerged from a historical location wherein their equation with colonial administration and their socio-economic background with respect to caste and communal location characterize what scholars (Donner, 2008; Gallo, 2017) observe as the traditional middle classes in India. The formation of India’s traditional middle classes is often situated in colonial histories during

which a certain strata of Indians emerged due to their unique relationship to the colonial administration. Donner noted that pre-existing categories of language, religion and caste or ethnicity, along with ideas of a nation, came to influence the “specific cultural traits”, “identities” and “lifestyles” (2008, p. 54-55) that differentiated India’s early middle classes from other groups. She observed that during this period “middleclassness” also implied “specific forms of cultural and symbolic capital” (Donner, 2008, p. 55) that readily subsumed upper-caste Hindus and high status Muslims into its category. It also relied on “urbane norms and practices” that “upwardly mobile groups” embraced for status production (Donner, 2008, p. 55).

By the end of 1940s, the south Indian immigrant community comprising Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam speaking people, had created a communal identity and cultural place in Pune. They had their own schools, various institutions including “the Fine Arts Society” for Tamilian ‘musicians and artists’, associations such as Kerala Samajam, and religious associations (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.159). They were also running “hotels and restaurants” that served regional food (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.159). The earliest south Indian immigrants, hired at the Military Accounts Office (MAO), eventually settled down in the central part of the city due to its proximity to their workplace and “easy availability of low rent housing” (Nair, 1978, p. 41).

The presence of ethnic neighbourhoods with a certain degree of “homogeneity” with respect to caste and cultural practices, and the availability of facilities such as schools at Rasta Peth⁷ enabled the immigrants to acquire a level of satisfaction with the city (Nair, 1978). In both these stages of migration from the southern states, the majority of immigrants were Tamil-speaking people who had moved from regions in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Post-independence attempt to set up industrial complexes and development programmes encouraged internal migration in India. The Census of India⁸ 1951 (as cited in the Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.157)

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6. For instance, Travancore alone sent about 1.57 lakh recruits to “the army and civilian labour force” (Joseph, 2000, p. 105).
 7. Nair observed that Rasta Peth was an ‘almost centrally located in the city of Poona’ and was ‘not far from the Poona railway station’, was ‘nearer to the Poona cantonment, the general post and telegraph office and the main shopping centre of the city’ (1978, p. 24).
 8. According to the Census of 1951 “the population of the Poona district (including the newly merged areas)” was “19,50,976, which is 323.6 to the sq. mile” (Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954).

noted that the number of Tamil-speaking people in Pune was 19,274 and Malayalam-speaking people were 1,950. They were considered “a floating population” – as only a few were expected to settle down in Pune, and were “mostly employees in the Military Accounts Office, Defence establishments and workshops, and other union offices in Poona” (the Gazetteer of Bombay State, 1954, p.157). A significant section of south Indian immigrants to Pune were employed in Central government services due to their relatively higher educational attainment (Nair, 1978).

Mallika Nair, who was 66 years old at the time of the interview in 2017, worked at the Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (PCDA) office until her retirement in 2012. Her parents had also migrated to Pune in 1951 following her father’s job transfer from Chennai. He was employed at the Military Engineering Services (MES) under the Southern Command. Like many new migrants to Pune her parents first lived at Rasta Peth, a few kilometers away from the Military offices, in a rented accommodation in a *wada* (traditional Maharashtrian building with many rooms). Mallika and her sister and brother were born here. She recalls that her childhood was ‘truly cosmopolitan’ as their *wada* was home to Tamilians, Telugus, Sindhis and, as she noted, ‘there were also Muslims’.

Migrants were aware of the differences between various regional identities. The notions of ‘unity in diversity’ prevailed as an exciting ideal to practice in urban spaces which brought together multiple communities. It marked the optimism of the Nehruvian era when regional diversity was particularly celebrated. Urban spaces and the Army, in particular, were spaces where the excitement around notions of regional, cultural and religious plurality played out and contributed to middle class politics of identity formation and engagement with ‘the modern’.

My respondent Mallika pointed out that Rasta Peth was a ‘favored location’ for Malayalis as ‘the station, Camp and Swargate were all close by’, in addition to the offices where Malayalis found jobs such as ‘the defence

establishments, ordinance factories, CDO, MES headquarters and other institutions’. She remembers that there were also many Malayalis who had ‘tyre shops’ at Rasta Peth. The Ayyappa Temple at Rasta Peth, one of the oldest temples of the south Indian immigrants in Pune, is symbolic and reminiscent of the presence of south Indian migrants in the area in these early periods.

