SPIRITED WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES: A STUDY OF BANGLADESHI FEMALE TEMPORARY MIGRATION TO THE MIDDLE EAST

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation draws on the stories of 34 Bangladeshi women who went to seven Middle Eastern countries, including United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon and Jordan, as temporary workers during 1995-2010. I interrogate their interactions with migration brokers and employers and offer a complex understanding of their migration journey. My understanding adds to the structural aspect of their migration journey by highlighting the social context of rural Bangladesh from where these women migrate. I argue a nuanced view of these women's engagement with migration brokers from their social and familial circles and their conduct with their employers in Middle East requires a critical consideration of Bangladeshi rural realities. Understanding their behaviour in terms of their rural origins leads to feminist insights into power attentive to social context. By linking a macro-structural lens of power to a feminist meso lens of power in this dissertation, I comprehend their situation with brokers and employers in a nuanced manner and complicate dominant ways of understanding their migration journey. My approach bridges a feminist critical understanding of power relations and a macro-structural understanding of power relations between women and other institutional actors, including migration brokers and employers in women's migration journey. This study generates feminist knowledge by utilizing the methodological approach of Grounded Theory. From a feminist epistemological point of view, this knowledge is particularly important as it is generated by marginalized/ disenfranchised Bangladeshi women and uses their otherwise unappreciated perspectives as the basis of knowledge creation.

DEDICATION

To those in my family whose unconditional love, support and encouragement made this project possible: my parents, Shahanara Husain and A.B.M. Husain; my brothers, Rayhan Mehdi Husain and Dr. Muin Husain; my aunt Hasna Begum; my lifelong teacher and mentor, Professor Sanat Kumar Saha, Economics, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh; and my husband, Steve Johnson.

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Chapter One

Introducing the Research

1-Overview

My doctoral dissertation unravels the complexities and nuances of Bangladeshi female temporary workers' migration from Bangladesh to the Middle East, an ongoing process that began in the 1990s to meet an increasing demand for temporary labourers, primarily domestic workers but also garment/factory workers and cleaners (Blanchet, Razzaque, & Biswas, 2008; Siddiqui, 2001). Historically, although instances of labour migration of males from Bangladesh can be traced across 200 years of colonial subjection, first under the British (1757-1947) and then the Pakistani (1947-1971), women remained in the background as dependents, accompanied in any migratory process by spouses or other male guardians (Siddiqui, 2001). After Bangladesh gained its independence as a sovereign state, systematic out-migration of Bangladeshi males as temporary labourers to the Middle East began in earnest with the establishment of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) in 1976 under the Labour and Employment Ministry of the Government of Bangladesh. But it was not until the 1990s that Bangladeshi women became visible in this external migration scenario (Siddiqui, 2001). Their visibility can largely be attributed to the "feminization of migration" that began in certain oil-rich countries in the Middle East (Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates) in the mid-1980s; in the 1990s, this spread into the new industrial economies of East and Southeast Asia (Castles & Miller, 2009). At this point, the state of Bangladesh stepped in to take advantage of feminization of migration in a bid to generate necessary foreign exchange for sustaining the economy (Oishi, 2005). Over time, private actors and agents became significant players in

women's migration under the administrative and regulatory governance of the Bangladeshi state (Siddiqui, 2001). However, given the lack of systematic information, comprehensive data and scholarly research, Bangladeshi women's temporary out-migration to date remains largely unknown.

Against this backdrop, my study draws on the stories of 34 Bangladeshi women who went to seven countries in the Middle Eastern region, including United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon and Jordan, as temporary workers during 1995-2010. Twenty eight were domestic workers, three were cleaners and three were garment workers. I interrogated their engagement with migration brokers,[1] certain individuals from the women's familial and social circles who facilitated their recruitment and relocation. I also problematized women's responses to and negotiation with their employers in the destination country.

I demonstrate in this dissertation that the women's social context in Bangladesh offers a critical venue for analyzing their institutional mobility. As women and migration brokers interact during recruitment and relocation, Bangladeshi rural societal realities inform their interaction. As well, my data tell me about Bangladeshi women's negotiations with their Middle Eastern employers in the context of pre-existing institutional power inequality; they also say much about Bangladeshi rural social realities and the power relations within them.

In sum, this dissertation sheds light on Bangladeshi rural social contexts and power relations and hierarchy as it seeks to understand Bangladeshi women's engagement with migration brokers and dealings with employers in the Middle East. It generates valuable feminist knowledge about some returned Bangladeshi female temporary workers, specifically the local

[1] By migration brokers I meant informal migration intermediaries - individuals who operate as sub-agents of a recruiting agency or as independent agents who, in contrast to official/established migration agents (for example, a recruiting agency), operate without holding a license permit from the state of Bangladesh.

context informing their migration journey. I argue that there are ways to comprehend power other than under the structural or macro framework of migration, a framework commonly used in contemporary Asian scholarly literature on the broker mediated recruitment process of temporary workers. I will show in Chapter Three that this literature points to the structural framework of migration and power relationships between prospective migrants and migration agents or between different migration agents on a macro level. This literature leaves room to unpack power relations on a meso or social level.

There is a rich body of feminist scholarly work on migrant domestic workers' negotiations with their employers in various geographic locations (e.g., Constable, 2007; Gamburd, 2000; Moukarbel, 2009; Parreñas, 1998, 2001; Rahman, 2005). While unraveling migrant domestics' negotiations with their employers, this literature tends to focus on power asymmetry between the two parties in the macro-structural landscape of migration. In my view, alternative contexts of power relationships involving migrant domestics' home societies could explain their negotiation with employers in the destination. As temporary migrant domestic workers are not eligible to settle in their destination countries and must return to their home countries after completing their contracts, it is possible that they remain embedded in the power relations of the social context of their homes while in the destination country. But do power relations of the home context make sense in understanding their negotiations and dealings with employers? I argue that they do.

This study is important from the perspective of feminist knowledge. First, I will look critically at the situation of some Bangladeshi women involving migration brokers and their Middle Eastern employers. By using empirical data, I will avoid making generalized assumptions

about these women and their situation with migration brokers and employers. Feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) critiques generalized views about women in the Global South; some feminist scholars, she says, fail to provide context specific understandings of these women and their situations. By context specific understanding Mohanty means a nuanced understanding of the lives of women in the Global South. Accordingly, my analysis moves beyond a simplistic understanding of Bangladeshi women and their situation with migration brokers and their employers as a dichotomous and simplistic victim / agency debate. It acknowledges Bangladeshi women's situations and struggles during their migration journey in a more nuanced manner; that is, it goes beyond structural aspects of their migration journey by highlighting the social context of Bangladesh.

Second, the study generates feminist knowledge by utilizing the methodological approach of Grounded Theory (GT). By focusing on a number of Bangladeshi women's lived experiences of migration, I will show how brokers and employers are inextricably involved in two important phases of the migration journey. From a feminist epistemological point of view, this knowledge is particularly important: it is generated by marginalized/ disenfranchised women and uses their otherwise unappreciated perspectives as the basis of knowledge creation.

I conducted this research through semi-structured (open-ended) interviews of returned Bangladeshi women from the Middle East (see Appendix F). I interviewed them in Bangladesh during October 2010-April 2011. I also collected information on Bangladeshi female migration in secondary materials and held one-on-one conversations with selected Bangladeshi state officials, recruiting agency proprietors, migration brokers (sub-agents from recruiting agency), migrant rights activists, and several focus groups with villagers and returned women migrants in

a source area of Bangladeshi female migration. In addition, I conducted one pilot focus group discussion with three domestic workers who experienced trafficking in the destination country. My analysis follows the individual stories told to me by women in the interviews. Depending on their relevance to the women's stories, I used the information generated from all other conversations and focus group discussions to complement the analysis.

Feminist scholars have often enacted multi-site fieldwork in the context of transnational migration research (e.g., Parreñas, 1998, 2001; Wong, 2003; Zontini, 2010). In contrast, although this work considers the transnational migration of temporary workers, it involves single-site fieldwork in Bangladesh. I was unable to carry out multi-site fieldwork due to the huge time and financial costs that would be incurred if I were to travel across Bangladesh and the Middle East for fieldwork and data collection. Therefore, I conducted my fieldwork in Bangladesh. The methodological approach of Grounded Theory (GT), which I will explain in detail in Chapter Three, underpins my research. Grounded Theory does not require a meta theory to inform the research enquiry (Clarke, 2012). Under this widely used qualitative research approach, analysis and insights are drawn from the empirical data the researcher generates, primarily by interviewing informants (Clarke, 2012; Creswell, 2013). In Chapter Two, I will explicate my rationale for choosing Grounded Theory for this research

As noted above, I interviewed 34 returned migrant Bangladeshi women, asking about their experiences with migration brokers and Middle Eastern employers. In one sense, the women's experiences could be construed as instances of transnational encounter and exchange because they were either about to move or already had moved from one national context to another. Nevertheless, my data suggest the women did not frame their experiences in strictly

transnational terms. Throughout their engagement with brokers and employers, they preferred to think and act in their context of origin, reinforcing normative relations and values of a Bangladeshi rural society. For this reason, I did not overlay my findings with a meta-framework of transnational theory.

Having provided a snapshot of my thesis, I devote the remaining of this chapter, first, to provide a brief background and explain the context of my research. Second, I shed light on some important feminist approaches to power informing women's situations in different contexts around the globe. I particularly note feminist scholars Mohanty (2003), Abu-Lughod (1986) and Suad Joseph (1993) and their discussions of women from the Global South. I explain how their perspectives have inspired my thesis. Finally, I explain the structure and organization of my dissertation.

2-Setting the Research Background

The recruitment roles of migration brokers from Bangladeshi temporary migrants' social and community networks have been noted elsewhere. A report published by Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) says between 1976 and 2008, 62 per cent of those who migrated to the Gulf States as temporary workers, both men and women, used services offered by members of their social networks and personal connections to facilitate their migration (as cited in Rahman, 2012, p. 222). There is also ample coverage in the press. For example, in recent years, Bangladeshi newspapers have highlighted brokers as important migration mediators, variously describing them as users or abusers of the institutional process of migration in their use of migration for financial gain. Widely circulated national newspapers, *The*

Daily Prothom Alo (January 18, 2010; January 25, 2010), *The Daily Ittefaq* (April 29, 2009), *Bangladesh Protidin* (December 25, 2010), have featured migration brokers as frauds cheating their clients (both women and men).

Similarly, negative views of Bangladeshi domestic workers' situations with their employers in the Middle East have appeared in numerous Bangladeshi national newspapers. Reports published in *The Daily Ittefaq* (April 29, 2009; January 29, 2010), *The Daily Star* (June 23, 2009), *The Daily Prothom Alo* (December 23, 2009; February 2, 2010), *The Daily Inqilab* (January 8, 2010), *The Daily Jugantor* (March 21, 2010), describe horror scenarios in the Middle East, with Bangladeshi domestic workers tortured and kept in "bondage" by their employers.[2]

Yet these newspapers render a simplistic view of Bangladeshi women's situation. Their reports represent brokers and Middle Eastern employers as the oppressors of those Bangladeshi women who come into contact with them. From a critical perspective, this requires a more detailed interrogation. Yes, they may be vulnerable, but how do women respond to their employers? What motivates them to act in a certain way? By addressing these questions, we can gain a much more comprehensive perspective on Bangladeshi women's negotiations with their employers in the Middle East and how these negotiations inform power in addition to the institutionally defined power relationship of domestic workers and their employers.

This research is timely in another way. Feminist sociologist Shelly Feldman (2001) has noted that before the 1980s, Bangladeshi rural women were generally invisible as workers in the formal sector, with their labour concentrated in home-based, subsistence agriculture. With the continuing mechanization of the agricultural sector, rural women's subsistence labour lost its

[2] These are only a few examples; many reports have been circulated by these and other newspapers about Bangladeshi domestics' appalling situation with their Middle Eastern employers.

practical utility. New opportunities of formal employment for women appeared in the 1980s with the emergence and rapid expansion of the garment industry and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations). Although the ideological and political climate of the country was not favourable to women's formal sector employment participation, poor and lower middle-class women from rural/sub-urban areas of the country worked in the garment industry out of economic necessity. In so doing, they became a pioneering group, negotiating the normative gender boundary for the first time since Bangladeshi independence in 1971.[3]

Another significant negotiation of poor Bangladeshi women with their gender roles began as they started to migrate outside the country beginning in the early 1990s. There is considerable academic work on Bangladeshi women in the garment industry but a surprising lack of scholarly interest in female migration.[4] There are, of course, some exceptions. Based on statistics and a number of surveys, Siddiqui's (2000) book, *Transcending Boundaries*, is the first systematic attempt to portray the short-term contract labour migration of Bangladeshi women to some countries in Southeast Asia (Malaysia and Singapore) and the Middle East (Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman and United Arab Emirates) during the 1990s. Afsar (2005) sheds light on the strict conditionality imposed by the state of Bangladesh on the movement of Bangladeshi domestic workers to the Middle East. Dannecker (2005) argues that upon their return to Bangladesh from Malaysia, female factory workers generally serve as an important agent of social transformation by negotiating Bangladeshi patriarchal gender relations in their everyday

[3] This normative boundary restricted Bangladeshi women's space to the household. As Shelly Feldman (2001) notes, before the 1980s when agriculture was the principal driving force of Bangladeshi economy, women were expected to work inside the household sphere. Traditional values on women's proper spaces have continued, though to a lesser extent, in later years.

[4] Among the many reports on women in the garment sector in Bangladesh, some are particularly worth mentioning (see Dannecker, 2002; Kabeer, 2000; Siddiqui, 1996).

lives. Using a multivariate regression model, Blanchet, Razzaque and Biswas (2008) provide a quantitative snapshot of Bangladeshi women`s temporary migration to India, the Middle East and Malaysia.

None of these important works has critically examined Bangladeshi women's experience with migration brokers in their migration organization stages or their dealings and negotiations with employers in the destination countries. No less important, as yet there exists no in-depth scholarly work on Bangladeshi women's migration to the Middle East which addresses Bangladeshi women's situation with employers and migration brokers from their social circles within a single critical frame of analysis. My research, thus, makes a significant contribution to feminist scholarly understanding of Bangladeshi women's temporary migration. Following the stories of a number of Bangladeshi returned women migrants, I interrogate their interactions with migration brokers and employers in the Middle East and offer a complex understanding of their migration journey.

This thesis examines some Bangladeshi female temporary workers' situations and experiences of migration with migration brokers and their Middle Eastern employers. As power is an important component of this understanding, it is essential for me to interrogate how power unravels in these women's experiences. Therefore, in the section that follows I focus my attention on certain contemporary feminist scholarly approaches to power; feminist scholars employ these approaches as they seek to understand women's situations and struggles across the globe. I use the discussion to introduce the feminist analytical lens through which I have viewed Bangladeshi women's stories in this dissertation.

3-Women's Situation and Struggle: Feminist Understandings of Power

Three approaches of power have been particularly influential in feminist theorizations of power in "contemporary Western societies" (Allen, 1999, p.2). The first recognizes power as a resource and was initiated by the famous political philosopher John Stuart Mill in his ground breaking essay *The Subjection of Women*[5]. Mill envisaged power as political power and considered that every individual, including men and women, should have equal access to this crucial resource (Allen, 1999, p.8). Some liberal feminists have adopted Mill's perspective; for example, in *Gender, and the Family* (1989), Susan Moller Okin expands Mill's understanding of power in the public sphere by pointing out that the problem associated with the gendered division of labour needs to be addressed in both public and private spheres of individuals' lives (Allen, p. 8, 1999). Her main emphasis, however, is on the unequal power relationship in the gendered division of household labour. As Allen puts it:

> The unequal distribution of power and other resources within the family is the result of a variety of institutional and structural social factors, but the linchpin of all these is the gender division of paid and unpaid labor and the corresponding cultural system of valuation that deems paid "productive" labor valuable and unpaid "reproductive" labor valueless. (1999, p. 9)

Okin suggests power needs to be redistributed between women and men equally in "an equal sharing of paid and unpaid labor" until "women have power in amounts roughly equal to men" (as cited in Allen, 1999, p. 10).

Feminist scholars Iris Marion Young (1990), Anna Yeatman (1997) and Amy Allen (1999) have been particularly critical of Okin`s understanding of power. For example, Young (1990) asserts Okin (1989) was wrong, as she failed to see that "power is a relation rather than a thing" (p.31). In Young`s view "[a] distributive understanding of power obscures the fact that, as

[5]This essay was first published in 1897.

Foucault puts it, power exists only in action" (1990, p.32). Allen (1999) raises an important question about Okin`s theorization of power: "If power is conceived of in this way, the following problem arises: Given that those who are subordinated don't currently have power, then how are they to wield the power that is needed to change social relationships such that they will be granted equal access to this critical resource?" (Allen, 1999, p.10). Allen (1999) and Yeatman (1997) agree that an implicit message is conveyed in Okin`s view of power: it victimizes women by "inscrib[ing] them discursively as subjects who depend on the protective power of the state" (Yeatman, 1997, p. 144).

The second influential feminist view of power noted by Allen (1999) informs radical feminists' perceptions. These theorists see power in the unequal relations between women and men under patriarchy (see Dworkin, 1987; MacKinnon, 1989; Pateman, 1988). For example, radical feminist Catherine MacKinnon (1989) views power exclusively as the domination of females by males; "domination and gender are completely interrelated, such that relations of domination are implicated in the very formation of gender difference itself" (as cited in Allen, 1999, p.12). Like MacKinnon, Pateman and Dworkin maintain that under patriarchy, all men, irrespective of their social locations, possess power over women; that is, "male domination is pervasive" (as cited in Allen, 1999, p.13). This is true because of "the form of political right that all men exercise by virtue of being men" (Patemen, 1988, p. 20).[6] This view of men's universal wielding of power to oppress women is underlined by Elizabeth Spelman (1988) who notes the racism, classism, heterosexism etc. to which women are also subjected (see Allen, 1999, p. 16).

[6] Radical feminists are aware that not every male is able to exert power equally "over white women" (Allen, 1999, p. 13).

Katie Roiphe (1993) and Naomi Wolf (1993) suggest radical feminists' perception of power is one-sided; it fails to theorize power in understanding women`s resistance and bolsters "victim feminism" (as cited in Allen, 1999, p.6). No less important, radical feminists' perception of power considers women as a category to be completely "innocent," overlooking the reality that because of their racial, ethnic, and class privileges, some women wield power over others lacking these privileges (Allen, 1999, p. 25).

A number of feminists, including Carol Gilligan (1982), Sara Ruddick (1989), Virginia Held (1993), Jean Baker Miller (1986), Helene Cixous (1977), and Luce Irigaray (1985), as Amy Allen (1999) points out, have addressed the above problems by advocating an alternative model of power. Commonly known as " Power as Empowerment" this third influential model does not equate power exclusively with female domination by males as some radical feminists would have it; neither does it uphold liberal feminists' views of power by equating power with a resource over which women and men should have equal access (Allen, 1999, p. 18). Instead, it considers women's feminine ability as central to their knowledge of power (ibid, p. 18). Proponents of this notion of power maintain "power is the ability to transform and empower others by nurturing and caring for them in such a way that they are ultimately able to be powerful themselves" (ibid, p.21). For example, Virginia Held says "the capacity to give birth and to nurture and empower could be the basis for new and more humanly promising conceptions than the ones that now prevail of power, empowerment, and growth" (Held, 1993, p. 137). Held, thus, advocates a reconceptualization of the "masculinist" power which centres on male authority and domination; such reconceptualization, according to her, can be accomplished by drawing on women's empowering experiences of mothering (Allen, 1999, p. 20). Despite its significance,

empowerment theorists' perception of empowerment seems to remain embedded in male power and domination: "The conception of power as empowerment is derived from an account of 'feminine' practices and traits that, at least in large part, have been constituted as feminine by misogynist culture" (Allen, 1999, p.23).

Feminist scholar Amy Allen (1999) argues a full-fledged feminist theory of power must take into account both domination and resistance in its analytical framing:

> [I]nsofar as feminists are interested in studying power, it is because we have an interest in understanding, criticizing, challenging, subverting, and ultimately overturning the multiple axes of stratification affecting women in contemporary Western societies, including (but not limited to) sexism, racism, heterosexism, and class oppression. (1999, p. 2)

In her view, the three dominant feminist models of power (discussed above) are inadequate feminist conceptualizations of power as none of these models has adequately brought both domination and resistance into its analytical framing of power.

By refusing to see power as "essentially negative" and emphasizing that it must be viewed in an "expansive way," Michel Foucault offers important insights into the development of the feminist theorizing of power (see Allen, 1999, p. 31). Certain well-known contemporary feminist theorists, including Nancy Fraser (1989), Sandra Bartky (1990), Lois McNay (1992), Susan Bordo (1993), build on a Foucaultian frame. For example, Bartky (1990) and Bordo (1993) use Foucault's notion of *disciplinary power* to understand its impacts on female bodies. I will come back to Foucaultian disciplinary power in Chapter Six.

Feminists note certain limitations of Foucault`s conceptual insights into power. One incisive critique of Foucault comes from Nancy Hartstock (1990, 1996). Foucault, she says, views power only from "the perspective of one who is able to exercise power," thereby

neglecting “the perspective of one who is subjugated” (as cited in Allen, p. 37, 199). She sees Foucault’s theory of power as one-sided and “inadequate and even irrelevant to the needs of the colonized or the dominated” (ibid p. 166). For her part, Allen (1999) points out that while Foucault emphasizes the integrality/inseparability of power and resistance, he does not theorize how resistance becomes operative in realms of power (1999, p. 54). She goes on to claim that Foucault’s account of power is unable to address some pressing feminist concerns: “agency,” “resistance” and “solidarity” (ibid, p. 3). Feminist scholar Judith Butler (1993) is acclaimed for resolving the anomaly of agency in Foucaultian power theory by means of “integrating the Derridean notion of citationality or iterability into the Foucaultian account of subjection” (Allen, 1999, p. 120), but she is critiqued by feminist scholars for her exclusive focus on discursive understanding of power (Allen, 1999). An important feminist conception of power developing around the idea of collective power and solidarity appears in work by Hannah Arendt (1968), but in Allen’s view, this formulation falls short in terms of theorizing domination in realms of power (Allen, 1999, p. 120).

Allen provides a particularly interesting insight into feminist conceptions of power when she says, “One’s understanding of power as a function of the interests one brings to the study of power seems particularly true for feminist theorizing about power” (1999, p.1). After all, women’s situation is not the same everywhere, given the diverse socio-cultural and political situations across the globe. This may well create differences in feminist interests when it comes to the issue of understanding power relations involving women in any particular context. In short, there is no “universal” feminist notion of power (ibid, p. 5).

Other important insights are found in feminist writing on societies in the Global South. For example, Chandra Mohanty (2003), Suad Joseph (1993), Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) emphasize the need to relate women's situations in the Global South to the realities of their lives. Prominent post-colonial feminist scholar Mohanty notes the importance of understanding meanings and implications of context-specific struggles in women's lives (2003). She refuses any universalistic / homogeneous view of women from the Global South that does not closely examine the particular social, economic, cultural and ideological environments.[7] If women's lives are perceived as the same across the Global South, Mohanty argues, this will create a linear and acritical image of power relations, including the idea that power impacts all women equally, irrespective of differences in class, race, age, geographic situation etc. Thus, a nuanced view of power relations informing the reality of women's lives in any particular context of the Global South will be precluded.

Mohanty points to the analytical strategies adopted in some feminist writing on women in the Global South[8] and condemns these texts for not acknowledging the many different historical, social, economic and ideological environments. She says such work uncritically identifies women across the Global South "as a homogeneous group" who, regardless of the differences in their "class, ethnic, or racial location" and socio-cultural and historical situation, experience male oppression in the same way: "[I]n these texts women are defined as victims of male violence …;

[7] Mohanty says she uses Third World or South and First World or North, borrowing from Zillah Eisenstein`s book *Global Obscenities: Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Lure of Cyberfantasy* (1998). She does not mean to homogenize these terms; instead she demands that critical researchers provide specific country/ region specific understanding of women's situations in the South (2003, p.19). Inspired by Mohanty, I use Global South as a substitute term for Third World.

[8] These analytic principles do not codify feminist scholarship in a dichotomous manner, that is, as either non-Western or Western. Mohanty comments, "[E]ven though I am dealing with feminist who identify themselves as culturally or geographically from the West, what I say about these presuppositions or implicit principles holds for anyone who uses these methods, whether Third World women in the West or Third World women writing on these issues and publishing in the West" (2003, p. 21).

as universal dependents …; victims of the Islamic code …; and, finally, victims of the economic development process" (2003, p.23). The linear view of power conveyed by these texts renders power only as male domination (read: institutionalized female domination by males and which all women in the Global South experience in the same way) and overlooks alternative forms and modalities of power relations that could offer insight into women's situation in their particular context. When women and their situation are uncritically placed within a monolithic, surface-level perception of power, Mohanty says, this obstructs multiple perspectives in feminist knowledge production. It fails to address the heterogeneity of women's struggles across Global South and between the Global North and Global South.

While Mohanty (2003) urges feminist scholars to resist simplistic and generalized scholarship about women's lives in the Global South, feminist anthropologist Suad Joseph (1993) brings an insightful understanding to bear on patriarchal families in a "urban working-class neighbourhood" in Beirut, Lebanon (1993, p. 452). In her ethnographic observations of the neighbourhood, Joseph finds women and men remain embedded in a strong patriarchal family bonding along hierarchies of gender and age: as they interact or engage with each other, they do not appear as "autonomous" or "bounded" individuals but as significantly related ones. Suad Joseph's understanding is rooted in certain important theoretical perspectives of relationality developed by Minuchin, Rosman and Baker (1978), Minuchin and Fishman (1981), Roland (1988) and Gergen (1990). These theorists argue relationships between individuals should be considered the pivotal marker of their social existence. As individuals interact, they construct a "relational nucleus," a "self-sustaining system of coordinated actions in which two or more persons are engaged" (Gergen, 1990, p. 584). Further, "[w]hen any two of us come

together, it is essentially the meeting point for the multiple systems of relatedness in which each of us is embedded" (Gergen, 1990, p. 585). Perceiving individuals through their relationships invokes "a relational conception of knowledge, social understanding, emotions, and selves" (Joseph, 1993, p. 458)

Building on these theorists, Suad Joseph (1993) produces her own understanding of individuals' relational existence within their families - something she finds across the Arab families she studies in Lebanon. In order to survive and to thrive, individuals from the neighbourhood retain allegiance to norms that define hierarchies in family relationships. Thus, irrespective of their affiliation with either a Shia or Sunni community, they display relational-selves instead of "autonomous"/unbounded-selves within their family relationships and along hierarchical gender and age-based power relationships. Such a scenario stands in sharp contrast to predominantly "market-based societies that are organized around contractual relations and that require individuation, autonomy, and separateness to produce mobile persons" (Joseph, 1993, p. 456). Joseph's observation is important to understanding power relations in family relationships; women and men in " family and community-oriented social systems" (ibid, p. 458) can reaffirm and reproduce a family power hierarchy to ensure their survival by remaining extremely close to family members and being mutually responsible for meeting each other's needs.

While conducting an ethnographic study on women in The Awlad 'Ali Bedouin community on the northwest coast of Egypt, Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) uses a particular notion, *hasham*, to explain Bedouin women's everyday behaviour with respect to the "code of modesty" (1986, p. 108). Such behaviour includes practices of "veiling," wearing modest outfits and notions of femininity informed by body language. Bedouin women in her research site, Abu-

Lughod maintains, voluntarily protect and embrace a subordinate feminine status prescribed by the hierarchical gender and age-based social order of Bedouin society. In a Bedouin societal system, right accrues to individuals only when they remain committed to Bedouin social norms of morality along gender and age-based hierarchies. Those who stay in the lower part of such hierarchical systems (for example, women and children) are taught to accept the hierarchy voluntarily. They understand they can still "achieve respect and honor" in this hierarchical system if they choose to comply with the "modesty code" of the community (Abu-Lughod, 1986, p.79). Accordingly, a Bedouin woman is expected to voluntarily accept her gender and age - based subordination and conform to rules of the societal hierarchy along these social axes of differentiation. In this case, she pays a mandatory price for her community membership: her autonomy as an independent individual. This is particularly interesting; it shows notions of individual "autonomy" and "independence" are irrelevant within such contexts of society or community based relationships. Individuals shape or are shaped by each other according to the hierarchical social order guiding their lives. For survival reasons, they are obligated to keep the hierarchy intact. It is, thus, important for them to conform to the power structure in their normative social situation.

Mohanty, Suad Joseph and Abu-Lughod's insights of power, as elucidated above, significantly shaped my understanding of power as I analyzed my data on Bangladeshi women's communications with migration brokers and their negotiations and dealings with employers in the Middle East. Mohanty suggests the situation of women in the Global South must be seen within power relations in the context of their lives in the Global South. Suad Joseph emphasizes specific patriarchal family and community-bound social arrangements and notes how such

arrangements might inform power relations in the lives of those women. And according to Abu-Lughod while the unequal and gendered power relations with men in some social contexts of the Global South significantly informs women's lives, why women choose to conform to such power relations should be a matter of feminist attention.

Inspired by Mohanty, Suad Joseph and Abu-Lughod, this dissertation yields new insight into feminist approaches to power. It is sensitive to the social context of marginalized women living in Bangladesh. It advocates for a critical interrogation of social context to comprehend women`s migration journeys.

4-Organization of the Chapters

Chapter One constitutes an introduction to the dissertation. In Chapter Two, I explain the methodological approach of Grounded Theory which informs this research. I address the notions of reflexivity, positionality, voice and representation and note their integrality to my feminist research approach. I explain the process of data generation following my fieldwork, highlighting specific characteristics of the sample and explaining the data analysis. Then, I reflect on my fieldwork, noting both insights and challenges. I talk about negotiating the various feminist dilemmas I encountered during my fieldwork before I conclude the chapter.

Chapter Three, the literature review, is divided into two major sections. In the first section, I focus on contemporary Asian literature on transnational migration of temporary workers involving migration brokers. I consider the notion of power, in particular, how power has been considered in the context of temporary workers' recruitment and relocation via brokers. In the second section, I examine important feminist scholarly works on migrant domestic

workers; in particular, I interrogate power relations in the context of migrant domestics' responses to and negotiations with their employers in the destination country.

Chapter Four focuses on the contextual background of Bangladeshi women`s migration to the Middle East. I provide a brief overview of the history of international migration from Bangladesh. I discuss important state and non-state organizations and agents and their involvement with temporary workers' (men and women) out-migration. Then, I situate the story of Bangladeshi women`s migration within the ideological and policy realities of Bangladesh involving female migration.

In Chapters Five and Six respectively, I turn to my analysis of the women's stories. First, in Chapter Five, I interrogate women's communication and engagement with migration brokers from their social and community circles within the Bangladeshi structural and institutional landscape of outward- migration. Next, in Chapter Six, I address the women's conduct with their employers within the structural and institutional realities informing migrant temporary workers' situation in the Middle East.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, while I continue to examine the women's stories analyzed in Chapters Five and six, I synthesize the two analyses and make a number of inferences; my main argumentation for the dissertation stems from these inferences.

In Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter, I highlight the key findings and discuss their significance in terms of feminist knowledge. I stress the contribution the dissertation makes to migration literature and suggest some potential venues for future research.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Fieldwork

1-Introduction

In this chapter I deal with methodological issues pertinent to my dissertation. In section two, I explain my feminist research approach which is informed by Grounded Theory and offer my reasons for choosing Grounded Theory. Then I elucidate three crucial dimensions of a non-hierarchical feminist research praxis − reflexivity, positionality, voice and representation − as these relate to my research. In section two, I explain the data generation and the procedure underpinning the data analysis. Section three is a self-reflective section on my experiences and challenges during fieldwork and my negotiation with them. Finally, in the conclusion, I highlight key points and note my learning experiences in the use of feminist methodology.

2-Feminist Methodology and Grounded Theory (GT)

Methodology in social research includes the principles and procedures of investigating social reality, what Sandra Harding defines as "a theory and analysis of how research should proceed" (Harding, 1987, p. 2). What makes a methodology distinctively feminist is "its deliberate focus on gender combined with an emphasis on emancipatory goals" (Kirsch, 1999, p.7). Like any other approach to social research, feminist methodology is inextricably linked with epistemology. An epistemology deals with the construction of knowledge: what is a valid knowledge and how such knowledge can be obtained (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). As feminists diverge along intellectual and political lines, there are numerous feminist methodology approaches with different epistemological underpinnings (Wolf, 1996). Feminists generally

argue for the adoption of a non-positivist epistemological stance in their research; however, they do not necessarily agree about its relative importance in relation to other epistemological concerns. For example, certain women of colour feminists (see Mohanty, 1991; Narayn, 1989) have vigorously critiqued those feminists with a tendency to homogenize every feminist project under a common epistemological foundation of non-positivism thereby denying alternative feminist voices (Wolf, 1996). Their criticisms, Wolf says, "encourage a conceptualization of feminist epistemology as a heterogeneous enterprise with multiple strands" (1996, p. 5). But as Narayan notes, "Its practitioners differ both philosophically and politically in a number of significant ways" (1989, p. 257).

The feminist methodology approach informing my research is Grounded Theory (GT). Grounded Theory (GT) is an empirical approach to quest knowledge about peoples' lives (Clarke, 2012). As Clarke says, "The very term *grounded theory* means data-grounded theorizing" (Clarke, 2012, p. 390). Atkinson, Coffee and Delamount define GT somewhat differently: "Grounded theory is not a description of a kind of a theory. Rather it represents a general way of generating theory (or, even more generically, a way of having ideas on the basis of empirical research)" (2003, p. 150). However defined, the basic premise is that a theory can be developed by going "back and forth" over the nuances and particularities attaching "empirical data" and finding a way to think about them conceptually (Clarke, 2012, p. 390).

Two approaches to GT have drawn much scholarly attention, one developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and the other by well-known feminist academic Kathy Charmaz (1990, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2006). Strauss and Corbin's approach provides a structured a way of doing GT; the researcher generates "a theory that explains process, action, or interaction on a topic"

(Creswell, 2006, p. 64). Feminists have critiqued this approach, however. In the view of Kathy Charmaz (2006), Strauss and Corbin's approach follows a "positivist tradition" in the sense that it considers data as "true" facts; it gives minimal attention to the social context of research (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). It pays insufficient attention to the data generation process; for example, it ignores the researcher and the informants' combined involvement in the data generation process and, therefore, implicitly challenges feminist praxis of collaborative research. It valorizes only the researchers' expertise in knowledge construction and considers such knowledge to be objective or unbiased. Charmaz also says that instead of encouraging researchers to create their own pathways to research, this approach pushes them to work within a predefined framework of research and, thus, invites reproduction of existing status quos inherent in the framework. In short, Strauss and Corbin's approach deviates from feminists' understanding of a research procedure as a critical and creative endeavour.

The constructivist approach to GT developed by Kathy Charmaz (1990, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2006) emphasizes the elucidation of the phenomenon under study. Based on her/ his stance to the research process, the researcher seeks to build collaborative knowledge "from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). This approach acknowledges theory as a matter of interpretation depending on the world-view of the researcher; there is no one way of doing theory (Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2000, 2002, 2006). Thus, Charmaz's approach advocates for utilization of epistemological diversity in the construction of knowledge. Constructivist Grounded Theorists emphasize understanding behaviour; they unravel how people act and seek the reasoning behind their conduct within the context of their existence (Charmaz, 2006).

Some aspects of a constructivist approach to GT inform feminist (or any other critical approach to social science) research and are worth mentioning. For example, an analysis employing a constructivist GT approach needs to be "contextually situated in time, place, culture and situation" (Charmaz, 2006, p.131). The phenomenon under study is lodged in the larger context of the real world; this, in turn, ensure the analysis is not "separate, fragmented, and atomistic" (ibid, p. 131). Proponents and practitioners of constructivist GT are aware of the inseparability of facts and values; they reject the idea of an objective, value-free research (ibid). They take a self-reflexive stance throughout the research process and consciously incorporate their informants' perspectives along with their own in data interpretation and analysis (ibid).

Importantly for the present research, this approach encourages multiple epistemological underpinnings as a basis of knowledge creation while remaining particularly attentive to disenfranchised people and their voices (Clarke, 2012). It is particularly problematic to construct knowledge about women in the Global South using a single epistemology (i.e. normative); this has been pointed out by post-colonial feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty (2003). In a close reading of some important feminist writings on women in the Global South, Mohanty observes these works stereotypically portray the women simply as passive recipients of the institutionalized system of patriarchy, which in their view exists homogeneously throughout the Global South. Such an uncritical portrayal of women, according to Mohanty, is based on these authors' pre-conceived understandings of women in the Global South as ubiquitous victims. They ignore the heterogeneous historical, ideological, social and economic contexts within which these women`s situations and struggles remain embedded. In other words, they give a

problematic account of women's situations in the Global South by remaining insensitive to diversified historical, ideological, social and economic contexts of their existence.

According to Mohanty (2003), the construction of knowledge in these works draws on a unique epistemology which supports a "western" gaze of feminism. A single perspective is problematic; a single normative epistemology should never govern the creation of knowledge. Therefore, Mohanty urges feminist scholars to reject a normative gaze or, in other words, to resist "epistemic violence" (Clarke, 2006, p.389) while producing knowledge about women in the Global South.

Feminist scholar Abu- Lughod (1993) responds to Mohanty's plea in her study of women in the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin community on the northwest coast of Egypt. Focusing on the Bedouin social structure within which her Bedouin women informants' lives are grounded, she looks for meanings of their lived experience. By paying attention to the women's tales and noting how they are embedded in a particular social context, Abu-Lughod makes a conscientious effort to make her informants heard on their own terms and as social actors in their own right. The knowledge produced by Abu-Lughod works against "epistemic violence" (Clarke, 2006, p. 389), for it is informed by her women informants' voices which otherwise would have remained unheard. Abu-Lughod acknowledges her informants − disenfranchised Bedouin women in the Global South – as producers of knowledge and as social actors in their own right. She contests a dichotomous understanding of an expert/non-expert divide in the construction of knowledge. Simultaneously, by acknowledging the resulting knowledge as situated, partial and context specific, Abu-Lughod resists a generalized representation of her research outcome.

The purpose of this research is to examine some Bangladeshi women's situations with migration- brokers and employers in a nuanced manner. I intend to suggest new ways of knowing about their lives beyond any generalized or common sense understanding. I want to construct a knowledge that transcends a normative epistemological gaze. Simultaneously, I want to build a knowledge built on a feminist epistemology valorizing marginalized/ disenfranchised women and their perspectives.

Feminists Chandra Mohanty and Abu-Lughod have particularly inspired me, and, I have opted for a feminist methodological approach to Constructivist GT given its ability to facilitate my goals. With insights gleaned from Mohanty (2003) and Abu-Lughod(1993) on researching women in the Global South and my chosen feminist methodology of GT, this research will systematically reveal my Bangladeshi female informants' otherwise unheard voices, providing a new critical understanding of their migration journey.

The issue of power is a crucial consideration (Clarke, 2006). Feminists commonly acknowledge power is integral to their research process. They are mindful that power makes a difference in terms of who is able to know what; put differently, not everyone has equal access to knowledge production and the benefit such knowledge entails (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). Feminists consistently strive to unravel and critique power dynamics in their research; they acknowledge and attempt to minimize the power difference between researcher and the researched, or they design research projects that will allow the researcher to apply her presumably "distinctive" power to the cause of social justice (Wolf, 1996). In either case, feminists are mindful that power relations matter and must be negotiated in the research context (Harding & Norberg, 2005).

Reflexivity, positionality, and voice (and representation) are three dimensions underlying the ethics and politics of developing a non-hierarchical feminist research praxis, including that of GT. These issues challenged me throughout my research.

2.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity unravels power in the process of research, holding researchers accountable to those with whom they conduct their research (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Kirsch, 1999; Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). A reflexive methodology, Nancy Naples (2003) argues, allows the researcher to "become aware of and diminish the ways in which domination and repression are reproduced in the course of research and in the products of their work" (pp. 37-38). And acknowledgement of "difference" between the researcher and research subjects is key in a critical self-reflexive research approach that seeks to "minimize power differentials in knowledge construction" (Hesse-Biber & Piateli, 200, p. 500). As many social researchers argue (see Anderson, 1998; Beoku-Betts, 1994; Collins, 1991, 2000; Dunbar, Rodriguez & Parker, 2000; Edwards, 1990; Riessman, 1987), excessive emphasis on commonalities rather than on differences, between the researcher and the participants, is inimical to collaborative knowledge construction, which is attuned to power relations. Differences between the researcher and the participants might result from differences in their economic status, cultural or ethnic background, level of education, sexual orientation or differences along other social axes of diversity.

Collins (1991, 2000) and Edwards (1990) recommend that researchers be mindful and reflect on their "situatedness in a complicated, shifting *matrix* of social locations and conversing openly with the research participants about the difference" (as cited in Hesse-Biber & Piatelli,

2007, p. 500). Such open conversation between researcher and participants, though intended, might not always be possible, however; especially, when they do not speak the same language or have very different class and cultural affiliations (Collins, 2000; Rhodes, 1994). In this scenario, the researcher faces the challenge of finding ways to initiate an open interaction. The researcher needs to negotiate her role within her unequal situatedness with informants to "improv[e] the quality of interactions and enrich… the research process" (Marx, 2000, p. 132)

Given our common cultural and ethnic backgrounds, to some extent I was able to share my female informants' "perspectives and values" (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 493). Nonetheless, I acknowledge our differences due to class, social status and education level. I tried to work out this difference by listening more and talking less (Hesse-Biber &Piatelli, 2007). Through a self-reflexive examination of my situation in relation to my informants, I attempted to deal with our differences and the ensuing power inequality.

I exercised self-reflexive practices as I generated my interview guide (Appendix F). At the outset of my fieldwork, I did an informal pilot group interview with five women, who had been to the Middle East as temporary workers. Two had been domestic workers, two were cleaners and one was a garment worker. As noted by Rahman (2011), these three categories constitute the dominant stream of Bangladeshi women temporary workers migrating to the Middle East. When I invited these five women to speak about anything they wanted to share, they unanimously spoke of migration arrangements and their experiences in the Middle East. Following what they told me, I generated my open-ended interview guide around these two themes. In so doing, I let women's voices guide my research direction. Such a decision was extremely important to me as my main intention was not to deviate from one of the most

important priorities of my research, letting women interpret their experiences of migration in their own terms. By adopting a self-reflexive stance, I believe, I held myself accountable to the women with whom I conducted my research. Adhering to important feminist insights on self-reflexivity, I tried to minimize the domination endemic in any research process, involving the power asymmetry between the researcher and those on whom the research is conducted.

De Vault asserts when subjects are unable to express themselves with words, it is crucial that researchers "develop methods for listening around and beyond words" (De Vault, 1990, p. 101). Dunbar, Rodriguez and Parker apply this to their interview experiences with people of colour across class. In their research, strategies like "observing facial expressions, vernacular voice intonations, nonverbal cues, and other forms of body language" worked well and enabled them to make sense of informants' unspoken embodiment (2000, p. 293). Sometimes, informants' expressions and body languages might be culture and class specific and, thus, indicative of particular backgrounds. In such scenarios, unless the researcher possesses knowledge of the informants' background, the self-reflexive practice to understand informants' unspoken embodiment might not capture the intricate meanings signified by their expressions. A researcher needs to be aware of the differences between her and her research participants and know how such differences impact data collection and interpretation.

Hesse-Biber and Piatelli contend differences due to cultural and language barriers should not necessarily "translate into a failure to study across difference" (2007, p. 501). They say researchers, irrespective of their differential backgrounds with informants, can still work out the power hierarchy accruing to such difference as long as they remain attuned to it, and self-reflexively examine and address their differences from the informants. Collins (2000) and

Rhodes (1994) add: "Working across difference depends not only on possessing common language and cultural knowledge, but also on establishing trust and engaging in dialogical relationships" (cited in Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2000, p. 500, 2007). I needed to acknowledge this as I engaged with Bangladeshi women.

While feminist researchers emphasize reflexivity to understand how researcher and participants' differences in social background and location might affect the power dynamics in the research process, the extent to which feminist researchers have successfully enacted a self-reflexive methodology in the actual context of their fieldwork is seldom clear. In real practice, a perfectly non-hierarchical and collaborative knowledge building is an unachievable goal. A feminist researcher cannot eradicate structural power differences that she shares with her informants. Nor she can sustain collaboration with her informants without their co-operation and support. Thus, too much emphasis on self-reflexivity could lead to navel-gazing or "soul searching" (Harding, 1987, p. 9) and close the door on fieldwork (Berik, 1996).

In short, it was important for me to remain self-reflexive and engage in a research practice that would meaningfully relate to the "actual" situation and struggles of the women in my study (see Berik, 1996; England, 1994; Katz, 1994; Nagar, 2006b).

2.2 Positionality

Feminist researchers need to situate or position themselves in their research contexts to explore their relationships with research participants in terms of the broader spectrum of social power involving gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality. "Situating" themselves in the context of their research allows them to strive for "interactive," "collaborative," non-

hierarchical relations with participants while producing "detailed," non-objective "empirical" data (Kirsch, 1999, p. 13). While realizing the importance of situating themselves in the context of the research, feminist researchers, like researchers who critique positivist epistemological approaches, acknowledge that their situated location provides only a partial understanding of the social reality (Hesse-Biber & Piatel, 2007; Kirsch, 1999; Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). They remain mindful that the researcher and the informants' perspectives should both inform the collaborative and non-hierarchical knowledge construction (see Hsiung, 1996; Joseph, 1996; Lal, 1996). Thus, Suad Joseph (1996) (an US academic originally from Lebanon) found her cultural roots as an "Arab" manifested in the fieldwork site (Lebanon). More specifically, she found herself in relational terms with her key informant (her fictive brother) in the patriarchal connective context informing her fieldwork (Joseph, 1996, p.118). Her key informant significantly influenced the research process, especially how she interpreted and made sense of the data generated through the fieldwork. Knowledge produced by the researcher (Joseph), therefore, was negotiated; it incorporated the perspectives of both the researcher and her informant.

While feminist theorists consider the perspectives of the researcher and the research participants simultaneously need to be taken into account when the purpose is to produce non-hierarchical and accountable knowledge, they also acknowledge that power does not remain uni-directional in this process. Both the researcher and the informants exercise power in the research process. Consequently, it is important that power relations between researchers and informants be understood from each significant social axis of differentiation, including class, gender,

education, sexuality and more. This understanding was significant in my fieldwork as I explain later in the chapter.

2.3 Voice and Representation

Feminist researchers have long debated the significance of their women informants' voices and how to account for them in their research and writing. Post-colonial scholar Mohanty (1991, 2003) refuses any universalistic/ homogeneous view of women from the Global South that is blind to the particular social, economic, cultural and ideological contexts within which these women live. She critiques some contemporary scholarly work for uncritically representing them as "singular," "monolithic," "homogeneous" subjects, e.g., that they are all illiterate, uneducated, helpless and powerless (Mohanty, 1991, p. 57). Subaltern studies scholar Gaytri Spivak (1988) questions the way researchers often appropriate "postcolonial subjects," in particular their voices in the process of representing them (as cited in Wolf, 1996, p. 33). To her, this is a manifestation of "historical and contemporary exploitative relations between colonizers and the colonized, reflecting more about the former than the latter" (as cited in Wolf, 1996, p. 33).

Given such critiques, some feminist scholars, notably anthropologists (see Abu-Lughod, 1993; Behar, 1993; Tsing, 1993), have made striking attempts to honour their informants' voices. They have developed their research exclusively around their female informants' lived stories, unguided by any particular research question and with the least possible editing of such stories (Wolf, 1996, p. 34). For example, Lila Abu- Lughod (1993) draws on her anthropological and feminist insights to unravel voices of women from a small Bedouin community in Egypt. Her

brilliant analyses use storytelling to rise above conventional research approaches in anthropology, which in her view, valorize only the researcher's stance and expertise in the production of knowledge about particular groups of people and their culture. She considers Bedouin women's perspectives and voices within the social context of their living, in a bid to produce knowledge about them on their own terms.

These conscientious attempts to transcend dilemmas of voice and representation do not change the essential power difference between researcher and the researched; the product of the research does not benefit both equally (Wolf, 1996). Behar acknowledges she was unable to perceive the product of her oral history research as a "co-production of knowledge" seeing it, rather, as a "translation" of power (as cited in Wolf, 1996, p. 34).

To a certain extent, I have grappled with some of the above concerns as I made a conscientious effort to bring out my research informants' voices. As a researcher with relative power, privilege and the potential ability to make a difference in the lives of my ancestral sisters (my informants and I share a Bengali ethnic and cultural identity), it was important for me to represent my female informants' interests in the best possible way, holding myself responsible for what I hear in their stories and the way I present it to readers. My ability to interact with my female informants (in fact, with all my informants) in fluent Bangla, a language more or less homogeneously spoken by all Bangladeshis, I believe, enabled me to do a good job. I was able to bridge political and academic feminisms and link them with the concrete practice of my research.

Nonetheless, I may have missed some important nuances after I translated our Bangla conversations into English based on my interpretation of their words. How could I translate their confidence and the striking forthrightness with which some of the women responded to my

queries, using specific Bangla words which have no direct meaning in English? I am not sure I was able to capture the spirit, nuances, and intricate meanings of the stories. The necessity for "translation and interpretation" and "meaning making" (Creese, Huang, Frisby, & Kambere, 2011, pp. 102-103) was a troubling concern for me.

My final presentation of women`s stories about their lived experience should not be taken "as unmediated and disinterested accounts of 'real' experience" (Steedly, 1993, p. 37). In deciding which particular aspects to select and in what form, I have utilized my own situated view, as a feminist academic and researcher. Nevertheless, I hope to have done justice to the women`s voices, representing them as accurately and honestly as possible.

3- Fieldwork and Data Collection

I used in-depth, semi-structured interviewing as the primary qualitative technique for data generation. I combined the data generated through interviews with returned Bangladeshi women migrant workers from the Middle East with information from informal talks and focus groups with some other informants (more details are given later in this section). I also used secondary sources: newspaper reports, reports of international organizations, brochure of NGOs, academic writings and official statistics on Bangladeshi migration.

I began my research journey in July 2009 when I went to Bangladesh for an informal pre-dissertation field trip. I stayed there during July-August of 2009 to explore the realities of female migration from Bangladesh to the Middle East. I knew I would require support from people working in the migration sector to enable my fieldwork, to get access to informants, and to collect secondary materials; therefore, it was important for me to build contacts and networks

before starting fieldwork. Given the dearth of systematic information and comprehensive statistical data and research on Bangladeshi female migration, I had to address my concerns before beginning the fieldwork.

Officially, I started my fieldwork when I returned to Bangladesh for the second time, during October 2010-April 2011. A number of individuals, thankfully, gave me consistent support, particularly in accessing female informants. Support came from the following: a migrants' rights activist, who was a returned male worker from Malaysia; a former coordinator from SHISUK (Shikkha Sastho Unnyoyan Karjocrom), a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Bangladesh, who had worked earlier with its migration related projects; and two instructors from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) supported mandatory training program for domestic workers. Given their extensive grass roots networking and contacts with many returned migrant workers, I was confident I could rely on them for the kind of support I needed during fieldwork. With the promise of a reasonable monetary compensation for his time, the migrants' rights activist also agreed to accompany me to different places and organizations, if needed, for interviews and data collection.

I decided not to seek direct help from any mainstream NGOs to access potential female interviewees for my research. Such a decision was extremely important, as my main intention was not to deviate from one of the most important priorities of my research, namely, to let women talk about their experiences of migration in their own terms and not be influenced by extraneous forces while speaking. Having been informed by the activist and the former coordinator of SHISUK (also an activist) that BMET administers two domestic workers' training centers in Dhaka (the Bangladesh-German Technical Training Centre and SFM Mohila

Technical Training), and told these places might be a good source for contacting informants, I went there on my own. In most cases, the women who attend this training, I was told by the former SHISUK coordinator, have already worked in the Middle East, either as a domestic worker or a garment worker or any other category of worker. Further, the deputy secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Employment told me the state has been executing a mandatory training program for Middle-East bound Bangladeshi domestic workers since 2008; this training is required for anyone interested in going to the Middle East each time, irrespective of whether she has been there previously as a domestic worker or any other category worker.

Eighteen women trainees gave their formal consent to participate in an interview. It took me six days to interview them individually in the centres and between their training sessions. They gave me the addresses of 16 additional women who had returned from the Middle East. After I contacted these women, they agreed to share their experiences.

In all, I conducted in-depth open-ended interviews with 34 returned women migrants from Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain and Oman. Twenty-eight were domestic workers, three were garment workers and the remaining three were cleaners. Over the same period, I held informal talks with three state officials, proprietors of two recruiting agencies, the BAIRA (Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies) secretary general, two brokers and two migrants' rights activists (a former coordinator of SHISUK and a returned migrant worker from Malaysia mentioned previously).

In addition, I conducted four group talks or focus groups. Three took place in Kanainagar village, a source area of female migration from Narayanganj district in the eastern part of Bangladesh. One group talk session involved three returned women migrants, one from

Lebanon and two from Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. These women worked there as domestic workers. Another group talk involved the same women, their family members and neighbours from the village. I conducted a third group talk inside a tea-stall adjacent to Kanainagar. The idea for the third one was to collect information on female migration from local people; I also wanted to know their views on migration in general. The fourth group talk involved three women who had been to Lebanon as domestic workers and experienced horrific abuse and trafficking in the destination before returning to Bangladesh. In total, I conducted 48 interviews, including in-depth interviews with 34 women, informal talks with 10 people affiliated with the migration sector and 4 group talks. Table 1 shows the types and numbers of interviews and informal talks.

Table 1: Types and numbers of interviews, conversations and focus groups

Open-ended interviews with women: 34

Conversations: **10**

- **3** State Officials (Deputy Secretary Immigration of the Government of Bangladesh, Technical Director of Bangladesh Manpower, Employment and Trainings (BMET), Managing Director of Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESEL))
- **2** Private Recruiting Agencies' Proprietors
- Secretary General of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA)
- **2** Brokers (one female and one male)
- **2** Activists (one returned migrant worker from Malaysia and a former program coordinator of an NGO)

Focus Groups: 4 (**3** were held in Kanainagar; **1** was held with three domestic workers who experienced severe abuse and trafficking in Lebanon)

At the outset of my fieldwork, I had discussions with my guide. Given his extensive experience with grassroots activism and networking in the migration sector, I used his advice to plan the various stages of my fieldwork over seven months (October 2010-April 2011). After consulting him, I decided to do a pilot focus group interview, involving several women who had already been to the Middle East as temporary workers. This pilot focus group was in addition to the four focus groups mentioned previously. My pilot focus group involved two domestic workers, one garment worker, and two cleaners. All had been to one or more Middle Eastern countries in the 1990s or 2000s (2000-2010).

Certain significant themes emerged from the pilot focus group discussions, and I noted these for the future interviews. For the most part, from October to December 2010, I was interviewing women and conducting focus groups while occasionally conversing with other informants including state officials, recruiting agency proprietors, brokers and migrant activists. All 34 interviews with individual women were completed by December 2010. It took me until February 2011 to complete the remaining focus groups and informal conversations. Except for three Kanainagar focus group talks, all took place in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh.

I used a semi-structured open-ended interview guide (see Appendix F). Interviews were approximately one to one and half hour long. Eighteen of the 34 individual interviews were conducted in either the Bangladesh-German Technical Training Centre or the SFM Mohila Technical Training Centre − two state run programs for domestic workers' training located in Dhaka. Of the remaining 16 interviews, six took place at women's personal residences and three at a women's hostel in Mirpur (all interview locations were in Dhaka). I invited the remaining seven women to have tea with me at my residence in Dhaka. They were invited at different

times. I interviewed them in Bangla, the language spoken by Bangladeshis. I obtained their consent for an interview by asking them to sign a consent form written in Bangla. After women signed the consent form, I conducted in-depth and open-ended interviews to generate their stories of migration. I tape-recorded the interviews and transcribed them in Bangla. I spoke with the state officials and recruiting agency proprietors in their offices (during work); one activist (former coordinator of SHISUK) spoke to me at his personal residence. I had conversations with two brokers over tea at my residence in Dhaka; at that time they were working as sub-agents of two different recruitment agencies in Dhaka. At the same time, I was regularly talking to the returned migrant worker from Malaysia − my guide during fieldwork. As noted, I tape-recorded all interviews with women and focus groups and later transcribed them. I transcribed the women's interviews and my guide transcribed the focus groups.

I collected various secondary materials throughout my fieldwork. These included hard copies of important contemporary Bangladeshi national newspaper reports on migration to the Middle East. I also collected archived national newspaper reports from 2007, 2008, and 2009 and relevant available government statistics, ordinances and policy papers on migration. Other secondary materials included NGO reports, posters, and bulletins and international organizations' reports on migrations (United Nations Development Programme, International Organization of Migration). Through the interviews and the literature, I gained valuable knowledge about migrant women's destination countries in the Middle East.

In sum, my data comprised primary materials from qualitative interviews, focus groups, conversations and secondary materials. Of these data, the most important component was the

women's stories generated through interviews; the remaining conversations and focus groups I considered as complementing the interviews.

3.1 The Sample and its Characteristics

I accessed 18 of the female informants in Bangladesh-German Technical Training Centre and SFM Mohila Technical Training Centre. I asked them to sit with me for an interview, and they agreed. Some referred me to their female friends and relatives who had stayed in the Middle East as temporary workers. These women were getting ready to go to a Middle Eastern country for a second time as a domestic worker and so came to Dhaka to attend the mandatory state sponsored training. I had to finish interviewing them before they left the area. Interviewing women was my main priority; I did not have time to personally observe the training sessions.

Out of the 34 women whom I interviewed, four went to two countries in the Middle East; initially, they had worked in one country in the Middle East for some time and then moved to another country from there. In sum, none of these 34 women had made more than one trip from Bangladesh to the Middle East when I interviewed them.

Using TTC was crucial; women gather here from all over Bangladesh to attend the state sponsored training program for domestic workers. My sample included female interviewees from 14 districts in the northern, southern, eastern and western parts of Bangladesh. Thus, I avoided bias towards particular districts or regions of the country as source areas for migration.

I needed to define the way I understand the Middle East in my study, including my female informants' destination countries. As the boundary of this region has always been perceived as dynamic, fluid and contested amongst academics and those interested in its

geopolitics, it was important for me to have a clear understanding of how I understand its geography. I consulted with my father, a Professor of Middle Eastern Art History at Rajshahi University in Bangladesh. Following our discussion, I decided to adhere to the commonly used definition that includes territories and regions of Western Asia (excluding North Africa).[9] Throughout this dissertation, therefore, I use the term "Middle East" to mean the countries where women informants in this study went: Lebanon, Jordan and five oil producing states in the Persian Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia; these five states are included in the definition of Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC). I am well aware, however, that by grouping these countries under the common category "Middle East" I may have missed country-specific nuances in women`s migration.

I decided to interview women who had been to one or more of the countries within the previously defined geographic boundaries. Initially, I planned to include only those women who had returned after having stayed in the Middle East for at least one year. However, I changed the criteria as I was informed in media reports and by migrants' right activists that many women who had reportedly been abused in employers' homes or experienced extreme situations had to return to Bangladesh after only a few months. I regarded it important to incorporate women who had gone through all kinds of situations, so I included whoever went to the Middle East as temporary workers, irrespective of the length of their stay. I tried to create a representative sample by including diversity in women`s situations.

Some important aspects of the female informants' profile appear in Table 2.

[9] For a comprehensive geographical understanding of the Middle East see Beaumont, Blake and Malcolm (1988, pp. 1-47). For a more contemporary understanding, specifically the region`s history, culture, religion and geopolitical standing, see Husain (2011), especially Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five.

Table 2: Returned migrant women

Name*	Marital Status	Children	Country of employment in the Middle East	Occupation **
1.Alo	Married	3	Dubai	DW
2. Raha	Married	1	Dubai	DW
3.Ruku	Married	2	Dubai	DW
4. Reshmi	Married	0	Dubai	GW
5.Shiri	Single	0	Dubai	DW
6.Shumu	Single	0	Dubai	DW
7. Hashu	Single	0	Dubai	DW
8. Rumi	Married	3	Dubai	DW
9. Kusum	Married	2	Lebanon	DW
10. Nupur	Married	1	Lebanon	DW
11. Bela	Married	3	Lebanon	DW
12. Banu	Married	3	Lebanon	DW
13. Muku	Married	2	Lebanon	DW
14. Rowshan	Married	1	Lebanon	DW
15. Runu	Single	0	Lebanon	DW
16. Rafi	Married	3	Lebanon	DW
17. Rubi	Married	2	Lebanon	DW
18. Ratri	Single	0	Lebanon	DW
19. Rima	Married	3	Lebanon	DW
20. Salu	Married	2	Saudi Arabia	DW
21. Anju	Deserted	0	Saudi Arabia	C
22. Fatu	Married	1	Saudi Arabia	DW
23. Rini	Married	2	Saudi Arabia	DW
24. Raju	Married	2	Saudi Arabia	C
25.Sumona	Married	1	Saudi Arabia	D
26. Moni	Married	2	Kuwait	C
27. Moni	Single	0	Kuwait	GW

Name*	Marital Status	Children	Country of employment in the Middle East	Occupation **
28. Bula	Single	0	Kuwait	DW
29. Sheemu	Married	1	Oman	DW
30. Rozina	Married	1	Bahrain	DW
31.Julekha	Married	1	Oman , Lebanon	DW
32.Masuda	Married	2	Dubai, Jordan	GW
33.Monu	Married	4	Kuwait, Dubai,	DW
34. Shanu	Married	2	Dubai, S.Arabia	DW

* These names are pseudonyms.

** DW = Domestic Worker; GW = Garment Worker; C = Cleaner

Informants were from 14 districts in Bangladesh, including eastern, western, northern and southern parts of the country. I have included a map of Bangladesh (Appendix B), showing these districts. At the time of their migration, 25 women were married and 8 were unmarried. One woman had been deserted by her husband. The educational background ranged from being illiterate to a maximum of higher secondary education (equivalent to grade 12 in the North American standard system of education). Most women came from rural areas and experienced economic, social or familial hardship before migration. Interestingly, all informants were Muslims. Possibly Bangladeshi Muslim women are more comfortable working in the Middle East given their religious affiliation with Islam. Preference or selection bias on the part of the Middle Eastern employers for Muslim women is another possibility. These issues require more investigation, something beyond the scope of the present research.

According to their passports, the ages of my female informants ranged from 20 to 45. Because there is no systematic and institutionalized practice of record keeping on birth registration in Bangladesh, these ages may not be accurate. As a result, I decided not to rely on this aspect of their personal profile.

3.2 Data Analysis

I let women's stories guide me throughout the data generation. I invited my informants to tell me the pros and cons of their migration, including their experience with migration-brokers (who assisted them in recruitment and relocation) and employers. After each interview, I listened to the audio-taped interview carefully and transcribed it word for word. I went over the entire transcription and identified segments of the transcription that signified the woman's situation with her migration-brokers and her employer; I coded those segments. Following Charmaz (2006) this initial coding was followed by focused coding. In this process, I reread the initial codes (informing women's situation with brokers and employers) and sorted out codes that occurred most frequently across all interviews and created categories for analysis. Finally, I analyzed the data on women's stories under these categories, comparing and contrasting them across and within categories.

Whenever my conversations with state officials, recruiting agency proprietors, activists, brokers added to the categories under which I organized women's tales, I juxtaposed them with women's tales. I used the focus group conversations wherever they were relevant to complement the analysis. At the same time, I drew on secondary materials, including academic/ non-academic literature and statistics. Once I completed the data analysis, I began to write the dissertation.

4- Reflections from Fieldwork

4.1 Experiences and Challenges of Fieldwork

Returning to Bangladesh to do fieldwork was not quite the same as returning "home" for me. By then I had lived in Canada for over six years, and "home" was Canada. I love Canadian hockey, basketball, and jazz; the voices of Celine Dion and Bryan Adams take me away. At the same time, I take inspiration from the writings of Nobel Laureate Bengali philosopher and poet Rabindranath Tagore. I occasionally participate in Bengali cultural events in Toronto where I sing and recite poems with my friends, and I absolutely love Bengali food, especially fish curry with white rice. It is as if I live on a bridge between Canada and Bangladesh --- I belong in both countries but do not belong anywhere in an "authentic" way. During my fieldwork, I had to continuously negotiate the subjectivities emerging from my "hyphenated" (Bannerji, 2002, p. 117) sense of home. I was both "insider" and "outsider" in Bangladesh, the country where I was born and grew up.

Whether a researcher should be considered "insider" or "outsider" in the research context is an issue widely discussed by feminist researchers (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1996; England, 1994; Mendez & Wolf, 2007; Naples, 2003; Wolf, 1996). They interrogate the utility of categorizing a researcher either as an insider or an outsider in the context of fieldwork. Realizing the limitations of identifying the researcher either as an insider or outsider, they point to the possibility of multiple ways of existence for the researcher in her research context. My situation as both insider and outsider often led to an ambiguous status for me in the context of my fieldwork. I was an insider by dint of my Bengali ethno-cultural belonging. My Bengali

parentage, growing up in Bangladesh, my fluency in speaking and writing Bangla, and my Bangladeshi nationality by birth made me an insider. Nonetheless, I quickly realized that my "Bangladeshiness" was not enough to gain the trust of my female informants. Even though I thought we would get along because of the commonalities in our ethno-cultural and national roots, not to mention our common gender, it wasn't as easy as all that. My independent and unmarried status and my relatively short hair, which do not fit the stereotypical image of a traditional Bengali woman, became a concern to my informants. I was asked uncomfortable questions about my marital status; many women sounded skeptical about the prospect of my getting a good husband and having children if not done sooner rather than later. One of the recruiting agency proprietors with whom I spoke during the fieldwork did not seem happy at all when he heard where my *desh* (ancestral home in the village) was. I could see, for a few seconds, deliberate unfriendly signals in his body language. In Bangladesh, people often like to know about a stranger's ancestral roots; this is an important way to find out about the person. Sometimes people overtly express regional prejudices against those who do not belong to the same district. Clearly, this was the situation with the recruiting agency proprietor; he constructed me as an outsider as I did not come from the same place as his ancestors. At the same time, my privileged social status due to my educational background, my "transnational" privilege over resources and opportunities, combined with my upper middle-class status in Bangladesh constrained me from completely appreciating the multiple struggles encountered by my female informants in their everyday lives in Bangladesh. And I had no doubt that all of these complex social inequalities within which we were differentially situated made me an outsider to my female informants.

My experiences speak to those of other feminists (for example, Hsiung, 1996; Kondo, 1986; Zavella, 1996) who returned to their country of origin or ancestry from the West to conduct fieldwork. They found themselves simultaneously insiders and outsiders, often with complications. This is a problematic situation for any researcher, who like me, has chosen to live "transnationally" between two countries, setting a clear line of demarcation of privileges and opportunities.

Given the non-existence of any pure insider or outsider category, whether and how I was an insider or outsider, or both, in my fieldwork can always be contested. Ultimately, what counts is my fieldwork experience - an experience that is "genuine" and cannot be challenged. Such experience speaks to my embodiment as I find it expressed in Donna Kate Rushin`s poem: "I must be the bridge to nowhere/ But my true self" (2010, p. 253).

During fieldwork, I tried to remain self-consciously aware of the power and privileges I held in relation to my informants. I came to realize that power is never unidirectional from the researcher to the researched, and it is not only the researcher who holds all power. Instead, power needs to be seen in relational terms, involving both the researcher and the informants. A number of fieldwork occurrences made me ponder this relational power dynamic. In such situations, by practicing self-reflexivity, I found myself powerless; I felt quite "othered" by my informants who critically interrogated my presence in the field. For example, some recruiting agency proprietors and state officials refused to give me an appointment or brushed off appointments they had made earlier; they responded hastily and cautiously if they did consent to talk with me. I was often interrogated about the actual purpose of my research and the particular organization (national or international) they suspected to be funding my research, of course, not without certain motives.

Even when I explained the research project was my own doctoral work, it seemed impossible for them to believe a young and unmarried woman could fly all the way from Canada to Bangladesh to carry out a challenging endeavour and claim it exclusively as her own. A striking example is the following scenario: I was speaking to a recruiting agency proprietor about the purpose of my talk with him. He stopped me suddenly and said, "Before agreeing to sit with you for an interview, I had to carefully make sure from various sources that you are not coming from any intelligence body,"

My gender clearly fueled the ongoing power dynamic between me and my male informants. No matter whether my informant was a state official, recruiting agent, broker or a journalist, I invariably noticed consistently curious and amused (and sometimes uneasy) looks at me during our meetings. As I was speaking with a high official from BAIRA, I seemed to remain invisible to him throughout the entire conversation; he answered all my questions by looking at my guide who was sitting right beside me. In this situation, where did my privilege over my guide go? Obviously, I did not hold more power over my male guide in this scenario based on my education, class and transnational privilege. My power over my guide, to a considerable extent, was over-ruled by my inferior "second-sex," a term coined by French philosopher and feminist Simon De Beauvoir in her ground-breaking work *The Second Sex* (1957). Similarly, the proprietor of a recruiting agency never looked into my eyes when we spoke. While I was speaking to a journalist from a widely-circulated national newspaper in Bangladesh about my project, he did not hesitate to tell me that he hates feminist academics.

Such events made me think: would my male interviewees have behaved this way if I were a male? Ironically, I had no doubt that my gender exoticized my project. All my male

informants seemed quite charmed with my apparent femininity and mannerisms, but it was hard for them to accept my authority and right to ask them problematic questions. All these issues put me in an interesting but uneasy gendered power struggle.

Feminist scholars (for example, Nagar, 2006a, 2006b; Pratt, 2002; Sultana, 2007a, 2007b) often talk about collaboration and strategies to build successful collaboration in their research. They say feminists need to take the lead to initiate collaboration in their research relationships with informants. Even when I was accepted cordially by my female informants, I could see the boundary they imposed on our interactions. The class difference may have hampered our connection. For example, they always addressed me as "madam," thereby accepting and pointing to the obvious class and education division. Then, when I said I was trying to bring their experiences of migration into the limelight, I noted some wariness. Because of their fragile economic situation, they may have been looking for a material reward from the research; they may have thought I would provide them with a secured job with my research outcome. Some women even said this point blank. As I was unable to promise them a concrete material reward, they were not happy. Given our very different outlook about the research outcome, I did not think our collaboration was necessarily maintained to the extent I wanted, no matter how hard I tried. Thus, I do not think commonality in gender can be regarded as either a necessary or a sufficient condition to sustain fruitful collaborative research when the researcher and informants measure the research contribution and outcome differently due to differences in their class, social standings and education.

Extraneous undesirable intrusions sometimes limited collaboration between me and my informants but I had expected this. One of my informants, Reshmi, was able to talk to me only in

front of her husband. I noticed Reshmi's guarded and cautious responses as we spoke; our conversation was often interrupted by her husband's response. Reshmi and another informant, Bela, often let their husbands respond to my queries on their behalf. Another migrant woman to whom I was introduced by Reshmi and who wanted to speak to me changed her mind because she failed to receive her husband's approval. These instances speak to the patriarchal and gendered milieu of my research and show how it jeopardized the possibility of (an even better) collaboration.

At times, a potential informant refused to cooperate. For example, the proprietor of a recruiting agency greeted me with tea and then simply asked me to leave his office, telling me that he would not respond to my questions. With my guide, beyond our obvious class and educational difference, gender difference hampered our connection. While I tried to make sure that my guide did not see me just as his employer, I was not certain I could make him feel we were equal co-workers in the field. Ultimately, the unequal power relations remained regardless of how well we interacted or got along in the research process. Consciously or unconsciously, both of us remained mindful of difference; nonetheless, we worked together and built our collaboration within boundaries of the difference.

Sultana argues, "While it is possible to work from locations of differences and build in common affinities/ goals, failure to do so does not mean lack of importance in the research produced and the political impact it can have" (2007b, p.48). Given the differences along lines of class, education and social situations, and within the patriarchal and gendered contexts underpinning my research, I could not sustain a non-hierarchical collaboration with my informants, at least not to the extent I wanted. Despite the unavoidable dilemmas, however, my

research was extremely meaningful to me. Using my feminist insights and knowledge, at least, I was able to hear and make others hear my female informants' voices. I used Bangladeshi returned migrant women's perspectives and voices to produce knowledge about their migration experience on their own terms, making a determined effort to transcend any generalized or taken-for-granted understanding of their situation.

4.2 Feminist Negotiation with Fieldwork Challenges

Feminist researchers argue that researchers and research participants are always embedded in unequal power relations in fieldwork sites and beyond. As a feminist researcher, I was aware of my control and power in all stages of the research process. I had the power to randomly select research informants, decide the location and timing of interviews, and to disseminate the research outcome. To balance the unequal power relations, I tried to develop rapport at the outset of every interview. I greeted them with "salam"[10] and asked about their health and their family members. I told them about myself and explained the intent of my research. I tried to minimize my status as an "outsider" by relating my own experience as an immigrant woman in Canada. When they offered me to a chair to sit on while they preferred to sit on the ground, I politely refused and said I would like to sit on the ground with them. The height of our sitting arrangement mattered to me, as a height difference could create a "vertical hierarchy" (Sultana, 2007a, p. 379). I tried to avoid the possibility of any hierarchical interactions. By letting them speak freely in an open and non-intimidating dialogue, I sought their personal stories of migration. Finally, by adopting a self-reflexive approach, I hoped to deal with the issue of unequal power relations in the interview scenario.

[10] This word is commonly used by Muslims as a greeting.

Feminist methodology requires a critical examination of power relations between researchers and their informants beyond the interview scenario (Acker et al., 1996). As I proceeded with my research, it was important for me to explore my relationships with my female informants in terms of the larger modus of power beyond the interview scenario. I knew that I held considerable power over the informants because of my privileges and opportunities accruing to my upper middle-class status in Bangladesh and because I am a feminist researcher in Western academia; unfortunately, I could not alter these privileges and opportunities.

As a feminist researcher, then, how did I deal with uneven power relations which could influence my analysis and presentation of their stories, even when not intentionally? My response: in my analysis of the interview data, I tried to present women's stories while remaining aware that my representation of their voices would entail certain mediation. After all, my understanding of the stories is influenced by my higher class, education, other privileges and opportunities. Given this, the best I could do was to remain as faithful as possible to the information I gathered.

5-Conclusion

This chapter discusses the feminist methodology of constructivist Grounded Theory guiding my research. Because I am seeking to tell my informants' stories using their own voices, Grounded Theory seems appropriate.

In the chapter, I have emphasized issues of reflexivity, positionality, voice and representation as integral to understanding the crucial power dynamic in any feminist research process. Feminist researchers regard self-reflexivity as a key towards producing non-hierarchical

and collaborative knowledge. In the process of collaborative knowledge construction, they argue that vis-à-vis each other, both researcher and participants need to be considered to see how they both exercise power, albeit in different ways. Their respective positionalities impact on the data generation in collaborative and non-hierarchical research process. Accordingly, I paid attention to reflexivity, positionality, voice and representation as I enacted a non-hierarchical praxis. However, I had to accept the actuality that despite their attempts, feminist researchers have not been able to offer concrete methodological and epistemological rules to address the accompanying dilemmas (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). Feminists emphasize sustaining a non-hierarchical collaboration with their informants during the research process; but in a "real–world" research scenario, I found such collaboration difficult to sustain given my differential social location in relation to my informants. Added to this, my informants and I seem to have valued the research outcome differently. Whereas my female informants expected that after hearing their stories, somebody in the position of power and authority would step in with a secured job for them, I hoped that sooner or later I could use my research to push policy makers in Bangladesh to address the institutional problems associated with Bangladeshi women`s migration.

Feminist methodology has contradictions and paradoxes, but feminists need to continue to work within such contradictions and negotiate with them as they strive to achieve the objectives that they ultimately target through their work. This was the most important message gleaned from my fieldwork; it enabled my critical engagement with Bangladeshi women`s migration experience.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

1-Introduction

In this chapter I review important academic work in the social sciences that sheds light on the broker-mediated migration scenarios of temporary workers in Asia. I also interrogate key feminist scholarly writing on migrant domestic workers and their employers in the destination countries.

My dissertation seeks a critical feminist understanding of the experiences of some Bangladeshi female temporary workers who have returned from the Middle East. To this end, I problematize their engagement with migration brokers during their migration arrangement process. In addition, I analyze their responses to and negotiations with their employers in their Middle Eastern destination countries. As a component of this interrogation and analysis, I consider how power relations are revealed in these interactions. The story I tell in this dissertation complements contemporary literature on broker-mediated migration arrangements of temporary workers in Asia, as well as literature on migrant women in the context of domestic work. Therefore, in this chapter, I shed light on how power relations are informed in these two categories of the literature.

In section two, I address some scholarly work in the social sciences setting migration brokering in the context of temporary transnational labour migration within Asia − primarily from Asia to other Asian countries and to the Middle East. In this regard it is important to note that United Nations (UN) considers Middle East to be a part of Asia, along with South Asia, East Asia, and South-East Asia (as cited in Castles, de Hass, & Miler, 2014, p. 148). Bangladeshi

women temporary workers, the topic of this dissertation, move from one Asian country to another: from Bangladesh to the Middle East. In section three, I address some important feminist literature that brings together migrant domestic workers and their employers. Given the overwhelming amount of scholarly work on migration and domestic work, this literature review selectively addresses some contemporary work more relevant to my research concerns, regardless of region.

2-Migration Brokers and Temporary Workers' Recruitment in Asia

A broker is commonly understood to be an intermediary who works as a third party in facilitating a transaction between a buyer and seller for a commission. Sociologists (for example, Burt, 2000; Marsden, 1982; Obstfeld & Borgatti, 2008, Small, 2009) have highlighted brokers as important traders in the social system. By bringing together otherwise detached actors in the social system, a broker makes sure that the actors have access to their intended resources (Strovel & Shaw, 2012). Johan Lindquist, Biao Xiang and Brenda S. A. Yeoh (2012) provide the following definition of brokers and brokers' practices in the context of migration: "We use the terms 'broker' and 'middlemen' synonymously to denote a party who mediates between other parties, in this case the migrant and the employer or client" (2012, p. 8). Following this definition, a migration broker could be an individual or an organization working at one or more stages of the migration process to bring together the two parties (employer/client and prospective migrant). Migration brokers operate in different forms, for example, an individual who works within his/her social network as a migration mediator, a migrant recruiting agency and its complementary organizations or sub-agents who work with the recruiting agency, or any other

actor or agent who works at one or more stages to facilitate migration (Agunias, 2009).[11] As Agunias (2009) has rightly pointed out, migration brokers are significant players "in the movement of people in an immensely inter-connected world divided by porous and often arbitrary borders" (2009, p. 2).

In recent years, scholars have noted an increasingly formalized transnational labour migration system in many Asian labour-sending countries (for example, see Guevarra, 2010; Lindquist, 2012; Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012; Rodriquez, 2010; Xiang, 2012, 2008). Both state and private agents play a crucial role within such a system. Whereas the state serves as the main bureaucratic and regulatory body, private agents take part in the migrant recruitment process. A number of scholars have noted the crucial role of private agents in the temporary (and often circular) transnational migration facilitation process of some important labour exporters in Asia, including, Indonesia, China, the Philippines (Lindquist, Xiang & Yeoh, 2012), Bangladesh (Rahman, 2012) and Sri Lanka (Gamburd, 2000).

Migration brokers' operations in Asia are diverse: they facilitate different types of migration, for example, student migration and marriage migration, along with many other types of migration, besides facilitating the transnational migration of temporary labourers (Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012). Following some key scholarly literature on broker-mediated contemporary transnational migration in Asia, in this chapter I interrogate brokering practices in migrant recruitment under three types of arrangements: first, when brokers operate as established organizations (for example, a recruiting agency); second, when brokers are individuals who operate through and within their social channels and relationships; third, when brokers operate in

[11] Throughout this chapter I use the terms migration broker, agent and intermediary synonymously.

a collaboration involving the state and prospective migrants. In the third scenario private brokers are intertwined in a complex relationship with the state and migrants.

2.1 Broker Operating as a Recruiting Agency

Scholars have noted the widespread operation of private recruiting agencies in the labour sending countries in Asia, especially in the context of temporary labourers recruitment to the Gulf states in the Middle East and to East (South Korea) and Southeast Asia (Malaysia and Singapore) (Rahman, 2012). Recruiting agencies operate in Southeast Asia: Indonesia (Lindquist, 2010, 2012), Philippines (Agunias, 2010; Constable, 2007), Thailand (Lindquist, 2010), Vietnam (Lindquist, 2010), East Asia: China (Xiang, 2012) and South Asia: Sri Lanka (Gamburd, 2000), Bangladesh (Afsar, 2009; Rahman, 2012), India (Abella, 1995) and Pakistan (Abella, 1995). In migrant source countries in Asia, private recruiting agencies serve as the main "contact point" for destination recruiting agencies and employers; on a structural and organizational level, they are the key players in the labour recruitment process (Rahman, 2012, p. 216). However, in the context of the actual practice of recruitment, sub-agent(s) of the recruiting agency often take on the main role. These sub-agents reach out to candidates in the grass-roots rural areas; their widespread operation is noted in work on Indonesia (Lindquist, 2010, 2012), the Philippines (Agunias, 2009; Lindquist, 2010), China (Xiang, 2012, 2013) and Bangladesh (Afsar, 2009; Rahman, 2012). Sub-agents' operations are usually informal; that is, unlike formal recruiting agencies they work without holding a license permit from the sending state.