Malayalis “had become a fully mobile class of people by 1961” (Joseph, 2000, p. 82). About “ninety-eight percent” of Malayali immigrants in Pune were expected to have come to the city “after 1961” (Khairkar, 2008, p. 159). Among them 75% had come from the Travancore-Cochin districts of Alleppy, Kottayam and Trichur⁹, and Palakkad. In a much later study, Zachariah and Rajan (2013) observe that the majority of those who migrated from Kerala to other states or who undertook internal migration belonged to Hindu and Christian communities; the Muslim community showed more inclination for emigration to Gulf regions (48% in 2007) than out migration (8.8% in 2003) (2013, p. 27). These communities benefitted from the earlier spread of education, particularly in the Travancore-Cochin regions.

Due to relatively better educational level, the migrants from Kerala were mainly engaged in clerical, office jobs or manufacturing work in Pune. Khairkar (2008) also observed that 76% of the heads of migrant families from Kerala were educated above class 10, and 31% above graduation. Moreover, 12% of migrants had come to Pune after retirement. They, as a percentage to state population, accounted for 3.69% in 1961¹⁰ and employment was one of main reasons for their migration to Pune (Khairkar, 2008).

In Maharashtra, Bombay¹¹ began experiencing increasing congestion due to growing number of private industrial capital (Verma, 1985 as cited in Lele, 1995, p. 1521), particularly between 1960 and 1965. In the early 1960s, the state government imposed a ban on the setting up of “any new industry at Bombay” (Diddee, 1984, p. 81). The government “set up a number of institutional

9. Certain parts of Thrissur belonged to the Malabar region as well.

10. This figure increased to 6.38 in 1981 (Khairkar, 2008). As per the GOI census of India, the Malayali population in Maharashtra went up from 90,460 in 1961 to 340,597 in 1991; the number being much higher at present. In Maharashtra, the age compositions of the female migrants from Kerala who had been residing in the state for the last nine years in 1981 comprised of 18.12% of 18-22 year olds, 28.08% of 23-27 year olds and 16.29% of 28-32 year olds (Joseph, 2000, p. 145-144).

11. In the 1960s, industrial growth continued to remain ‘concentrated in and around Bombay with Greater Bombay and Thane together accounting for over 5,98,000 industrial workers, while Pune, the next largest district, had only 45,000 in 1967 (Lele, 1995, p. 1521).

mechanisms to encourage dispersal of medium and large-scale industry across the state and especially into the backward regions” (Lele, 1995, p. 1521).

The diversion of development from Mumbai in the 1960s encouraged industrialization and associated urbanization of Pune (Diddee, 1984; Lele, 1995) that was supported by the inflow of migrants to the city in search of jobs (Bapat and Crook, 1992). With the organisation of the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation in 1960 two important townships of Pimpri and Chinchwad emerged in the outskirts of Pune “along the Bombay-Pune railway and highway” (Bapat and Crook, 1992, p. 1141). The ensuing rapid industrialization increased the employment opportunities in the city (Nair, 1978, p. 42; Khairkar, 2008; Bapat and Crook, 1992). Suburbanisation of other regions around Pune also attracted migrants for work.

The respondents in my study belong to this stage of migration that was facilitated by the emergence of large scale industries within and around the Pune Municipal Corporation in the 1960s and 1970s (Nair, 1978; Khairkar, 2008). Notably, these were also times of the Sino-Indian war of 1962, and the Indo-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971 led to the expansion of Defence and other allied establishments in Pune, and further growth of employment opportunities (Nair, 1978, p. 42). Two of my respondents, Mary George and Annamma Chako recall the scarcity in rice and kerosene, and the black outs in their initial years in the city. Another respondent, Indira Nair remembers literally ‘jumped into the hole’, a bunker inside her office compound, with her co-workers when the siren rang. However, the war situation further increased labour demands and the 1960s and 1970s saw the largest wave of south Indian migration to Pune (Nair, 1978).

South Indian migrants from other castes also migrated to the city for employment and many ethnic enclaves, apart from Rasta Peth, came into being in areas such as those in ‘Ghorpuri, Kirkee and Pimpri’ (Nair, 1978, p. 43). Many of the respondents for my research belong to the immigrant communities who worked and settled down in the Aundh-Khadki regions of Pune.

Clearly, the various union offices in Pune and industrial urban spaces around it continued to attract south Indian migrants including upper-caste Malayalis. Pune was a “first-order central place”, *i.e.*, a metropolitan city (Diddee, 1984, p. 153) by the 1970s. In addition to a

number of prominent educational institutions such as “Poona University”, medical colleges, the agricultural college, law colleges, College of Military Engineering, etc., the city also had several institutions of national importance. Some of these include the National Chemical Laboratory, National Defence Academy, Explosives factory, Armament Research and Development Establishment, Headquarters of the Southern Command (Military), Controller of Defence Accounts, and several Central and State Government Offices (Diddee, 1984, p. 154) among others.