Rahman`s study (2012) sheds light on how recruiting agencies in Bangladesh are involved in organizing Bangladeshi temporary workers' (predominantly male construction

workers, janitors, drivers, factory workers, hospitality workers, gardeners) recruitment to the Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain). He observes that recruiting agencies in Bangladesh and the Gulf collaborate in the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers. Upon receiving a request from a recruiting agency interested in recruiting Bangladeshi workers for Gulf employers, a Bangladeshi recruiting agency looks for candidates willing to fill these positions. To this end, Bangladeshi recruiting agencies largely depend on their sub-agents who travel across village areas to recruit candidates. A primary responsibility of these informal sub-agents is to persuade people in the villages to go abroad and to use the services of the recruiting agency (or agencies) for whom the sub-agent works. Once an individual enrolls with the recruiting agency, the sub-agent assists the candidate with mandatory bureaucratic formalities (for example, acquiring a passport, medical examination) associated with the departure process. If need be, a sub-agent also serves as an insurer of the candidate as he/she seeks a loan, perhaps from a pawnbroker, to pay the departure cost. These sub-agents usually have affiliations in the areas where they work, maintaining connections with village elites; sub-agents are often residents of the villages where they operate and may even be among the village elite (Rahman, 2012, p. 222). Their personal and social affiliations with people in their areas of operation gives them necessary credibility to sell their services to villagers; after all, villagers need to make sure they have local access to support in case of fraud or abuse in the destination region – in this case, the Middle East.

Speaking about unskilled temporary workers' recruitment in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, Lindquist (2010, 2012) illuminates the important roles of informal sub-agents who work on behalf of formal recruiting agencies in Indonesia. License-holding recruiting agencies in

Indonesia operate through their branches in all major cities, including Jakarta and Surabya. These branches vary in size and scale of operation. Unlicensed (informal) recruiters often operate in the rural areas as representatives of licensed recruiting agencies, frequently teaming up with other informal labour agents. Networking between various informal recruiters gives rise to an extremely complex and volatile system of migration-brokerage across the country. The actual practice of migrant recruitment starts with the informal recruiters who approach prospective candidates from their village or other nearby localities, using their social relations and networking. These informal brokers may be primary school teachers, returned migrants or even grandmothers. They mostly work as part-timers but are significant players in the Indonesian migration industry. They operate by building and working around the issue of trust; by showing themselves trustworthy to the villagers, they successfully pursue their business as migration mediators.

A more nuanced and complicated understanding of the relationships between recruiting agents and their chain of sub-agents is discussed by Biao Xiang (2012, 2013). In exploring the reason for the excessively high cost associated with the legal transnational migration of unskilled labourers from China, Xiang finds commercial migration brokers' (both formal and informal) active collaboration explains the high cost. He notes that these migration brokers operate within a hierarchical and expanded system of networking spreading across China (from cities to rural areas). The prospective candidate pays all brokers within the network who provide services to the candidate in different stages of their migration facilitation process. Hence, candidates usually pay an exorbitant fee for their departure. Migration brokers' operational nexus puts the state and potential migrants into an "intermediary trap" – a phrase Xiang (2013) uses to describe the

dependency of the Chinese state and prospective migrant workers on brokers' network in mediating migration. Migration brokers who constitute the intermediary trap, according to Xiang, are hierarchically connected along their operational nexus. At the top of brokers' operational nexus are the licensed recruiting agencies – "window companies," as Xiang terms them. These brokers deal with the bureaucratic complexities associated with migration in both China and the labour importing state. At the mid-level of this hierarchical operation chain are brokers involved in the recruitment process in conjunction with those brokers at the grass-roots level. Brokers at the grass-roots level could be institutions, for example, "local labour bureaus," "vocational schools" or even "individuals" with "public authority," for example, "retired cadres" or "school teachers" (Xiang, 2013, pp. 6-7). These brokers, as Xiang points out, operate by remaining embedded in their hierarchical chain of operation; in so doing, they complement each other in the migration organization process.

One common feature that resonates in works by Xiang, Lindquist and Rahman (as discussed above) is worth mentioning. Rahman (2012) focuses on the complex institutional process of Bangladeshi temporary workers' recruitment in the Gulf mediated by various recruiting brokers: recruiting agents in Bangladesh and the Middle East, as well as sub-agents of recruiting agents in Bangladesh; Lindquist (2010, 2012) sheds light on the institutional dynamic of migration-brokerage in the context of Indonesia, while Xiang (2013) explicitly sheds light on the hierarchal relations between different recruiting brokers within the intermediary trap. These scholars point to power hierarchies between brokers; such hierarchies inform their collaborative operation on a macro (structural) level. I contend that hierarchies at the micro and meso-levels also inform the institutional organization of broker-mediated temporary migration from China,

Indonesia and Bangladesh. Xiang, Lindquist and Rahman have failed to note micro or meso-level hierarchies within the brokers' operational nexus. In practice, bridging different hierarchical levels (macro, meso, micro) is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the operational dynamics of power relations in the broker-mediated recruitment process.

2.2 Broker Operation within Social Relations with Prospective Migrants

Conventional wisdom says profit making drives migration brokers. On the basis of this criterion, some scholars differentiate migration brokers from other migration intermediaries. For example, in the context of home care-workers' migration from Poland to Germany and Italy Elrick and Lewandowska (2008) understand brokers to be "persons who want to be materially rewarded for passing on information," not intermediaries from migrants' social networks who are "persons who exchange information for a non-material reward" (p. 722). Some studies of Asian migration, however, disagree (for example, Collins, 2012; Lindquist, 2012; Lindquist, Xiang & Yeoh, 2012). They claim economic interests and social relations are inextricably bound up in shaping brokers' actions: brokers must link their economic interests and social relations to sell their services to migration candidates. This theme resonates in some key scholarly works in different contexts of recruitment in Asia, for example, temporary labourers' migration and student migration.

Rahman (2012) points to the importance of social and symbolic ties in the recruitment of Bangladeshi migrants labourers to the Gulf States. As Rahman notes, a Bangladeshi broker living in the destination state finds a job for his/her friend or relative with his/her *kafeel* (sponsor-employer) or somebody known to this kafeel who would be willing to sponsor the

potential candidate. Upon receiving consent from a sponsor in the Gulf, the broker collects the passport photocopy and other relevant papers from the prospective migrant worker and passes these on to the potential kafeel to obtain a visa for the candidate. Once a visa is obtained, the broker sends it to the candidate in Bangladesh. The candidate is required to finish the remaining official formalities before being able to fly to the Gulf. In this process, the brokers' activity, as Rahman`s study indicates, is driven by a sense of good-will for the candidate (i.e., an expression of their common bond across their Bangladeshi social relations) as well as by economic motive. Rahman acknowledges brokers' operations are complex, but he makes no attempt to decipher them. Nor does he acknowledge that a broker and a candidate could interact by remaining embedded in their common Bangladeshi social norms and values; nor does he interrogate how power hierarchies between a broker and a candidate (along gender, age or other social axes of differentiation) inform their engagement.

Like Rahman (2012), Lindquist (2012) emphasizes brokers and prospective candidates' social relations as the basis of brokers' business operations. Lindquist`s (2012) study on unskilled Indonesian temporary workers' migration to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia maintains that because of the social relationships and affiliations that migration brokers in Indonesia (who work as informal sub-agents of Indonesian recruiting agencies) share with the would-be migrants from their village communities, they are effective sales persons within the community. Central to Lindquist`s understanding of the relationships between the informal brokers and the prospective migrants is the issue of trust. Villagers buy services from informal brokers whom they trust because of their respected social status, not to mention the common (social and community) bond shared along their social relationships and acquaintances. Therefore, informal brokers,

Lindquist observes, continually strive to appear trustworthy to the candidates, as they ultimately seek economic gain. Although he notes that a complex interplay between the brokers and the candidates' social and economic relations informs their engagement within the structural landscape of migration, Lindquist does not consider how social hierarchies on the basis of gender, age, class etc. are revealed in such engagements.

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to brokers' practice in the context of student migration, an important form of temporary migration around the globe (Collins, 2012). That brokers play crucial roles in mediating student migration is highlighted in studies featuring student migration in contemporary Asia and the Pacific region. Examples include student migration from China (Xiang & Shen, 2009), Korea (Collins, 2008, 2012) and Bangladesh (Mahmud, 2013). Xiang and Shen (2009) observe that Chinese students who go abroad to pursue higher education come to know education agents primarily through their personal networks and acquaintances. Education agents in China are more than information providers to prospective international students; they assist students to choose a school abroad depending on their particular needs and financial ability to pursue higher education.

The complex interplay between a broker's social relations (with prospective international students') and economic interests has much to do with shaping brokers' operation, something noted by Collins (2012) in his research on student migration from Korea to New Zealand. During the 1990s, as Collins points out, New Zealand opened its door to students by internationally marketing its education sector following neoliberal privatization and deregulation. Schools in New Zealand, however, did not have the resources to internationally market curricula or courses. At this juncture, education brokers emerged as a crucial mediator; they provided their services to

close the gap between prospective international students and educational institutions. These agents primarily operated along ethnic / national lines to draw students from Korea to New Zealand. For example, a Korean resident in New Zealand operated transnationally with a South Korean agent; often they were friends or relatives of the incoming student from South Korea. In many instances, agents were referred to the incoming students by fellow Koreans living in New Zealand who previously had used their services. This way, as Collin's study reveals, personal and social connections and relationships played a crucial role in the expansion of student agents' business in New Zealand. The fact that some of these Korean agents were former students in New Zealand made them more credible to their Korean clients. The diverse services provided to incoming Korean students were often inspired by both economic objectives and good-will for their fellow citizens. They were service providers in a strict economic sense but offered other forms of free support services (for example, advice on higher education in New Zealand, temporary accommodation and internet access, transportation to airport) to incoming students. Agents' actions, therefore, were informed by the complex interplay between their altruism and their economic interests. Lindquist, Xiang, and Yeoh (2012) comment: "It is the very ability to bridge the divide between profit and social relations… that makes the education broker a critical player in relation to students, education providers and the state" (2012, p.18). Their ability to bridge their profit drive and altruism also enabled the Korean agents, as Collins notes, to build social capital to sustain their business in the long-run. Clearly, any binary construction of the practices of migration brokers as either economic or benevolent is problematic (Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012), for such construction fails to capture the complex reality.

These researchers unequivocally indicate migration brokers' social relationship with candidates as a critical component in the brokers' operation. In actual practice, a migration broker remains embedded in hierarchical social relations with the candidate on the basis of gender, class etc. or other social axes of differentiation. This is quite apart from the hierarchy that situates them differently within the macro-structural terrain of migration. Interestingly, these works do not consider social-level hierarchies along the lines of gender, class, age etc. or how such hierarchies between a broker and a candidate may inform their interaction.

Some scholars (De-Bel Air, 2011; Rahman, 2012; Shah, 2008) say contemporary temporary migration to the Middle East is informed by the system of "visa-trading". Under this system, whoever is involved in the migration mediation process, whether an individual from prospective migrants' social networks or a recruiting agency in the destination in the Middle East, can arrange visas for would-be migrant workers by paying the sponsor-employer in the destination country. Rahman (2012) points out that a conventional social network approach is unable to capture the complexities of the present phenomenon of temporary workers' migration to the Middle East. A social network approach generally rests on the premise that members of a social network, including both migrants and non-migrants, remain embedded in strong relational ties along common national, ethnic, regional, religious or other affiliations; migrants and non-migrants mutually work around their relational ties which sustain continuous migration between countries and regions of the world (Faist, 2000; Gurak & Cases, 1992; MacDonald & MacDonald, 1974; Rahman, 2012; Shah & Menon, 1999). As members of prospective migrants' social networks in the Middle East destination countries are required to buy visas from Middle Eastern sponsors, their behaviour with candidates in the recruitment process cannot be explained

solely by their sense of altruism as suggested in conventional social network approach of migration. To this point, the scholarly literature on Middle East has failed to explain this new, commercialized, network-assisted recruitment and labour migration. This requires in-depth intervention by migration scholars. One way to capture the specific complexity informing brokers' micro-level actions in migrant recruitment in the contemporary regime of visa-trading in the Middle East could be to problematize the interplay of brokers' economic and social relations with the candidate.

2.3 Broker Operation within the State, Market and Prospective Migrant Relationship

One particular characteristic of temporary workers' migration from major labour sending countries in Asia is the involvement of both state institutions and private brokers in the migration management system (Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012). While the state sets up, controls and regulates the bureaucratic and administrative structure of migration, private brokers remain involved on various levels in the actual process of recruitment. Throughout the recruitment process, state institutions, private brokers and prospective migrants have a complex relationship. Some scholars address their interplay in the contemporary neoliberal regime of Asian migration. For the purpose of clarity in exposition, I consider how certain promising contemporary scholars of Asian migration look at the specific complexity of state-market -migrant relationships and power hierarchies by breaking them down into four categories: 1) between intermediaries (private agents or/ and their sub-agents); 2) between the state and intermediaries; 3) between intermediaries and the prospective migrant worker; 4) between the state and prospective migrant worker.

Prominent anthropologist Biao Xiang (2012, 2013) notes that before the 1980s the Chinese state had the sole authority to manage unskilled temporary labour migration to other countries in Asia, primarily to Japan, Singapore and South Korea. Starting in the 1980s the Chinese state gradually started to liberalize its manpower export sector and commercial agents were encouraged to become involved in labour recruitment. Initially, the state only allowed licensed agents to practice, but after 2002, unlicensed agents could operate as sub-agents of the licensed agents. In actual practices of recruitment, however, as Xiang`s research finds, licensed agents often exist only on paper; a string of sub-agents work at the grass-roots level to recruit Chinese workers to work abroad. In this process, the Chinese state, licensed agents and their sub-agents work together, supporting their respective objectives while shaping Chinese workers' mobility. Sub-agents within this structural landscape of migration "gained a dominant position in cultivating, facilitating and controlling migration despite their supposedly supplementary role" (Xiang, 213, p. 4).

As mentioned before, Xiang maintains that the high cost of migration of the unskilled Chinese labourers is due to Chinese state and prospective migrant workers' high dependence on migration intermediaries (agents and sub-agents) in facilitating the migration-making process. State institutions and outward-bound workers find agents and sub-agents indispensable to migration. They remain dependent on these intermediaries "not by coercion, but by the lack of alternatives" (Xiang, 2013, p. 4). Networks of various intermediaries are at the heart of the intermediary trap; they simultaneously "depended on, benefitted from and were constrained by each other" (Xiang, 2013, p. 4). In Xiang`s view, all parties − the state, intermediaries and

outward-bound workers who participate to sustain the intermediary trap to their own advantage remain embedded in complex power relationships.

Xiang (2013) also notes the hierarchy of the intermediary trap. The top level comprises license-holding recruiting agents / companies. These agents hold a license from the government and are in a position to formally handle bureaucratic procedures associated with workers' migration. To locate and recruit candidates, they depend on their sub-agents, institutions and individuals operating at the grass-roots level across China. Interestingly, Xiang observes Chinese nationals are aware of intermediaries' hierarchically organized collaborative operations and often indicate their unequal and differential situation in the migration-making process. For example, those who hold a license from the government are known as " upstairs" or " the string above" or *shangxian* in Chinese; those institutions and individuals at the grass-roots level are " downstairs" or " the string below" or *xiaxian* in Chinese (Xiang, 2013, p. 7).

Xiang (2012, 2013) notes the hierarchy between the state of China and intermediaries as well. From 1980 to 2002, China gradually incorporated deregulation into its previously state regulated labour export system. The state allowed private recruiting agencies to expand their business, but controlled them by imposing strict regulations on their business operations. To simultaneously regulate and deregulate the labour export sector was meant to serve a dual purpose: protecting migrants from fraudulent agents and enabling them to deal with complex bureaucratic formalities. Therefore,

> the rise of recruiting agencies [can be understood], not as a sign of the incomplete centralization of state power, but rather as a product of hyper centralization in which the government allows broker networks a particular form of autonomy while holding them by the "neck," thus governing transnational movement of labour without knowing the details of mobility. (Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012, pp. 16-17)

The Chinese state did not need to know the intimate details of the agents' actual practices as long as they did not conflict with the state`s objectives of governing migrants' mobility through a system of bureaucratic control and protection measures.

Xiang's understanding of the state and agents' collaboration in mediating the migration of Chinese temporary workers points to a hierarchical framework. Within the hierarchical relationship, the state exercises control over agents by remaining the main administrative and regulatory body while agents pursue their business endeavours. Logically, it follows that the two parties play a complementary role in the migration organization process.

The nature of the relationship of the state and migration agents is studied in other Asian contexts. Drawing on interviews of Bangladeshi students studying in Japanese educational institutions and several Bangladeshis who migrated to the US under the diversity visa program (DV), Hasan Mahmud (2012) maintains migration agents actually supported these destinations states' regulatory regimes of international student migration and immigration for permanent residency. In his view, by facilitating Bangladeshi international students' temporary arrival, migration agents in Japan actually allowed the capitalist state to gain a source of low-cost labour; Bangladeshi visa students, as Mahmud notes, work in part time service sector jobs while pursuing their studies. Further, agents in Bangladesh assisted Bangladeshi DV applicants to prepare documents mandatory for entry to the US. These agents in Bangladesh, therefore, supported US efforts to control its border by preventing the unlawful entry of Bangladeshis.

It should be mentioned that the specific nature of the relationship of the state and migration agents is a pressing issue for migration scholars. Some say the state does not compete with or complement agents' operation; in this scenario, the state is understood to have the sole

authority to control its border (Spener, 2009a, 2009b). Others argue the two parties enjoy a complementary relationship, with each promoting the other's objectives (Mahmud, 2012; Xiang, 2012, 2013). In a regulated system of state-market mediated temporary (and circular) migration, the common trend in temporary workers' migration from some Asian countries, for example, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, it seems plausible that the state and market intermediaries have a complementary relationship to the extent such relationships serve their respective interests.

In the state-market mediated system of migrant recruitment, private agents are undeniably embedded in a hierarchical relationship with the prospective migrant worker. In this regard, Xiang's intermediary trap (2013) explained at some length previously is worth mentioning. Xiang says workers and the Chinese state remain voluntarily trapped by intermediaries within the structure of a state-market managed system. Workers remain as subjects of control by the state and intermediaries. In this process, power operates linearly, from the agents to migrant workers and also from the state to migrant workers: Agents exercise power over workers as they facilitate their "real" movements, whereas the state exercises power over workers by setting and governing the structure of their movement.

Like Xiang (2012, 2013), Lindquist (2012) retains an analytical focus on the complexities of the state- broker mediated recruitment scenario, but in this case in Indonesia. He observes that temporary labour migration from Indonesia is informed by both state regulation and market activities of migration agents. Additionally, he includes the social relationships of agents and prospective migration candidates in his explanation of the institutional (macro-structural) framework of recruitment. This is a more nuanced understanding of migrant recruitment than the

one offered by Xiang, as it combines social and structural realities of temporary workers' migration. Unlike Xiang (2012, 2013), however, Lindquist (2012) does not consider how hierarchical relationships between agents and migration candidates are organized.

Xiang (2013) offers a thought-provoking look at the hierarchical relationship of the state and its citizens. In his view, instead of directly regulating the mobility of its citizens on an individual level, the Chinese state controls them by administering the infrastructure that underpins their mobility. Xiang notes four particular features of the state`s action. First, the state regulates the movement of its citizens on the basis of their individual identity; such regulation has nothing to do with their collective affiliation or identity. Second, for all its citizens, the state pursues the same legislative and regulatory measures for their migration in an effort to be apolitical. Third, the state dissociates itself from individual migrant workers (citizens) and governs their movement indirectly by controlling the migration infrastructure. Accordingly, the Chinese state indirectly exercises power over its citizens without apparently interfering with their individual freedom of movement and upholds the practices which commonly reflect the state-citizen relationship defined by liberal philosophy: "In this process, the state simultaneously withdrew from certain domains and introduced new regulations, simultaneously freed social life from state control and penetrated social life more deeply and nimbly" (Xiang, 2013, pp.11-12).

Other than Xiang (2013), the nature of power relationships between the state and migrant workers has not been addressed explicitly elsewhere in works that I addressed in this review in the context of state regulated and broker-driven temporary workers' migration. For the most part, the works mentioned here have focussed on the institutional (macro-structural) underpinning of migrant recruitment in major labour sending countries in Asia. It commonly discusses the

functions of the state and private agents in the recruitment scenario. Writers implicitly point to differential hierarchical situations (of the state, prospective migrant worker and agents) without explicitly addressing how hierarchical power relations shape migrant movement.

One scenario noted by scholars on Asian migration about the state-market mediated recruitment scenario is worth mentioning. Several researchers (see Lindquist, 2012; Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012; Xiang, 2012, 2013) observe that the state-market mediated recruitment process which defines the contemporary landscape of mobility from major labour sending countries in contemporary Asia, in turn, has given rise to the possibilities of innumerable ways whereby various brokers can engage with each other in mediating migration. According to Biao Xiang (2012), the sending state desperately needs these agents and their chains so they can financially benefit from the remittance earnings of the migrant workers. The state needs agents and, in turn, agents use this fact to ensure their own economic gains. Seen this way, brokering in temporary labourers' migration could turn out to be self-perpetuated, suggesting innumerable ways of brokering activities along various brokers' operational nexus. Scholars already maintain that a categorical understanding of migration-brokers' operations does not reveal the scale of migration-brokering in Asia; migration-brokering manifests across different actors and needs to be seen "as a continuum rather than a dichotomy" (Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012, p.14). Accordingly, brokering should not be looked at as a particular category and practice (for example, how an individual or a recruiting agency operates as a broker) but across and within categories of brokers collaborating within the institutional terrain of migration.

Overall, most work reviewed here focuses on the recruitment process in a number of important migrant sending countries in Asia. The work sheds light on the institutional process of

migrant export and explains how the process organizes at the macro-structural level. Authors explicitly discuss or implicitly point to power relationships between migration brokers, between migration brokers and prospective migrants, and between migration brokers, prospective migrants and the state, within the institutional (macro-structural) setting of migration. Yet the work does not consider the existence of alternative forms and modalities of power relations or how these power relations might inform the various actors (migration-brokers, the state, candidates) and their interactions. As I will show in Chapter Seven, my dissertation identifies alternative manifestations of power relations between brokers and Bangladeshi women in the recruitment process. Using a feminist frame of analysis, my work fills the gap in the literature on broker-mediated temporary labourers' migration in Asia.

3-Migrant Domestics' Conduct and Negotiations with Employers in the Destination

A great body of feminist literature interrogates migrant domestic workers' experiences with their employers across the globe. During the 1990s and early 2000s, a considerable number of scholarly works have included domestic workers and their employers in one analytical frame (Constable, 2007; Pande, 2012). Broadly speaking, two categories are clearly identifiable in the existing studies. One concerns power and how it is exercised by the employers of domestic workers; it disentangles various forms of vulnerability/ inequality imposed on domestic workers by their employers. Work within this category has an oppressive understanding of power; authors maintain that employers exercise their authority on domestic workers to keep them under their control. The second category considers how migrant domestics respond to employers' authority.

In the first category, the literature on how employers exercise power and authority over domestic workers addresses several important themes. One is globalization and care work. Such work takes a close look at migrant domestic workers, many of whom travel from impoverished countries of the Global South to the Global North to seek a livelihood. Their movement is instigated by forces of demand and supply for care-work under globalization. The work reveals inequalities along various social axes of differentiation, for example, gender, race and class. Such inequalities are experienced by domestic workers who work in isolation in their employers' private homes (see for example, Anderson, 2000; Chin, 1998; Constable, 2007; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Hochschild, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Lan, 2000; Parreñas,1998, 2001,2005; Raijman, Schammah-Gesser, & Kemp, 2003). For their part, Ehrenreich and Hochschild maintain migrant women from poor countries can "either live with their children in desperate poverty or make money by living apart from them," while their employers from the richer countries can both live with and support their children (2003, p. 2). Hochschild extends their argument by suggesting "love" appears as "an unfairly distributed resource − extracted from one place and enjoyed somewhere else" among children from migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries, whereby children from the former get less and children from the latter get more (2003, p.22). Globalization, therefore, brings two groups of women together but on an unequal footing as either employers or employees, on the basis of their privileged/ underprivileged geopolitical situation. It deprives employees' children (living in the Global South) from receiving necessary love and care.

Domestic workers as a category are particularly vulnerable to their employers and other actors in the destinations, a point underscored in some important studies. These studies explicitly

focus on state interests and their convergence with employers and employment agencies' interests in creating a collaborative regulatory regime to control temporary migrant domestic workers in destination countries (Cheng, 2003; Constable, 2007; Wee & Sim, 2005 Yeoh, Hunag & Rahman, 2005). Such regimes operate differentially among women along lines of race, ethnicity, culture, religion and nationality (Wee & Sim, 2005; Yeoh, Huang & Rahman, 2005). Cheng`s work (2003) is particularly insightful. By employing the concept of the "institutionalization of legal othering," Cheng demonstrates in the context of Taiwan how state practices, popular discourse, and practices of Taiwanese employers in their homes collectively constitute a "regulatory regime" to control the lives of domestic workers from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia (2003, p. 167). Taiwan has strict immigration regulations and assigns the responsibility of their enforcement to employers and employment agencies. Employers are penalized by the state if foreign domestic workers run away or get pregnant; they lose their security deposit with the state and lose permission to employ domestic workers. This way, the state transfers its responsibility to employers who must control foreign domestics as "alien" labourers. Employers are advised by means of reports which appear in newspaper columns, non-academic articles and books. Cheng says they are given various strategies to discipline their domestic workers and avoid the ills that the latter's "racial and cultural backwardness" (2003, p. 167) may bring to the employers' homes. Taiwanese employers take this advice and enforce it in their respective household contexts. Cheng`s study shows how state policies, public discourse and Taiwanese employers collaborate in forming a legal set of institutional practices as a means of controlling foreign domestic workers as the "other".

In a similar vein, Abigail Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis`s classic work, *Not One of the Family* (1997), delineates political and social inequalities in Canada in the form of sexism, classism, and racism which render migrant domestics a vulnerable group of workers. They are forced by the Canadian state to be temporary, live-in workers in employers' homes for two years; after four years they become eligible to apply for permanent residency. If they are terminated from their job before two years, they do not receive unemployment benefits because they have broken the terms of stay in Canada. The situation "illegalizes" these women; it makes them vulnerable and exposes them to danger. Tellingly, they can be deported without an appeals process.

A noteworthy stream of literature focuses on the susceptibility of migrant domestic workers to their employers' power in the context of the Arab world (Pande, 2012). Several academics document migrant domestic workers' exploitation by their employers in Lebanon (see Jureidini, 2004, 2010; Jureidini &Moukarbel, 2004; Moukarbel, 2009; Pande, 2012, 2014). Others describe their exploitation at their employers' homes in the Middle East, in Syria (Kahale, 2003), Bahrain (Najjar, 2004), Kuwait (Godfrey, Shah & Smith, 2004) and the United Arab Emirates (Sabban, 2004). To this point, literature on migrant domestics' disastrous work and living situations in the Middle East has been disseminated primarily through the media, human rights NGOs and international organizations (Pande, 2012).

Several feminist studies emphasize various dimensions of inequality experienced by domestic workers vis-à-vis their employers, especially at an intimate level of interaction. For example, some have noted a common tendency among employers (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Cock, 1980; Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Romero, 1992; Wrigley, 1995; Young, 1987) whereby

employers represent domestics as belonging to their "own" family. Such behaviour, according to these scholars, is highly exploitative − it creates a false impression in their domestics' minds, inducing them to think they are members of their employers' family and motivating them to provide additional services without remuneration. Parreñas (1998) complicates the issue. After observing the behaviour of her research informants (Filipino domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles), she suggests that employers' family-member like treatment of their domestics could be simultaneously used by employers and domestics to their own advantage. Parreñas points out that unequal relations between domestics and employers do not mean that employers can unilaterally impose their authority; instead, because of the interdependent nature of their relationship both parties can exercise power over each other to their best advantage even when they share an extremely unequal power relationship. She builds her argument on Foucauldian analytics of power which reject the idea of any singular or universal possession of power. Therefore, power does not necessarily operate in a linear fashion from employers to domestic workers; there is always the possibility of the two parties participating in a power game within the unequal institutional context and intimate setting of domestic work.

Scholars working in the area of illegalized/ undocumented (im)migration note the perilous situation of many illegalized migrant workers in the destination states (for example, Calavita, 2003; De Genova, 2002, 2004; Goldring &Landolt, 2011). The vulnerable situation of illegalized migrant domestic workers is also well explained (for example, De Regt, 2010; Pande, 2014; Raijman, Schammah-Gesser, & Kemp, 2003). The work on illegalized migrant domestic workers, however, does not shed light on illegalized domestics' interactions with employers; instead, their analytical and conceptual focus is on how the destination state makes migrant

domestic workers illegal. The literature on illegal migrant domestic workers in the Middle East seems relatively sparse, especially in comparison to the considerable work on illegal migrant domestic workers in the contexts of North America and Europe.

A great deal of recent research, including scholarly and non-scholarly publications and media reports, is pointing to the widespread practice of trafficking around the globe, especially in the Middle Eastern region (for some examples see Calandruccio, 2005; Degorge, 2006; Hamill, 2011; Jureidini, 2010; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; Lewis, 1994; Mattar, 2003; Sherry, 2004). The work cites migrant domestic workers as a category particularly susceptible to trafficking (Hamill, 2011). In reports prepared by international organizations, Lebanon is identified as a place where trafficking of migrant domestic workers is an ever present phenomenon (United Nations, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2010). Jureidini (2010) looks at the trafficking of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon and notes how it has become an open secret, manifested in the process of selling and buying migrant domestic workers, jointly by their placement agencies and employers. These migrant domestic workers possess no control over their labour in this buying-selling process and are clearly trafficked victims. He points out that the specific system of sponsorship (kafala) in Lebanon under which domestic workers' recruitment and placement is organized, causes migrant domestic workers to fall into a trafficking trap. Jureidini, however, does not focus on trafficked domestics' negotiation efforts with their employers or agents in the process of being bought and sold. Trafficked domestics' negotiations, given the limitations of their situation, are understudied and Jureidini's work is no exception. In his view, trafficked migrant domestics in Lebanon remain passive recipients of institutional authority exercised by employers and employment agents.

The second strand of the literature relevant to this dissertation looks at how domestic workers respond to their employers' power through individual conduct and negotiations (for some examples see Adams, 2000; Gamburd, 2000; Gill, 1994; Lan, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Moukarbel, 2009; Palmer, 1989; Parreñas, 1998, 2001; Rollins, 1985). Such individual behaviour, as these scholars note, does not dismantle the institutional structure that underpins migrant domestic workers' subordination to their employers. Another body of contemporary scholarship looks at domestic workers' collective and organized efforts to improve their work situations and living conditions. These studies have been conducted in the context of North America, Europe, and the United Kingdom, or in countries with a history of collective organizing (see Anderson, 2010; Chin, 2003; Constable, 2009; Gurowitz, 2000; Law, 2003; Lyons, 2007; Piper, 2003). In what follows, I address some important work on migrant domestic workers' behaviour with their employers on an individual level. Note that I do not consider domestic workers' responses to their employers on a collective level. I am following Bangladeshi women`s individual stories.

Nicole Constable`s (2007) ethnography on Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong is an exemplary example of domestics' dealings and negotiations with their employers at an everyday level. A Foucauldian premise of power and resistance bolsters Constable`s analysis of Filipino domestics' behaviour: "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault, 1978, pp. 95-96). Constable says Filipino domestics express both direct and indirect forms of resistance on an individual level when responding to their employers' exercise of power. Actions of resistance are manifested in contestation, deception, dishonesty, mockery and pulling out from the job. They

use jokes to release the everyday pain and frustration they endure in the workplace. Such behaviour has also been noted in studies of domestic work (for example, Adams, 2000; Coley, 1981; Dill, 1988; Gamburd, 2000; Gill, 1994; Lan, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Palmer, 1988; Parreñas, 2001; Rollins, 1985). The general conclusion echoes Constable: on an individual level, domestics' resistance to their employers' authority has very little or nothing to do with changing the institutional status quo that sustains and perpetuates their subordinate situation.

Rachael Parreñas (1998) provides a more nuanced understanding of how Filipino domestics' individual-level resistance operates in realms of power. Her analysis rests on two basic premises of a Foucauldian understanding of power: it is diffused across spaces and places and it manifests in everyday interactions between individuals. Foucault (1980) says power is "machinery that no one owns" (1980, p. 156). Therefore, it "must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain" (Foucault, 1980, p.98). This dispersed power operationalizes between individuals in their everyday interactions. As feminist scholar Nancy Fraser (1989) points out : "Anchored in the multiplicity of what he [Foucault] calls 'micropractices,' the social practices that constitute everyday life in modern societies… power is better conceived as a complex, shifting field of relations in which everyone is an element" (1989, p. 29). In Foucault's view, then, every individual is embedded in power in the context of everyday social relations, no one completely holds power, nor can anyone be completely dispossessed from holding power. Although this view emphasizes a micro-dynamic of power relations between individuals, Foucault does not deny institutional (macro-level) power asymmetry, with individuals differentially situated within it (Parreñas, 1998).

The idea that power is dispersed and every individual is capable of exercising power over another leads Parreñas to interpret how Filipino domestic workers exercise power over their employers. These domestic workers are embedded in a significantly asymmetrical situation of power with their employers within the institutional and structural condition of migration: their precarious status as low-class migrant workers and non-citizens in the destination country, their race (non-white) and female gender puts them at a disadvantage with their affluent, white employers. However, individually how these domestics respond to and deal with their situation at their employers' homes is interesting. Parreñas does not see them as passive victims. Contrary to the literature on domestic work that emphasizes non-equitable dimensions of interactions between domestics and their employers (for example, Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Cock, 1980; Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Romero, 1992; Wrigley, 1995; Young, 1997) discussed previously in this chapter, these domestics interpret and often mold employers' actions to their advantage. They also respond to disciplinary actions by resorting to "various tactics of resistance, including displaying emotions to negotiate working conditions, carrying a mask to remove their work identity from their personal identity, and talking back, all of which are everyday actions that question work arrangements and relationships between employers and employees" (Parreñas, 1998, p. 323).

Nayla Moukarbel`s work (2009) provides a thought-provoking account of Sri Lankan domestic workers and their employers in Lebanon. She draws on Bourdieu`s (1991) notion of "symbolic power" and James Scott`s (1990) notion of "everyday forms of resistance" to explain the control and resistance aspects of the employer/employee relationship. Before going on with

Moukarbel and her findings, it is worth adding a brief discussion of symbolic power and everyday resistance.

Pierre Bourdieu (1991) defines symbolic power as standing in opposition to the common-sense understanding of power. According to Bourdieu (1991), power is diffused everywhere, and because it is scattered, it can remain undetected. When power is exercised in its hidden form, the outcome of violence produced by its exercise also remains covert. This intrinsic characteristic of power makes it easy for the dominant to impose their will on their subordinates: "For domination to be successful, it has to be hidden and invisible to the eyes of the dominated" (as cited in Moukarbel, 1999, p. 160). Bourdieu maintains that to understand symbolic violence, it is vital to "see that it presupposes a kind of active complicity on the part of those subjected to it" (1991, p. 23). Those subjected to the abuse of this type of power are unable to identify a "real" act of violence and, therefore, remain silent, and Bourdieu defines this silence as complicity. He also argues that whether and to what extent the subordinate collaborates with the dominant in the production of symbolic violence depends on the former's *habitus*. Bourdieu defines habitus as a particular mind-set internalized by people with a similar background; their behaviour or actions are informed by this mindset:

> It is important to note that habitus is somewhat analogous across persons from similar backgrounds. A person from a working-class background, for instance, has acquired different dispositions to one from a middle or high-class environment. The social conditions of existence of people, therefore, whether similar or different, are expressed in their habitus. (as cited in Moukarbel, 2009, p. 162)

Now, what shapes habitus? Dominant people exercise symbolic power over those who are relatively weak (for their social class, gender, education level etc.) and the latter who experience

its outcome (as covert violence) also indirectly participate with the former by complying with the mindset (they internalize that they are weaker).

In Moukarbel`s understanding, differences in the backgrounds of Lebanese employers and their Sri Lankan domestic workers, therefore, make them jointly participate and perpetuate symbolic violence. For example, because they have little or no formal education and are extremely poor, Sri Lankan domestic workers consider themselves subordinate to their affluent employers. Therefore, they silently comply with their employers' instructions within an unequal power relationship and apparently without expressing any resentment; in short, they collaborate with their employers to perpetuate the violence exercised on them.

Interestingly, even when Sri Lankan domestic workers participate in the covert exercise of power and violence, quite contradictorily, they also indirectly resist. Moukarbel explains this by referring to "everyday forms of resistance," an idea advanced by James Scott and Tria Kerkvliet in their research on peasants in Southeast Asia (1986). Of these peasants, they say: "They require little or no co-ordination or planning; they often represent forms of 'self-help'; they typically avoid any direct symbolic affront to authority; and they are generally underwritten by a sub-culture of resistance" (Scott & Kerkvliet, 1986, p. I). Such behaviour is conscious; the conduct is "*intended* either to mitigate or deny claims asserted by superordinate classes" (Scott, 1985, p. 290; emphasis in original). Scott and Kerkvliet observe everyday resistance among peasants manifested as "footdragging, dissimulation, false-compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth" (Scott & Kerkvliet, 1986, p. 6). Because these peasants are vulnerable, they cannot directly confront their landlords; instead, they indirectly

exercise resistance and take control of their situation. Moukarbel notes some similar forms of resistance among Sri Lankan domestics' behaviour: pretended oblivion, fibbing, pilfering etc.

With symbolic violence and everyday resistance at the core of her theoretical framework, Moukarbel (2009) contends migrant domestic workers' negotiations with their employers could be conceptualized as a competitive game played by two contestants, domestic workers as subordinate and employers as dominant: "A type of 'equilibrium' is attained where the two protagonists (the dominant and the subordinate), each with the weapons available to them and with measured strength, pull the rope in the direction that is best suited to their own self-interests; careful, however, not to break it" (Moukarbel, 2009, p. 220).

In the literature on domestics' resistance of the power of their employers, scholars often consider either individual-level (micro) or collective resistance: domestics' individual resistance takes place informally and within their daily practices of domestic work; collective resistance, meanwhile, happens through formal organizing of domestic workers in unions or associations (Pande, 2012). Amrita Pande's insightful study, however, suggests otherwise. Drawing on oral histories of 57 migrant domestic workers (from Ethiopia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) in Lebanon, Pande looks at their resistance activities within the institutional system of kafala which underpins their migration to Lebanon. Using James Scott`s (1990) notion of "infrapolitics" which, according to her, offers a middle-ground in perceiving resistance – that is, resistance as standing between micro and macro understandings of resistance, the first one realizable in "passive acquiescence" and the second in " outright social mobilization" (Pande, 2012, p. 399). Pande coins a new term: meso-level resistance. This type of resistance is exhibited by migrant domestic workers in Lebanon who form "strategic dyads or more formalized worker

collectives in ethnic churches and rental apartments" (ibid, p. 398). Throughout her work, Pande questions the notion of "victimhood" – the widespread perception that migrant domestic workers in the Arab world are nothing but victims of abuse under the institutional system of kafala which organizes their work and living arrangements. In so doing, she simultaneously challenges the dichotomous understanding of private (individual) forms of resistance and overt forms of collective (organized) resistance in the form of organized labour unions; she suggests resistance can follow alternative pathways.

Interestingly, both Pande (2012) and Moukarbel (2009) use James Scott`s notion of "infrapolitics" to understand domestics' resistance. Scott comments: "If formal political organization is the realm of elites … of written records… and public action, infrapolitics is, by contrast, the realm of informal leadership and non-elites, of conversation and oral discourse, and of surreptitious resistance" (Scott, 1990, p. 200). Scott's perception of infrapolitics, therefore, expands the notion of politics and political activities at the grass-roots level and beyond our commonsense understanding of politics as an endeavour informed by an organized practice at the formal level. Whereas Moukarbel (2009) materializes infrapolitics to understand domestics' resistance with their employers as a micro-conduct (informal) used to take control of their subordinated situation with employers, Pande (2012) uses the same term to extend our understanding of resistance as a meso-level conduct between informal (micro/ everyday activity) and formal (collective-level / organized activity) activities enacted by domestic workers to resist their subordination.

Michele Ruth Gamburd (2000) provides her readers with another distinctive view of domestic workers' conduct. Her case study of Sri Lankan domestic workers in the Middle East

portrays domestics' encounters with their employers as "neither full-fledged resistance nor complete acquiescence to hegemony" (2000, p. 121). Using their capacity to act to take control of their situation, the domestic workers in this study prove themselves effective individual agents. Their behaviour and structural constraints seem to inform each other as they simultaneously "negotiate," "reproduce" and "transform" the power hierarchy between themselves and their employers (Gamburd, 2000, p. 121). Unlike Moukarbel and Pande who perceive the resistance behaviour of domestics as self-conscious, Gamburd seem reluctant to accept that domestics' behaviour can be seen as a self-conscious act. She argues the nature of domestic work involves both a client-salesperson relationship and personal intimacy; it is not possible to maintain that domestics' behaviour with their employers can be seen simply within a simplistic relation of domination and resistance. She ultimately suggests it is not about whether domestics actively resist or passively acquiesce; instead, they may simultaneously do both. Thus, the Sri Lankan domestics both "resist" and "accommodate" their employers' domination.