Besides the Range Hills quarters, the Aundh-Khadki region also had the Khadki railway station, the Khadki market that had a Malayali Mess or eat out, the Ayyappa Temple and churches. Gradually the presence of Malayalis in the area increased and the region became one of the enclaves of the ethnic Malayali community. The growth of the immigrant community in the region was furthered due to the simulation of aspects of regional and ethnic culture in the process of urbanization of Pune (Nair, 1978, p. 190). Simultaneously, the process of migration has further led to the development and urbanisation of Pune.

The evolution of Pune city can be traced to urbanizing policies towards restructuring (Bhagat, 2017) as well as increasing pressure of population especially that of incoming migrants on its resources including housing facilities. Before the arrival of corporate capital in the mid-1980s and rapid growth of housing facilities and complexes in the city, some of the migrants relied on the quarters such as those at Range Hills that was allotted to government employees.

Malayali Migrant Community in 1960s and 1970s:

The periods of 1960s, 70s and 80s were also decades of intense migration from Kerala. Due to the expansion of education in the state, particularly Travancore and Cochin regions and rising unemployment, Malayalis began migrating to other parts of India, and to the Gulf, in search of jobs. Certain studies show that those who undertook internal migration, *i.e.* migration within the country, were mainly educated Malayalis from Hindu and Christian families, and those who migrated to the Gulf were predominantly Malayali Muslim migrants and were in general lesser educated than the internal migrants (Zachariah and Rajan, 2013, p. 27).

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12. Pune is an emerging metropolitan city. Its proximity to Mumbai and rapid urbanization make it an important site for studying processes of migration and identity formation.

Rapid industrialization in Pune city ¹² after 1961 including increased wages in the “new industries and government jobs” provided a favourable socio-economic environment that invited migrants from various states as well as from other regions of Maharashtra (Bhapat and Crook 1992, p. 1146; Khairkar, 2008). In the 1970s, modern town planning concepts were also introduced in the city. Pune soon emerged as an important centre for engineering industries, especially in the automotive sector. Companies such as Telco, Bajaj, Kinetic, Bharat Forge, Alfa Laval, and Thermax started their businesses in the city. Industrial establishments including those in the public sector that were set up in and around Pune generated enormous job opportunities. Around the same time, the emergence of many educational institutions turned Pune into an educational hub for higher studies. Migrants from regions such as Kerala that had better educational systems reached out to these sectors for jobs. The location of Malayali migrant community in urbanizing and industrializing Pune made the migrant community of the 1960s and 1970s an embedded social resource for potential and new migrants from Kerala (Lin, 1999, p. 35).

Malayali migrants recall that prior to the mid 1980s the community in Pune was smaller, had similar class struggles and people had ‘time’ for each other. As discussed earlier there was also a certain degree of caste homogeneity with respect to migrant enclaves. In the absence of scarcity of consumer goods and forms of entertainment, leisurely activities for the respondents also entailed visiting other families and spending holidays together.

People and connections formed the migration networks, and the same were also important support systems for the migrants during ‘waiting periods’ (Aiyappan, 1965; George, 2005) and in times of uncertainty. Stronger attachments developed among friends and relations as they relied on each other in times of need, such as a space to stay temporarily when migrant couples were ‘caught’ by authorities living illegally in government quarters. In a study on nursing migration to the US, George (2005) noted that many of the women who migrated from the Syrian Christian community in Kerala to other parts of India and abroad first relied on female networks. These networks were crucial not only in securing job opportunities but also facilitating accommodation and security for the migrating woman. The associations formed through such networks enabled

women to form lasting bonds with each other similar to the nature of kinship relations even when they were not related. This was true for migration networks comprising female and male members.

The migrant communities in India, especially those belonging to the earlier generation, formed a “small cultural world of their own” (Mythily, 1959 as cited in Nair, 1978, p. 6) in order to simulate their “regional cultural and social environment” (Nair, 1978, p. 7). This allows them to maintain their own identity, rooted in traditional social values and ethos - in a culturally mixed neighbourhood (Nair, 1978, p. 7). Recreation of “a relatively homogeneous cultural group” (Nair, 1978, p. 6) in Pune characterised the “community life of the immigrants” (Nair, 1978, p. 7) during the periods under study. The pre-liberalization era, in particular, was marked by this particular feature of the migrants:

“The process of simulation of the regional culture in the urban area is facilitated by the residential segregation of the immigrants who tend to cluster around relatives and other immigrants belonging to their own region, caste, language, religion and class” (Nair, 1978, p. 7).

Most of my respondents claimed that people knew each other ‘in those days’ and those relationships were deeper. Since television and other means of entertainment were limited, families visited each other and friendships at work and neighbourhood were formed easily.

“There were no TV those days, so we met people and we talked and we knew each other. It wasn’t a cold city as it is today. A cold city where everybody lives one life behind closed doors and... puts on an appearance of being a very happy family... it was not that. The families knew each other... they knew the troubles”.—Sarala Jagan

The elderly migrants recall that the community was closely-knit and people knew each other well enough to know the troubles and would readily offer any kind of help. The early generation of migrants had imbued the practice of help which represented the ethos of communal societies. As children, young migrants picked up these behaviors and attitudes and their actions in the immigrant community was a reflection of this. Sarala recalls how her mother had contacted “all the Malayalis” she knew from “Dehru Road to Hadapsar” to raise money for the widow of a deceased Malayali man.

“She bought a machine and gave it to his wife

so that... his wife said that she can't go back because there were a lot of sisters in her house. She said 'I can't go back to my parents, I can't afford to go back'. And she did tailoring and brought up her children" – Sarala Jagan

Influential community networks:

The social network of Malayali migrants formed earlier as detailed in the section 'Defence establishments and history of migration to 'Poona'' became instrumental in increasing the flow of Malayalis to Pune from the 1960s onwards. Some of the migrants recalled this period as a time when the relatively smaller group of Malayalis shared a sense of *oneness*, a bond built on shared cultural sensibilities and vulnerability as outsiders, mutual dependence and aid, and associations formed through relatedness and kinship¹³. Migrants in the social network during this period prior to liberalisation were united through their common allegiance to linguistic and cultural markers of regionalism.

Kinship is an important aspect of the household¹⁴ in the communities of Asia. Even intra-household activities and intra-household relations are structured by the nature of kinship links, and so is the "the social division of labour and the dynamics of... class relations" (Palriwala, 1990, p.16). Family and kinship bonds are central structures in the "productive and reproductive system of a social formation" (Palriwala, 1990, p.16). In fact, kinship has remained "a powerful medium in expressing bonds of ethnicity, caste, class and religion" (Palriwala, 1990, p.16), specifically in the case of communities in Asia. Hence, the idea of family-household or kinship systems in Asian communities is interrelated.

Interpersonal and social bonds among Malayali immigrants in the city were stronger due to family and kinship bonds, and shared values and nature of collective societies. One critical aspect of the Malayali community that enabled the strengthening of their networks in Pune was the concept of saving (*rakshapadutuka*) or helping others. The concept of saving motivated migrants who

made a foothold in the city and those in influential positions to act as "embedded resources" (Lin, 1999, p. 36) in the social network for new and potential migrants to access and gain employment. Secure migrants who had also received help as new migrants mostly through kin relations and friends returned the favor by aiding others in their role as resources in the social network.

The significance of the value of 'saving' others became clear to me when Chako commented on the general economic situation of the people in Kerala in those decades. He said:

"Ane ellavarum pavazhal aayirunnu (In those days everyone was poor)."

He was referring to the situation of widespread poverty in Kerala that made life difficult for most people. A.J. Pious and Chako observed that the period of the 1960s and 1970s were marked by scarcity of consumer products and low per capita income. The circulation of money and goods were limited. People lived simpler lives, and possessed fewer personal items such as a single shirt and pant.

Chako had made this observation in the context of trying to explain why he and his wife, Annamma, got many young girls from among their relations to Pune. The labour of young girls for housework including childcare was critical for migrant couples in Pune, more so when both the spouses were employed. The absence of extended familial structures to draw support from during childbirth and rearing following migration made domestic labour a 'critical' necessity for married migrant couples in the newly urbanizing Pune. The couples who got their female relations to Pune as domestic help also promised and eventually helped the girls find employment in Pune or nearby places such as Mumbai. Chako observed that they 'saved' the girls and their families from poverty and unemployment. Hence, the communal value of 'saving' others enabled single female migrants to seek help from their kin relations to access jobs following migration.

13. Kinship as I understand here includes blood relations, relatives through marriage, including that of siblings and other immediate family members and relatives, and relationship through adoption. In Kerala society, kinship ties in rural areas and in certain urban settings may also include neighbours and those from your native region.