All the scholarly works reviewed here have one commonality; all show how migrant domestic workers' behaviour with their employer is induced by the institutional context of their migration and legal status in the destination country that puts them into an unequal situation of power relations with their employers. Unequal power relations with their employers will most certainly affect domestics' behaviour. However, certain important questions remain unaddressed. Are there alternative ways to address domestics' behaviour with their employers in realms of power relations other than considering the institutional constructs of the receiving country? What about the power relations and values of their home context? Does the home context make sense in understanding migrant domestic workers' behaviour with their employers?

Using “real” data on some Bangladeshi domestic workers’ behaviour with their employers in the Middle East, I consider these questions in this dissertation and provide an alternative understanding about Bangladeshi women`s conduct with their employers in the Middle East In the next chapter, I explain the basic situation of Bangladeshi women`s migration to the Middle East. In subsequent chapters, I analyze the data and interpret my findings.

Chapter Four

Setting the Stage: Bangladeshi Women's Migration to the Middle East

1-Introduction

This chapter sets the stage for my analyses in Chapters Five and Six which respectively problematize Bangladeshi women's engagement with migration brokers from their social and familial circles and their conduct with their employers in the Middle East. To this end, in section two, I provide a brief overview of the background and context of contemporary outward migration from Bangladesh, highlighting past and present trends and noting contemporary phenomena in migration to the Middle East. In section three I highlight some important Bangladeshi organizations and agents and their involvement with Bangladeshi migration arrangements. In the fourth section I turn to the issue of women's migration. Finally, I conclude by summarizing the key points of this chapter. The chapter provides an important contextual backdrop to the stories I include in later chapters.

2-Background and Context of Overseas Migration from Bangladesh

Literally Bangladesh means "Bengali nation;" it is a low plain in the Bay of Bengal and situated between India and Myanmar (Kibria, 2011). For almost 200 years (1757-1947) Bangladesh was a part of undivided British India. With the ending of British rule in the Indian subcontinent in August 1947, Bangladesh became a part of Pakistan and remained so until 1971. During that time Bangladesh was known as the eastern province of the Pakistani state or, more commonly, East Pakistan. Bangladesh became an independent nation state in 1971 following a nine-month war for independence.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world with 146.6 million people living in an area of just 147,570 square kilometers (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010, p.3). The country suffers from widespread underemployment. According to a labour force survey report 24.5 per cent of the working age group (that is, adult females and males) remains underemployed inside the country (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010, p. 161). Therefore, the practical utility of labour migration seems two-fold for Bangladesh: By exporting its labour, the state can solve the problem of underemployment inside the country and accumulate foreign exchange from remittance earnings of its migrant labourers. To gain this double benefit, the government of Bangladesh has been supporting the export of "manpower" by officially promoting labour migration in its Five Year Plans (Oishi, 2005). Although the RMG (ready-made garment) sector is commonly acknowledged to be making the foremost contribution to foreign exchange earnings of the national economy, the net foreign exchange earnings from Bangladeshi migrant workers' remittances surpass those of the RMG industry (Siddiqui, 2005).

Kibria (2011) has noted that remittances sent to Bangladesh predominantly come through temporary workers in Gulf States of the Middle Eastern region; since 1998, remittance earnings have been steadily increasing every year. Interestingly, the political turmoil caused by the Arab Spring[12] did not significantly reduce Bangladeshi foreign workers' remittance earnings. In 2011, when the uprisings were rapidly spreading across the Middle East, many predicted that Bangladeshi remittance earnings would decrease significantly. However, Bangladeshi workers' total remittance contribution to the national economy that year was 11.5 billion US dollars, six

[12]This term refers to the mass-scale anti-government rebellion in early 2011 across Arab League states in the Middle East. Starting in Tunisia, it escalated in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco, Syria, Jordan, destabilizing a substantial proportion of the region for some time. See:
http://middleeast.about.com/od/humanrightsdemocracy/a/Definition-Of-The-Arab-Spring.htm

per cent more than the previous year and the highest remittance earnings in the history of Bangladesh since labour export began in 1976 (Kibria, 2011). Kibria gives two reasons for this unexpected economic gain. First, those Bangladeshis who came back from the Middle East in 2011 due to the political upheaval may have brought with them all their financial resources acquired in the Middle East. Second, Bangladeshis in the Middle East who did not return to Bangladesh that year might have sent all their assets to Bangladesh upon observing the volatile political situation. Furthermore, in recent years, as Kibria (2011) notes, the government of Bangladesh in collaboration with the private sector has been encouraging migrant labourers to send their remittances in Bangladesh through formal banking channels instead of informal routes; for this reason, remittance earnings by foreign workers are now easily detectable and therefore quantifiable.

From the perspective of the Bangladeshi state, then, labour migration is crucial. By exporting its labour, the state finds a practical way to solve underemployment, and with remittance earnings, the state enhances its foreign reserves. With these exchange earnings, it can buy capital goods and raw materials to develop the economy and handle its balance of payments.

Migration from Bangladesh is also significant because of its ability to ameliorate the poverty of many Bangladeshi. Since the 1980s, Bangladesh has been implementing pro-market economic policies to attain "macroeconomic stability, economic liberalization and greater integration of economy to global trade and investment" (Muqtada, 2003, p. 319). Some scholars (Muqtada, 2003; Nuruzzaman, 2004) have persuasively argued that neo-liberal policies have not been able to improve the employment situation of the economy, nor have the policies improved the social indicators of the country. Issues of wealth distribution have been largely ignored in the

name of increasing production and economic growth under the neoliberal mandate of privatization; the result has been a rise of inequality. Given this scenario, migration outside the country seems a good option to many Bangladeshis. Tasnim Siddiqui, a prominent researcher on Bangladeshi migration, suggests that to economically empower themselves, many Bangladeshis, particularly those who are not poorest of the poor, or in other words, those who are impoverished but still remain in a position to bear the cost of migration, migrate outside the country (Siddiqui, 2003). Pervasive economic insolvency combined with lack of adequate employment opportunity inside the country, in her view, underpins outward migration.

2.1 Migration from Bangladesh: Past and Present

Bengali outward migration did not begin in the past few decades. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Bengalis from the current state of Bangladesh, along with other natives from the Indian subcontinent, served in the British Empire ships as sailors; these ships transported goods across the world from the port city of Kolkata (in present-day India) (Siddiqui, 2003). Following the end of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, India and Pakistan emerged as two separate nation states in 1947, with the current state of Bangladesh included within the territorial boundaries of Pakistan. Spate (1963) observes the division of British India resulted in a flow of approximately 17.5 million people within the newly created geographic boundaries of India and Pakistan; severely affected by the turmoil caused by dissolution of the Indian subcontinent, many went to Britain (as cited in Peach, 2006, p. 134). During that time, the British government had an open immigration policy for those from its former colonies; as per the

British Nationality Act of 1948, they were citizens of the United Kingdom (Peach, 2006). Over time, this policy resulted in a substantial number of Bangladeshis in Britain (Peach, 2006).

Spener (1997) notes that after 1962, the British government made it difficult for people of colour from its former colonies (South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean) to stay in Britain; the government justified its action by arguing the external labour needs of the British economy had diminished considerably. In Spener's view, it was racism against people of colour, not diminished labour demand, behind the restrictive immigration policy: "Assimilability was the issue; controls over 'coloured' immigrants were introduced despite labour needs, not because of them" (Spener, 1997, p. 155).

Because of the British government's strict immigration post-1962, by the 1980s Bangladeshi immigration to Britain had virtually ended (Oishi, 2005). At the same time, new avenues opened up. In the mid-1970s, contract job opportunities for Bangladeshis emerged in some countries in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf Co-operation Council states (GCC) (Kibria, 2011). BMET (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training) data indicate that during 1976-2009 more than five million Bangladeshis went to work in the Gulf region; most went to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (as cited in Kibria, 2011). During the 1990s, contract labour migration expanded to include East and Southeast Asia: Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore, as well as Lebanon and Mauritius (Kibria, 2011).

In terms of scale and complexity, short-term contract migration to the Middle East is now the predominant form of Bangladeshi migration (Rahman, 2012; Siddiqui, 2001, 2003, 2005), with Bangladeshi diasporas also found in North America, Australia, Europe (Kibria, 2011; Siddiqui, 2003) and South Africa (Siddiqui, 2003). In addition, clandestine cross-border

migration of Bangladeshis to India has been occurring since Bangladesh was created in 1971 (Kumar, 2009; Saha, 2002). Irregular and often circular in nature, this clandestine movement has caused much strain in the diplomatic relations of the two neighbouring states (Kibria, 2011). While interesting, a full discussion of this cross-border movement is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Siddiqui (2001) and Kibria (2011) note that migration of Bangladeshis to Middle Eastern states takes place on the basis of specific job contracts in one of four categories: professionals (doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses); skilled workers (manufacturing or factory workers, computer technicians, linesmen); semi-skilled workers (tailors, masons); unskilled workers (domestic workers, cleaners, agricultural labourers, construction workers). BMET statistics (Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training, 2015) reveal unskilled/ less-skilled category migrants comprise the larger share of Bangladeshi migration; skilled workers come second. The professional category is comparatively very low. For example, during 1976-2014, 50 per cent of the overseas migration was for the unskilled/less-skilled category, followed by approximately over 31 per cent skilled and 15 per cent semi-skilled. Only about 2 per cent of migrants were in the professional category.

Contrary to the settlement migration of Bangladeshis to Britain or more recently to North America and Australia, workers who migrate to the Middle East with a job offer will return to Bangladesh after completing their contracts. Contract labour migration to the Middle East is, of course, not unique to Bangladesh; it includes other countries from Asia, notably India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand and Sri Lanka (Castles, de Hass, & Miller, 2014; Castles & Miller, 2009; Oishi, 2005; Moukarbel, 2009). Some scholars (Castles, de Hass, & Miller, 2014;

Castles & Miller, 2009; Moukarbel, 2009) say the phenomenon of temporary migration was initiated following OPEC`s (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) sudden decision in 1973 to increase oil prices globally. Oil-rich Gulf co-operation council (GCC) states in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates) benefitted enormously as a result. The huge revenues were initially invested in infrastructural projects. Later, these countries invested oil revenues in service sectors. As labour force participation rates amongst citizens of the GCC states were historically low, they had to rely considerably on foreign labourers to build their construction and service industry (Moukarbel, 2009; Oishi, 2005). As observed by Baldwin-Edwards (2005), initially (in the 1970s and early 1980s) GCC countries recruited labour from certain Arab states, namely, Egypt, Yemen and Palestine (as cited in Moukarbel, 2009, p. 22). Although during this time a small number of workers from certain Asian countries, for example, India and Pakistan, were also found in the construction sector, after the mid-1980s, the number of Asian workers from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Indonesia Sri Lanka and Bangladesh climbed dramatically (Moukarbel, 2009).

More recently, the demand for Asian workers in the Gulf states has continued, with diversified labour needs generated in the service sector (Broachman, 1993; Castles, de Hass, & Miller, 2014; Chammartin, 2005), including domestic workers, nurses, sales persons and various other service sector workers (Castles & Miller 2009; Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014). Other countries in the Middle East, notably, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel, have begun to import Asian domestic workers to meet the increasing demand (Asis, 2006). A massive demand for female service sector workers generated across Middle East has accelerated a “feminization of migration” in the region (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014; Castles & Miller, 2009). Chammartin

(2005) says 81 per cent of women migrants in the Middle East are domestic workers (cited in Moukarbel, 2009, p. 23).

As some scholars (Fargues, 2006; Malit & Naufal, 2014; Rahman, 2012) have noted, a migrant worker is not eligible for a permanent right of stay or citizenship in the Gulf States. As Philippe Fargues (2006) argues, the Gulf States pursue a policy of protectionism to secure its labour market from foreigners. It is mandatory that a foreign worker be sponsored by a native employer or *kafeel* to become eligible to live and work there (Baldwin-Edwards, 2011; Colton, 2010; De Bel-Air, 2011; Longava, 1997; Rahman, 2012). A kafeel can be an individual, firm or enterprise who holds all financial and legal responsibilities for a migrant worker throughout his/her approved contract period of stay; a migrant worker loses the legal right to stay as soon as the contract expires (Rahman, 2012).

Another aspect of Middle Eastern migration is worth mentioning. In general, Asian labour receiving states in the Gulf are not interested in bi-lateral agreements with the sending states (Fernanadez, 2014; Malit & Naufal, 2014). According to Malit and Naufal (2014), they refrain from such agreements to retain their bargaining power. This does not mean that labour agreements do not occur. For example, a report by International Migration Organization (Agunias, Aghazarm, & Battistella, n.d.) notes that Bangladesh signed bilateral agreements with Kuwait (2000 and 2008) and South Korea (2007). Five memoranda of understanding were ratified between Bangladesh and several of its migrant receiving states: Qatar (1988 and 2008), Malaysia (2003 and 2006), United Arab Emirates (2007), Oman (2007), Libya (2008). The report does not provide any further information about these bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding; for example, whether and to what extent these agreements have taken effect is

not mentioned. Regardless, Bangladesh urgently needs migrant workers' remittances and, therefore, remains in a considerably weaker bargaining situation. It will continue to send workers, regardless of a possible drop in wages. Bangladeshi labour migration to the Middle East, thus, takes shape within an asymmetrical bargaining relationship between Bangladesh and its labour receiving states in Middle East.

3-Arrangement of Bangladeshi Temporary Migration Abroad

This section discusses some important Bangladeshi organizations and agents directly involved in arranging Bangladeshi temporary workers' migration. It includes information I gathered from available secondary materials as well as information I collected during my fieldwork in Bangladesh.

3.1 Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET)

Established in 1976, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) has administrative responsibilities related to migration from Bangladesh; it is a state organization under the supervision of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (Rahman, 2012; Siddiqui, 2001, 2005). It has principal authority over the issuance and renewal of licenses to private recruiting agencies and grants permission for their recruitment operations. BMET holds an official mandate from the state of Bangladesh to promote overseas migration and to look after the welfare of Bangladeshi migrants abroad. Besides, BMET administers several training programs towards skill development of prospective migrant workers; these programs are offered through 38 training centres across the country. Only foreign-bound

Bangladeshi domestic workers are required to attend a special training program (lasting three weeks) administered by BMET. Such training programs are optional for prospective migrant workers under any other job category than domestic work. As I was told by the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, the mandatory training requirement for domestic workers has been stringently in effect since 2008; the state supervises this must-have training for overseas-bound female domestic workers to make up for their lack of formal schooling and lack of professional experience as domestic workers and to reduce the chances of sexual violence at their employers' homes.

Some studies (Hossain, 1986; Siddiqui, 2001) indicate that for a few years after its independence, Bangladesh had no organized labour export policy. In order to benefit from the increasing demand for foreign workers in the Middle East, later on the state began to promote the exportation of labour. As part of this promotion, the BMET was established in 1976. At first, BMET was limited to recruitment arrangements for the Middle East or elsewhere. With the global spread of neoliberalism and privatization during the 1980s, the Bangladeshi state started to promote private sector developments. Thus, the state invited private recruiters' involvement in migrant recruitment processes and gradually decreased its own direct participation. The state maintained limited involvement process through its own recruiting agency BOESEL. Since then, its main role has been to enact regulations and to monitor private recruiters. In other words, BMET serves as the principal bureaucratic and regulatory body under which Bangladeshi workers' overseas migration takes shape. Acting for the state, BMET can take disciplinary measures in the event of irregular or illegal practices (Siddiqui, 2001).

3.2 Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESEL)

Established in 1984, BOESEL, as noted above, is the recruiting agency operated by the Bangladeshi state (Rahman, 2012; Siddiqui, 2001, 2005). During my fieldwork in Bangladesh, the managing director explained BOESEL's involvement in migration.

Like private recruiting agencies, BOESEL holds a manpower license from the state. However, unlike private agencies, this organization's business operations are strictly directed and monitored by the state. BOESEL operates in the area of professional and skilled workers' migration to the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Africa. Its scale of operation, however, is limited in comparison to private recruiting agencies. As Rahman (2012, p.221) notes, according to the BMET estimate (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, 2011), of the 6.26 million Bangladeshi workers who went overseas to work between 1976 and 2008, Bangladeshi private recruitment agencies assisted in the recruitment of the majority (2.33 million); these workers went overseas in the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled categories. During the same period, BOESEL assisted only 14,811 workers, and these persons found work in the professional category. Over time, BOESEL's operation has remained small but relatively steady compared to private recruiting agencies and their often unpredictable and fluctuating operation. More recently, as I was told by the managing director of BOESEL, this agency has also been involved in female migration. For example, since 2010 BOESEL has been sending women garment workers to Jordan. Before 2010 very few female garment workers were sent to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates through BOESEL. At the time of my fieldwork during 2010-2011, BOESEL was still sending garment workers to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in limited numbers.

As became apparent in my conversation with the managing director of the organization, the state considers it essential to run BOESEL, even on a limited scale, so that it can maintain some kind of control over the manpower recruitment sector. Such strategic behaviour is justified given the chaos in the Bangladeshi labour export sector, with overwhelming presence of private recruitment agencies and increasing instances of malpractice observed in recent years. The BOESEL managing director told me Bangladesh lost some important labour markets in Southeast Asia and the Middle East during 2005-2010, primarily due to irregularities associated with private recruiting agencies' operation. In his view, the state urgently needs to prevent such incidents to protect foreign markets for Bangladeshi labourers. Accordingly, the state runs BOESEL as an ideal recruiting agency; its ultimate aim is to teach private recruiting agencies about fair practices of recruitment.

3.3 Private Recruiting Agencies and Sub-agents

As mentioned, with the accelerating emphasis on private sector development in Bangladesh during the 1980s, private recruiting agencies gradually took over labour recruitment. According to a recent estimate, there are approximately 700 recruiting agencies in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting agencies, 2011). Having received a license from the state, these recruiting agencies operate under a private organization named Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) (Rahman, 2012; Siddiqui, 2001).

My interview with the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment confirmed Bangladeshi recruiting agencies primarily send skilled and unskilled/less-skilled workers to the Middle East and East/Southeast Asia; interestingly, he told

me that only ten of these 700 recruiting agencies hold a special license from the state which makes them eligible to send domestic workers to the Middle East. The Deputy Secretary also informed me that domestic worker sender recruiting agencies in Bangladesh hold a mandatory security deposit of 150,0000 Bangladeshi taka (equivalent to approximately 18,750 Canadian dollars) with the state[13]; this is in addition to the regular amount that they hold with the state for a license of operation. The government also requires each of these ten recruiting agencies to have a formal agreement with a counterpart recruiting agency in the Middle East into whose custody they send domestic workers. The Bangladeshi embassy in the destination state will verify the contract between Bangladeshi and Middle Eastern recruiting agencies before it can be made operative.

Because of these strict state regulations, recruiting agencies may be more reluctant to deal with domestic workers. I see this as a reasonable justification for the insignificant number of domestic worker sending recruiting agencies in the substantial population of recruiting agencies in Bangladesh.

During my fieldwork I also learned that private recruiting agencies in Bangladesh rely almost exclusively on their sub-agents. As suggested by Rahman (2012) and Siddiqui (2001), sub-agents collect prospective clients from all over Bangladesh and particularly from small village areas. These sub-agents unofficially work on behalf of recruiting agencies in Bangladesh to gather interested candidates for migration. The candidates' overseas recruitment and migration are subsequently arranged by the recruiting agency.

[13] This is based on the exchange rate of one Canadian dollar equalling 80 Bangladeshi taka, the rate for 2010-2011 when I was doing my fieldwork in Bangladesh.

Rahman (2012) has observed the particular process whereby Bangladeshi and Gulf recruiting agencies engage in arranging Bangladeshi workers' recruitment. A recruiting agency in Bangladesh initially receives a "demand letter" from a recruiting agency in a Gulf State. After the letter has been verified and approved by BMET, the Bangladeshi recruiting agency uses its local sub-agents who start to search for those who are interested to work abroad. These sub-agents work across Bangladeshi villages to bring together prospective migrant workers and Bangladeshi recruiting agencies. They submit prospective migrants' passports and relevant papers to the recruiting agency in Bangladesh. The agency then gets in touch with its counterpart recruiting agency. When a "work visa" has been arranged for a potential foreign worker, a kafeel in the Gulf state passes it on to the native recruiting agency (in the Gulf) who, in turn, sends it to its counterpart recruiting agency in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2012, p. 222). At this point, the recruiting agency in Bangladesh starts to arrange its client`s departure by collecting an immigration clearance from BMET.

More information on recruiting agencies and sub-agents is given in Chapter Five where I focus on Bangladeshi women's engagement with migration brokers.

3.4 Informal Contacts

Prospective Bangladeshi migrants' personal-level contacts with Bangladeshi agents living abroad or contact with these agents through their acquaintances open the door to employment for many. Between 1976 and 2008, 62 per cent of the total Bangladeshi overseas employment took place through informal channels, for example, via personal connections in their social circles (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, 2011). Available studies (Rahman, 2012;

Siddiqui, 2001, 2005) indicate informal agents' or brokers' important role in recruitment, especially visa collection. Rahman (2012) discusses the "urro" or "flying" visa: "it flies directly from a migrant broker in the Gulf countries to a prospective migrant in Bangladesh, bypassing local recruiting agencies and their subagents" (Rahman, 2012, p. 223). A broker living in a Gulf State finds a job for his/her friend(s) or relative(s) with a kafeel (sponsor-employer) or somebody known to the kafeel. The broker collects the passport photocopy and other relevant papers from the friend/ relative in Bangladesh (the prospective migrant worker) and passes the papers to the prospective kafeel in the Gulf. After the kafeel has collected a visa, the broker sends it to the friend or relative or the prospective migrant worker in Bangladesh. Finally, the prospective migrant worker completes certain official formalities (medical examination, immigration clearance from BMET) before being able to fly. Visa collection has a substantial economic benefit for a broker in the destination state; he/she imposes a service fee on both the prospective migrant and the sponsor. Chapter Five discusses the broker operation in more depth.

A number of private NGOs inside Bangladesh have become involved with Bangladeshi migration. Since 2003, the majority of migration NGOs in Bangladesh work under the banner of BMDF (Bangladesh Migrant Development Forum). BMDF is a forum of migrant NGOs created jointly by IOM (International Organization of Migration) and Action Aid International, a transnational human rights organization. These NGOs, however, do not participate in workers' overseas recruitment and migration arrangement. As of 2011, 28 NGOs under BMDF were working to promote migrant workers' rights and ensure safe migration. Only two, SHISUK and SHOSTI, work on both female and male migration. Only one NGO, BOMSA (Bangladeshi Obvibashi Mohila Sramik Association), works exclusively on female migration (since 1998). It

raises awareness amongst Bangladeshi prospective and returned female migrants about their rights and educates prospective female migrants about safe migration. Certain transnational donor organizations, for example, Canada-based CIDA and ActionAid International, sponsor BOMSA. BOMSA, SHISUK and SHOSTI have been supporting the state of Bangladesh in running its mandatory training program for domestic workers. Some UN organizations, including International Organization of Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have been working in Bangladesh to generate public awareness of safe migration; their work includes anti-trafficking projects inside the country. International organizations' migration-related projects often take place through collaboration with state organizations and NGOs/ research organizations

4-Migration of Bangladeshi Women

How does Bangladeshi women's independent migration to Middle East fit into the scenario of temporary workers' migration in the region? Before the 1990s, Bangladeshi migration to the Middle East was male migration; this started to change after the 1990s when Bangladeshi women started to independently migrate (Siddiqui, 2001). For quite some time, however, female migration constituted a very insignificant proportion of Bangladeshi migration to the Middle East. Some studies (Oishi 2005; Siddiqui, 2001) say that until the early 2000s, women constituted no more than one per cent of the total yearly migration. The situation has changed; BMET statistics for 2004-2014 show women's migration steadily increased every year, reaching as high as 18 per cent of the total migration in 2014. Some scholars (Siddiqui, 2001; Sultan, 2010) believe the official statistics under-represent the actual number of Bangladeshi

women who migrate every year. According to Sultan (2010), as the Bangladeshi state has never been consistent in its policies on female migration (I discuss this later in the chapter), there are increasing instances of clandestine outward movement. As a result, substantial numbers of female migrations are not documented. Sultan refers to the long-term study of Blanchet, Razzaque and Biswas (2008) to support her claim. Whereas the state estimate of Bangladeshi female migration during 2000-2004 was 13,000, according to the estimate of these three researchers, 437,020 Bangladeshi women resided outside the country, mainly in the Middle East; they also say 2,770,796 Bangladeshis were outside Bangladesh as foreign workers during 2000-2004 (as cited in Sultan, 2010, p. 115). Accordingly, Bangladeshi women represented approximately 15 per cent of the total number of Bangladeshis outside Bangladesh during 2000-2004. This figure is 15 times higher than the official estimate of one per cent female migration in the aggregate yearly counts during the early 2000s.

Illegal cross-border movements of Bangladeshi women and men to India have been occurring since 1971 (Kumar, 2009; Saha, 2002). This could be seen as a significant impediment to obtaining a fair estimate of Bangladeshi females' outward migration. The undocumented cross-border migration includes instances of voluntary migration as well as trafficking (Sultan, 2003). Sultan (2010) maintains that when illegal cross-border movements of Bangladeshi women to India are taken into consideration side by side with their legal or clandestine movements to the Middle East, Southeast/ East Asia or elsewhere, the number of Bangladeshi women who migrate outside the country for work would be considerably higher than the official estimates of the Bangladeshi state. Noting the increasing instances of irregular female migration, Siddiqui (2001) provides several explanations: cumbersome bureaucratic procedures for formal migration, the

state's restrictive policy on female migration, and the authorization of only Bangladeshi license-holders to act as legitimate intermediaries in domestic workers' migration. This has given rise to increased use of unacknowledged channels for migration, making it difficult to estimate the extent of migration.

As available studies (see Dannecker, 2005; Siddiqui, 2001) indicate, Bangladeshi women's independent migration became visible in the 1990s (Siddiqui, 2001). Certain academic works (Hossain, 1984; Siddiqui, 2001) maintain this was happening in a scattered fashion during the 1970s; however, no solid statistics are readily available to back this up. As I was told by the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), there was a dearth of systematic and comprehensive quantitative data on Bangladeshi female migration during the 1990s; this problem continued until at least 2003. During 1990-2003, the Bangladesh state had no systematic database on women`s migration; the state simply made yearly estimates. The situation started to improve gradually after 2004, and this trend is reflected in BMET website. BMET now has relatively better data on female migration than in the 1990s and early 2000s; destination countries are incorporated in its database. However, BMET data still have a major limitation; they only provide aggregate yearly estimates of Bangladeshi female migrant workers in different countries and do not systematically classify the job categories within which these women work. The proprietor of Hasan International Limited, one of the largest female migrant sending recruiting agencies in Bangladesh and the technical director of BMET both told me that domestic workers overwhelmingly dominate female migration from Bangladesh to the Middle East. The number of any other category of female workers, according to their understanding, is almost negligible.

Limitations in the availability of comprehensive and reliable data on Bangladeshi women's outward migration have always precluded getting a full picture. As mentioned, this problem was particularly acute during the early years of female migration from Bangladesh (the 1990s) and continued to the early 2000s. Based on disparate statistics collected through various public and private sources, Siddiqui`s (2001) study indicates unskilled workers (domestic workers, cleaners, labourers) and skilled workers (manufacturing or garment workers) joined in Bangladeshi female migration during the 1990s, heading to the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and Malaysia. BMET data show Lebanon and Jordan are two other destination countries. In terms of sheer numbers, BMET statistics indicate Lebanon to be the main destination of Bangladeshi domestic workers in the Middle East. A table with statistics on Bangladeshi female migration during 2004-2011 can be found in Appendix D.

Two major destinations of Bangladeshi female migration during the 1990s are noted by Nana Oishi (2005): the Middle East and Malaysia. On the basis of statistical information provided by International Organization of Migration (IOM) and International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), she says United Arab Emirates (UAE) was the major destination of Bangladeshi female workers in 1999 and Malaysia was the second major destination. Bangladeshi women's migration to Malaysia can be associated with the "feminization of migration" (Castles, de Hass, & Miller, 2014; Castles & Miller, 2009; Chattopadhyay, 1997; Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Piper, 2003) in the new industrial economies of East and Southeast Asia; this began in the 1990s following a similar trend in the Middle East, starting in the mid-1980s (Castles, de Hass, & Miller, 2014; Castles & Miller, 2009). Some studies (see Afsar, 2002, 2004; Dannecker, 2005) note the presence of Bangladeshi

female workers in the garment and textile industries of Malaysia during 1991-1999, mostly as contract workers. A study by Afsar (2002) indicates that during 1991-1999 half the Bangladeshi female manufacturing employment outside the country was in Malaysia (50 per cent) followed by the United Arab Emirates (13 per cent). However, during 2007-2012, following a comprehensive ban imposed by the Malaysian government on Bangladeshi workers, the migration of Bangladeshi women workers came to a standstill. Malaysia justified the ban on the grounds of increased instances of forgeries in Bangladeshi workers' recruitment which the government seemed unable to prevent.[14]

Since the 1990s, migration of Bangladeshi women to the Middle East as unskilled/ less-skilled workers (predominantly domestic workers) has been the dominant form of female labour migration (Siddiqui, 2001). As I am concerned with Bangladeshi female migration to the Middle East, I must consider this at some length.

What initiated and sustained the migration of Bangladeshi women to the Middle East? The decline in the various construction activities in some oil-rich countries (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia) that began shortly after the global oil-price hike of 1973 accompanied a demand for foreign workers in service sectors of these countries since the mid-1980s (Castles & Miller, 2009; Moukarbel, 2009). According to Castles and Miller (2009), in the oil-rich Gulf states, "[t]he demand for domestic workers, nurses, sales staff, and other service personnel surged, leading to a marked feminization of migrant labor flows, with Sri Lanka and Indonesia as the main sources" (1999, p.4) ; Lebanon, Jordan and Israel later joined this labour demand chain. Certain researchers (see Brochman, 1993;

[14] A number of reports in Bangladeshi national newspapers explain why the Malaysian government banned Bangladeshi migration in 2007 and continued the ban in later years (see *Daily Star* December 27, 2007, January 01, 2008, March 02, 2008, August 09, 2008; *Daily Ittefaq*, December 02, 2009).

Moukarbel, 2009; Oishi, 2005) maintain that high consumption levels and luxurious living standards of the Arab nationals as a result of the overwhelming increase in their oil-based wealth gradually contributed to the feminization of migration. Foreign domestic workers comprised the major component of the demand for labour (Moukarbel, 2009). These domestic workers initially came from some of the major labour sending countries in Asia, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Korea and Thailand; other Asian countries including Bangladesh joined this supply chain (Moukarbel, 2009). A study by Chammartin (2005) suggests 80 per cent of the Asian women currently working in the Middle East are domestic workers (as cited in Moukarbel, 2009, p. 23).

Interestingly, local Arab women's participation in the labour market and the presence of foreign domestic workers in the Middle East appear as two independent events (Oishi, 2005). Historically, labour force participation amongst local Arab women has been low (Oishi, 2005). Some scholars (see Moukarbel, 2009; Oishi, 2005) suggest high living standards of the local Arab population in Middle Eastern countries could be behind the increased presence of foreign domestic workers (Moukarbel, 2009; Oishi 2005). As Oishi (2005) observes, the practice of employing a domestic help seems to have become a "status symbol" for Arab households (2005, p. 47). Shah, Chowdhury and Menon`s (2002) research supports Oishi's (2005) observation; they suggest a significant number of Arab households perceive their societal standing on the basis of the numbers of domestic workers they possess (as cited in Oishi, 2005, p. 47).

The perpetual need for female service sector workers in the Middle East, as I have elucidated above, informs the story of Bangladeshi women`s migration to the region from one important perspective. But the story of their migration needs to be acknowledged from

alternative perspectives. Accordingly, I will turn to the complex interplay of economic and ideological realities in Bangladesh leading impoverished women to outward migration.

Feminist sociologist Shelly Feldman (2001) observes that following the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, generally women were not visible in formal sector employments. During 1971-1980, rural women remained concentrated in a home-based subsistence economy. Later, with the widespread mechanization of the agricultural sector, women's activities in agricultural production were deemed unimportant; they started to be seen as economic burdens. Side by side, with the emergence and rapid expansion of the export-oriented garment and manufacturing industry in Bangladeshi cities, new employment opportunities were generated for poor women. Out of economic necessity, many impoverished Bangladeshi women from rural and sub-urban areas became industrial workers. Of course, jobs in the Bangladeshi export-oriented industry could not absorb everyone who needed a job and only marginally improved the economic situation of those women able to get these jobs. Nonetheless, working in garment factories enabled many women to earn something (Saha, 2002). Within a few years a significant increase was observed in women's participation in the garment industry (Feldman, 2001). Then, as Rozario (2001) notes, during the 1980s, the NGO sector started to expand in Bangladesh, generating some temporary earning opportunities for women. Even though short-term jobs were inadequate, they were important; once again, with nothing else available, even short-term work was significant.

Initially, the path to employment was not easy for rural and sub-urban Bangladeshi women. Feldman (2001) observes that the initial increase in women's labour force participation led to a tremendous backlash from Islamic extremists, especially those upholding the ideology of

Jamat-i-Islami, a political party governed by Islamic faith-based laws and principles and active in national politics. Proponents of Jamat-i-Islami and like-minded people strongly opposed women`s visibility in the public sector; patriarchal dictates and religious sentiments happily coincided to shout for normative gender roles, and prescribed women to revert to their homes. It should be mentioned that in 1994 Jamt-i-Islami sanctioned a death threat against Bangladeshi feminist writer and poet Taslima Nasrin; she ultimately went into exile (see Alam, 1998; Siddiqi, 2000). Women's formal sector participation continued despite the contradictory ideological and economic environment of the country.

Since the 1990s, women have made themselves visible in various jobs in Bangladeshi cities. International development agencies are increasingly stepping in to improve the socio-economic positions of women (Kabeer, 1994, Rozario, 2001; White, 1992). NGOs have even promoted village women's political participation (Rozario, 2001). Yet on an aggregate level, there is no fundamental change in the majority of rural/sub-urban women's lives (Rozario, 2001). In many respects, urban women with middle-class backgrounds have an advantage, with better access to education and consequent opportunities for employment. Nonetheless, as Rozario (2001) points out, poor rural/ sub-urban women and middle-class urban women are both significantly constrained by gendered obstacles.

Illustrative of Rozario's concern are two specific situations. The first has to do with gendered employment. In terms of their unemployment and underemployment situations, Bangladeshi males fare much better than females: Amongst those who need a job, 3.4 per cent of males remain unemployed compared to 7 per cent of females; 68.3 per cent of women remain underemployed compared to 10.9 per cent of men (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010,

p.161). Research evidence also suggests women working in the garment factories (Rozario, 2001; Sultan, 2010) and NGOs (Sultan, 2010) are susceptible to sexual harassment.

Another gendered obstacle in Bangladeshi women's lives, as Rozario (2001) points out, is the pivotal role of marriage in defining identity. The widespread practice of marriage-dowry in impoverished Bangladeshi rural and sub-urban social life is indicative of the significance of marriage. Bangladeshi women possess no significant social identity without their husbands. A woman's identity is always defined in relation to her husband. NGOs in Bangladesh generally claim they are working to raise awareness amongst village people; in practice, however, it does not seem any noteworthy progress has been made to abolish the system of dowry. NGOs could even be charged with indirectly working to keep dowry payment practices intact. For example, most NGOs who run microcredit programs for rural women only provide loans to married women and deliberately exclude unmarried women even if they need their support.

Bangladeshi rural/sub-urban women who participate in public sector employment need to negotiate with the pervasive presence of gendered obstacles. In an impoverished society where normative gender ideology assigns women to the home and authorizes men to exercise sole guardianship over women through marriage, it is often difficult to ensure the basic necessities of life for women. Going outside the country for employment may be a step forward in women's negotiation with Bangladeshi gender relations. Yet the challenge facing women appears even greater; they have to negotiate with gender obstacles in Bangladesh as they choose to independently cross the national boundary; in addition, such movement involves risk and uncertainty for an uneducated, rural woman in a foreign land.

Bangladeshi women's migration, thus, takes shape within a contradictory climate. On the one hand, normative gender ideology refuses to let women cross the geographic boundary of Bangladesh; on the other hand, material reality tells them to do exactly the opposite. Women, therefore, have no choice but to negotiate with their situation if they are to move abroad.

The next task in this chapter is to explicate specific involvements of the state of Bangladesh with female outward migration. As noted, Bangladesh is heavily dependent on remittances sent by overseas workers. Twenty-six per cent of foreign income earnings of the country are due to remittances sent by migrants (Dannecker, 2005). Thus, it is no surprise that the Bangladesh government officially promotes labour migration. This promotion is largely targeted towards sending less-skilled or unskilled and skilled workers to the Middle East and Southeast Asia (Oishi, 2005). However, unlike other important labour exporting countries in Asia, for example, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, Bangladeshi women who migrate remain in the shadow of their male counterparts. In other words, the state of Bangladesh has always promoted male migration to solve the country`s pressing need for foreign exchange; the same does not hold true for female migration.

As Siddiqui (2001) observes, in the 1970s, the state had no particular stance on female migration; to be more specific, it had no concrete policy to either encourage or discourage female migration. In 1981 the state banned the migration of less-skilled women under the domestic worker category. Female workers in professional and skilled categories, however, were exempt. This strict policy on less-skilled female migration was slightly modified in 1988, as domestic workers were given permission to migrate under special conditions. The most restrictive state policy on female migration was declared in 1997 when the state prohibited all autonomous

(single) female workers' migration outside the country except those in the professional worker category, for example, doctors, engineers and teachers. This policy could not be sustained for long, as strong protests emanated from interested groups and civil society. Thus, the state withdrew its decision, but a ban on domestic workers remained. The ban was finally lifted in September 2003 (Oishi, 2005).

Two policy measures on domestic workers came into effect, one in 2005 and the other in 2007.[15] These policies included further clarifications on the official procedures of domestic workers' migration. Both policies made it mandatory for prospective domestic workers to obtain domestic worker training from the state approved training centres.

It is interesting to note that except for the 1997 policy, all policies on female migration used domestic workers as their main and only target. When I asked the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment about it, he said domestic workers are the focus of Bangladeshi policy on female migration because the state regards this absolutely necessary, given domestic workers' less-skilled status as workers; they are presumed vulnerable as they are women workers with very little or no education and very limited work skills. The position of the state on the situation of Bangladeshi domestic workers in the Middle East resonates in the Bangladeshi press coverage of female migration. For example, in recent years, stories of abuse experienced by Bangladeshi domestics in the Middle East were reported in national newspapers. No stories on other Bangladeshi female migrant workers received similar publicity.

[15] During my fieldwork in Bangladesh, the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment told me about the 2005 and 2007 policies on female migration.

Given the primacy of domestic workers in Bangladesh state policy on female migration, it is important to highlight some key aspects of this policy. While Bangladeshi men above 18 years of age may choose to migrate anywhere for work, policies on domestic workers' migration have specified a minimum age requirement for women (Oishi, 2005). For example, in the 2003 policy, the minimum age to qualify for a domestic worker job was 35; in the 2005 and 2007 policies it dropped to 25, still considerably over the male minimum age of 18.[16] The policy of 2003 even specified that a prospective domestic worker required a letter of consent from her legal guardian (presumably male) to be qualified to work outside the country (Oishi, 2005). The state would issue immigration clearance to an outward-bound domestic worker only after verifying that her husband or father had no objection to her migration.

As Oishi (2005) notes, a paternalistic and gendered ideology generally informs female migration policies of migrant sending states in Asia. Thus, in her view, male migration policies of Asian sending countries are exclusively economically driven, whereas policies of female migration are predominantly "value-driven" (Oishi, 2005, p.81). However, I find the female migration policies of the Bangladeshi state are simultaneously informed by an economic imperative and considerable dogma. Admittedly, the Bangladeshi state has a gendered outlook, but this does not mean it has less economic incentive for female migration. In recent years, a priority of the Bangladeshi state has been to earn foreign exchange. The state urgently needs foreign exchange to resolve deficits in its balance of payments and to import capital goods and raw materials to sustain its industrial sector. As net foreign exchange earnings from migrant workers' remittance are greater than net foreign exchange earnings from the export sector or

[16] I learned about these in a conversation with the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh.

direct foreign investments (Khan, 2002) the state is aggressively working to increase labour migration. In fact, the state seems to be paying even more attention to female labour migration than to male labour migration. Various pro-active programs to boost female labourers' outward migration show its increased interest in and involvement with female migration; for example, since 2008 the state in collaboration with some private NGOS, SHISUK, SHOSTI and BOMSA, is running a mandatory training program for Middle East bound domestic workers. The state is also pursuing awareness programs by targeting prospective female migrants and interested parties in collaboration with private NGOs and international organizations. The managing director of BOESEL explained some of the latest initiatives on part of Bangladeshi state to promote female migration; these include BOESEL administered garment worker migration to Jordan (which started in September 2010) and the creation of a pool of domestic workers' to be sent to Singapore in the near future.