14. The 'household' as a unit of study in academia is not merely that of 'co-residence, conception and reproduction' (Palriwala, 1990, p.15), it is a complex structure in itself comprising of, and linking, several other processes and institutions such as family, kinship, marriage, class and community, among others. More closely, 'the household is rooted in kinship, marriage and familial organization and in family ideology,' wherein family ideology means 'a set of moral principles' defined along gender lines practiced by each family.

B.M. Menon and the concept of saving:

During this period, the concept of ‘saving’ became a salient aspect in the way the larger Malayali community imagined itself in Pune. The respondents observed that Malayalis holding important positions at senior levels in government and private organizations were instrumental in recruiting newer migrants to the city, including women. Lin explained that valued resources include “contact resources” who are “embedded” in the migrant’s contacts or connections. They play the role of “helpers in an instrumental action, such as job searches” (Lin, 1999, p. 36). Contact resources involve those with “wealth, power and/or status” that is reflective of “the contact’s occupation, authority position, industrial sector, or income” (Lin, 1999, p. 36).

In the 1970s, B M Menon played a critical role, similar to that of Rao Bahadoor Vengu Iyyer, in the recruitment of educated migrants from Kerala to government offices in Pune. Menon was an upper caste Nair from Kerala and the Controller of Defence Accounts (CDA) from November 1978 to July 1979. One of the senior-most officials in CDA it was clear that Menon was a “valued resource” (Lin, 1999, p. 36) for the social network of Malayalis in Pune. Valued resources in most societies are characterized by “wealth, power and status” and proximity to such a person or persons give a new or potential migrant an advantage in the form of a social capital (Lin, 1999, p.36).

Many of my respondents claimed that they knew or have heard of the Indian Defence Accounts Service personnel having ‘saved many’ (“*kore aalle rakshapaduti*”) Malayalis by helping them find employment using his influence. Those who came to know of this approached him for employment through their close relations or friends. Some of my female respondents claimed they received help from Menon through their brothers or sisters who were already employed in the government offices under him. The respondents largely spoke favorably about him as ‘a nice person’ (“*nalla alle*” or “*nalloru manushan*”) whom everyone had a ‘good opinion about’ and who was friendly, approachable and helpful. In the imagination of the current Malayali community in Aundh-Khadki areas, Menon espoused the ideal of saving others and is regarded with esteem by the immigrants.

Lin observed that “contact resources” in the network who already have “material resources (such as wealth)” and holds “hierarchical positions (such as

power)” are motivated to help others in order to gain reputation through social credit (1999, p.40). Menon was a significant “contact resource” (Lin, 1999) for the Malayali immigrant community in Pune. While potential migrants approached Menon in order to acquire “economic return” in the form of employment, the latter helped the migrants in order to achieve “social gain” in the form of “reputation” (Lin, 1999, p.40). Here, Lin defines reputation “as favorable/unfavorable opinions about an individual in a social network” (1999, p.40). In the context of this study, the concept of saving is a form of transaction that enabled potential migrants and their resources in the destination networks to gain returns in the form of economic, political or social returns (Lin, 1999, p.40). In the case of Menon, he gained a favorable, if not great, reputation in the larger network due to the “social credit” he accrued by helping many Malayalis find employment.

In feminist migration research “the employer preferences and the institutional support those preferences have received” determine “the prevalence of immigrant women and men in particular occupations and not the mere presence of immigrants alone” (Nawyn, 2010, p. 754). An important aspect of the ‘helpful’ nature of Menon was that he did not discriminate between an educated male candidate and an educated female candidate, or migrants from other religious backgrounds. If the Malayali female applicant was qualified enough and had approached him through a relative who was known to him or his friends, he was willing to help. One of my respondents, for instance, was hired to the Military Accounts Office after she approached Menon for a job through her brother.

“He (Menon) had the local powers to recruit and he could recruit any number of people. So, he saw to it that the Southern Command had (representation) from the North to the South – right from Gujarat, Rajasthan to Kanyakumari... he had power ... He being a Keralite, he was from North... Aluva side, he saw to it that all the ladies who passed out of SSC, SSLC... from all parts of Kerala he brought... Suppose if he saw that you came from Aluva, he saw to it that you could take an interview in Bombay... like that he has recruited many people.”

– Lethika Kurup.

Lethika Kurup was the first respondent to speak about Menon. She stressed that although she was hired

through staff selection in 1979, she had heard that Menon had filled in 'a lot of vacancies' in the defence establishments after the 1962 war. He was keen on hiring women from Kerala who had cleared their Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam and Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC).

Some of my respondents defended Menon's actions by attributing recruitment of Malayalis in the Defence establishments to the nature of hiring in organizations, which were characteristic of those times. Selection to government services was heavily influenced by the community to which the superiors with the power to recruit belonged. Malayalis justified their recruitment on the basis of ethnicity by citing examples of other regional higher-ups who had selected recruits from their own regions. Tessy Sebastian observed that Malayalis were not the only community that favored their regional community in the hiring process. She pointed out that a few years after Menon had left his post in the 1980s the new CDA was a Kannadiga from Bangalore and he recruited many Kannadigas to the offices. He mainly hired them as Class I employees in the positions of peons, handing boys, watchmen, etc. So the office had a higher percentage of Kannadigas in these jobs. As before these appointments were made within his permit and with the requirement that your name be enrolled in the employment exchange.

Abraham noted that besides Menon there were other seniors who were instrumental in hiring 'a good number of Malayalis' to union offices. However, he ruled out favoritism instead pointed to certain 'skills' and 'qualities' the Malayali migrants had. As clerical posts required only matriculation pass with skills in typing and shorthand, many Malayalis also qualified for these jobs in the city. Tessy and Remeny also mention that since offices of the Southern Command were concentrated in Pune, people from the southern regions as well as central and

surrounding states migrated to join its offices in the city. Therefore, they argued that no one region could stake a claim in the jobs of the Southern Command as it represented 'the whole of the south'.

Hence, Malayalis holding important positions in the senior levels in government and private organizations encouraged the recruitment of Malayalis including women into their organizations. These persons came to be remembered and respected by the migrant community. Prema Nambiar admits that Menon may have been 'whatever for others' but for Malayali migrants to Pune 'he was god'.

Migrants face barriers:

Migration has shaped cities and accelerated the pace of urbanization (Bhagat, 2017). However, cityward migration and interstate migration in particular has been sensitive issues in India (Bhagat, 2017, p. 35) due to political ideologies such as "sons of the soil" (Weiner, 1978), which allows for discrimination by emphasizing the natives' right to "claim local jobs while blaming migrants for snatching them away" (Weiner, 1978 as cited in Bhagat, 2017, p. 35). It leads to anti-migrant sentiments and "occasional violence against migrants" (Weiner, 1978; Hansen, 2001 as cited in Bhagat, 2017, p. 35). Some of the Malayalis recall that towards the later part of B M Menon's career complaints against him were raised by Shiv Sena¹⁵ supporters¹⁶ and a certain degree of local discontent had reached the parliament. The local people in Pune questioned his nativist preferences in the hiring process as Maharashtrais were not getting these jobs. Some of the migrants recalled that he was called in for an explanation, and Menon had said that he had followed the due process and that all recruits hired during his tenure had their names enrolled in the Employment Exchange and had the required educational qualifications for the posts they were appointed to.

15. One of my respondents, Valsala Sashidharan, was employed as a stenographer in the industrial office of the Maharashtra State Printing Press. She was the only Malayali out of 750 staff. Valsala said she knew written Marathi including grammar 'even better than Maharashtrais' and her bosses, who were mainly Maharashtra Brahmins, appreciated her work as a secretary.

16. The Shiv Sena's agenda when it was first formed in 1966 was to seek "reservation of jobs and new economic opportunities for Maharashtrais" (Lele, 1995, p. 1520). In the 1960s, they shifted focus on to the south Indians (the 'lungiwalas') for their nativist preferences in employment in secretarial and clerical jobs. They did this partially to deflect attention from the dominance of capital over Bombay, and due to "the specific part of the job market the Shiv Sena wanted to protect" which was "mainly in the lower echelons of white-collar employment" (Lele, 1995, p. 1520). Maharashtrais were asked to emulate those qualities that made south Indians successful at finding jobs (Lele, 1995, p. 1520). These sentiments did not explicitly affect Pune as it affected Bombay except in cases such as recruitments under B M Menon.

A few respondents spoke about the feelings of discontent against migrants occupying positions in these offices. Joseph (2000) had observed that across India internal migrants were viewed with ‘suspicion’ and ‘hostility’ due to regional-cultural and linguistic markers of distinction.

“Sometimes they would say things like, ‘you all coming here and working is reducing our chances of getting a job here” – Remeny

Remeny recalls that Maharashtrians in her office ‘adjusted’ and did not behave in any ‘harmful way’ or acted with ‘hostile feeling’ as in ‘Bombay’ though there were ‘feelings of dislike’ for outsiders.

Bhagat (2017) observed that discrimination against migrants can operate in varied forms. In the case of China, migrants to urban areas face difficulties in accessing employment opportunities and in “pensions, housing, healthcare and education” (2017, p. 38). In the case of internal migration in India, migrants are more likely to be discriminated against in “political and administrative processes, market mechanisms, and socio-economic processes” (2017, p. 38) and there exists a degree of “suspicion” and “hostility” against them (Joseph, 2000, p. 121).