Overall, recent practices of the Bangladeshi state indicate its strategic pursuit of both economic and value-laden agendas in order to exploit maximum benefits from channeling female migration to the end of earning foreign exchange.

5-Conclusion

This chapter highlights some important aspects of Bangladeshi temporary workers' migration, with an emphasis on female migration. The Bangladeshi state promotes external migration to solve underemployment and to earn foreign exchange. In contemporary Bangladeshi labour migration flows, less-skilled/unskilled and skilled migrants commonly move as temporary or contract workers to the Middle East, East and Southeast Asia. Both men and women opt for

labour migration for economic reasons. The Middle East is a popular destination for women because of the high demand for foreign female workers in its service industry, predominantly as domestic workers. Their migration is aided by the Bangladeshi state, Bangladeshi private recruiting agencies and their sub-agents, recruiting agencies in Middle Eastern labour receiving states as well as Bangladeshi individuals remaining either in Bangladesh or the Middle East.

The outward migration of Bangladeshi women is informed by certain contradictory situations inside the country. On the one hand, an institutionally ingrained gender ideology urges women to stay in their homes under male guardianship; this discourages Bangladeshi women from moving outside the country for work. On the other hand, the need to survive induces them to migrate. Last but not least, Bangladesh's current focus on female migration is largely inspired by its urgent need for money. Bangladeshi official policy on female migration reflects a patriarchal gendered stance, but with the need for foreign currency, the state is exercising a mediated approach.

In Chapters Five and Six, I build on this chapter by looking more closely at women's migration. Chapter Five considers their communication with intermediaries during recruitment and relocation. Chapter Six addresses their conduct with employers in the Middle East. In both chapters, I rely on women's stories to guide me.

Chapter Five

Brokers and Bangladeshi Women`s Migration to the Middle East

1-Introduction

This chapter is on migration brokers and their involvement with Bangladeshi women`s migration to the Middle East. My analysis follows the stories of women who mentioned relatives, neighbours and acquaintances acting as brokers in their migration arrangements. I examine these women`s experiences, problematizing their engagement with brokers. My findings reveal that faced with structural impediments within the institutional landscape of migration in Bangladesh, such as inaccessibility to established migration agents or having limited or no information about the official procedure of migration, the women in this study used informal brokers whom they know from their familial and social circles to facilitate their recruitment and departure. By paying close attention to women`s stories, I also find the interactions between women and brokers are informed by their Bangladeshi rural social relations.

This chapter argues Bangladeshi women's use of these informal brokers is a structural issue pertinent to their migration. How the two parties engage with each other is primarily social; therefore, their interaction is informed by the patriarchal social relations common to rural Bangladesh. In particular, by expressing their compliance with Bangladeshi rural patriarchal social relations, both parties pursue their respective objectives as they interact: the women migrate and the recruitment brokers make money.

As mentioned, this chapter builds on Bangladeshi women`s stories of migration. I use academic literature and other relevant information that I collected during my fieldwork to complement my analysis.

2- Brokers in the Recruitment and Relocation of Bangladeshi Women

Available literature suggests migration from rural areas to the major cities of Bangladesh, such as Dhaka, Khulna, and Chittagong, is an important livelihood strategy for extremely poor people, both men and women (Afsar, 2000; Hossain, Khan, & Seley, 2003; Mamun, 2003; Sadi, 2003; Siddiqui, 2003). A government estimate says that in 2008, 4.5 million people in the rural areas had no land or any source of income (Bangladesh: Landless numbers on the rise [News], 2010).With a continuously growing population and no other permanent income generation opportunities available, landlessness and impoverishment have grown in recent years. Added to this, regular flooding of rivers during the monsoon season causes homelessness; there could be as many as one million or more people in the country who are affected by floods every year (Siddiqui, 2003, p. 3). Bangladesh is the largest delta on earth, formed by earth and sand left by the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna - the three great Himalayan rivers. According to a government report, in an area of 55, 598 square miles, Bangladesh has 405 rivers; these rivers cross boundaries of India and Myanmar (Bangladesh Ministry of water Resources, n.d.). Millions of people are dependent on these rivers for their livelihood.

Impoverished people who have no land or work in rural areas and those who have lost their homes due to flooding have no choice except to migrate for their survival (Hossain, Khan, & Seeley, 2003). They initially look for a livelihood in areas adjacent to their villages or locality; if such a strategy does not work out, they move to major cities in various informal service jobs, such as rickshaw-pullers or vendors (Sadi, 2003). Young rural women often migrate to the three major cities of Bangladesh – Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna – to find a job in the garment

industry. These extremely poor women and men, however, are unable to migrate outside the country as this comes at too high a cost. The people in rural areas who are not utterly destitute and have some access to financial resources are the ones who migrate to pursue a better economic future for themselves and their families (Siddiqui, 2003).

This resonates in the Bangladeshi women's stories. Many cited economic reasons as the driving force behind their migration to the Middle East. They indicated that migration was a decision made by themselves and their family members at a collective level for the economic improvement of the family. Women's relatives, neighbours and persons whom women came to know through their relatives, neighbours or family members played important roles in their migration arrangement. Two women in the sample were assisted by family members living in the Middle East. In total, 31 women out of the 34 I interviewed informed me of one or more such individual's involvement in their migration; the remaining three said they arranged their migration by directly getting in touch with a recruiting agency in Dhaka. Table 3 (below) and the diagram in Appendix E (at the end of the dissertation) show who assisted women with their migration.

Table 3: Individuals who assisted women in their migration

Relationship to women	Number of women assisted by the individual
Direct Family Member	2
Relative (Real or Fictitious)	15
Neighbour	10
Somebody known through family, relative or neighbour	4
	**Note: 3 women directly contacted a recruiting agency instead of approaching an individual (Total N = 34)

The women informants told me the individuals listed in Table 3 remained involved in important ways in the institutional process of their migration to the Middle East. Some collected visas for the candidates (women) and either sent them directly to the women in Bangladesh or via a third party in Bangladesh.

In Chapter Four, I talked about the mechanisms of Bangladeshi temporary workers' recruitment in the Middle East. Informed by Rahman (2012), I delineated procedures for the workers to obtain visas following specific criteria for a "work" or "flying" visa. For work visas, a recruiting agency in the Middle East collects visas for prospective candidates and sends them to their counterpart recruiting agency in Bangladesh. The agency in Bangladesh then distributes the visas through their chain of sub-agents who travel across rural areas to recruit candidates. Candidates can also collect visas by themselves from recruiting agency offices in Dhaka. Under flying visa arrangements, a migration broker in the destination informally collects a visa from the

sponsor and directly passes it on to the candidate in Bangladesh. Thus, no other individual is involved in this process of visa collection and its eventual reception by the candidate.

Strikingly, my data from the women's stories indicate that visa collection and their distribution in the context of Bangladeshi temporary workers' migration to the Middle East is not necessarily as straightforward as that suggested by Rahman (2012). Instead, formal and informal actors' actions are often interwoven in the visa collection and distribution. Diagram 1 highlights specificities of visa collection for the 34 women in the sample.

As shown in Appendix E, 24 women's visas fall under the category of work visas, while four flying visas came directly to the women through their personal connections in the destination country. Six do not meet either work visa or flying visa criteria. These women's visas were collected for them by individuals who lived in the destination and were known to the women or their family. Instead of receiving their visas directly from these persons, however, the women received them via a third party. Four received their visas from visa collectors' families in Bangladesh. One woman received her visa via a sub-agent of a recruiting agency to whom the visa collector sent the visa, while one received her visa from a recruiting agency to whom the visa collector sent the visa. The diversity of this scenario demands a more nuanced categorization of the visa procedures than those suggested by Rahman (2012), involving individuals from candidates' social and familial channels and their possible connections, both formal and informal, in the Bangladesh-Middle East transnational terrain.

Women identified the individuals shown in Table 3 and Appendix E as migration brokers. Women used a Bangla term, *dalal*, to denote them. In this case, the word indicates an individual who might be involved in one or more stages of recruitment and relocation for a

service fee. In his research on temporary workers' migration from Indonesia to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, Lindquist (2012) observes similar informal-level operations of individuals on behalf of recruiting agencies in Indonesia; they are usually well-respected individuals in their locality (for example, a school teacher, a grandmother, a returned migrant worker). These people do brokering as a part-time occupation and are commonly referred to as a *petugas lapangan* (field agent) in the local language. Likewise, in the context of China, Xiang (2013) finds individuals like school teachers and former public employees collaborate with official migration agents (license-holder private recruiting agency) in facilitating Chinese temporary workers' external migration; Chinese people often call these brokers "the legs" in their everyday conversations. Ironically, as Lindquist (2012) notes, although widespread informal-level migration brokering in the contemporary circular regime of migration in Asia is a reality, there is a significant gap in understanding their operation from a scholarly perspective.

Throughout this chapter and in the subsequent ones, I use the Bangla term dalal to indicate an individual intermediary who works either on behalf of a recruiting agency in Bangladesh (that is, as a sub-agent) or as an independent broker by remaining either in Bangladesh or the Middle East while taking part in the recruitment and relocation of Bangladeshi women. Many women explicitly used dalal in their stories, further justifying my use of the term.

Some women also used certain familial salutations, for example, *chacha, nana, mami, bonai, dulavai, apa* etc., thereby valorizing personal relations over strictly economic relations. These hierarchical salutations (informed by gender and age relations) are used by Bangladeshi people in their everyday familial or social interactions.

As I mentioned earlier, these individuals operated either in Bangladesh as sub-agents of the recruiting agency or as independent dalals who sent women visas directly or via a local mediator in Bangladesh. There were four instances in which a dalal in the Middle East sent a visa to a local mediator in Bangladesh; in each case, these dalals operated within a family network: one female member of a family remaining in the Middle East collected a visa for the candidate, and another male member of the same family in Bangladesh arranged departure formalities. Dalals who worked as sub-agents of recruiting agencies were all males.

2.1 Economics of Recruitment

The Bangladeshi government has set 84,000 taka (equivalent to 1,050 Canadian dollars) as the maximum charge that recruiting agencies can ask from temporary workers going to the Middle East (except those in the domestic worker category) (Martin, 2010; Rahman, 2012). During my fieldwork in Bangladesh, I was advised by the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in Bangladesh that as per the immigration law, a Bangladeshi recruiting agency can charge no more than 20,000 taka (250 Canadian dollars) as its service fee for sending a domestic worker to the Middle East. For all other female temporary workers, he told me the maximum designated amount for an agency is 84,000 taka (1,050 Canadian dollars). However, the extent to which recruiting agencies actually comply with the government designated amount is questionable. For example, Rahman's study (2012) on recruitment costs of Bangladeshi workers to the Gulf finds recruiting agencies often charge the candidate much more than the designated maximum amount. My data confirm this and display a similar pattern. In every instance, the women in the sample paid a higher amount to brokers than

the officially designated service charge. The lowest amount charged was 30,000 taka, and the highest was 300,000 taka. This translates to 375and 3,750 Canadian dollars respectively.[17]

I tried to inquire further about this high intermediary fee. Specifically, I wanted to understand why Middle East bound temporary workers from Bangladesh have to pay an exorbitant price for their migration. I asked the two Bangladeshi recruiting agency proprietors and two sub-agents (who were my informants) about this, but they avoided answering my question. In addition, although I made every effort, I could not find any way to learn about the fee-sharing and profit-making endeavours of sub-agents and recruiting agencies in Bangladesh, or the fee sharing and profit making activities of dalals who transnationally participate in recruitment.

Consequently, my questions about why each of the Bangladeshi women in this study uniformly paid an usurious amount to brokers or, to put it differently, what accounted for the high cost of Bangladeshi women's migration remained unanswered. I therefore consulted the scholarly literature on the Middle East. I found Rahman`s (2012) research on Bangladeshi temporary workers' migration to the Gulf states particularly useful. Rahman observes that Bangladeshi workers going to the Gulf need to pay a substantially higher amount to intermediaries who remain involved in their recruitment and relocation process. These workers often pay their intermediaries a fee well above the maximum designated amount (84,000 Bangladeshi taka or 1,050 Canadian dollars). Rahman divides the cost of recruitment of Bangladeshi temporary workers to the Gulf States into two components: formal fees and intermediary fees. Included in the formal fees are all mandatory departure expenses (for

[17] Unless otherwise stated, all currency conversions mentioned in this study have been based on the exchange rate between Bangladeshi taka and Canadian dollars (1 Canadian Dollar= 80 BD Taka) at the time of my fieldwork (October 2010 – April 2011) in Bangladesh.

example, passport fees, air fare and all other government fees associated with the departure process). Intermediary fees represent the amount the candidate pays to all intermediaries (for example, recruiting agencies, their sub-agents and other dalals). Rahman finds that almost 77 per cent of the cost of recruitment borne by a Bangladeshi temporary worker who migrates to Gulf is due to intermediary fees; only 23 per cent represents formal fees.

Why must Gulf bound Bangladeshi temporary workers pay an exorbitant intermediary fee? One possible explanation, according to Rahman, is the system of "visa-trading"- an institutionalized practice of selling temporary work visas by sponsor employers to intermediaries. Visa-trading has been noted by scholars in the context of contemporary temporary workers' recruitment to the Middle East (for example, De-Bel Air, 2011; Rahman, 2012; Shah, 2008). Rahman's study, in particular, observes that sponsor employers in the Middle East sell visas to intermediaries for different prices, depending on the job category. Having bought a visa from the sponsor employer, a recruiting agency in the Middle East can sell the visa to its counterpart recruiting agency in Bangladesh. The recruiting agency in Bangladesh can then sell the visa to someone who wants to work in the Middle East. In this process, the agency often uses sub-agents who travel to villages to recruit people willing to work in the Middle East. Alternatively, an independent broker in the Middle East can buy a visa from a Middle Eastern sponsor and then sell it to a candidate in Bangladesh.[18] The visa obtained by the candidate, either through a sub-agent or an independent broker, involves a service charge which covers the cost of buying the visa in addition and gives the intermediary a handsome profit. In this scenario, the possibility that a candidate could be economically exploited by an intermediary is very high.

[18] According to Rahman (2012), this happens in the flying visa procedure.

Rahman's explanation of visa-trading in the context of Bangladeshi temporary workers' recruitment in the Middle East was useful to my study. These women received their visas through a sub-agent or a recruiting agency in Bangladesh or an independent broker in the Middle East.[19] Therefore, it seemed likely that the visas were sold to the intermediaries by sponsor employers in the Middle East; Bangladeshi women, in turn, had to compensate by paying a high amount.

To cover their costs of migration, women were assisted by family members, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances from their social circles. Twenty eight of my sample borrowed money from their extended family, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. Such loans did not involve any interest payments. Two used their personal savings to partially bear the expense. Six women were given money by their father, mother, daughter or sister; the amount was enough to bear all expenses associated with their departure arrangement. Out of the 28 women who borrowed to finance their migration, 21 were able to pay off their debt with the money they earned working in the Middle East, while seven failed to repay their debt in the long-run.

Of the 34 Bangladeshi women in the sample, 17 sent most of their salary to their families in Bangladesh; they spent the remainder of their savings on the family after their return. Ten out of 34 women significantly improved their families' economic condition with the money they saved; they bought land, cows and made joint accounts with their husband/ sister/ brother. The other seven women in the study who went to Lebanon as domestic workers experienced extremely abusive situations and came back to Bangladesh empty handed. [20]

[19] Four of these independent brokers in the Middle East networked with their families in Bangladesh to ultimately hand over visas to the candidates.

[20] These seven women failed to repay the debt owed to their neighbours and relatives.

The economic investment in migration to the Middle East seems to have involved a high risk, for the women and their families and for any others who assisted women in their migration. Given the extremely volatile work environment of female temporary workers in the Middle East, the net return on the considerable money invested in their recruitment was always unpredictable.

2.2 Why do Bangladeshi Women use Dalals?

Why do women go to dalals? Why don't they protest the exorbitant charges? In my attempt to answer these questions, I drew on migration scholar Biao Xiang`s (2013) concept of the "intermediary trap". In his study of Chinese temporary workers' migration to Japan, Xiang uses the term to explain the exclusive dependence of the Chinese state and prospective Chinese migrants on intermediaries (recruiting agencies and their sub-agents). According to Xiang, the Chinese state and prospective migrants find intermediaries essential to the migration process. Intermediaries help the state manage the complex and multi-layered bureaucratic steps, and they assist prospective candidates by accessing them at the grass-roots level and navigating them through state-mandated procedures.

Of course, due to the very different geopolitical and economic situations of China and Bangladesh, not to mention the enormous differences in size (i.e. geography, population), the overall structural and institutional scenario of migration from China is not a direct reflection of the scenario in Bangladesh. Even so, the Bangladeshi temporary workers' extreme dependence on intermediaries is evocative of an intermediary trap.

Within the structural and institutional landscape of migration in Bangladesh, the Bangladeshi state remains heavily dependent on migration intermediaries. Without assistance

from recruiting agents (and their sub-agents) and independent brokers, the state finds it difficult to manage its large manpower export sector. Yet it requires foreign exchange money to sustain the economy. Therefore, the Bangladeshi state gives license-holding Bangladeshi recruiting agencies the formal authority to serve as the main contact point for destination recruiting agencies and their employers. Foreign employers channel their specific requests for workers through destination recruiting agencies which, in turn, submit the request to their counterpart license-holder recruiting agencies in Bangladesh. These latter agencies primarily use their sub-agents or dalals to access candidates for migration from all possible sources in the grass-roots; sub-agents assist candidates in dealing with complex bureaucratic steps that the state has made mandatory for them. In addition, independent brokers or dalals in their destinations in Middle East facilitate recruitment and relocation of Bangladeshi temporary workers by directly taking part in the recruitment process through collecting visas and sending them to the candidates in Bangladesh. In short, recruiting agents/ sub-agents in Bangladesh and Bangladeshi independent brokers help the state of Bangladesh promote the movement of temporary workers; these people increase the country's foreign exchange reservoir by sending considerable amounts of remittance every year.

The Bangladeshi state and Bangladeshi migration intermediaries' collaboration in mediating the outward migration of temporary workers is informed by a hierarchical relationship between the two parties. The state exercises power over migration intermediaries; it is the main administrative and regulatory body creating and governing the institutional foundations of mobility while allowing intermediaries to pursue their business endeavours. The two parties play a complementary role in mediating migration, with each achieving certain objectives. This

complementary relationship between the migrant sending state and intermediaries is, however, not unique to Bangladesh. Such a relationship is also noticeable in the state and market-mediated temporary (and circular) migration systems across major temporary migrant sending countries in Asia, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and China (Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012). In the case of Bangladesh, the state dependence on migration intermediaries can also be seen as the consequence of the neoliberal policies of international organizations like the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a pre-condition of giving aid and loans, these organizations push Bangladesh to promote widespread liberalization across the economy. Therefore, Bangladesh has been creating structural adjustment policies since the 1980s (Nuruzzaman, 2004). As part of its neoliberal mandate- promoting initiative, the Bangladeshi state has allowed private recruiting agencies, their sub-agents and independent brokers to carry on their business operations. Bangladesh remains substantially involved with migration by retaining the main administrative and regulatory responsibilities for external migration. The Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh told me the state involvement with migration sector is essential to avoid chaos, as this is the most important foreign exchange earning sector.

I now turn to the issue of Bangladeshi temporary workers' dependency on informal migration-brokers or dalals. Their lack of access to official channels is one explanation for such dependence; dalals, however, are easily accessible. In Bangladesh, there are 700 private recruiting agencies [21] operating with a license from the government (Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, 2011). They mainly send temporary workers to the Middle East and Southeast Asia. None of these recruiting agencies' offices, however, is located outside

[21] This was during the time of my fieldwork (October 2010- April 2011) in Bangladesh.

Dhaka. This spatial concentration poses a serious constraint on reaching potential migrants, especially the poor, uneducated people in village areas who want to migrate. A former coordinator of an NGO and my research guide[22] during my fieldwork told me that the government supported awareness and information programs on migration arrangements disseminated by recruitment agencies have not yet reached rural areas. Therefore, some women informants looked for people from their familial and social circles who were willing to support them for a service charge. Thus, they consciously circumvented bureaucratic complexities associated with established migration agents, preferring the informal route, even when they knew they were paying an exorbitant amount. They also knew the amount varied from one woman to another, but without knowing the government assigned official fee structure, it was not possible to have a basis of comparison for payment.

These structural barriers, namely candidates' inaccessibility to established migration agents and a lack of information on official procedures, I argue, left potential migrants firmly in the grip of informal intermediaries or dalals. Those wanting to migrate outside the country require these intermediaries. This heavy dependence is captured in official statistics of the Bangladeshi government. For example, a report by Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) shows that during 1976-2008, 62 per cent of women and men who had migrated as temporary workers to the Gulf States used services of people whom they knew through their social circles and personal relationships (as cited in Rahman, 2012, p. 222). These individual intermediaries collected visas for the candidates from their sponsor employers' in the Gulf. Those who operated via recruiting agencies in Bangladesh assisted candidates through the mandatory formalities associated with the departure - acquiring a

[22] I have already mentioned in Chapter Two that they served as my informants during fieldwork.

passport, having a physical examination, opening a bank account, collecting immigration clearance from BMET etc.

Why Bangladeshi women in this study resorted to dalals is, then, a structural issue. Like any other Middle East bound temporary worker from Bangladesh, these women went to informal intermediaries in their social and familial circles because of the structural constraints inherent to the migration organization process. To put it differently, women's reliance on dalals is a logical consequence of the structural impediments informing the actual landscape of Bangladeshi migration; such a landscape generally informs all temporary workers' migration from Bangladesh to the Middle East. It is important to consider how dalals' business conduct fits into this landscape; my fieldwork experience in Bangladesh sheds light on this issue.

Kanainagar is a village in the district of Manikganj (near Dhaka). It is well-known for regular (and consistent) flows of male and female migration to the Middle East, ongoing since the late 1980s. On a chilly December morning of 2010 as I was doing my fieldwork in Bangladesh, I spoke to nine villagers about migration. When I asked about dalals, they told me that dalals' easy accessibility and trustworthiness were the main reasons people from this village preferred a dalal over a formally established agent. The following excerpt illustrates this perspective:

> People got scared you know. Incidents like this had happened before. Say, ten people from this village wanted to go abroad. So, they went to Dhaka and contacted an office. They paid departure fee to the office. Then, they went there after 15 days to enquire about the status of their departure arrangement. To their surprise, the office did not exist anymore! Given this, how do you expect them to trust such an office? Even when they have to pay *dalal* more than the office that is still better. Because there is no guarantee that they would be able to catch those people working with the office later on. But *dalal* is someone whom you know personally or through your relatives or friends. So, if anything happens you should be able to catch the *dalal*. (Resident of Kanainagar, December 13, 2010)

Generally, their accessibility and trustworthiness justifies paying large fees. Another person in the same village said:

> Suppose, I am a *dalal.* I work in the manpower business. Say, I would work to send someone abroad. That person does not know anybody from the office in Dhaka; instead he knows me. So, if I ask for say, 40 thousand taka from him he would be giving that money to me even when he knew the office in Dhaka might charge him a lower (and fixed) rate, say 35 thousand taka. (Resident of Kanainagar, December 13, 2010)

As I understood by talking to three of my informants, two dalals and my guide, poor people from villages in Bangladesh do not have the power necessary to hold recruiting agencies accountable for how they serve the candidates (women or men). But dalals remain accessible and are well-known to the candidate. Thus, potential migrants prefer seeking services from a broker, even with high cost.

It is not only dalals who look for prospective candidates or vice versa; there is a mutually negotiated conduct between both parties, the candidate and the dalal. One of my informants said the following:

> Suppose somebody from our village has contact with an office (recruiting agency) in Dhaka and some of us are really interested to go abroad. In that case we would not care how much money he had asked from us. He may be asking for 30 thousand taka or whatever. How would we verify if he is asking for more or not? It is not possible. All we could do is to choose one from them who had asked for the lowest amount. It's not only us who look for *dalal*. *Dalals* look for us too. We both look to find each other. (Resident of Kananinagar, December 13, 2010)

The above excerpt captures the economic interests of a dalal and indicates potential migrants' need for their service. The economic logic of supply and demand comes into play in negotiations between the two parties. Each benefits from the other albeit in an unequal negotiation process.

Social relationships between a migration broker and a candidate are pivotal in understanding the broker's business practice. This has been addressed by scholarly work in the

context of temporary migration in Asia (Collins, 2008, 2012; Lindquist, 2012 Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012; Mahmud, 2013; Rahman, 2012; Xiang, & Shen, 2009). Lindquist (2012), in particular, highlights the significance of trust in the nuanced aspects of a candidate-broker interaction. Speaking about unskilled labourers' migration from Indonesia to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, Lindquist says candidate only seek the services of brokers who are well-respected in the neighborhood; they feel this person can be relied on. Such brokers, in turn, feel it is imperative to behave in a trustworthy manner.

The issue of the trustworthy conduct of a businessperson is taken up by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) in their study on ethnic immigrant business practice in the US. They use the concept of "enforceable trust" to explain Dominican immigrant entrepreneurs' behaviour as they pursue their business within their community in New York City. According to these authors, enforceable trust allows businesspersons to generate social capital when they, as members of a community/ collectivity, comply with collective expectations of the community in which they operate while shaping their economic actions. Focusing on a study by Portes and Guarnizo (1991) on the Dominican immigrant community in New York, Portes and Sensenbrenner point to the emergence of a promising "entrepreneurial enclave" among Dominican immigrants in New York City in terms of small ethnic enterprises, for example, restaurants and shops, Spanish newspapers, and travel agencies (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1333). Those from the Dominican community who successfully established such businesses received loans from Dominican finance agencies or Dominican networks of informal loan operators across the city, with the creditors' expectation that they would be repaid. The debtors knew their failure to meet the community-business expectation of loan repayment might result in a seriously damaged

reputation, and in the worst possible scenario, "ostracism" from the community (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1333).

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) conclude that individuals who are pursuing their economic endeavours not only consider the short-term benefits of such actions; they also want to sustain these benefits in the long-run. Consequently, if they are seeking an economic future within their community, it is extremely important to adopt the collective expectations of the community with respect to behaviour.

> Individuals behave according to expectations not only because they must, but out of fear or punishment or in anticipation of rewards. The predictability in the behaviour of members of a group is in direct proportion to its sanctioning capacity. Hence, the oxymoron: trust exists in economic transactions precisely because it is enforceable by means that transcend the individuals involved. (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1332)

After discussing dalals with the villagers, I got the sense that through their business practices, dalals inspire confidence in the reliability of their services when dalals and candidates share a rural community affiliation. Thus, Portes and Sensenbrenner's (1993) idea of enforceable trust should be operative in the dalal-based recruitment scenario informing my study. It is in the dalal's best interest to adhere to the collective expectations of the rural community to which they belong while pursuing their economic venture as a migration middleperson. Dalals' compliance with community expectations is associated with a concrete reward; in this case, the reward is the guarantee that they will be able to sustain their business within the rural community as long as they adopt the collective expectation of responsible conduct in their economic endeavours within that community.

Having critically thought this through, it seems essential to highlight certain issues on enforceable trust and its relevance in Bangladeshi context of migration. Porte's and

Sensenbrenner's notion of enforceable trust rests on the assumption that the behaviour of Latino immigrant community members (in the US) is driven by their strong sense of embeddedness within their community. Their failure to behave according to community norms and expectations could have severe consequences, for example, being expelled from the community or jeopardizing their existence in the US. Therefore, being acutely aware of the very real possibility of banishment from the community business circle if they fail to comply with the collective expectation of the community in terms of their responsible business conduct, Latino immigrant businesspersons refrain from doing anything that goes against the community rules and expectations. By way of contrast, in the context of Bangladeshi migration, it is not necessary that the behaviour of a dalal show a strong sense of community bonding. After all, Bangladeshi dalals are natives of Bangladesh; it is unlikely that they will suffer from "immigrant-like sense of insecurity" within their rural community and behave accordingly. They do not work as full-time service providers either; they do *dalali* [23] to earn additional income. As well, these dalals usually have strong connections with government officials and rural elites (they are frequently rural elites themselves). Last but not least, dalals hold a superior economic status in relation to poor villagers who are mostly the candidates for migration.[24] On an individual or collective level, how much power a rural community or an economically impoverished prospective candidate from the rural community is able to exercise over a local dalal is, therefore, questionable.[25]

[23] A dalal's job.

[24] I gained this information about dalals and their operation by speaking with two dalals during my fieldwork in Bangladesh.

[25] Bangladeshi newspapers occasionally publish reports featuring dalals as frauds who are cheating their clients. There is a dearth of scholarly work problematizing interactions between Bangladeshi dalals and Middle East bound clients.

That said, I think the logic of enforceable trust has some limited applicability in the context of Bangladeshi migration generally and in the context of this present study more specifically. After all, when arranging to migrate to the Middle East, the women in this study sought services from dalals, largely because they felt they were able to trust them, given their connection in the local rural community. Besides, it was in the long-term economic interest of the dalals to perform their job in a way that would make them credible to women.

If Bangladeshi women in this study resorted to dalals primarily because of structural constraints to migration, it should logically follow that a dalal will take advantage of these structural impediments to serve their business interests. As it will be apparent in the next section, dalals who assisted Bangladeshi women in this study used their social affiliations and relationships with these women to ensure their economic gain.

3-How do Bangladeshi Women and Dalals Engage?

Feminist anthropologist Suad Joseph uses the term "connectivity" to designate "relationships in which a person`s boundaries are relatively fluid so that persons feel a part of significant others" in their community / social surroundings (1993, p. 452). While studying a working-class neighbourhood in Beirut, Joseph observed relational embeddedness across her Arab informants: "In a culture in which the family was valued over and above the person, identity was defined in familiar terms, and kin idioms and relationships pervaded public and private spheres, connective relationships were not only functional but necessary for successful social existence" (Joseph, 1993, pp. 452-53). Her understanding of connectivity, as such, interacted with the patriarchal system specific to the community to produce "patriarchal

connectivity" (1993, p. 453). This connective framework of patriarchy informed her informants' actions as they remained deeply embedded in the Arab culture of relationality: in effect, these were "psychodynamic processes by which one person comes to see himself/herself as part of another" (as cited in George, 2005, p.40).

Joseph's understanding of connectivity is grounded in some important theoretical perspectives of relationality (Gergen, 1990; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981; Minuchin, Rosman, & Baker, 1978; Roland, 1988). Minuchin, Rosman and Baker (1978) see individuals as existing in their families and in relation to each other within their social context. In a similar vein, Gergen (1990) says relationships between persons constitute the pivotal marker of social existence. Roland (1988) offers a culturally sensitive understanding of social existence for an individual in family and community. Building on these theories, Joseph produces her own theory of relational selfhood using the notion of connectivity. According to her, "[c]onnectivity entails cultural constructs and structural relations in which persons invite, require and initiate involvement with others in shaping the self" (Joseph 1993, p. 453).

When the notion of connectivity is linked with a specific understanding of patriarchy, the concept of patriarchal connectivity emerges; the individual becomes "non-autonomous" in a particular cultural and structural milieu of patriarchy (Joseph, 1993). Observing patriarchy and connectivity and their interaction across the Arab community in her research site, Joseph comments:

> I use patriarchy here to mean the privileging of males and seniors and the mobilization of kinship structures, morality, and idioms to legitimate and institutionalize gendered and aged domination. I use patriarchal connectivity to mean the production of selves with fluid boundaries organized for gendered and aged domination in a culture valorizing kin structures, morality, and idioms. (Joseph, 1993, p. 453)

As defined by Joseph, connectivity and its operational dynamic in a patriarchal (gender and age) power hierarchy converges with the particular situation of Bangladeshi women seeking intermediaries in their migration arrangements.

The Bangladeshi women's tales revealed not only a strong patriarchal connective context, but such connective relationships also extended beyond women's families, to include neighbours and members of their social circles, as if they were also family members. Patriarchal connectivity informs the cultural and structural context of patriarchal, gendered and age hierarchies in rural Bangladesh, within which the women informants, their families and migration brokers or dalals interacted. Their relations manifested in the salutations appearing in women's tales as they addressed dalals; for example, *mami, vashoor, chacha, nana, bonai, apa.*[26] The stories of Bula, Raha and Masuda reveal this bonding within a patriarchal framework:

> One of my *mami's* sisters lives in Kuwait. My *mami* (maternal uncle's wife) used to visit our home occasionally and talked to my mother. After observing our economic condition, she suggested to my mother that I should be given to her sister. She assured my mother that they would arrange my migration; they would take care of the associated costs and that this would be good for the family financially later on as I start to earn (Bula; Domestic Worker Kuwait)
>
> My husband remarried. He was not providing for me or my daughter. My brother-in-law's sister was working in Dubai. In this situation, my mother-in-law advised me to go to Dubai with their help. (Raha; Domestic Worker Dubai)
>
> I went through one of my *apas* (elder sister) in Bangladesh. I started to work at a garment factory in Dhaka. I was very young at that time. I got introduced to a garment supervisor. She told me, oh, I see you are so young! Come with me. Then she took me to her home. She told me, see, I don't have a daughter. I have a son. Feel free to live with us from now on. So, I stayed with her. She spent her own money to take me to Dubai. First she went to Dubai and took me later on. I gave my entire salary to *apa* as I worked there. I did not keep a single penny for myself. I did not even think about it. I did not ask for any money from her; neither did she give it to me. She provided for my food, clothing and everything. When she returned back to Bangladesh, I kept on sending her money for

[26] These are gender and age specific salutations used by Bengali. All Bangla words used in this dissertation appear in the glossary.

> another year. *Apa* loved me; I also loved her very much. (Masuda; Garment Worker Dubai)

The story of Shanu sheds light on a situation in which social behaviour stems from mutual trust within a connective patriarchal context:

> My migration was arranged through a *dalal* from Vairab . My aunt got married in Vairab. There are many *dalals* in Vairab[27] who send people abroad, I mean to Saudi Arab, Dubai or wherever they wish to go. My aunt organized my contact with the *dalal*. I verified with the *dalal* about safety of my going abroad. I told him that I have heard that sometimes women suffer a lot abroad; they remain unpaid and are abused there. I told him, see it would be very tough for me to give you so much money. But what is the guarantee that my *malik* would be good? [28] The *dalal* told me, if your *malik* is not good, I will refund your full money. So, I gave him money on this understanding. (Shahnu; Domestic Worker Dubai and S Arabia**)**

The story of Raju is similar:

> I did not know much about how my migration was arranged. I did not know because I did not think I needed to know. See, the *dalal* was my relative; my sister's *vashoor* (husband`s elder brother). He did everything that was required for my departure. I did not think I needed to enquire of him. Well, people say so many things about *bidesh* (foreign country). But I thought about it differently. After all, he is my close relative. He cannot place me in a bad place. Actually he sent me to a good place. (Raju; Cleaner S Arabia)

Raju's blind trust in her sister`s brother-in-law is evident; she did not think it was necessary to ask for any information on how her migration was being arranged. This trust emanates from Bangladeshi rural social perception that as a mature and responsible adult man, he is bound to assume his patriarchal responsibility and assist someone like his sister who needs his support.

In the cases of Fatu, Banu, Rafi and Salu, their interactive behaviour with brokers can also be set into a connective frame of patriarchy. In these cases, the relationship is framed as "family-like" even though there was no real family connection or it was very remote:

[27] This is an area from which many people migrate. Therefore, dalals' operation is extensive here.
[28] Many women in this study expressed a similar sense of the risks of migration.

> My *chacha* (uncle) is a *dalal*. He helped my departure arrangement. Well, my *chacha* is not my 'real' *chacha*; he is my neighbour. He is a good man and that is why I sought his assistance. (Fatu; Domestic Worker Saudi Arabia)

> My migration was arranged by someone from my area; he is a kind of *nana* (maternal grandfather) to me. At that time he was assisting a woman in my area to go abroad. The woman decided not to go at the last minute. I heard about it and asked *nana* if I could go on her behalf. At first, *nana* did not believe me. He did not think I was able to do it. Then I told him that I would go. My visa came after I had given him 50 thousand taka. (Banu; Domestic Worker Lebanon)

> The person through whom I went abroad was from my village. He was my neighbour, a kind of *bonai* (sister in-law's husband) to me. He told me if you want to go abroad then give me your passport; I will collect your visa. He was a *dalal* from my village. (Rafi; Domestic Worker Lebanon)

> I went to Lebanon with help from my *dulavai`s* (elder sister's husband) family. I paid them 30 thousand taka (inclusive of everything); additionally, I spent two and half thousand taka to get a passport. (Salu; Domestic Worker Lebanon)

By remaining grounded in connectivity and patriarchal connectivity as expressed in the stories above, women, their family (and extended family) / neighbours/ close acquaintances interacted to make migration a reality. The women reported no serious trouble from the brokers who assisted them, even those women using dalals operating on behalf of a recruiting agency in Bangladesh. Similar responses came from other women whose dalals operated independently in the Middle East or within their transnational networks.

Overall, migration brokers' close ties / bonding with the women through family or social relations informed by notions of connectivity and patriarchal connectivity explain their overall good / responsible conduct. Within the uneasy structural landscape of migration, women and migration brokers share familial and social bonds enabling both parties to pursue their objectives.

4-Conclusion

The women`s experiences show the inextricable involvement of their families and close acquaintances in their migration. My analysis of Bangladeshi women's stories in this chapter also shows Bangladeshi women and Bangladeshi migration brokers interact to facilitate migration arrangements for the former within the structural and institutional impediments informing Bangladeshi temporary workers' outward migration; as they engage, they remain bound by their social relationship as informed by the patriarchal connectivity of rural Bangladeshi society. By complying with and expressing their allegiance to the rural patriarchal social relations in Bangladesh, both women and migration brokers in this study benefit, albeit quite differently, from the process of arranging women's migration. While women find a way to materialize their dreams of economic improvement, brokers make economic profits by assisting their recruitment and relocation.

Chapter Six

Bangladeshi Women and their Employers in the Middle East

1-Introduction

In Chapter Five, I analyzed Bangladeshi women's experiences of migration with relatives, neighbours and acquaintances who played important roles as brokers in the women's migration arrangement. In this chapter, I focus on another important dimension of Bangladeshi women's migration experience. In light of their lived experience, I address how they portray their situation in the Middle East, looking into and problematizing their conduct with their employers.

The institutional reality of migration in the Middle East makes these women vulnerable. Some comply with their employers' demands; others contest or negotiate. By critically deciphering their behaviour, I realized Bangladeshi women's conduct is profoundly motivated by their need to support their families in Bangladesh and to repay loans from their extended family, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances. A number of women disclosed their internalized gendered values about Bengali rural women's sexual morality as they negotiated with their employers. In sum, Bangladeshi women's behaviour shows their deep embeddedness in their Bangladeshi rural environment.

The stories in this chapter show women's individual-level behaviour with their employers in a new light. Some key scholarly works on migrant domestic workers, as noted in Chapter Three, depict migrant domestic workers' individual-level behaviour with employers primarily within the institutional context of their (unequal) relationship in the destination; they have, however, left unaddressed their behaviour with their employers in relation to alternative contexts.

My reading of Bangladeshi domestic workers' tales suggests their conduct has much to do with specific social (and also economic) realities in rural Bangladesh, quite apart from the institutional realities in the Middle East. By bringing to the fore the under-appreciated situation of the home context and its influence on migrant domestics' individual-level behaviour, my findings suggest a unique way to interpret migrant domestics' conduct with their employers.

The majority of my female informants were domestic workers in the Middle East (28 out of 34). One woman in the sample went to Saudi Arabia as a cleaner and also worked there without documentation as a part-time domestic worker. I juxtapose her story to those of three domestics who became unauthorized workers in the Middle East. Five women in the sample (three went as garment workers, two were cleaners) did not inform me in detail about their individual experiences. Consequently, garment workers' and cleaners' stories do not receive separate attention in this chapter.

I was told by the informants that even when they went to the Middle East as live-in domestics, they did not all end up in the same situation. Eighteen worked as live-ins throughout their entire stay. Three initially worked as live-ins but later took on unauthorized work; one worked in a garment factory, one was a part-time domestic worker, and the third was a part-time domestic worker and a sales person in a store. Seven women in the sample who went to Lebanon as live-ins were sold by Lebanese placement agencies to their employers, one or more times. Other than these seven women in Lebanon, I did not find any significant cross-country variations in women's situations. Consequently, I have analyzed the rest of the women's stories without disaggregating their country of destination.

This chapter consists of three major sections**.** Section two focuses on live-in domestic workers. Three of the informants went to the Middle East under the contractual arrangement for a live-in, but ended up becoming illegalized workers (without an authorized work permit). I present their stories in section three. This section also includes the story of a cleaner in Saudi Arabia who, besides her regular job, worked without legal status as an unauthorized worker (part-time domestic worker). Seven women in the sample fell into a trafficking trap in Lebanon; they were sold by agents (placement agencies) to their employers in Lebanon and encountered horrifying situations. The physical and emotional abuse, suspicion, threats and torture these women experienced at the hands of agents, or their employers are bloodcurdling; sometimes such maltreatment came out as a joint endeavour of the two controlling parties (agent and employer). I discuss their stories in section four.

2-Live-in Domestic Workers

A great deal of available literature sheds light on the living and working situations of migrant domestic workers in the Middle East (for example, Gamburd, 2000; Hamill, 2011; Jureidini, 2010; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; Moukarbel, 2009; Pande, 2012). These workers come to the Middle East under the *kafala* system of sponsorship that is widely practiced across the region (Jureidini, 2010; Longava, 1997). As suggested by some noteworthy studies on the Gulf region (Baldwin-Edwards, 2011; Colton, 2010; De Bel-Air, 2011; Longava, 1999; Rahman, 2012; Shah, 1994), a foreign worker is only able to work legally in countries of the region under the *kafala* or sponsorship system. The worker must be sponsored by a native (citizen) employer, commonly known as their *kafeel*, with whom they work during their appointed period of stay.

Gamburd (2000) notes that a domestic worker sponsored by a kafeel works as a live-in in the latter`s household. A domestic worker`s duties include doing laundry, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. Domestic workers can have days off or free time for themselves only if their employers grant it to them.

In her study on returned domestic workers from the Middle East, Grete Brochmann (1990) says, "49 percent of the respondents say they have a work day of more than 16 hours," and "72 percent of the housemaids did not get *any* days off during the whole contract period" (1990, pp. 132-133). In Lebanon, Moukarbel (2009) finds live-in domestic workers must make themselves available to perform household duties at any time of the day. The domestic workers' movement is severely restricted through extreme controls in terms of where they can go, with whom they can mingle or make friends (Brochmann, 1990; Moukarbel, 2009). They are allowed to go outside only when accompanied by their employers' family members. The only time domestics are not accompanied by their employers is when they dispose of the garbage outside the house (Brochmann, 1990). In Lebanon, not paying regular wages to domestic workers and confiscating their passport and travel documents appear common practice (Moukarbel, 2009). Certain studies (Jureidini, 2010; Moukarbel, 2009; Pande, 2012) on domestic workers in Lebanon show that as part of her work-contract, a domestic worker is obliged to live with the same employer and cannot change employers unless the original employer agrees. The transfer of employers can happen only under special arrangement and "under special 'amnesty' periods arranged by the General Security" (Moukarbel, 2009, p. 36).

The situation of migrant domestics in the Middle East resonates with the situation of migrant domestic workers in East and Southeast Asia - Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and

Malaysia (Tan, 2008). It also evokes the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) in Canada. Since 1992, foreign domestic workers have come to work in Canada under LCP; they provide care work for disabled persons, children and the elderly in private homes (Faraday, 2012). Research shows that contemporary live-in caregivers in Canada are predominantly women from the Philippines (as cited in Faraday, 2012, p. 36). They come to Canada with a full-time work contract of four years. Live-in caregivers are eligible to apply for a permanent residency in Canada once they have completed 24 months of live-in caregiving work within their four years contract period.[29] By way of contrast, migrant domestic workers in the Middle East (and in Southeast Asia) have no right to permanent residency or citizenship status; they lose their legal right to live in the destination as soon as their contract with the employer expires (Hamill, 2011; Jureidini, 2010; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; Longava, 1997; Pande, 2012). The rigid laws on foreign domestics' stay in the Middle East place women in an extremely disadvantageous situation, completely relegating them to the discretion of their employers.

In what follows, I focus on the stories of Bangladeshi domestic workers who worked as live-in domestics at their employers' homes in the Middle East. Except for three women in the sample who worked in two different countries, all of the women worked in just one country as live-ins; they all lived with the same employer during their entire stay. In terms of sheer numbers, this group constituted the largest number of informants, 18 out of 28 women.

Table 2 in Chapter Two (Methodology) provides informants' detailed profiles; as the table indicates, out of 28 Bangladeshi women in my sample, 8 went to Dubai (in the United Arab

[29] When I was writing my dissertation, migrant domestic workers in Canada had a compulsory living requirement with their employers. In November 2014, citizenship and immigration Canada (CIC) initiated changes in the live-in caregiver program. Under the new policy, a foreign domestic worker in Canada can chose to either live-in or live-out. Further details can be found at : www.cic.gc.ca

Emirates), 11 to Lebanon, 3 to Saudi Arabia, and 1 each to Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait. Three worked as live-in domestic workers in more than one country: one worked in Kuwait and Dubai, one in Dubai and Saudi Arabia, and one in Oman and Lebanon. The majority were either illiterate or had very little formal schooling. Only four had the equivalent of grade eight and one the equivalent of grade seven. Except five women, all were married with at least one young child; the ages of their children ranged from seven to 12.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Michael Foucault elaborates the concept of disciplinary power; this, he says, can be exercised to discipline human beings in various institutions, such as prisons, schools, and factories, to configure bodies of prisoners, students and workers as "docile bodies" to ensure those holding power over them reach their desired outcomes. As Bangladeshi domestic workers' stories show, their employers invariably use Foucauldian disciplinary power to regulate their conduct; they are socialized by their employers to follow certain rules and regulations in terms of their tasks, for example, how to perform particular tasks, where they are able to go and where not, what they can do and what they cannot, and so on. The destination states in the Middle East play a role in legitimating and authorizing such power: they issue specific terms of contract for migrant domestics' appointments.

In Bangladeshi domestics' lived tales, the use of disciplinary power by their employers and their consent to such power becomes obvious. For example, Hashu precisely abided by the instructions of her employer:

> I found that I was treated alike with domestic workers from other countries. We were all treated in the same way. If you behave well with them, they would also behave the same way with you. If we commit a mistake, they would be mad at us. They would not forgive us; they would punish us instead. Then we had to manage them. Often, they told us we were wrong even when we were not wrong. In that case, we had to accept what they told us; we did what they told us to do. We cooked, cleaned the house and did laundry. For we

> are poor; we went there to earn money. We may get mad at them and come back; but, then what will we do? Maybe, those who are not able to tolerate their behaviour are the ones who choose to return home. (Hashu; Domestic Worker Dubai)

In a similar vein, Rumi expressed extreme obedience to her employer`s authority:

> After I was taken to the house by my *mailk*, I was taught everything from scratch, as if I was a mad woman and did not know anything! They taught me how to wash clothes, make juice for the children. They taught me and I learned. What better could I do than to learn? For I went there to earn money; I had to sell everything to come here. So, I learned everything and by remembering Allah *(takhan ami Allahar nam niye shob shikhe nicchi)*. Madam asked me to sleep at 12 a.m.; she would point me to the wall clock. She asked me to get up at 6 a.m. every day. She asked me to follow this routine strictly and not to be bothered with what the kids were doing at that time. I did exactly what she had asked me to do. I would get up at six o'clock and start my day. I would feed the children and send them to school. We were there to earn money, not to act naughty! (Rumi; Domestic Worker Dubai)

Constable (2007) notes a similar situation for Filipino domestic workers and their employers and recruiting agencies in Hong Kong. Following Foucault, Constable terms those disciplinary practices "modern covert discipline" (2007, p. 16). Covert forms of disciplinary practices by employers, as Constable observes, include instructing domestic workers not to wear showy outfits or make-up, along with specificities associated with performing their jobs, for example, how to behave sociably to the employer's family and to those who visit the family, when to shower, etc. These disciplinary practices, according to Constable, are covert; employers restrict their workers' conduct by enforcing certain rules and regulations, not by using direct physical or verbal assaults. They are implicitly coercive, representing a modern way of perpetuating violence; by instructing subordinates to behave in a certain manner, dominants tacitly exercise power instead of directly exercising it, as in the slavery system.

In Constable's view, Filipino domestics "in their desire to "professionalize" their image, often express a preference for more modern coercive methods" (2007, p. 16). She, nevertheless,

maintains that exercising covert forms of discipline, to some extent, provides Filipino domestics with "a comfortable illusion of freedom" (ibid, p.17).

In the stories of a number of my live-in informants, including Hashu and Rumi, the women's strict adherence to professionalism is apparent. Contrary to Constable's observations, however, I did not see accompanying illusions or ambivalence about freedom. They were fully aware of their situation and their position of disadvantage in the hierarchy. By reminding me of their economic deprivation in Bangladesh (which they wanted to avoid under any circumstances) domestic workers justified their compliance with their employers' disciplinary rules.

When deciding to migrate, these women had two choices. They could stay in Bangladesh and remain impoverished without a job or holding a job with very little pay, or they could move to a country with better prospects of economic improvement for themselves and their families. Seen this way, the cost of staying in Bangladesh appears much higher to these women, relative to the cost of their moving and working under rigid conditions at their employers' homes in a prosperous foreign land in the Middle East. Therefore, they decided to take the option which was less costly to them: they chose to put up with their employers instead of living under harsh economic conditions in Bangladesh. Once these women were in the Middle East, they tried in every possible way to materialize their dream of economic prosperity. Consequently, they tried to please their employers by aligning themselves with the normative power hierarchy and, thus, appeared to validate their employers' authority.

To reach their goals, it was important for these women to be patient. This is illustrated in the following stories from Rumi and Shiri:

> Initially I could not eat the food they gave me. Gradually I acquired the taste; at that point I used to love their food very much.Why has Allah sent me on this earth if I can't even bear hardship for a few days? (Rumi; Domestic Worker Dubai)

> Those of us who had been abroad, we experienced much hardship. Like many, initially I could not understand or speak the language; I was beaten up. Yes, they abuse us severely! But we have to face the situation. Initially, they gave me much hardship; but later on I was quite happy**.** Initially I had problem with their food. I could not eat anything they gave me to eat. But I did not cook for myself. I was afraid that madam would get angry with me if I did. Would they cook separately for a housemaid? No! So, I ate only those that I could eat, like fruits, biscuits. Overtime I learned to eat their food. By Allah's *rahmat* (blessing of the God) I was able to eat anything they gave me. (Shiri; Domestic Worker Dubai)

Rowshan, Ruku and Shiri shed light on their deference to their employers and their accompanying rationale:

> I have told the women whom I met during *TTC*[30] training that some *maliks* are good, some are not. Regardless, trust yourself, do not be afraid of the workload *(tomra nijer upor vorosha rakhba, kajke doraibana).* That is not your own country; so, it's important that you be courageous. If your conduct is good, then your *malik* would be good to you too. They are your boss, you are their employee. Don't talk back *(tader mukher upor katha bolbana*). They do not like you to weep; they prefer you to work with a smiling face. So, keep on smiling as you work for them. (Rowshan; Domestic Worker Lebanon)

> I would like to tell women that they should stay good, work well and do not go after bad means *(kono kharap pothe jaibana).* You can keep your malik pleased this way. I would like to educate women from my experience of working there. If you try you can do anything; you have to try to adjust yourself to all sorts of situations that you encounter there. (Ruku; Domestic Worker Dubai)

> If I did something and not in the right way, then madam would beat me. When I realized it, I would tell madam that I was wrong. I would promise her this is not going to happen next time. I would tell her, what would I do, I can't remember everything! Madam would then ask me to do everything and one by one; so, I did everything following what she told me. (Shiri; Domestic Worker Dubai)

As the above tales make clear, Rowshan, Ruku and Shiri unconditionally complied with their employers' power. Their behaviour can, thus, be regarded as a clever and calculated tactic,

[30] Technical Training Centre. There are several TTCs in Bangladesh from where the state, with support from some private NGOs, offers mandatory training to those going to Middle Eastern countries as domestic workers.

designed to enable them to remain in the Middle East under any circumstances to attain their ultimate objective of earning money.

According to Rollins (1985), employers control domestic workers' movements and actions, and domestics do not resist their employers' conduct: "If domestics do not pretend to be unintelligent, subservient, and content with their positions, they know the position could be lost" (1985, p. 227). They comply with the role of a subordinate carefully and cleverly and not to lose their employers' goodwill. Consistent with this view, most live-in domestics whom I interviewed did not express any direct resistance to their employers' control. Women`s responses show their calculated and risk-averse behaviour guided by an active awareness of their situation of economic deprivation in Bangladesh. In short, they consciously chose to align with the hierarchy of power.

That said, live-in domestics do not always unconditionally comply. Five of the women I interviewed directly confronted their employers by challenging them in a number of ways. For example, Hashu questioned or challenged her employer's mother's behaviour towards her through a third party, the police:

> One day my *malik* and her mother had a serious quarrel over me. His mother told him she did not want to keep me at the house anymore. So, I was taken to the jail. I told police in the jail that I did not do anything; why do I have to stay in jail? I told the police who my *malik* was. The police called my *malik* and then he came and took me back to his house. I was not kept at the jail. (Hashu; Domestic Worker Dubai)

In the following two cases, even when Julekha and Hashu had to accommodate their employers, they did not conform unconditionally. Julekha negotiated her living situation with the employer by informing the latter about her strong dislike for old clothing, while Hashu made

sure her employers took her to the doctor when she was sick by threatening them with non-cooperation if they did not listen to her:

> I had to do a lot of work at my madam's mother`s house and for free; I was not paid any money for this. Whenever I was done with madam's household work, they would take me there to work. They have given me everything (stuff). But I did not accept any old – clothing from them. I told them if they give me old clothes I would not wear them. (Julekha; Domestic Worker Oman)

> Whenever I got sick, they would take me to the doctor. I used to tell them I have a problem; if you don't take me to the doctor I can't work. Then they took me to the doctor. (Hashu; Domestic Worker Dubai)

Some women, for example, Sheemu, Julekha and Shiri, quit their jobs for various reasons, including humiliation, not being paid, or underpayment:

> I managed three visas from my employer and gave those visas to somebody whom I knew so that she could bring three women from Bangladesh. I told *malik* that they are like my sisters. So, my *malik* made arrangement for their visa. Two of these women fled from their *maliks'* house; somebody lured them with more salary to work elsewhere. After they had fled, *malik* misbehaved with me. He used to call me *harami* (thief); I was kept under lock and key at his house. So I left him; I came back to Bangladesh. (Sheemu; Domestic Worker Oman)

> I came back To Bangladesh after two years. I had too much work to do there. I had been made to work for free at madam's mother`s house. (Julekha; Domestic Worker Lebanon) I did not stay any longer with them because my salary was not increased. I said I would stay only if you give me six hundred taka but they offered me five hundred taka. So I left them. (Shiri; Domestic Worker Dubai)

Rumi's response points to the fact that even when she accommodated the employer, she knew it was a serious hardship for her. When the hardship exceeded her tolerance, she quit her job and remained firm in her decision:

> After my two-year contract was over I decided not to stay at their house; they kept me unpaid and under-fed, I did not want to bear the hardship anymore. When I used to visit their friends' house I saw many *mamas* **(**female employers in the Middle East**)** were better people. Those *mamas* would secretly ask me: how does your madam treat you? Then, I told them everything. I told them I was Bengali; I left my children in my country to come for work here. They would then offer me a job at their house; they would tell me

> that they could hire me if I was able to cancel the visa with my *madam*. Then I consulted with my *malik* about it. I told him to cancel my visa so that I could go home. He told me that the kids didn't want to let me go. So, why would I leave them? I confronted my *malik*; we fought and then he cancelled me. He cancelled me in a way so that I could never come back to Dubai. I told them it is okay; I am leaving now. Then I left the house. There is *Allah*; if I am able to work and if *Allah* wills I should be able to go to other countries; I do not need to go to Dubai. So, I have decided not to go to Dubai again. (Rumi; Domestic Worker Dubai)

By directly confronting their employers, some Bangladeshi domestics challenged the power asymmetry and were able to benefit themselves, to some extent. Their responses remind me of Mary Romero`s (1992) insightful study that brings Chicana domestic workers and their employers under one analytical lens. According to Romero, Chicana domestics' relationship with their employers fits into a capitalist-worker relationship under capitalism. In capitalism, capitalists can maximize their economic profit as they do not remunerate workers in proportion to the amount of labour they invest to produce commodities for the capitalists. The capitalists are the exploiters; the workers are the exploited. Unless this structurally organized exploiter-exploited relationship is uprooted, the situation of subordination continues for the workers. In a similar vein, as Romero argues, the employer of a domestic worker mirrors the image of a capitalist, as she/he always tries "to maximize the amount of unpaid labor" (p. 142) to increase the level of profit gained by employing a domestic worker. As a domestic is unable to break her unequal production relations with the capitalist, the only way she can liberate herself on an individual level from her employers' oppression, in Romero`s view, is by breaking away from her employer or by completely disassociating herself from her employer. Romero`s ideas inform the way Julekha, Shiri and Rumi made sense of their employers' oppression, as well as their strategy to end such oppression. By completely disassociating themselves from their employers, these women were ultimately able to regain control of their labour.

Some Bangladeshi domestics use various means of negotiation subject to their particular situation with the employer. Their responses are clever and innovative. By acting cleverly Monu was able to gain sympathy from her employer. Her response also ensured an economic reward:

> They used to help me in the houses. I used to weep and tell them I don't have a husband; they would then help me. They used to give me gifts during *Eids*; they would either give me gold jewelry or money. If they had guests visiting them, they would give me *bakhshish*. This way I was generating good income. (Monu; Domestic Worker Kuwait and Dubai)

After she became comfortable speaking Arabic, Julekha told her employer about her family's impoverishment in Bangladesh. The employer then raised Julekh's salary in recognition of her heavy workload.

> I had been told by the *dalal* that I would be paid ten and half thousand in Lebanon (in Bangladeshi currency), but actually I was paid only seven thousand Bangladeshi taka.Then, I thought about it. It would not be worth going back to Bangladesh at this point; why do I have to go back after spending so much money to come here! After I became proficient in Arabic, I told them that I was poor. I had my children and parents in Bangladesh. Unless they increased my salary it was hard for me to bear my family expenses. My madam saw that I was doing good with my work. She thought I was working both at her and her mother's house. So, she ultimately increased my salary after I stayed there for six months. (Julekha; Domestic Worker Lebanon)

Hashu used her acquired Arabic language skills to engage with her female employer and her relatives.

> When I became fluent in the language, I enjoyed and had fun with them. They talked to me. When madam`s bothers' and sisters' housemaids came to visit the house, I talked to them. I talked to them in Arabic. If they had taken me to their family gatherings, I could talk to Bengalis if there were any; if there were none I could not. (Hashu; Domestic Worker Dubai)

Julekha and Hashu's situation can be understood in light of Pierre Bourdieu`s views on social and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1984), people acquire social capital by maintaining a relationship with others across their social networks. The issue of sociability is

important as it enables people to gain access to opportunities by using their social connections. Bourdieu defines cultural capital as "an understanding and familiarity of a dominant culture and language in a society" (as cited in Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004, p. 141). After living with and working for their employers for some time, Juthi and Hosneara became fluent in speaking Arabic. This, in turn, enhanced their sociability in the cultural climate of the destination; over time, they acquired more power to bargain with their employers. Their fluency reduced their vulnerability.

The stories of certain Bangladeshi live-in domestics provide thought-provoking insight into their dealings with their employers in the Middle East; these women acted differently from the women whose tales I have addressed above. I tell their stories next.

2.1 One of the Family?[31]

Feminist scholars (for example, Bakan & Stasiulis 1997; Cock, 1980; Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Romero, 1992; Wrigley, 1995; Young, 1987) have written about the construction of domestic workers as members of the employer`s family. In their view, such a construction can be regarded as highly exploitative on many levels. It relegates domestic workers to a situation of slavery with the employers, while blurring their unequal power status and their limited ability to negotiate with their employers. Considering domestic workers as members of employers' families hides the existence of the domestic workers' own families (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1987). It allows employers to extract domestic workers' affection for their children without additional remuneration (Romero, 1992). Cohen (1989), while observing the situation of some West Indian

[31]In her dissertation, Parreñas (1998) uses these terms to problematize Filipino domestic workers' experience with their employers in Rome and Los Angeles.

domestic workers at their employers' homes in New York City, comments, "Family ideology, sometimes, used to explain why people have to sacrifice for one another, is turned around to induce people who are *not* in the family to do things that may be exploitative" (1989, p. 184). Parreñas (1998), on the other hand, suggests the possibility that domestic workers might hold "multiple emotions" about their employers and their jobs (1998, p.282). Following Wrigley (1995, 1991), she acknowledges an interdependency that underscores employers and domestics' relationships, often revealed in their behaviour with each other.

Contrary to the views of scholarship on the exploitative dimensions of the relationships between an employer and a domestic worker, I find that often Bangladeshi domestics regard their employers' treatment of them as quite generous. As the following stories indicate, these domestics appreciate their employers' generosity and positively respond to their employers' behaviour. Salu, Alo, Fatu and Rafi told me the following:

> I was there for a three year contract and overstayed for another year and without any *akama* (identity card to live and work in the Middle East) Then *Malik* said, her (Salu's) *akama* has expired; she cannot be kept anymore. I have to buy her a ticket for Bangladesh. Hearing this, my madam started to cry. She loved me a lot. Madam's second daughter was like a friend to me. She was very sweet to me. If she saw me sleeping she did not let her mother wake me up. She told her mother to let me sleep; they can do the work when I am asleep. I used to call my madam as mama, always. They used to eat bread, hardly rice. Gradually, when I learned the language well, I told mama that I love rice. She told me, alright, you can cook rice for yourself. But I did not want to eat rice alone. I told them, that's okay; I actually love your food a lot. I would eat whatever you do. (Salu; Domestic Worker Lebanon)

> I was given to stay in the same room with *malik*'s only daughter. His daughter was in class five. We shared the same bed. Like me her daughter`s name was also Alia. She was very nice to me. When I could not figure out what they told me, she would ask me to stay quiet and keep working. (Alo; Domestic Worker Dubai)

> I had a separate room, kitchen and washing machine. I ate from the same plate with my madam's mother. She was very nice; she used to love *kajer beti* (a domestic worker) living in the house with her family. (Fatu;Domestic Worker Saudi Arabia)

> I used to send all my salary to Bangladesh, I used to keep only the *bakhshish* money. The daughter of my madam used to tell me, why do you send all the money to Bangladesh? We won't send your salary to Bangladesh anymore. We would like to save the money for you and have your marriage arranged here (all these were spoken in Arabic as Rani told me). I used to tell her, no, I can't marry in this country. I love here; but, after all, I am a Bengali; won't people put shame on me if I marry here (*ami boltam lage, tobe shoto hoileo ami Bangali, manush lojja dibe na?)* I am here today because of my family's financial situation. If I can't give money to my family, my parents would be very unhappy. After I finished my works for the day, I used to play ball, chess and cards with madam`s nephews and nieces. They would call me to play with them after they are back from school. I felt as if I was in my own home. (Rafi;Domestic Worker Lebanon)

Interdependency between Bangladeshi domestics and their employers, expressed in their mutual need for each other, reverberates in the stories above. Parreñas (1998) notes that by treating domestic workers "like a human being, employers can induce domestic workers to 'do a good job.' Domestic workers may similarly attain the treatment they so desire to be 'like one of the family' by 'doing a good job'" (1998, p. 280). In the above scenarios, the Bangladeshi domestics' behaviour is driven by their sense of professional responsibility, along with personal emotion as they recognize their employers' good conduct.[32] The informal work environment at their employers' homes makes it possible for Bangladeshi domestics to shape their responses by linking the professional and personal aspects of their relationships; in other words, they seem to contest the view that employers only exploit domestic workers.

A few stories, like the following two, reveal the exploitative aspects underpinning the notion "like one of the family." In the first story, Rowshan acknowledged her employer's

[32] As I spoke with them, some female informants told me that during the BMET mandated domestic workers' training program, they were taught how to use washing machines, vacuum cleaners and food processors. They also told me that the training instructor advised them to perform their job professionally - as a responsible and accommodating employee at their employers' homes in the Middle East. Therefore, it is likely that through the mandatory training program, Bangladeshi domestics learned to maintain professionalism in their conduct with employers

generosity; at the same time, she resents the fact that the labour she invested in caring for the children remains unappreciated by the employer:

> Me and my *malik* (woman) stayed in the same room. She told me I was her daughter. They used to supply me the clothes that I wore there, and toiletries like soap and oil. I stayed there for three years. I raised one of their grandchildren while I was there. When I first went to the house he was just three months old. On the day of my departure the kid did not want to let me go. He did not go to anyone except me; he did not even go to his parents. As I worked (in the household) he would tightly hold my clothes. But they did not give me anything for raising him! I was just given this *burkha* (garment that covers the body and head) that you see me wearing. (Rowshan;Domestic Worker Lebanon)

Rumi's story indicates her employer used their children as a weapon to make her comply with the way they wanted her to perform the care-work:

> I used to cook there, clean the house and take care of the kids. Madam would tell me not to be naughty *(tui dushtami korishna).* She would tell me: take care of my kids, and your kids will be taken care of by Allah. Madam's mother would tell me the same thing. So, I looked after their kids and prayed to Allah to look after my kids. (Rumi;Domestic Worker Dubai)

Overall, the narratives in this section reveal how employers use "family" as an ideological mechanism to control domestics - an idea advanced by feminist scholars (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Cock, 1990; Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Romero, 1992; Wrigley, 1995; Young, 1997), discussed previously. By closely looking at the diverse range of emotions some workers express about their employers and their families, like Parreñas (1998), I find these domestics consciously conform to the "family" ideology advanced by their employers to gain the best out of their intimacy while remaining embedded in an unequal power relationship (Parreñas, 1998, p. 282). They have the ability to gain from employers' control and, therefore, cannot be seen as exploited workers only.

2.2 Emphasis on Individual Conduct and Character

Several women emphasized individual character and responsible behaviour as the main safeguard for women to prevent an undesirable situation in the destination country. For Muku, Rumi, Shiri and Shanu, it is a woman's responsibility to protect herself from her employer through her moral conduct regarding sexuality. To this end, she should regulate her behaviour so that it does not appear inviting to the employer:

> I know I did not lose in any way. I came back exactly the same as I went. I hear people of the country are no good. But I stayed there for three years. Neither madam's husband nor her sons did anything to me. People say men of the country are no good; they sleep with domestics. This is a lie. It can happen sometimes though. Is it all good in our country? There is good and bad in every country. To some extent it depends on the individual too. If you are around somebody for five days, he is bound to come near you, willingly. Are all women from our country good? Some walk naked, some wearing *burkha*; some cover their bodies. It depends on you. (Muku; Domestic Worker Lebanon)

> Those with whom I attended the housemaid training asked me how it had been for me to be in Dubai. I told them there is both good and bad in that country; but whether you would be good or bad that depends on you. If I want to be bad it would take me a few minutes to be so. But If I am a good woman, it would not happen so easily. (Rumi; Domestic Worker Dubai)

> Those who talk behind my back, I would like to tell them, see, not everybody are the same. Good and bad exist everywhere. Isn't it possible that some one unable to stay good in Bangladesh? Isn't it possible that she would turn out bad in Bangladesh? Two types of people, either good or bad, exist everywhere. It's up to the person how she wants to keep herself. So, what you assume about me is not right. Whatever I do, I always do that using my brain. (Shiri; Domestic Worker Dubai)

> There is good and bad, everywhere. Is it not same in Bangladesh? I think people of that country are good. It is we, Bengali women, who are not good. I do not think that country was bad at all. I lived on their money - I saved my life, my parents' lives. If they were bad, would I be going to them once again? Why would I go there leaving my family behind? I am going there because it is good there; and, I am not at all scared to go again. (Shanu;Domestic Worker Dubai and Saudi Arabia)

> People say it's bad to go abroad. I tell them, see I have been there, but I saw nothing bad! Both my *malik* and madam were good. As I went on the street, I saw good things.

> Perhaps you followed bad lines in that country and so you do say all these. I went there pure and came back pure! I do not see anything bad in that country; I did not find any. Now, why these women are beaten up there, they do not tell us quite frankly. I had been there but I did not see anything wrong! They must have followed dirty paths to earn their livings, otherwise, how would they see bad only? (Rozina; Domestic Worker Bahrain)

While taking the same tone as Rozina, Ruku asserts that the government of Bangladesh should provide support if a woman finds herself in a difficult situation with her employer in the destination. To her, both the migrant woman and the state of Bangladesh should be responsible:

> My experience in Dubai was good, really good. This time I am going to Dubai to work for the same employer. He gave me visa. I would like to tell women that they should stay good, work well and not go for a dirty path to earn their livings (*kono kharap pothe jaibana*). I would like to educate women from the way I worked there. If somebody gets a bad employer, then it is Bangladeshi government's duty to help her with the situation. It is the government's responsibility to help her out; otherwise it makes no sense to me that they are able to leave the country only after receiving training and obtaining certificate from the government (Ruku, Domestic Worker Dubai)

Except for Ruku, these Bangladeshi domestics say a woman's own behaviour is her main safeguard in the destination country. Such responses appear anti-feminist, to say the least; issues of women's collective welfare and safety have taken a back seat. The responses obscure the reality that underpins the organization of migration for domestic work to the Middle East (and elsewhere) and the fact that it systematically generates the possibility of exploitation because of the nature of the work contract.

Careful observation of the social environment in rural Bangladesh, from which these women come and the expectations and demands that such environment places on them must be considered if we are to understand their responses. As I will explain in Chapter Seven, these women's responses are informed by their gendered values regarding Bengali rural women and their sexuality to deal with their vulnerability in the Middle East. It is important for them to uphold such values to assure their social status in their community and family upon their return

to Bangladesh. Following this logic, their comments can be seen as a defense mechanism; after working in the Middle East their sexual reputations could be at stake, given predominant stereotypes in Bangladesh about migrant women "becoming" sexually promiscuous in the Middle East.[33]

3-Stories of Unauthorized Workers

In many Arab states, the strict institutional arrangement for foreign workers under the kafala system can be exacerbated when the worker remains without a sponsor or works for somebody who is not her sponsor (Longava, 1997). To change her job, a foreign worker needs to hold a formal approval from the kafeel. When a foreign worker leaves her employer without the latter's approval, she automatically becomes illegalized. As an unauthorized person, she is "subject to arrest, detention (imprisonment) and deportation" (Jureidini, 2010, p. 160).

According to a United Nations report, in 2010, 87 percent of the residents of Qatar were foreign nationals; in the same year, the percentage of migrant population per total population stood at 70 percent for the United Arab Emirates, 69 percent for Kuwait, 39 percent for Bahrain, 28 percent for Oman and 28 percent for Saudi Arabia (as cited in Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014, p. 153). Despite migrant workers' significant share in total population in these and other Middle Eastern countries which are widely dependent on foreign workers, they cannot become citizens and do not have the rights and opportunities accruing to those with a citizenship status. Their discriminatory status is perpetuated under the kafala system of sponsorship, whereby

[33] During my fieldwork in Bangladesh, I found this sentiment expressed by many people from different backgrounds who learned about Bangladeshi women's migration to the Middle East only on the surface, primarily informed by media/ national newspaper reports which publicize stories of Bangladeshi domestic workers who have been trafficked to the Middle East and ended up doing sex work.

migrant workers are allowed to live in the Middle East only when they work for their kafeel or sponsor-employer in the destination. When a migrant worker flees or chooses not to work for the sponsor, she is automatically illegalized. For these women, the lack of citizenship or permanent residency and conditions of stay in the destination under the kafala system, therefore, systematically "make" them illegal and put them in extreme danger (Hamill, 2011; Jureidini, 2010; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; Longava, 1997; Moukarbel, 2009; Pande, 2012).

Informed by the literature on unauthorized workers in the Middle East, in this section I provide stories of four illegalized Bangladeshi women domestics. They worked in four different states: Banu was a garment worker in Lebanon, Raha was a part-time domestic worker in two houses in Dubai, Bula had two different kinds of work experiences in Kuwait, first as a salesperson in a clothing store and later as a part-time domestic, and Raju went to Saudi Arabia as a hospital cleaner. She also worked as a part-time domestic. These women went to the Middle East for economic reasons - to improve the financial situation for themselves and their families in Bangladesh; they did not want to lose the valuable opportunity of earning money in the Middle East under any circumstances. Therefore, they decided to take the status of unauthorized workers by breaking off with their sponsor-employers (Banu, Raha, Bula) or covertly doing an extra job in addition to their authorized job (Raju). Below I present their stories.

Banu: Failed bargaining and quitting: Banu went to Lebanon as a contract domestic worker. After the first six months, she met some domestic workers from Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. In her words:

> Actually, I did not work at my employer's house for very long. I met different domestics from Sri Lanka and the Philippines as I went out with my madam or hung out with my Bengali friends. I asked them about their salary. Some of them said that they were being paid one hundred and fifty, some said two hundred or one hundred. Then I interrogated

> my madam about this. I asked her to raise my salary; I told her I had too much work to do there. She told me point blank that the salary won't be increased. I told her in that case I would not be working at their house anymore.

Banu became even more dissatisfied with her employer when she realized she would never be compensated in proportion to how much she was doing for the family:

> I used to work at my madam's father, brother and sister's house when I accompanied her there. I had to take care of the children in those houses. I gave my service for free; I was not paid or even offered a single penny for taking care of their children. But this is not what I had known before I joined my employer. I was told that my salary would be increased after I work there for two months and have learned some Arabic to be able to understand my employer's instructions. I waited for six months to get a raise in my salary. But my salary was still the same – just one hundred Lebanese currency! So, I left the house.

Banu's story tells the extent of her deprivation - she was doing extra work for no payment. Quitting seemed the only thing to do in the face of her employer's unjust practices and the stipulations of the kafala system in Lebanon which does not allow a migrant worker to change employers without consent from her current employee (kafeel) (Pande, 2012; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; Jureidini, 2010; Hamill, 2011). As soon as Banu quit, she was automatically "made" illegal by the strict regulations of her work arrangement even when it was her response to her employer`s unjust practices. In effect, kafala is an institutionalized mechanism whereby the Lebanese state ensures a migrant domestic worker remains "dependent on the employer for her legal and economic existence in the country" (Pande, 2012, p.387); otherwise, she loses her value as a worker and becomes disposable.

After Banu quit, with help from a Bangladeshi female acquaintance working as a medical cleaner in Lebanon, she managed to find a job in a garment factory (which seemed to hire illegalized workers) and was paid slightly better than her previous work. She worked in the factory for one year. She also confirmed a job for her husband in the factory. While Banu was

working through necessary arrangements to bring her husband from Bangladesh, the police caught her and sent her to jail. Banu is a "runway" domestic worker, a type discussed by Moukarbel (2009, pp. 36 -37) in her study of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. Runaway domestics flee their sponsors. If caught by the police, she can be imprisoned and then deported. Some Bangladeshi women in the sample who went to Lebanon informed me that when a domestic worker is found to have no legal employer, she is kept in the local jail until her situation is verified by the original employer. Negotiation with the employer ultimately determines the domestic worker's fate – that is, whether she stays in the country or is deported. If she can justify the reason for not keeping up with her contract, the employer has to set her free legally and buy her a ticket to go home. She is not free until her employer formally agrees to release her from the paternalistic relationship they share under kafala (Pande, 2012).

Although jailed because she was "illegal," Banu cleverly confronted her situation and was ultimately able to free herself from the bondage of her sponsor-employer:

> In the jail a lawyer asked me about the reason for my running away from the legal sponsor. I was not afraid; why would I? I told him every truth: that my *malik* was a very nice person but madam (his wife) was not; madam kept me underfed. The *mahasi* (lawyer in Arabic) then called my sponsor on phone and he came. Me, my sponsor and the lawyer sat together to discuss my situation. I cried loudly and sobbed; I told everything regarding how my sponsor's wife misbehaved with me. The sponsor did not contradict what I said. I was then released from the jail. The sponsor gave my ticket for returning to Bangladesh.

Raha: Sexual threats and fleeing: Raha went to Dubai as a domestic worker. She was with her employer for two months. After two months, she fled the house to avoid sexual harassment by her employer's three adult sons:

> My *malik* had three sons. They used to ask me to go into their rooms but I refused. Once I was even beaten up by them for the refusal. Initially they did not behave that way. It started in the second month of my stay at the house. I did not know much Arabic and so

> could not tell about it to their parents. I then called my sister-in-law in Lebanon and she advised me to flee the house.

Raha defied the sexual offer of her employer's sons by quitting and then illegally working as a part-time domestic worker. She came up with this plan and consciously took the decision to flee and to work without documents. She was very much aware of the pitfalls and even prepared herself to face the worst possible scenario, that is, deportation.

With help from a Bangladeshi woman whom she had adopted as her sister-in-law (fictive kin), Raha worked in two houses (one Indian and the other Arab) two hours every day as a part-time domestic worker. For cleaning, washing and ironing, in one house she received the same salary that she had earned as a full-time contract domestic worker before fleeing; she received slightly less in the other house. She hid and worked as a part-time domestic worker for nine months. Finally, she was caught by the police and sent to jail. She was kept in the jail for six days:

> No, I was not beaten up or abused in the jail. They did not even ask me anything. I just gave them the money for my ticket to return to Bangladesh and they sent me back. It is important that workers without *akama* or legal papers keep the ticket money handy. Or else, if caught who else is going to give us the air fare to return?

Whereas Muku, Rumi, Shiri and Shanu's responses emphasize women's sexual morality or their individual moral conduct to protect themselves from sexual violence, Raha's tale attacks the institutionalized vulnerability that domestic workers encounter in the privates spaces of their Middle Eastern employers' homes (Hamill, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2008; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; Pande, 2012; Moukarbel, 2009).

Bula: Escape from economic and emotional bondage: Bula went to Kuwait as a contract domestic worker. Her aunt's (maternal uncle's wife) sister (henceforth referred to as aunt) living

in Kuwait found a sponsor for her; she worked as an intermediary in Bula's departure process by collecting a visa for her from the sponsor. While Bula was in Kuwait, the woman used to take half of the salary from Bula every month on the grounds of bringing her to Kuwait. When her employer left for the USA, Bula was living with her aunt and simultaneously working (unauthorized) as a salesperson at a fabric store. She was experiencing consistent verbal abuse:

> I worked as a contract domestic with a certain employer for two years. Then my *malik* and his family moved to the USA. He left me with my *mam*i's (maternal uncle`s wife) sister who brought me to Kuwait. I used to work at a cloth store as a salesperson and was living with my *mami*'s sister. When my *akama* with the second employer expired I told her to help me to get a new *akama*. She did not. She said that if she did I would be leaving her; who is going to do the household chores then? She also threatened me saying that she would be selling me to a bad place. I asked somebody at the clothing store where I worked about this. He said that these things happen in Kuwait.

With help from some local Arabs and Bangladeshi women, she fled the house and remained in Kuwait without a legal permit of stay. At that time, she was working unauthorized as a part-time domestic for a household. In the end, she surrendered and went back to Bangladesh when the Kuwait government offered a general amnesty for illegal workers. Evidence suggests granting amnesties to unauthorized migrant workers who would otherwise experience arrest or deportation is a common practice in some countries in the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (Balaji, 2013)

Raju: Cleaner and part-time domestic worker: Raju went to Saudi Arabia to work as a cleaner at a hospital. She was not happy with the meager salary, so on weekends she also worked as a part-time domestic at a doctor's residence. She was not able to retain her part-time job for long, as it is illegal for a foreign contract worker to work in Saudi Arabia without proper identification. In her words:

> My company did not let me keep my *akama* with me. Those who work on contract jobs in the medical industry in Saudi Arabia, their *akama*s are kept with their company. I mean, otherwise companies find it risky that the contract worker may get out and work elsewhere during her stipulated time of stay in the country. This happened to me too. One day I was caught by police on the street as I was on my way to work at the doctor's residence.

Banu and Raha left their employers' homes because they were dissatisfied with their working and living conditions but were not able to free themselves completely because of the terms of their work contract validating their stay only in relation to their official employer. Neither had an *akama* (the ID card permitting their work-stay in the Middle East under one designated employer) and, thus, became unauthorized workers. By choosing to work for more than one employer (Raju), fleeing their sponsor-employers (Banu, Raha) or deciding to stay in the country without any official employer (Bula), all embraced illegalization rather than exploitation. But Banu, Raha, Bula and Raju's movements were restricted; if caught by police, the only option was deportation.

Mary Romero (1992) describes domestic workers' job responsibilities when they work in several employers' homes as "job work". According to her, by bringing more professionalism into the employer and employee relationship, job work brings better advantages to domestic workers who work with multiple employers than those who work with a single employer or as a live-in. Besides enjoying flexible work hours, a domestic who works for multiple employers is paid better than a live-in, as she is paid on the basis of specific tasks instead of by the hour as stipulated in the job contract for a live-in. It might be true that by working for different employers who were not their sponsors, Banu, Raha and Raju secured greater freedom and more flexible work hours, at least temporarily; however, in the long run, all were caught as illegals and deported to Bangladesh. As they violated the regulations on foreign workers in the Middle East,

they had to return to Bangladesh; they paid a huge price – sacrificing their dreams of economic betterment.