Lethika pointed out that soon afterwards, from 1977 onwards, recruitments happened strictly through the employment exchange¹⁷. All government offices including income tax, excise, and defence had to declare their zonal vacancies, and an entrance exam followed by interview became integral part of the hiring process.

Imagination of Malayali Migrant Community:

This section locates the social identities¹⁸ enacted by migrant women based on the values espoused in the migrant community’s narratives of the ideal *pravasi* (migrant). In other words, it constructs certain characteristics of the ideal Pune Malayali to understand the social identities enacted by female migrant workers in Pune.

Information about employment:

Lin observed that “social ties located in certain

strategic locations and/or hierarchial positions” can inform individuals about “useful information about opportunities and choices” that might be missed out (1999, p. 31). In addition to certain influential figures, the migrant community formed a social network that was instrumental not only as contact resources they also facilitated “the flow of information” to new migrants.

Remeny noted that B.M. Menon was crucial in helping a large number of Malayalis, however Malayalis in general were also ‘smart’ at finding employment opportunities. The spread of education in Kerala (Nair 1978; Jeffrey 1992; Desai, 2005) had increased the number of educated migrants from Kerala. Literacy and a certain level of educational attainment helped the Malayali migrants read about opportunities and carry out paperwork required for acquiring jobs (Jeffrey, 1992, p. 152). As new migrants to the city they gathered information about how to access work opportunities in the city. Remeny noted:

“They would come and immediately register their names with the employment exchange and would eventually get good positions... Most of the others would not give their names in the employment exchange, might not even have thought of it.”

The new Malayali migrants registered their names at the employment exchange and this knowledge enabled many educated migrants to be placed in various offices in the city. These were the strategies adopted by migrants as they waited for “recruitment to industrial and government employment” (Bhapat and Crook, 1992, p.1146).

Qualities such as smartness, educated and hardworking that the migrant community believed they shared gave its members a sense of confidence in their abilities as working migrants. Individual achievements became shared accomplishments and female migrant workers drew from these as well. The Malayali migrants in Pune, especially those who worked in the defence establishments, closely associated with one of the prominent public figures of those times, V.K. Krishna Menon. The then defence minister and politician was a

17. Almost all the female migrants in this study had registered at the employment exchange soon after arriving in Pune. The migrants then eagerly waited for a call from the employment exchange. Receiving more than one call was considered a matter of pride as desirable candidates. The calls were usually accompanied by interviews.

18. Social identities and what makes a ‘real’ or ‘desirable’ or ‘non-desirable’ identity or identities is “settled provisionally and continuously, in practice, as part and parcel of shared histories and ongoing activities” (Gee, 2004, p. 33).

'success story' for many Malayali migrants. He was, as they perceived themselves to be, a highly-educated, accomplished statesman also known for being clever and shrewd.

Krishna Menon's public image was also that of a very powerful politician and diplomat. Notably, he was also the target of Shiv Sena's hostile agenda, and symbolized everything that the party stood against: "an outsider, a south Indian and a communist sympathizer" (Lele, 1995, p. 1522). The immigrants Malayalis credited Krishna Menon for being the force behind the establishment of various research and development centres for the Defence such as the Armament Research and Development (ARD) centre in Pune. He represented their aspirations and 'superior' sense of what the community was.

The shaping of communal identities from desirable qualities and influential known figures enabled individuals to cope with the process of migration. Many of the respondents had noted that Malayali migrants held the reputation for being 'educated, sincere and hardworking'. The emphasis on uniqueness and 'superiority' of Malayali ethnic identities reflected the dominance of race as a social status. This communal narrative of Malayali migrants was an upper caste and middle class narrative that placed at a pedestal upper caste male members of the community such as B M Menon and V K Krishna Menon.

There were alternative interpretations of the Malayali migrant community outside this framework from the native population. Lele pointed out that the "noticeable presence of south Indians in clerical and lower management jobs" in the industrial and commercial sectors of Bombay and Pune was also attributed "to their command of the English language and to their willing subservience to authority" (Lele, 1995, p. 1520). Here, what the community interpreted as their sincerity towards work was also perceived by others outside the community "as a willing subservience to authority".

In the imaginations of the community, the belief in their abilities gave them a sense of confidence that became crucial in helping them find employment through influential networks and 'survive', as Remy observed, in the workplace. Therefore, certain set of values were crucial in shaping the community's ethnic identity in the region and in defining the social identities of female workers.