4-Tales of Struggle of Seven Domestics in Lebanon

As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, seven of my respondents went to Lebanon and encountered extremely abusive situations, including physical, sexual and emotional harassment and trafficking. They were sold by Lebanese (recruitment/ placement) agencies to their employers one or more times. In order to understand the situation, we need to consider the macro-institutional realities that shape Bangladeshi women's migration to Lebanon under the system of kafala. In section two of this chapter, I discussed the widely practiced kafala or sponsorship system in the Middle East. Informed by some scholarly work, I explained how kafala renders foreign workers extremely vulnerable. Their temporary residency status, lack of legal right to become citizens in the destination, the mandatory requirement that they remain tied to their sponsors throughout their stay and the threat of being illegalized if they do not work for their sponsors are the criteria permitting the creation, perpetuation and institutionalization of their vulnerability.

The vulnerability of all foreign workers under kafala is compounded for foreign domestic workers because of their invisibility – they work indoors at their employers' residences. In Kuwait, migrant domestic workers remain unprotected under the labour law; they are subject to the "Alien's Residence Law, in the form of a crucial requirement, namely, the sponsor's agreement and confirmation in all cases of issuance, renewal, and/ or cancellation of residency permits" (Longava, p. 84, 1997). As in Kuwait, domestic workers in Lebanon (Pande, 2012),

Jordan (Manseu, 2007) and six states across the Gulf region (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman) are excluded from the state labour laws and, therefore, are denied labour rights (Bajracharya & Sijapati, 2012; Manseau, 2007). Manseau's (2007) observation further suggests that except for Jordan, migrant domestic workers across the Gulf and Lebanon do not sign any legal contract with their employers specifying the terms and conditions of their jobs. No less striking, the Gulf countries and Lebanon have not ratified the UN Migrant Workers Convention or the ILO (International Labor Organization) Migrant Workers Convention (Manseau, 2007).

Ray Jureidini (2010) notes a particular form of vulnerability among domestic workers in Lebanon under the system of kafala. Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are often sold by their placement agents to employers who are not their "real" sponsors. Since 2006 the Lebanese state has banned the practice of bringing in foreign domestic workers without a sponsor, condemning this practice as illegal and asking local recruitment agencies to refrain. Nevertheless, the practice does not seem to have stopped; instead, an "open-secret" institutionalization of vulnerability for Sri Lankan, Filipino and Ethiopian domestic workers has been legitimized by the Lebanese state, by tacitly allowing placement agency-employer collaboration in continuing with illegal practices. In this regard, Jureidini maintains "the ability of employers and agents to maintain a strict control over [domestic workers] in either legal, contractual or illegal means" (2010, p. 159) helps to create and maintain the structural conditions for domestic workers' vulnerability under the sponsorship (kafala) system in Lebanon.

Following Jureidini (2010), the specific instances mentioned here, namely the buying and selling of seven Bangladeshi women by agents and employers in Lebanon, point to a problematic

nexus between employers and agents within which foreign domestic workers' recruitment and placement are organized under the kafala system. Jureidini observes collaboration between employers and agents in the context of recruitment of Sri Lankan, Filipino and Ethiopian domestic workers who constitute the majority of foreign domestic workers' recruitment in Lebanon (Pande, 2012, p. 387). By adding Bangladeshi domestic workers, my case study strengthens Jureidini's findings.

In addition to the seven Bangladeshi domestics who had horrendous experiences in Lebanon, five other women in the sample went to Lebanon as domestics with a work visa but did not confront the same situation. Regardless of how many Bangladeshi domestics in the sample fell into a buying and selling trap, this is a serious human rights violation; it deserves attention from feminist researchers working in the area of trafficking of domestic workers to the Middle East.

In this section, I present the tales of seven Bangladeshi women in Lebanon. All were bought and sold by their employers and recruiting agents. First, Rima was one of the highest educated women in my sample and studied to grade eight. She was taken directly to the recruiting agency office after her arrival in Lebanon airport. She had to wait in the office for several hours for her employer to come and pick her up. There were other women who were waiting with her to be picked up by their employers. But Rima's employer never showed up. An agent from the office then called somebody to pick Rima up. That man came and took her to a house where her abuse started one week after her arrival. Men in the house attempted to have sex with her. But Rima did not let this happen. In Rima's words:

> They were gross – son-in-laws, sons all gross! I was not allowed to wear anything at that house excepting short dress, I mean, only bra and panty. I had to do it; it was so hard for

> me! They did not even let me take shower! I mean, I was put into extreme distress. The son-in-laws of the house used to ask me to go to them, I mean, they remaining naked! I used to keep a knife handy, with me all the time. I told them I have a knife with me. I used to threaten them saying I would jump off from the balcony if any of them attacked me. They were scared of all these and so did not dare to come near me. I had a separate room to sleep; to protect myself I used to lock myself from inside the room as I slept.

Runu had a similar experience. She told me that after her arrival at Beirut Airport, she was received by two women and two men. That night she was kept in a house at Beirut. The following morning she was taken to two different places. At the second place, she was kept at the agent's house for three days. She came to know from a Bengali domestic worker working in the house that the agent actually sold her to someone else. After Runu was taken to this particular employer, the first few days went well for her. The problems started when the mistress of the house started to stay out during the daytime. Runu told me that three of madam's nephews and their friends made sexual advances; they were unsuccessful, however:

> Those guys would tell me vulgar things; they would show me money. They used to say "one," "one" in English. This meant they wanted to sleep with me. But I kept on telling them I would never do anything bad as long as I am alive. I told them they should either keep me to work at their house or send me back to Bangladesh. When those guys asked me to come and have sex with them I used to go inside the toilet and locked the door until they left. I used to keep a bottle of toilet cleaner always with me. When those guys came near me I used to threaten them by saying I would drink it and commit suicide if they ever touched me. They would leave me at that point.

When I compare Rima and Runu's stories, I see a striking resemblance. Both were sold by the "agent" to their employers and experienced sexual advances at the employer's house. Neither received any salary or compensation in the houses where they were taken to work. The ways Rima and Runu acted to mitigate their vulnerable situations are similar as well. They both threatened their employers with suicide to protect their sexual purity. In other words, they used their deeply ingrained social values on the chastity and dignity of Bangladeshi women and their

normative sexuality. Their value on rural women's appropriate sexual and moral conduct and the need to uphold it at any cost became an effective weapon to protect themselves from sexual assault or rape. Their experience suggests that the threat of suicide could be a useful means to deflect male harassment in the Middle East, especially when Muslim employers adopt strict religious (Islamic) practices. Suicide is strictly prohibited in Islamic cultural tradition (El-Najjar, 2013). Thus, apart from the fear that they might face legal consequences if an employee commits suicide under their supervision in an intimate setting of household work, it is also possible that Muslim employers' strong convictions about suicide would stop them from abusing their employees.

Kusum was sold successively to three different houses in Lebanon. She was dissatisfied with her living conditions at the first house. Her employer did not give her enough food; she was beaten up and not given her salary. Nor was she allowed to have contact with her family in Bangladesh. Instead of directly confronting her employer, she approached her situation differently:

> They kept me underfed. I wanted to contact my family in Bangladesh but they did not let me call my family. Then I started to cry. I cried and cried. I told them I have little babies in Bangladesh; they are on milk. Then they let me call my husband. I told my husband that possibly I have done a mistake by coming to Lebanon. The dream that I have for my children probably would never come true. You contact my agent in Bangladesh; ask them to call me. I would like to consult with them regarding my situation, that I am being beaten up here, not being paid my salary. Let's see what the agent can do. If they can put me at a good house I would stay in Lebanon, otherwise I won't. I have not paid them in Bangladesh for all these here.

Once her husband informed the recruiting agency in Bangladesh (through which Kusum came to Lebanon) of her situation, they called Kusum at the agency office in Lebanon. The Bangladeshi recruiting agency contacted its counterpart in Lebanon and interrogated the agency about her

situation. The agency in Lebanon tried to negotiate by putting her back with the first employer. However, once again, Kusum could not be happy with her employer's conduct; her employer threatened to return her to the agency in Lebanon unless Kusum agreed to provide sexual services. So she called her husband in Bangladesh. She told him that she would not allow anyone to force her to provide sex for money:

> They are threatening me to return back to the office. I am a Bengali woman. My asset is my *ijjat* (honour/chastity). I can't use my *ijjat* for business. I know how to read the Quran; I have *amal*, I have *iman* inside me. I cannot do business with my *ijjat*, no way! Ask the agent to take me back to Bangladesh. Otherwise, I will commit suicide.

Kusum was not sent back to Bangladesh, however. Instead, she was sold to a second house by the agency where she was again approached for sexual service:

> He (the employer's brother-in-law) used to show me bad movies and explained me about sexual intercourse. He told me, if you do all these things you can earn a lot of money. I told him, no, there is Allah! These are all *haram* (forbidden); these cannot be done.

Faced with this situation, she used the same strategy, but this time it did not work:

> I tell madam that I have small babies in Bangladesh; they are on milk. She tells me, no you cannot leave. You need money to go to Bangladesh. Who would pay for your ticket? Then, I tell her my office will send me to Bangladesh. They will make the arrangement for my return to Bangladesh. Let me go my sister! Hearing all these, she beats me up even more by pulling my hair and throwing me on the ground. She used a big rod, you know, very oily and long to beat me up. Finally, she sent me back to the office. I was not beaten in the office. Rather they gave me to another house where I was kept *najarbondi* (under close observation) for four months before I was sent back to Bangladesh by the agency office. I was sent with nothing, no money, nothing but a lot of debt!

For her part, Ruby was sold to two houses by the agency. She told me that the first employer did not like her and returned her to the office after a month. They did not pay her a single penny for her services. The agency sold her to a second house where she was approached for sex by the employer. She tried to negotiate on this issue:

> I told the *malik*, see, you are like my father, I am like your daughter; what are you doing to me? But my words did not change him. So, I went out into the street. But neighbours brought me back to the house. *Malik* started to behave in the same way. Don't you understand what he did! I again told him that he was like my father who had given me birth. I requested him not to do this to me. But my request did not stop him.

Ruby sought help from two of her Bengali acquaintances:

> There were two Bengali people working in a house next to the house where I lived and worked. One of them was a man and the other a woman. I told them everything, of what my *malik* was doing to me and requested them to save me. They secretly managed to let me get into a police car. After hearing everything from me the police took me to the jail. I told the police: I have come to you for my life, please save my life! I would rather prefer to die than losing my *ijjat* at the hand of this old-haggard. The *malik* and his wife later came to take me from the *thana* but I did not go with them. I told the police, see this man wanted to sleep with me. Because I did not do it he came to me with a knife to kill me.

Similarly, Ratri told me she was sold to three different houses in Lebanon. After she reached Lebanon, her first employer picked her up at the airport and took her to his residence. It was a big family, and Ratri had to do all the household work. From the beginning of her stay, she received offensive treatment from members of the household, including racist remarks (name calling) and physical abuse. Ultimately, she was returned to the agency office. After nine days, Ratri was sold to a second house by the agency. When her buyer did not pay the agency office on time, Ratri was taken back to the office and sold to a third house. But she was viewed suspiciously in that house for her higher education, in particular, her proficiency in English. She was returned to the office again. This time, she was lucky enough to be able to speak to a domestic worker's brother on the phone and let him know of her situation (originally, this man called the agency office to know the whereabouts of his sister who came to work as a domestic worker in Lebanon). This person informed Ratri's family in Bangladesh about her situation. The family was able to contact the dalal who worked for the recruiting agency in Bangladesh which

arranged Ratri's move to Lebanon. The family made arrangements to bring Ratri home with assistance from the recruiting agency.

Like Ratri, Bela experienced extreme physical abuse from her employer to whom she was sent by her placement agency in Lebanon. Not only was she severely beaten up by her employer, but an agent from the office joined her employer:

> I went to Lebanon as a housemaid. I was there for one and half months. The first 20 to 25 days were fine. Then they noticed that I had clotted hair on one side of my head. They cut that off even though I did not want it. After this happened, I became senseless and at a loss. At that point I was beaten like anything by them. They called and brought an agent from the office to beat me. I was hospitalized due to severe injuries from the beating. After this the employer kicked me out from the house. I was caught by police and was taken to jail in Lebanon.

However, unlike Rima, Runu, Kusum, Ruby, and Ratri who strove to protect themselves from perpetrators of the violence, Bela kept silent. She was the only person amongst them who did not fight.

Nupur told me she was sold to five different houses by the agency office in Lebanon. In the first household, she experienced severe physical abuse. She was beaten up both by her employer and an agent from the agency which sold her to the household:

> I was often beaten up in that house; they told me that I was not able to do household work properly. I told them that as I was learning these things for the first time I may not be perfect. But as I get used to the work eventually everything would be okay. Then I would do the work just like them. One day I was beaten up very severely as I refused to eat the meat that they cooked in their way. They not only beat me up but also brought an agent from the office to beat me. They all beat me together. I am so scared to think about the way they beat me - my heartbeat almost stopped.

She was taken back to the agency office and from there taken to the Bangladeshi Consulate Office to resolve the conflict between herself and the employer. From her story, it was not clear

whether and how the Consulate dealt with her case and if anything was done at all. Ultimately, Nupur was again taken to the agency office:

> Those men from agency were very tall and big. I was too scared to protest as they beat me up. I was shivering out of fear to see them. They took away the bangles that I was wearing in my hands. They told that they would sell them to buy my plane ticket. Then, I was taken by agents of the office to Bangladeshi consulate office in Lebanon. The agents told me to tell the consulate whatever they ask me to tell. I told them why would I tell whatever they ask me to say to the consulate office? I cannot lie. I have known from Bangladesh that women go to the consulate office to get support from them! They told me, if you talk too much we would smash you by running our motorbike over you! I told them, see, you and me, we are both Bengalis. Don't you feel any kindness, any compassion for me? This way, we had a lot of debate on our way to the consular office. At the consular office at first I was given to talk to an Arabian. I spoke to him in Arabic, and as much as I could. The man stared at me with surprise as I spoke. Then I was taken to a room and given a phone to talk to somebody. From other side of the phone I was asked in Bangla: why do you want to return in Bangladesh? I told him that I was being tortured. He asked me if my plane ticket for Bangladesh has been brought already. I told him that my *malik* told me about it and then I was sent to the office. But I was not sure if they actually bought my ticket or not. After this conversation, my photo and handprint were taken in the consulate office. Then I was sent back to the agency office.

At the agency office, Nupur was beaten up brutally for seven days, but she fought back:

> I was beaten very severely once I was taken to the office. For seven days I remained completely senseless. I was never beaten up like this ever since I was born. It was so bad, my flesh and blood got apart! They slapped me with hand, kicked me like anything. They threw me down to the ground violently by pulling my hair. At that point I stood up in front of the man who was beating me. I decided to either fight back or die - I must do either of the two. I asked him in Arabic: why are you hurting me this way? I spent money to come here. I came here to work not for any other thing. Ask my *malik* why he did hit me? He stopped hitting me when I did this. These people feel intimidated when we fight back. They think Bengalis are daring. This man then told another woman in the office about what I said at the consulate office. He told her how daring I was to resist his hitting. Then the woman told me that I was too audacious to do all this. She severely hit me with a long iron rod. Then she kept on kicking and slapping me. This way they continuously beat me up for seven days. I think even a person to be murdered do not experience such a situation! What I have not seen in my life, I have seen that in Lebanon. I spent money to come from Bangladesh to Lebanon and got such an experience!

Nupur was sent to another house by the office. This time the madam of the house was quite nice to her. She noticed Nupur's severe injury from beatings suffered earlier and called the office. She

asked them to give her back half of the money she spent to buy Nupur so she could use half of it to buy a ticket for her to go back to Bangladesh.

But Nupur was taken back by the office and sold to another house. As she was again beaten up, she started to think seriously:

> This house is so far from the city as if it is inside a forest! These people would kill me after some days. My dead body would dry up then, and no one would find my trace. I would not take this!

And she fled the house:

> One morning I was frying nuts with madam's mother in the kitchen. Then I told her that I would go to the bathroom and came outside the house and started to walk. I decided to walk, as far as my eyes would take me; I would either live or die but I won't stop.

As she took to the street, she was caught by the police and taken to jail. After several days in jail, she was finally able to return to Bangladesh with help from SHISUK, an NGO in Bangladesh. From the jail Nupur, was able to make a phone call to her husband in Bangladesh. Upon hearing from Nupur, he requested SHISUK to bring her back to Bangladesh.

The same NGO also made it possible for Kusum, Ruby, Bela and Runu to return to their homes in Bangladesh. While doing my fieldwork in Bangladesh, I was advised by my fieldwork guide that SHISUK offers free legal service to exploited Bangladeshi migrant workers abroad.[34] Once Kusum, Ruby, Bela, Nupur and Runu's families informed this particular NGO about their difficult situations in the Middle East, it stepped in. SHISUK formally sued the recruiting agencies in Bangladesh which arranged the women's migration to the Middle East. Facing a legal charge, the agencies made arrangements to bring the five women home from Lebanon. Rima and Ratri's families made their return arrangements by contacting their respective recruiting agencies in Bangladesh. They were able to contact the recruiting agencies via the

[34] The guide has several years of experience with SHISUK.

dalals who worked on behalf of the agencies; they were from the same neighbourhood in Bangladesh as the families.

In their tales, Runu, Rima, Ratri, Nupur, Bela, Kusum, Ruby talk about an office or agency which supplied them to different houses. I was curious to know more about the existence of such offices in Middle East. However, when I asked the proprietors of two well-known recruiting agencies (who are in the business of sending women abroad) in Bangladesh about it, they said they did not know anything about them.

Despite my failure to collect additional information in Bangladesh on the buying and selling of Bangladeshi domestic workers in the Middle East, the recent definition by the UN General Assembly on trafficking identifies these seven women as victims of trafficking:

> "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (as cited in Jureidini, 2010, p. 147)

Trafficking across the Middle East region is now an ubiquitous practice, a point highlighted by many studies (for example, see Anti-Slavery International, 2006; Calandruccio, 2005; Coalition against Trafficking of Women, 2008; Degorge, 2006; Global Programme Against Trafficking in Human Beings, 2006; Haddad, 1999; Hamill, 2011; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; Lewis, 1994; Mattar, 2003; Sherry, 2004). According to a recent report from the International Labour Organization (2013) about 600,000 foreign workers in the Middle East endure trafficking (p. 2). The report is based on interviews of 650 migrant workers in Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait and the

United Arab Emirates who were forced to provide their employers with unpaid labour or sexual services. The report declares these migrant workers trafficked victims under the UN definition.

The seven Bangladeshi tales included here confirm more than one element of trafficking: recruitment and transfer by use of force, coercion, deception; recruitment and transfer by abuse of power or vulnerability; recruitment and transfer for enslavement/ bondage. Clearly, these women were trafficked victims (UNDOC, 2006, p. 51). In analyzing the stories, what struck me was how these women were treated after they arrived in the Middle East. They had no control over the buying and selling of their labour. One story directly points to the lack of transparency in such a transaction:

> I had paid in Bangladesh to come to Lebanon and to work at a house. When madam of the house did not like me she should have sent me back to Bangladesh. Why she had returned me to the office and then office kept on selling me to different houses, one after another? I have heard the office sells women to houses for two and half to three *lakh taka*. I heard about this selling business from madams of different houses where I was sold. They told me that they bought me from the office with that much money. (Nupur; Domestic Worker, Lebanon)

My empirical findings, together with those of Ray Jureidini, confirm that in Lebanon, the conduct of Lebanese employers and recruitment agents has been legitimized on an institutional level, with the Lebanese state apparently unconcerned about the issue. Whether trafficking of migrant domestic workers in other countries of the Middle East follows similar or different patterns should be the subject of further scholarly research.

5 - Conclusion

This chapter shows that Bangladeshi women's experience in the Middle East is shaped by the kafala system. Live-in domestics, unauthorized workers and women who are trafficked are

vulnerable within that system. Power inequalities between employers and their Bangladeshi domestics are manifested in their unequal status under kafala which gives employers the authority to regulate domestics' lives. Bangladeshi women do not remain passive but actively attempt to deal with their situation; some comply, but others confront or negotiate with their employers. Overall, their behaviour and reasoning are driven by their strong economic incentives and by their internalized values on proper moral and sexual conduct of women within the social context of rural Bangladesh.

Chapter Seven

Making Sense of Women's Tales

1-Introduction

In this chapter, I revisit women`s stories as told in Chapters Five and Six and draw specific conclusions. The chapter comprises three major sections. In the next two sections, I focus on the implications of women's engagement with brokers and their conduct with their employers in the Middle East, respectively. Finally, in section four, I synthesize sections two and three to develop the key idea of this dissertation. A nuanced view of these women's engagement with migration brokers from their social and familial circles and their conduct with their employers in Middle East requires a consideration of Bangladeshi rural realities. Understanding their behaviour in terms of their rural origins leads to feminist insights into power attentive to the social context of women's rural origin in Bangladesh.

2-Bangladeshi Women and Migration Brokers: Implications of Engagement

The women's stories highlighted individuals from their social and familial spheres and noted their involvement with departure arrangements. Family members, neighbours and casual acquaintances, either in Bangladesh or the Middle Eastern country, facilitated visa collection and departure procedures. These middlepersons or brokers are colloquially called dalal in Bangla. Dalals charged women variable, often usurious fees. Strikingly, many women had no idea about the various steps involved in departure arrangements and completely relied on dalals.

Focusing on dalals and their activities in Chapter Five, I talked about the procedures involved in the recruitment of Bangladeshi temporary workers and the subsequent visa

collection. Referring to Rahman (2012), I described two ways to arrange visas for temporary workers: "work visa" and "flying visa" procedures. The work visa procedure involves recruitment agencies in Bangladesh and the Middle East. Under this arrangement, a recruiting agency in the Middle East collects a visa from the sponsor and sends it to the counterpart recruiting agency in Bangladesh. The recruiting agency in Bangladesh then gives the visa to someone who wants to work in the Middle East. In this process, recruiting agencies in Bangladesh more often connect the potential candidate via their own sub-agents or dalals.[35] The latter use their extensive social connections across rural areas to locate and approach a potential candidate on behalf of the recruiting agency. In flying visa arrangements, a migration broker or dalal in the Middle East collects a visa from the sponsor without involving a recruiting agency or a third party in Bangladesh or the Middle East.

Of my interviewees, 70 per cent had work visas, and 12 per cent had flying visas. In 18 per cent of the cases, however, visa procurement could not be slotted into one of these two procedures. Rather, visas were collected by dalals or brokers living in the destination who were known to the women or their families. These brokers sent visas to a third party in Bangladesh (recruiting agency, sub-agent, family members of the dalal); having received visas from the collectors, they distributed them to women. This finding indicates multiple ways of organizing Bangladeshi women's recruitment, especially when people from women's social and familial circles maintain numerous connections and relationships with individuals and recruiting agencies in the Bangladesh-Middle East transnational terrain.

[35] The term sub-agent is a formal way to address a dalal. Rahman's (2012) study shows sub-agents operate on behalf of established or official recruiting agencies in Bangladesh. A recruiting agency in Bangladesh can run its business of migrant recruitment with a license from the government.

The interconnected operation of migration brokers is viable in other contexts of state-market mediated temporary workers' migration in Asia. For example, in the context of Chinese temporary workers' migration to Southeast Asia, Xiang (2013) identifies different brokers − private recruiting agents, their sub-agents and other collaborating individuals within an extensive network across China. According to Xiang, China and its migration brokers play a complementary role in the recruitment and relocation of Chinese temporary workers to East Asia. The Chinese state is generally indifferent about migration brokers' operation as long as there is no conflict of interest with the state. Thus, migration brokers freely pursue their businesses, subject to a bureaucratic frame of migration governance and control. Numerous profit making activities for individuals and organizations result from the diversified collaboration and networking.

Such a scenario can be observed in other Asian countries. For example, in Bangladesh the temporary transnational migration system is state-broker mediated; the state provides the main bureaucratic and administrative framework, within which migration brokers are free to collaborate. Given the context, Bangladeshi temporary workers' migration is complex. However, to the best of my knowledge, the effect of migration brokers on the migration of temporary workers (female or male) to the Middle East has not received significant scholarly attention.

One of my findings is particularly worth mentioning. Contrary to common knowledge, as propagated by the media in Bangladesh, my interviewees did not speak of trouble or mistreatment from a dalal in their recruitment and relocation. The women were unanimous; regardless of how these migration intermediaries worked for women or where they were located, the women personalized the relationship, addressing them with Bangladeshi gender and age

specific social salutations, thereby indicating them as relatives rather than strangers or agents. They trusted the dalals involved in their recruitment and felt no need to question them about their usurious service charges. In short, the women relied on these individuals and saw nothing unjust or exploitative about their business operation. This confidence should be interrogated critically, however, not simply accepted at face value.

Bangladesh extends 55,598 square miles and has 68,000 villages. The economic life of the rural dwellers no longer revolves around subsistence agriculture, as it did during colonial times, first under the British (1757-1947) and then under Pakistani rulers (1947-1971). Social life, nonetheless, revolves around agrarian relations. As noted in work on kinship and social structure in Bangladesh (Aziz, 1979; Razario, 2001), within the structure informing the social life of Bangladeshi villages, mutual dependence, trust and obligations are regarded as the basis of social existence. People in rural Bangladesh feel free to seek assistance from each other or be of help to each other, if and when the need arises. They find meaning in their lives not as "autonomous" or "independent" individuals but as individuals in relation to their family and fellow villagers.

Such closeness is an important characteristic of a pre-capitalist or subsistence economic system. When economic life revolves around agricultural production, people need to co-operate in different stages of the agricultural production process, including the eventual distribution of agricultural products. Members of a subsistence economy retain a culture of strong social bonding to sustain their community-bound living; such social bonding is absent in societies informed by market based or commercial relationships: "Enmeshment may be dysfunctional in market-based societies that are organized around contractual relations and that require

individuation, autonomy, and separateness to produce mobile persons" (Joseph, 1993, p. 456). In non-market societies[36], closeness and co-operation constitute the basis of an accountable relationship (ibid, p. 454).

A non-market mindset informed by a strong sense of bonding between individuals in their day to day social relationships continues to characterize village life in Bangladesh. Although agriculture is no longer the dominant mode of production in the rural economy, people retain a subsistence mindset. In my understanding, one important reason for this is the lack of formal education; simply stated, people are unaware of market-oriented, individualized outlooks. Rural dwellers lack access to modern (and westernized) formal education which builds the cultural capital needed to create an independent and autonomous or market-oriented mindset. Although the state seems to be making an honest effort to extend primary-level education to all villages by building schools, it has not made any attempt to promote higher-level educational institutions in village areas. Poor villagers cannot afford going to public or private colleges and universities in the main cities, Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, or in the sub-urban areas.

Because of the nature of my research, I find it particularly important to take a close look at the bonding defining everyday living from a feminist analytical perspective. Feminist anthropologist Suad Joseph (1993) defines two seemingly interrelated concepts, "connectivity" and "patriachal connectivity." As I have illustrated in Chapter Five, according to Joseph connectivity signifies peoples' relational existence in a social system revolving around kinship; the second concept, patriarchal connectivity suggests relational existence in a kinship-based social system can simultaneously take shape within a patriarchal one. Patriarchal hierarchies

[36] In actual practice, of course, the boundary line between a market and a non-market society is not so clear.

might exist along gender, age or any other relevant social axes of differentiation. Patriarchal connectivity, therefore, signifies relational embeddedness in a hierarchical system of patriarchal domination.

By following a number of Bangladeshi women's tales, I find connectivity and patriarchal connectivity, as defined by Suad Joseph (1993) in the context of her research in Lebanon, provides a feminist lens for comprehending social ties in the system of patriarchal gender and age based social relations found in rural Bangladesh. Such social bonding resonates in the women's stories about their recruitment and departure arrangements as they left to work in the Middle East. In this case, the women and the dalals both remain embedded in a strong sense of social connection informed by patriarchal connectivity. Whereas Joseph (1993) connects patriarchal connectivity to the family and kinship system in Lebanon (Arab working class families in Lebanon), my research adds a new dimension. The Bangladeshi women in my study signified their relationship not only with their direct family and relatives who assisted them with their migration arrangement but also with anyone from their social and familial circles who assisted them. Similar findings are echoed by Asis, Huang and Yeoh (2004) in their study. Using Bryceson and Vuorela's (2002) concept of "relativizing," they explain that Filipino domestic workers in Singapore choose to take their employers' household members and people they meet in Singapore as their own families while they strive to deal with the emotional strain caused by their separation from their family members in the Philippines. Asis, Huang, and Yeoh's (2004) study and my research findings challenge the dominant perception that individuals can constitute a family only when they are related through blood.

While communicating with their real or fictive family and rural acquaintances during their recruitment and relocation, women in this study remained compliant with Bangladeshi rural patriarchal hierarchies along gender and age. To put it differently, faced with structural barriers within the institutional landscape of migration, they expressed their unconditional reliance on dalals who assisted them with their migration; their behaviour with the dalals was driven by a mindset of gender and age hierarchical dependency.

It needs to be mentioned again: while assisting women with their recruitment and relocation, dalals remained either in Bangladesh or in the Middle East. Regardless, they sincerely and responsibly provided their services. As the dalals and the female migrants held the same rural social affiliation, dalals' good conduct can also be seen in light of patriarchal connectivity. By remaining compliant with gender and age hierarchical patriarchal relations of obligation as perceived in a Bangladeshi rural society, all dalals in this study (either in Bangladesh or in the Middle East) genuinely helped women with their recruitment and relocation. At a more nuanced level, however, a dalal's conduct needs to be understood in light of her/his economic rationale as a commercial service provider. After all, as her/his ultimate objective in assisting women was money, her/his behaviour cannot be seen as driven by a sense of duty for fellow community members.

An important study of informal migration-brokers' business operation within their social relations is by Lindquist (2012). In a study on Indonesian unskilled temporary labourers migrating to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, Lindquist observes that to promote their business, informal brokers in Indonesian villages find it imperative to build a good reputation with their fellow villagers. Ultimately, it is to their advantage when they prove trustworthy to the

candidate; thus, their social relationship with the rural service receivers benefits them immensely. I make a similar inference about the dalals who informally interacted with women in this study. Their economic motivation remains grounded in social relations – the obligations, norms and values of a patriarchal connective rural social environment. The Bangladeshi rural social environment nurtures the dalals' patriarchal connective bonding with members of their rural community. Within such an environment, the dalals use their social relationship with community members to their economic advantage.

All in all, a patriarchal social bonding underpins Bangladeshi women and dalals' behaviour in recruitment and relocation. Both the women and the dalals in this study used their gender and age informed hierarchical rural patriarchal relationship to their advantage. It allowed women to leave Bangladesh despite the structural barriers to mobility and migration, and the dalals made money. In sum, the Bangladeshi rural social context influenced Bangladeshi women's engagement with migration brokers.

Before ending this section, I should make one important observation about women's monetary payment to dalals. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, at the time of my interviewing them, all Bangladeshi women in this study had made one trip to the Middle East. Except for three women (noted in Chapter Five) all were assisted by a dalal. Those who were getting ready to go to the Middle East for a second time[37] were, of course, better acquainted with the realities of their migration than they were the first time. These women told me that this time they did bargain with dalals about the service charge. Some said they paid the dalal a lower service fee this time. Regardless, they still paid a variable and high service fee.

[37]Eighteen women I interviewed in Bangladesh-German and SFM Mohila training centres in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh

3-Bangladeshi Women and their Employers in the Middle East: Implications of Women's Conduct with Employers

As elucidated in Chapter Six, the Bangladeshi women in this study encountered extremely difficult situations within the institutional organization of their migration under kafala in the Middle East. They dealt with and negotiated their situations in various ways. In this section, I interrogate their responses, explicating how Bangladeshi rural reality underpins the responses.

Those domestic workers who apparently conformed to the disciplinary norms of their employers' homes displayed a variety of deferential behaviour. Such behaviour was necessary as they could not afford to lose their jobs; after all, by earning money in the Middle East, they knew they could ameliorate the economic deprivation of their families in the impoverished rural areas of Bangladesh. Out of necessity, they aligned themselves with the institutionally defined hierarchy of domestic workers and employers. While live-in domestics accommodated their employers, sometimes they negotiated unequal institutional relationships. Some questioned their employers' authoritarian conduct; when hardships seemed unbearable, they even quit their jobs. Some live-in domestics informed their employers about their families' impoverished situation in Bangladesh to gain their sympathy; in so doing, these women ensured an economic reward in terms of an increased salary or additional financial assistance. Their behaviour was informed by clever and astute reasoning; they were fully aware of the high costs they would pay otherwise. The alternative was choosing to return to Bangladesh, keeping them and their families in the trap of poverty and economic deprivation. The majority of these women held debts with their

relatives, neighbours and acquaintances in Bangladesh; they needed to work in the Middle East to pay them off. Thus, economic logic prompted live-ins' conduct with their employers.

However, their conduct was also grounded in a strong sense of family and social responsibility. Seen this way, power relationships between individuals living in the patriarchal connective context of Bangladeshi rural society inspired and informed live-in domestics' compliance, negotiation or defiance, quite apart from the institutionally defined employer-domestic worker power relationship in the Middle-East under kafala.

Prominent feminist scholars (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Cock, 1980; Cohen, 1989; Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Romero, 1992; Wrigley, 1995; Young, 1987) have critiqued the practice of constructing domestic workers as members of the employers' family. They persistently argue that such construction is highly exploitative because it allows employers to reap maximum benefits from domestic workers' services, with little or no additional remuneration. Bangladeshi women's experience with their Middle Eastern employers, however, tells me that while it is important to consider how domestics face exploitation and control at their employers' homes, it is simultaneously necessary to look into the rapport that might exist between employers and their domestics within the informal and indoor setting of the job itself. Parreñas (1998) draws similar conclusions in her study of Filipino domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles. By carefully analysing her Filipino informants' lived stories, Parreñas (1998) concludes domestic workers are able to benefit from their close encounter with their employers: "A non-business like environment does not necessarily translate to manipulation, because domestics hold multiple emotions about their jobs and thus have the ability to manipulate the attachment which develops from the intimacy of domestic work" (1998, p. 282). This conclusion and my observation that

some Bangladeshi domestic workers appreciate their employers' generosity and good treatment convey the same message: an intimate bonding between a migrant domestic worker and her employer is always possible even when the two parties remain in an unequal relationship within the institutional context of the destination. In addition, in the absence of their families, these Bangladeshi women found it easy to see their employers and their family members as their own families.

Employers and domestic workers negotiated while remaining aware of their unequal status within the institutionally defined employer-migrant domestic worker relationship. Maintaining an intimate bond with their employers despite an unequal relationship was particularly necessary for these women, to secure their jobs, realize their dreams of economic improvement for their families in Bangladesh, and repay financial debts with their rural acquaintances in Bangladesh. The economic and social obligations of these Bangladeshi women in the patriarchal connective structure of their environment in rural Bangladesh, therefore, induced their rapport with employers.

Bangladeshi women's efforts to develop and maintain a good rapport with their employers echoes James Scott's (1985, 1990) observations about subordinates' conduct with dominants. In Scott's view, subordinates are fully aware of their vulnerability within the institutional status quo. Therefore, they prefer not to directly confront the dominants; instead, they indirectly try in every possible way to minimize their domination and appropriation. In actual practice, subordinates find it crucial to accommodate dominants if they are trying to protect their interests and those of their families.

Important feminist scholarly literature suggests employers use "family" as an ideological mechanism to control their domestics (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997; Cock, 1980; Cohen, 1989; Gregson & Lowe, 1994; Romero, 1992; Wrigley, 1995; Young, 1987). Following what I heard from my informants, I suggest alternative and meaningful interpretations are also possible. Migrant domestics not only remain embedded within the institutional relationships they share with employers (in their destination); they may simultaneously remain embedded in the context of origin. Seen this way, an understanding of migrant domestics' home context of power relations could be critical to understand their behaviour with their employers in the destination.

Some Bangladeshi women in the Middle East expressed explicit defiance of the institutional system underpinning their migration by working without documentation. As elaborated in Chapter Six, the regulation of a foreign worker in the Gulf region under the kafala system makes it mandatory for a foreign worker to work and live under the supervision of one sponsor/employer throughout the entire stay. Otherwise, the worker is considered unauthorized. The stories of Banu and Raha speak to this complexity and demonstrate their response to the system and to their exploitative and abusive employers. Banu and Raha left their employers' homes dissatisfied with their working and living conditions. Afterwards, they worked for employers who were not their sponsors. Raju chose to work part-time beside her main job as a cleaner, in the hope of earning some extra money. Bula stayed in Kuwait for some time without a contract and also worked for a household as an unauthorized worker. To improve their families' economic condition and to repay financial debts, these women found it necessary to stay in the Middle East; in other words, their strong familial and social bonding in Bangladesh shaped their action in the Middle East.

Several live-in domestic workers mentioned moral character and their responsible conduct as the main safeguards against sexual harassment in the Middle East. Specifically, they emphasized the morals and values of Bangladeshi rural women and their sexuality and explained how they used these convictions to protect themselves from sexual advances in the Middle East. To put this differently, using an individualized discourse of morality to designate appropriate sexual and behavioural conduct for women, they blamed those Bangladeshi women who failed to live up to this discourse and fall into a sexually promiscuous life. In this view, as long as women's actions are guided by the normative moral conduct for women, they are able to place themselves in a secure situation. In this discourse, issues of collective welfare and safety lose importance in the face of individual moral conduct.

What made some Bangladeshi domestic workers indicate women's moral failure as the principal reason for their abuse in the Middle East instead of the sustained conditions of systemic vulnerability? Historically, Bangladeshi women's' everyday living is part of a social, economic and religious milieu where normative Bengali femininity (defined by women`s chastity and corresponding modesty) is the crucial marker of their identity (Rozario, 2001). Even today, Bangladeshi women maintain a normative ideal of Bengali femininity, albeit modified, and practice it in their everyday lives, for example, by refraining from overtly demonstrating their sexuality. Such gendered values on women's sexual morality are particularly important to poor people across rural areas (Rozario, 2001); they are embedded in the patriarchal atmosphere of Bangladeshi rural society. The women I spoke to knew they would go back to Bangladesh; therefore, retaining and displaying gendered values on sexuality was important.

At the same time, traditional gendered value systems common to the Islamic world support regulation of women's sexual behaviour. These migrant women were aware of this and used their Bengali values to their advantage in two ways − to protect themselves from sexual threats in the Middle East and to ensure a respectable social status upon their return.

The emphasis on preserving Bengali gendered values of sexuality was apparent in the responses of several Bangladeshi women who encountered trafficking in the Middle East. As noted in Chapter Six, Rima, Runu, Kusum and Ruby said they were sold by their agency in Lebanon to their employers, either once or several times. All were approached for sex at their employers' homes. Faced with this, their deeply-ingrained social morals and values on the chastity and dignity of Bangladeshi women and their normative sexuality came to the fore. This translated into their direct resistance; thankfully, they were able to make this strategy work.

In rural areas of Bangladesh, notions of honour and shame are considered important markers for the construction of men and women's social and family identity (Rozario, 2001). Men and women are responsible for maintaining appropriate conduct to protect their status in their family and community. Rozario remarks: "It is through their role as protectors that men's honor is determined. Women's honour or status is related to their having shame or preserving their purity voluntarily" (2001, p. 86). Rozario finds rural Bengali women, whether they are Muslim, Hindu or Christian, maintain a regulatory boundary around their sexual behaviour to ensure their family and neighbours do not relegate them to the status of "fallen" women. They accept their subjection by demoting themselves to the position of the weaker sex; they consciously embrace their position in a gendered hierarchy to secure a respectable social status.

Their deference could be seen as an "honorable mode of dependency" (Abu-Lughod, 1986, p. 104) in the context of their family and rural social circles.

In her ethnographic study of women in the Awlad Ali Bedouin community in the northwest coast of Egypt, Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) uses the concept of *hasham* to explain Bedouin women's social context-specific gendered behavioral conduct: the "code of modesty" (1986, p. 108). This manifests in Bedouin women's voluntary "acts of veiling and dressing modestly (covering hair, arms, legs, and the outlines of the body) as well as more personal gestures such as downcast eyes, humble but formal posture, and restraint in eating, smoking, talking, laughing, and joking" (ibid, p. 108). In Abu-Lughod`s view, Bedouin women find it essential to practice a gendered code of conduct in their everyday living; they express their morality to earn respect. In my study, I noted that by adhering to the gendered values of Bangladeshi rural women, Rima, Runu, Kusum and Ruby strove to protect and embrace their feminine status while working in the Middle East. Their responses protected them from sexual assaults and ensured a respectable Bengali feminine status upon returning to Bangladesh.

On the one hand, the actual situation of their institutional vulnerability in the Middle East prompted them to behave in certain ways as they attempted to take control of their situation. On the other hand, their responses were driven by economic need which was, in turn, embedded in their close bonding with and obligation to their families and social acquaintances in rural Bangladesh. For a number, Bangladeshi rural gendered values influenced their negotiations with employers in the Middle East. Therefore, it is plausible to argue that the rural context of Bangladesh and their situation of economic impoverishment within that context helped shape the behaviour of Bangladeshi women in the Middle East.