Construction of Ideal 'Pravasi' Malayali:

The imagination of the *pravasi* (migrant) Malayali influenced migrant women's socially situated identities. In this regard, what were the culturally sanctioned ideas of an 'authentic' pravasi or immigrant Malayali including women.

The notions of an authentic pravasi are situated in being culturally aware, modern (urban) Malayali, and not being 'pretentious'. There are general markers for a 'real' Malayali verses those who are superficial and pretentious. This is established through the performance of the *pravasi* Malayali. For instance, a real Malayali has a communal mindset, stays connected to their kin, and does not shy away from speaking Malayalam, all of which establish cultural competency.

The emphasis on knowing one's regional language among Malayali migrant communities outside Kerala through initiatives such as Malayalam Mission show that linguistic distinction is also "essentially cultural difference" (Bhagat, 2017, p. 35). Knowledge of native language means understanding one's regional history and the distinct location within the federal system of India that becomes "pronounced in the event of migration" (Bhagat, 2017, p. 35). Perhaps the very experiences of migration and acculturation result in the spread of these notions of an authentic Malayali and the need to establish cultural competency in the eyes of the other.

The cultural markers of the ideal Malayali migrant are seemingly generic. As observed earlier, in the sphere of work the respondents observed that Malayalis were 'educated, sincere and hardworking' compared to the native population. In the imagination of the migrant community being 'hardworking and sincere' were markers of all Malayali worker, irrespective of their gender or caste/class backgrounds. One of my respondents claimed that women were even more sincere with their work than men. Moreover, south Indians, especially those from Tamil Nadu and Kerala, were regarded as belonging to communities that were educated. Notwithstanding the fact that many of those who migrated from the southern states for central government jobs belonged to upper caste/class communities who were the main beneficiaries of higher education in Kerala and had relied on the strength of their kin networks.

Perhaps, the general notion that they possessed these qualities made them work accordingly and factored in during the period of hiring. It is in the nature of migration itself that makes people who have relocated to a new

place to 'prove' themselves as deserving of a position and social status. The migrants marked themselves ethnically as distinct and valuable by distinguishing themselves from others.

Such a reputation put the community at a favorable location in the job market. Recommendations and communal contacts greatly helped more recruits from the community to find jobs. Malayalis holding important positions in the senior levels in government and private organizations encouraged the recruitment of Malayalis including women into their organizations. Migrants dealt with discontent in their offices by invoking the imagination of the community and the narrative of Malayalis as 'educated, hardworking and sincere' and therefore deserving of the jobs they held.

Conclusion:

In the early decades following Independence the migration network of Malayalis tied to the Defence establishments in Pune were influential, comprising mainly of upper castes and middle classes from Kerala and Tamil Nadu regions. Women benefitted from this migration network, comprising kin and close relations, and friends, in finding paid employment.

The social identities enacted by migrant women were based on values espoused in the migrant community's narratives of the ideal *pravasi* (migrant). The ideal Malayali *pravasi* was evaluated based on community-centric mindset, maintenance of relationship with kin, and the use of Malayalam in conversations, all of which established cultural competency. Within this immigrant community, individuals also identified themselves as educated, hardworking and sincere, qualities which they noted as being crucial in deserving the job opportunities and positions that were made available to them through the influence of these networks. However, even though the migrants imagined themselves as "sincere" the same was interpreted differently as south Indians "subservience to authority" by the natives including Shiv Sena. The migrants across caste and class desired respectability in their professional spaces.

The early generation of migrants had imbued the practice of help which represented the ethos of that generation of migrants in the city. The concept of helping or 'saving' (*rakshapadutuka*) was crucial in strengthening this migration network. Stronger communal bonds existed among the early migrant community due to proximity in relations shared among smaller immigrant

groups. Shared experiences of relative poverty in Kerala and similar class backgrounds led to the concept of helping or saving others from the community, which further strengthened the social network in these decades. Within the concept of 'helping' or 'saving', migrants who made a foothold in the city and those in influential positions were "contact resources" (Lin, 1999) for potential migrants who were in search of employment opportunities in the city. In this regard the Controller of Defence Accounts, B M Menon, was a valued resource who espoused these ideals of the immigrant community in Pune by 'saving' as many Malayalis by giving them employment using his influence. During this period, the concept of 'saving' or helping played a crucial role in the way the community imagined itself in Pune. Such an imagination of the community also defined the social identities of female migrant workers. These earlier caste-based networks also enabled women from particularly upper caste and middle class families from certain regions in Kerala to migrate for labour in white-collar jobs in Pune.

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