In this regard, I emphasize one important point. Some might say that Bangladeshi women's socially informed behaviour does not surprise them. After all, these women were socialized in a Bangladeshi rural societal environment and they knew they were going back to it after completing their contract job in the Middle East. I agree. At the same time, I would also like to draw their attention to feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty (1991, 2003). Mohanty argues there is no universal knowledge; therefore, no single and normative epistemology can govern the creation of knowledge. Accordingly, it is problematic to valorize a single perspective in understanding women's lives. Consistent with Mohanty's suggestion, the observation that Bangladeshi women's stories highlight their social context and how it informs their interactions with their employers in the Middle East (and also with migration brokers) must be taken seriously to avoid any generalized or common sense understanding of their situation with their employers (and migration brokers) on a surface level. Nor should we observe women's situations with their employers (and migration brokers) primarily at a structural (macro) level as it is generally perceived by media and public discourse inside Bangladesh. Such knowledge is constructed using a normative epistemological gaze. In contrast, by valorizing these marginalized Bangladeshi women's otherwise unappreciated perspectives, I have constructed knowledge about these women's experiences. I claim this knowledge is not informed by a normative epistemological gaze.

4-Bangladeshi Women, Migration Brokers and Employers in the Middle East: A Feminist Insight into Power following Women's Migration

Three commonly acknowledged feminist perceptions of power - liberal radical, and empowerment – have been developed in the context of women's struggles in contemporary western societies and suggest how women remain subjugated to male power and patriarchy (Allen, 1999). Nevertheless, feminists focusing on women's situations within the patriarchal context of western societies consider alternative ways of perceiving power in women's lives are also possible. For example, prominent feminist scholar Amy Allen (1999) maintains there is no unique feminist theory of power. Furthermore, a feminist theory of power needs to be sensitive to the particular social, cultural and political environment within which women live their lives; in other words, a feminist theory of power needs to capture the environment in its construction. She also suggests that given the diverse realities of women's lives in different parts of the globe, it is always possible to come up with alternative feminist perceptions of power.

Alternative ways of theorizing power can be found in the writings of feminists working on the Global South. For example, post-colonial feminist scholar Mohanty (2003) argues women's situation in the Global South must be comprehended in the light of the historical, economic, social and ideological realities of their particular context. This will capture nuances in women's lives which cannot be inferred otherwise. Mohanty urges feminist scholars to look into power and power relations involving Third World women within the specific context of their lives, as dominant or surface-level views fail to critically illuminate their struggles.

While echoing Mohanty, Suad Joseph (1993) emphasizes understanding women's situations in their social context. In her view, a market-oriented social structure instills an

individualist mentality, not necessarily seen in the social environment of countries in the Global South. Such individuals, particularly those living within family and community-bound social arrangements, often have a mindset, with specific traditions, customs and values of their community exerting an influence on that mindset. Within such social systems, women and men remain relationally embedded as they survive and thrive; their behaviour and interactions in their everyday lives take shape within close bonding. Therefore, to see the nuances in women's lives, it is important to pay critical attention to the relationality informed by the particular social context and its implications for power in women's lives.

In a similar vein, Abu-Lughod emphasizes understanding third world women's lives within their particular social and community environments. Her research suggests social and community norms in the Global South sometimes prescribe moral regulations for women in their everyday behaviour; no less important, women living in such contexts find it necessary to comply with these norms for both status and survival. Seen this way, a feminist understanding of power should not only be about how women are oppressed by power in patriarchy and how they respond to oppression; it should also be about how they negotiate with unequal power relations and how particular social contexts inform their negotiation.

My understanding is strongly affected by Mohanty, Abu-Lughod and Joseph. First, in light of Mohanty's view, a feminist understanding of power and Third World women needs to be comprehended in light of the specific context; it is important to pay attention to the power process of the environment and how it impinges in daily lives. By deconstructing the stories of women in this study, I find that in their engagement with migration brokers and their conduct with employers while these women are embedded in the macro-structural power relations of their

migration they simultaneously remain deeply entrenched in the Bangladeshi rural social climate and power relations that individuals share with each other within the climate.

Second, Suad Joseph draws attention to individuals' relational embeddedness in a family and community-bound patriarchal social system of the Third World. Such a system precludes the perception of an autonomous or individual existence. Bangladeshi women's interaction with brokers from their social and familial circles suggests a similar relational embeddedness. Even after going to the Middle East, their behaviour with employers, either explicitly or implicitly, expresses their embeddedness in the Bangladeshi rural patriarchal social context.

Third, Abu-Lughod's research shows how within a family and community bound social system in the Global South, specific regulations on moral behaviour can be imposed on women. Women who are subordinated within a regulatory social system, like that in Bangladeshi villages, are obligated to comply with prescribed social customs and values without showing resistance; to survive, women are obligated to safeguard their gendered subordination following social morals and values.

If feminist knowledge about women from the Third World must be context specific and capture the realities of women's lives in a particular social context in the Global South, then Mohanty, Joseph and Abu-Lughod's views suggest any feminist knowledge about power must consider the realities that inform women's lives. It cannot address the notion of power and power relations in women's lives in the context of contemporary western societies.

My research findings shed light on a group of Bangladeshi women (from the Global South) who travelled to the Middle East as temporary migrant workers and remained deeply embedded in the social context and realities of rural Bangladesh before and after their departure.

The way they communicated with migration-brokers in their recruitment and how they dealt with or negotiated with their employers in the Middle East attests to this. They always remained embedded within the gender and age informed power relations defining the social (and ideological) situation of poor rural women in Bangladesh.

My research, therefore, adds insights into power and women's migration from the vantage point of feminists who work on marginalized non-western women or women from the Third World. Instead of construing Bangladeshi women's engagement with migration brokers and dealings with employers exclusively through a macro-structural / institutional lens of power, I have taken a different approach. My understanding of power manifests in the gender and age hierarchy peculiar to the social context of rural Bangladesh. I argue a feminist critical understanding of power in the context of women's migration must consider power relations in the actual social situations of these women, as well as power relations informing the macro-institutional landscape of their migration. By linking a macro-structural lens of power to a feminist meso lens of power in this dissertation, I comprehend Bangladeshi migrant women's situation with brokers and employers in a nuanced manner and transcend dominant views of their situation in terms of power. My approach bridges a feminist critical understanding of power relations and a macro-structural understanding of power relations between women and other institutional actors, including migration brokers and employers who remain crucially involved with women in their migration journey.

Ironically, I have not been able to erase the hierarchy in my research - starting with fieldwork and data collection, and moving on to transcription, translation etc. – even though I have claimed to support "epistemic diversity" and resist "epistemic violence" (Clarke, 2012, p.

389) by allowing subjugated voices to speak. Some feminist scholars (Abu-Lughod, 1993; Behar, 1993; Tsing, 1993; Wolf, 1996) say a power inequality between the researcher and research informants is integral to the research process, and a researcher cannot completely leave or live without hierarchies; my research echoes this view. The collaborative knowledge that I claim to produce in this dissertation is, thus, mediated by unequal power relations within which I remained embedded with my women informants in all stages of the research process.

I also exercised power over my informants when I disseminated the outcome of my research. I had to present my analysis of the women's stories so that I could satisfy my targeted academic audience, especially by making sure my presentation met the requirements of my academic institution. Even so, I did my best to honour my informants' voices by remaining as honest as possible as I interpreted, analyzed and reflected.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

1-Introduction

In this research, I drew on the lived stories of 34 Bangladeshi women who went to seven countries (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan) in the Middle East as temporary workers (domestic workers, garment workers, cleaners) and interrogated their engagement with certain individuals, including family, relatives, neighbours, and acquaintances, who assisted in their migratory arrangements. In addition, I elicited the narratives of their travel to and work in the Middle East and problematized their conduct with their employers. My research findings suggest the Bangladeshi rural social context is a key to unlocking their interactions with brokers and employers. Such a context informs gender and age hierarchies and gendered values of rural Bangladesh, the origins of these female temporary workers.

This research has allowed me to critically interrogate returned Bangladeshi women migrants' experiences, thus introducing some spirited new voices into feminist discourse. By facilitating their speaking, I have captured the nuances and complexity of their struggles in two important phases of their migration journey, the first involving brokers and the second, their employers; in so doing, I have rejected the systematic practice of silencing women's perspectives in traditional social research, as noted by feminist researchers (Bloom, 1998; Falconer, 2009).

This chapter summarizes the key findings of my dissertation and reflects on their significance. I highlight my contribution to the literature and indicate the limitations of the

research. I suggest potential venues for future research in light of my findings, noting important issues that I have raised but been forced to leave unaddressed given the scope of this dissertation.

2-Summary of Key Findings

My research suggests the engagement of Bangladeshi women with their migration brokers is informed by the patriarchal social environment of rural Bangladeshi society. Structural barriers, including imperfect information about formal market agents (recruiting agencies in Bangladesh) and their inaccessibility make it difficult for poor/ lower middle-class women from village areas to use the services of formal market agents to facilitate their recruitment and departure. As an accessible alternative, women turn to migration brokers (middlemen/ women) whom they know from their rural social circles. These brokers, colloquially known as dalal, are relatives (real or fictive), neighbours or persons whom they know through their family or neighbours.

Brokers assist the women in their recruitment and relocation while remaining either in Bangladesh or in the Middle East. In the majority of instances (61 per cent), those who remain in Bangladesh work as sub-agents of recruiting agencies (work visa); they disburse the visas collected by Bangladeshi recruiting agencies (from their counterpart recruiting agencies in the Middle East) to the female candidates with whom they share a rural affiliation. In 12 per cent of the cases, brokers collect visas on their own from the sponsor employers and send them to their migration candidates in Bangladesh (flying visa). In 18 per cent of the cases, visas independently collected by brokers from sponsor employers in the Middle East come to women via a third party in Bangladesh − either the visa collectors' family members in Bangladesh or a recruiting agency

/ sub-agent.[38] These first two procedures of visa collection and recruitment are called work visa and flying visa mechanisms, respectively, in a scholarly piece on Bangladeshi temporary workers' migration to the Gulf States (see Rahman, 2012). The third procedure is related to transnational networking between the visa collector in the Middle East and the visa distributer in Bangladesh (visa collector`s family/ recruiting agency/ sub-agent in Bangladesh); it has not been noted in any scholarly work in the context of Bangladeshi temporary workers' migration to the Middle East.

From the women's stories, we know the brokers working on behalf of recruiting agencies in Bangladesh following the work visa procedure are all males, while those who independently send visas to women from the Middle East following the flying visa procedure include both males and females. In a number of instances, when brokers operate transnationally within their family networking, a female member of a family (daughter/ wife) has collected a visa for the candidate from the Middle Eastern sponsor employer, and a male member of the same family in Bangladesh (father/ husband) has taken care of departure formalities for the candidate. Therefore, it seems gender has much to do with shaping the institutional landscape of Bangladeshi women's temporary migration to the Middle East. How gender shapes the institutional landscape of Bangladeshi women's migration to the Middle East or vice versa would be an interesting and important study. Such study will require a transnational theoretical framework of analysis, and could be an important project of further research.

As noted in studies of Bangladeshi villages (see Aziz, 1979; Rozario, 2001), social life continues to revolve around agrarian relations. These are manifested in everyday family and

[38] In nine per cent of the cases, women directly collected their visas from recruiting agencies in Bangladesh. These agencies initially collected the visas through their counterpart recruiting agencies in the Middle East before disbursing them to women.

community lives, with patriarchal relations valorizing mutual reciprocity, expectation and accountability as indispensable to social survival. My findings indicate patriarchal relations and bonding play out as women engage with brokers or middlepersons in their migration organization. Women and middlepersons interact as they pursue their own interests, expressing their allegiance to patriarchal social ties along gender and age hierarchies. For business reasons, brokers find it particularly important to comply with patriarchal social bonding (and gender and age based power relations within the bonding) as they provide their services.

As for Bangladeshi domestic workers' behaviour and negotiations with their employers in the Middle East, apparently their institutional vulnerability as temporary workers prompts their conduct. More specifically, they remain embedded in institutional power relations that exist between employers and temporary migrant workers in the Middle East, suggesting the very unequal status of temporary workers in relation to their employers. By hearing their stories, I realized that as Bangladeshi women negotiate with their employers, they remain embedded in their Bangladeshi rural social context and corresponding rural social milieu of power: their responses to their employers are driven primarily by their economic need which, in turn, remains caught in their strong sense of gender and age hierarchical social bonding across family and community relations.

As they use their internalized sense of appropriate sexual and moral behaviour in their negotiations with employers, some Bangladeshi women directly exhibit Bangladeshi rural patriarchal social norms and values of women's sexual morality. They express their compliance with the Bangladeshi rural social hierarchy around gender to serve themselves doubly: to protect themselves from sexual assaults in the Middle East and to retain their respectable (moral)

Bengali feminine status which they regard as essential for their familial and social survival upon their ultimate return to Bangladesh.

3-Significance of Findings

The research findings are important in two main ways. First, they foster an in-depth scholarly understanding of Bangladeshi women's temporary migration to the Middle East. To the best of my knowledge, this research is the first systematic attempt to shed critical light on Bangladeshi migrant women's situation with migration brokers and their Middle Eastern employers. Second, the research findings are significant from feminist theoretical and methodological perspectives.

As discussed in Chapter Four, migration outside the country becomes a viable alternative for poor rural/sub-urban women in Bangladesh given the grim situation of women's economic status in Bangladesh. Yet structural and institutional impediments pose a formidable challenge to poor people – both men and women – from rural areas who intend to migrate out of the country for their livelihood. In addition, when they cross national boundaries, Bangladeshi women experience several gendered constraints by Bangladeshi state policy of outward female migration.

In *Reshaping the Holy* (2008) feminist political scientist Elora Shehabuddin uses the term "subaltern rationality" to explain impoverished Bangladeshi rural women's negotiations with subordination in their everyday lives. Poor Muslim women in rural areas are economically, socially and politically marginalized and underprivileged, and they remain under the close surveillance of religious customs and values in their community life. These women experience a

contradiction in their everyday living. On the one hand, they must avoid challenging their religion by not violating the norms of their appropriate behavioural conduct as per the norms of *purdah*; therefore, they must refrain from making themselves visible in the public work space. On the other hand, there is a desperate need to survive. They deal with this contradiction in an interesting way. Instead of directly contesting their subordination by purdah, they redefine purdah by coming out in the public space as garment or NGO workers. As Shehabuddin notes, they justify the meaning of purdah to those who criticize them: "Defining purdah as a state of mind, a purity of thought, something that they carry inside them rather than an expensive outer garment, permits these women to present and even see themselves as pious Muslims yet leaves them free to meet the basic needs of survival" (Shehabuddin, 2008, p. 4). Their behaviour, Shehabuddin contends, is propelled by their lived experience: they have been abandoned by the state of Bangladesh due to its incompetency to provide them with basic entitlements, including "education, legal protection, and health care" (ibid, p. 5). Lacking basic protections and with no safety net offered by the state, these women pragmatically reshape their situation and do so in a way that will work to their best advantage.

In other words, poor Muslim women do not eschew the religious and cultural values and customs which perpetuate their subordination; instead, they cleverly negotiate with them while seeking a living outside of the home. They seem well aware that if they contest their rural community's ideology on the appropriate moral conduct of a Muslim woman, they may be castigated or even disowned. With no state support or protection, where would they go if rejected by the rural community? For them, the cost of violating social and community norms is huge.

Rozario (2001) notes that social and community norms of the proper behaviour of Bangladeshi rural women revolve around the notion of "purity" irrespective of religious affiliation (2001, p. 3). Seen this way, every poor Bangladeshi woman in the village areas of Bangladesh remains trapped in common norms of appropriate behaviour.

As my research suggests, Bangladeshi rural women's interaction with migration brokers or their interactions with Middle Eastern employers can be understood within the logic of rationality noted by Elora Shehabuddin in her research on poverty-stricken rural Bangladeshi women. Despite having limited or no formal education and work experience outside their homes, the women who spoke to me had taken on a huge challenge when they decided to migrate to the Middle East for work. They saw this risky investment as necessary even though future economic benefits were uncertain and they faced numerous problems. How could they deal with the structural and institutional barriers to mobility? Where could they learn about formal institutional procedures of migration to the Middle East? Who would help them? By remaining in a rural area, how could they access an exclusively capital city based recruiting agent to facilitate their recruitment and relocation?

At this point, some brokers from their social and familial circles emerged as their saviours, and women utilized their familial and social linkages with these brokers to their best advantage. With the help of brokers, the women I interviewed were able to leave Bangladesh despite the structural constraints on their migration and mobility. Interestingly, they engaged with brokers in order to ensure their departure, while remaining compliant with the gender and age informed hierarchical patriarchal social milieu of Bangladeshi rural society.

In the Middle East, as these women dealt with their vulnerability with their employers, they consciously remained caught up in the power relations of their social contexts (involving their family and rural community) in Bangladesh. Their struggles in their destinations, thus, cannot be seen as isolated from how they live their lives in Bangladesh. These women univocally told me that they went to the Middle East for the economic improvement of their families. They financed their migration by borrowing money from their neighbours, friends and relatives. Therefore, they carried their economic and social obligations for their family and community with them to the Middle East. It was extremely important for them to make sure they did not fail to meet their obligations. Seen this way, they remained deeply fixed in Bangladeshi rural social context informed by gender and age hierarchies, even when they were in the destination country. In addition, in their particular behavioural conduct with employers, several women expressed their acceptance of the normative gendered relations and values of rural Bangladesh, using their internalized gendered values about morality to protect their sexual vulnerability. Instead of condemning the institutional realities of temporary workers in the Middle East as creating and perpetuating systemic discrimination against migrant domestic workers, some even said Bangladeshi women who violate the normative moral conduct are prone to trouble in the destination state.

In my view, their desperate economic need caused women to respond this way. After all, they needed to stay in the Middle East at any cost to fulfill their economic objectives. Faced with an institutionally legitimized system of discrimination against migrant domestic workers with no means of support, these women seem to have found no better way to take control of their situation than by manifesting their internalized gendered values on appropriate moral conduct.

Moreover, these women knew once they completed their work contract, they would no longer be able to remain in the Middle East; they had to return to Bangladesh. In the absence of any support mechanism in Bangladesh, they had no choice but to live according to the prescribed gendered norms and hierarchies of the home environment. To safeguard their respectable social status as a *valo meye*[39], these women had to demonstrate they did not violate Bangladeshi rural patriarchal social norms by becoming sexually immoral (the dominant stereotype of migrant women in Bangladesh) in the Middle East: they left as a *valo meye* and returned the same.

Overall, in their interaction with brokers and their conduct with employers, the Bangladeshi women in my study pragmatically heeded the hierarchies and values of the social context in rural Bangladesh. Sometimes they even transnationally reproduced the Bangladeshi rural social context (some responded to their situation in the destination country by expressing their internalized gendered values on appropriate moral conduct). Such behaviour was necessary, as they sought a safe, secure space for both their short and long-term survival. It stemmed from their particular awareness or "actual" experience of an extremely difficult life in a critical situation. Notably, the state of Bangladesh has failed to generate employment opportunities inside the country. Nor does the state provide smooth access to out-migration to compensate for its failure. Furthermore, the institutionally legitimized system of vulnerability for migrant domestic workers in the Middle East leaves women with no solid base of protection. Last but not least, ironically, the state of Bangladesh has rejected its responsibility to support these women after their return to Bangladesh despite being the main regulatory mechanism facilitating their out-migration to earn remittances and, thus, to serve its own interest in financial gain.

[39] This is a commonly used Bangla term to indicate a woman or a girl who maintains the normative social expectations of a woman's moral conduct.

Of course, I do not mean to say every Bangladeshi rural woman in the context of migration would engage with migration brokers or employers in a way similar to my informants. Nor can behaviour always be explained using a similar logic of pragmatism. Even so, prospective or already migrant Bangladeshi women are more than simply passive recipients of exploitation by brokers and employers. In this context, Bangladeshi newspapers' portrayal of Bangladeshi women is simplistic. It is important to discern women's situations in the context of all associated complexities shaping their interactions and beyond any dualistic victim/ agency debate. Even as these women engage with brokers or deal with their employers, they consciously remain embedded in Bangladeshi rural hierarchy along their social relations and Bangladeshi rural social norms of moral conduct. Their conformity is indispensable for both short and long-term survival. These spirited women find innovative ways to deal with their situations in a world fraught with gendered vulnerability, constraints and obstacles.

From the perspective of feminist theoretical knowledge, my findings carry additional significance. In this regard I refer to feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty's (2003) views once again. Mohanty urges that feminist scholars be mindful that a surface-level understanding about women in a particular context in the Global South will not accurately represent these women and their situation. Scholars must understand the environment (social, political, historical, ideological) in the specific context of the Global South before they can consider how women`s situations and struggles are informed by the environment. My research has been significantly inspired by Mohanty's call. I have shown how the rural social context of Bangladesh has informed the Bangladeshi women in this study throughout their migration journey. The resulting view of power relations is nuanced, as it honours the context.

Whereas dominant feminist theories have conceptualized power as "domination" or "resistance" or "empowerment," based on the stories I heard, I understand power as "negotiation" informed by the social context. Some possible questions to address from this negotiation framing of power are: Why do women keep themselves subordinated to the power and authority they experience in specific patriarchal social context of the Global South? Why do they not contest the status quo? My work, thus, suggests a new direction for investigating the expression of power involving women in non-western societies.

My empirical data on Bangladeshi women's communication with brokers and employers reveal their "real" actions and engagements, thus following the interdisciplinary qualitative research approach of Grounded Theory. I have produced feminist collaborative knowledge by incorporating perspectives of the women informants with methodological premises of Grounded Theory. Listening to them and then systematically analyzing their voices has allowed me to shed light on a little known area: Bangladeshi women's temporary migration to the Middle East. Feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) has vigorously critiqued any hegemonic knowledge about marginalized women from the Global South, pleading with feminist scholars to resist any dominant and uncritical knowledge that disregards their actual circumstances. Following Mohanty, this dissertation is based on marginalized Bangladeshi rural women's lived experience of migration and is informed by their voices. I bring to the fore the perspectives of marginalized Bangladeshi women, offering their experiences as the basis of a unique knowledge while simultaneously pointing out the limitations of the dominant understandings of their migration.

Bloom (1998) contends, "However, recognition that women have been systematically silenced in social research is also important and it is the responsibility of the feminist researcher to make public and validate women's own experience" (as cited in Falconer, p.5, 2009). I have centered my research on this notion, using Grounded Theory as a critical lens through which to tell my readers about the migration experiences of a number of Bangladeshi women. Following Abu-Lughod (1993), I highlight the implications and meaning of women's lived experience, told in their voices, within the particular social context of their Bangladeshi origins. I systematically facilitate the previously unheard voices of migratory Bangladeshi women to provide my audience with a critical understanding of their migration. Admittedly, the knowledge constructed in this dissertation is situated, partial and open to alternative interpretations and presentations.

4- Other Contributions (Contributions to the Literature)

Contemporary scholars on Asian migration have shed light on the broker-mediated institutional mobility of temporary workers in Asia by emphasizing recruitment (e.g., Afsar, 2009; Agunias, 2010; Baruah, 2006; De Bel-Air, 2011; Lian & Rahman, 2006; Lindquist, 2010, 2012; Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh,2012; Martin, 2006; Rahman, 2012; Shah, 2008; Xiang, 2012, 2013). While continuing to focus on the infrastructure that shapes workers' mobility in Asia, these works on migration either explicitly or implicitly point to structural or macro power relations between different migration agents in the migrant recruitment process. They, therefore, leave room to discover alternative forms and modalities of power relations at the meso or micro-level between migration agents or between brokers and migration candidates in the migrant recruitment process.

As I follow the recruitment of a number of Bangladeshi women temporary workers, my work looks beyond structural or macro-level power relations to understand the communication between these women and their migration brokers. By noting the gender and age hierarchies of a Bangladeshi rural society and showing how they inform broker-mediated recruitment and relocation, I suggest there are alternative ways to perceive power in the migrant recruitment process beyond the structural or macro framework of recruitment. It is important to bridge the various forms and modalities of power relations between different migration agents, brokers and migration candidates to grasp the operational dynamics of power between all parties involved in the migrant recruitment process.

My work makes an important contribution to contemporary feminist literature on migrant domestic workers' negotiations with their employers. This body of literature (e.g. Constable, 2007; Gamburd, 2000; Moukarbel, 2009; Parreñas, 1998, 2001; Rahman, 2005) provides insight into various dimensions of inequality involving employers and migrant domestic workers within the institutional realities of the migrant destination country. They simultaneously shed light on how migrant domestic workers respond to their employers' conduct. It is, however, important to consider alternative forms of power relations, including meso or micro power relations in home contexts and to interrogate whether these shape migrant domestics' conduct with their employers in the destination. In making this suggestion, my work enhances the critical understanding of the negotiations and conduct of Bangladeshi domestic workers with Middle Eastern employers. Relations remain embedded in power relations in both the destination country and the home context. An understanding of both contexts yields a more complex view of these women's lives in the destination country.

5. - Concluding Thoughts: Future Research Directions

As noted in Chapter One, I elected not to take a transnational approach to this research. I did my fieldwork in Bangladesh and used the methodological approach of Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory does not require any explicit theoretical framing to be used as the underpinning basis of scholarly investigation (Clarke, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Nevertheless, some scholars may see this as a limitation of my research. Therefore, in what follows, I explain how my research findings have given rise to some interesting and important issues for future scholarly research which can be addressed through a transnational optic.

First, Bangladeshi women's recruitment to work in the Middle East could be much more complex and complicated than hitherto explained in the literature. As noted previously, Bangladeshi women's recruitment follows the protocols of work visa and flying visa (Rahman, 2012), but my research shows it happens in other ways yet to be addressed in scholarly work. This opens possibilities for future research projects. I suggest it is important to critically examine the different pathways of recruitment for Bangladeshi women temporary workers in the Middle East, involving actors and agents at all levels in the institutional landscape of their transnational migration − the Middle Eastern states, the state of Bangladesh, private brokers and other probable recruiters in Bangladesh and the destination states in Middle East − in short, everyone who participates in transnational recruitment. On a theoretical and methodological level, such interrogation will require a transnational or multi-sited institutional ethnography framework of analysis. How gender informs this institutional landscape could be another promising area for future research.

Second, the women in this study had made only one trip from Bangladesh to the Middle East at the time of my interviewing them. One important future research area could be the transnational migration of Bangladeshi rural women to the Middle East and its effect on the transformation of gender relations in rural Bangladesh, especially when these women make several trips to the Middle East. This could be done by interrogating whether and how long-term or repeated transnational experiences influence their activities and experiences in Bangladesh upon return. This could include such things as whether or to what extent women assert more control of intra-household allocation of resources after their return to Bangladesh, whether transnational experiences have enabled them to develop new ideas of gender and home, whether they have introduced new gender practices in local contexts upon their return, and so forth.

Last but not least, the creation and perpetuation of migrant domestic workers' systemic vulnerability during their recruitment requires urgent attention. As elucidated in Chapters Six and Seven, seven Bangladeshi domestic workers in my sample were bought and sold in Lebanon and, thus, trafficked in their recruitment process. Jureidini (2010) notes a similar scenario in his research into Sri Lankan, Ethiopian and Filipino domestic workers in Lebanon. More scholarly research is required in the context of other destinations of migrant domestic workers in the Middle East to see if this is systemic across the region. Most importantly, it is time for feminists to organize transnationally against this institutionalized system of human rights violations and work collaboratively to make a real difference.

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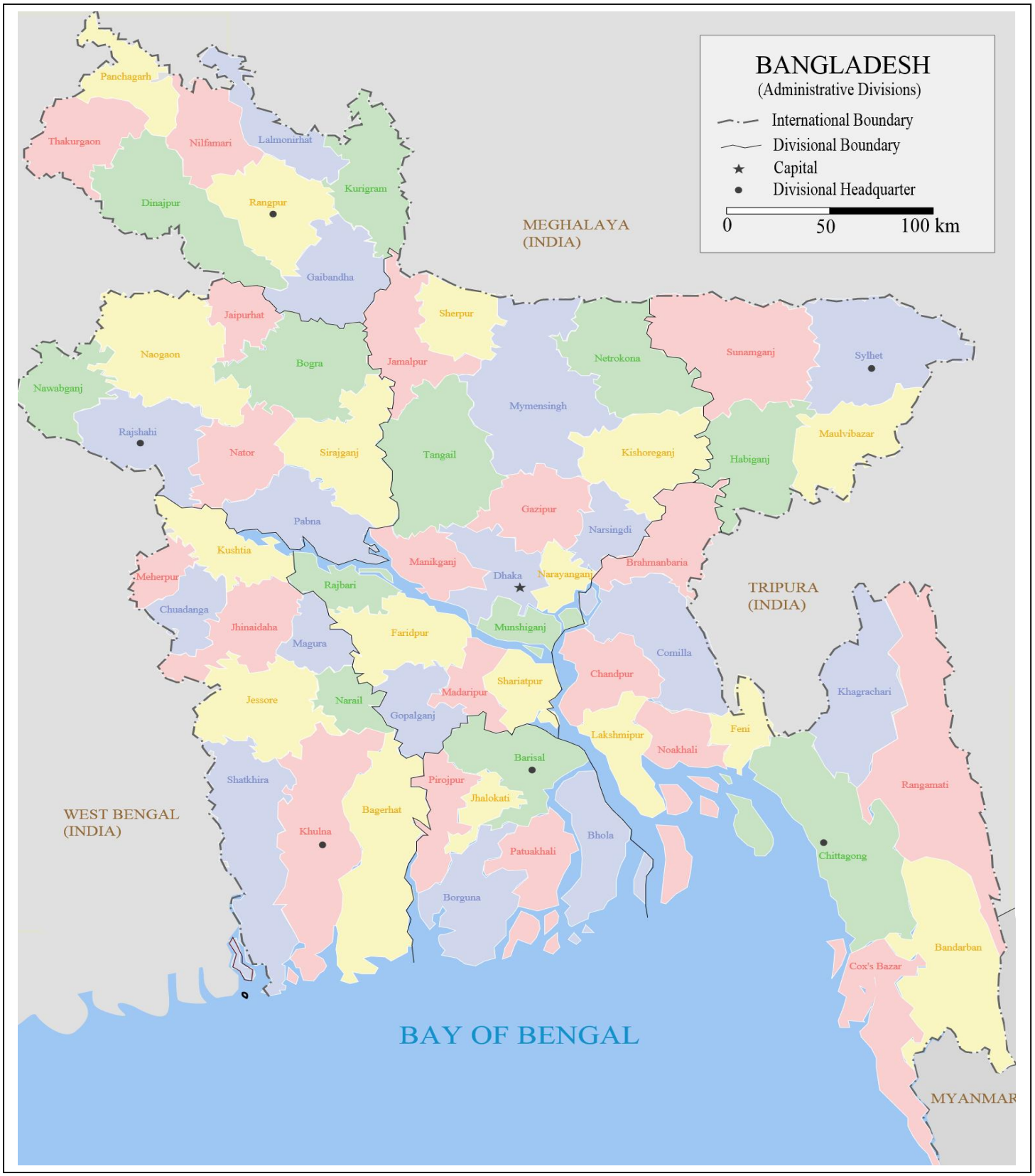
Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of Non-English (Bangla and Arabic) Terms used by Bangladeshi Female Informants.

akama	identity card to live and work in the Middle East
apa	elder sister
bakhshish	gift
bidesh	foreign country
bonai	sister-in-law's husband
burkha	garment that covers the body and head
chacha	paternal uncle
dulavai	elder sister's husband
dushtami	being naughty
Eid	a Muslim festival
haram	forbidden
harami	thief
ijjat	honour/ chastity
kaj	work
kajer beti	domestic worker
katha	talk
kharap	bad
lakh	hundred thousand
lojja	shame
mahashi	lawyer
malik	master
mami	maternal uncle's wife
manush	human
mukh	face
nana	maternal grandfather
poth	way
purdah	veil
rahmat	blessing
shob	everything
taka	money
thana	police station
vashoor	husband's elder brother
vorosha	hope

Appendix B: Map of Bangladesh Showing Female Informants' Origin



Appendix C: Note on Appendix B

The 34 women in this study came from villages located in 14 districts in Bangladesh involving north, south, east and west parts of the country. These districts, following the map in Appendix B, are:

> Dhaka, Narayanganj, Manikganj, Narsingdi, Mymensingh,Tangail, Comilla (East Bangladesh); Naogan, Bogra (West Bangladesh); Nilfamari (North Bangladesh); Faridpur, Madaripur, Barisal, Pirojpur (South Bangladesh)

In their research, Blanchet, Razzuque and Biswas (2008, p. 44) identify these 14 districts as high, medium and low intensity districts of Bangladeshi female migration as follows:

> Dhaka, Narayanganj, Manikganj (high intensity district); Tangail, Narsingdi, Faridpur, Madaripur, Pirojpur, Barisal, Comilla (medium intensity district); Nilfamari, Naogaon, Bogra, Mymensingh (low intensity district)

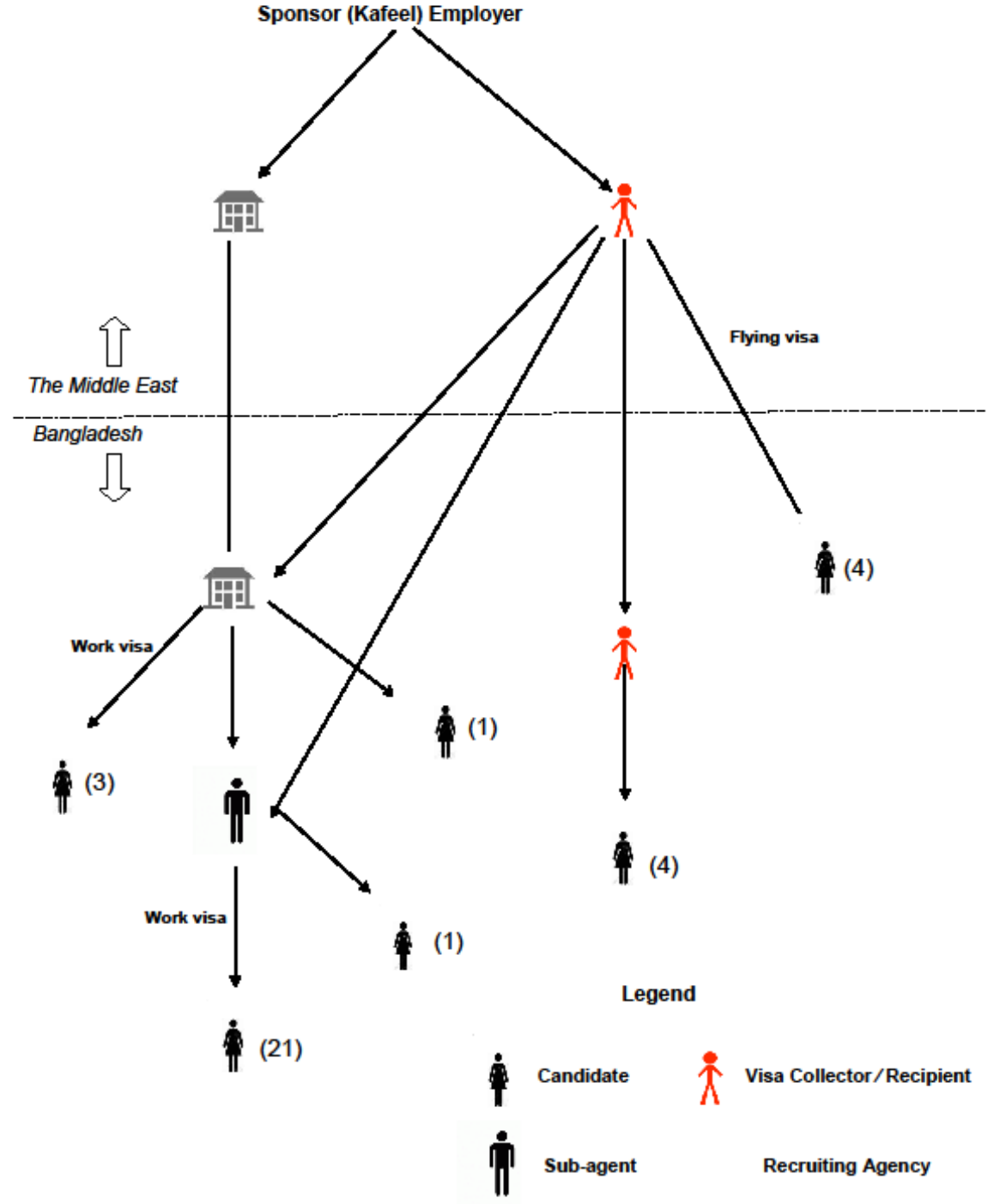
Note: the map in Appendix B comes from [Google map]. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.google.ca/search?q=map+of+bangladesh+showing+all+districts&espv=2&biw=1280&bih=675&tbm=isch&imgil=Lxt8Gz2iF7d4FM%253A%253Bqc5Nq1fVxUJ38M%253Bhttps%25253A%25252F%25252Fen.wikipedia.org%25252Fwiki%25252FDdistricts_of_Bangladesh&source=iu&pf=m&fir=Lxt8Gz2iF7d4FM%253A%252Cqc5Nq1fVxUJ38M%252C_&dpr=1&usg=__v0vchs4vA3c03KpcCgfWQxIBRUU%3D&ved=0CC0QyjdqFQoTCIeotZDzusgCFUKXHgod2n0GTQ&ei=cJYaVoewO8Kuetr7megE#imgrc=Lxt8Gz2iF7d4FM%3A&usg=__v0vchs4vA3c03KpcCgfWQxIBRUU%3D

Appendix D: Statistics on Bangladeshi Female Migration to the Middle East and Southeast Asia (2004-2011)*

	Destination States								
Year	S. Arabia	UAE	Kuwait	Oman	Bahrain	Lebanon	Jordan	Malaysia	Singapore
2004	3,133	3,241	1,773	60	1,058	-	1, 883	-	6
2005	6,319	3,786	930	132	553	12	1,745	-	**7**
2006	7,358	7,355	589	629	232	743	518	1	6
2007	7,341	5,181	49	1,380	244	3 ,498	12	354	8
2008	4,144	5,902	-	276	173	7,948	201	1,091	34
2009	386	6,095	-	11	29	13,062	439	87	89
2010	44	7,111	1	18	57	15,116	2,136	16	156
2011	166	7,394	-	1,061	17	15,610	4,338	23	241
Total	**28,891**	**46,065**	**3,342**	**3,567**	**2,363**	**55,989**	**11,272**	**1572**	**547**

* Compiled from the online data archive of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET) of the Government of Bangladesh (http://www.bmet.org.bd/BMET/index)

Appendix E: Visa Collection and Recruitment of 34 Bangladeshi Women



Appendix F: Female Interview Guide (returned female migrants)

I. Personal Information

* Tell me about yourself.

1) How old are you?

2) What is your educational qualification?

3) What is your marital status? Are you single or married or divorced?

4) Do you have children? How old are they?

5) Which district of Bangladesh you are from?

6) How would you describe your socio-economic background? [Probe: upper class, upper-middle class, middle class, lower middle class, lower class; what is your family income roughly?]

7) Why did you go to the Middle East? Which country?

8) What expectations did you have about going to the Middle East?

II. Family in Migration:

*Tell me about your family.

1) How many members do you have in your family?

2) What is your family`s economic condition?

3) Did your family want you to go abroad? Why or why not? Can you tell me in detail?

4) Did you go abroad after consulting with your family? With which members?

5) How do they feel about your going to the Middle East?

6) Were you in touch with your family members while being abroad?

7) Did you send money to your family while you were abroad? Why? How?

8) How do you feel about going abroad?

III. Migration Arrangement:

*Tell me about how your migration was arranged.

1) What are the different steps of going to the Middle East? What did you do first? Then what did you do?

2) How did you finance your migration cost? Did your family provide for the cost?

3) If you have children, did your family help with childcare in your absence? Could you elaborate?

4) Did your family help you in any other way? What long term impact did that have?

5) Did you go to a recruiting agency for facilitating your migration? How did they assist you? How much did you pay them? What was your experience with them?

6) Were there any other steps that you followed in order to migrate?

7) Did a friend or relative in the Middle East facilitated your migration? How? Was there any other agent involved with your migration and employment in the Middle East?

8) Did you attend the pre-departure training programme of BMET? How was that? What kind of things or activities did you learn? Any materials you have to show me?

9) Did you hold the emigration clearance card from BMET?

10) Is there anything else you had to do in order to make this trip?

11) What obstacles did you encounter? What did you do to overcome them?

IV. Experience in the Middle East:

*How was your experience in the Middle East?

1) For how long were you there?

2) Did you work as a domestic help in the Middle East? Did you do any other job?

3) Was there any agent in the Middle East that you had to deal with to get your job(s)?

4) Did you do more than one job there?

5) How much was your salary?

6) What did you do with your salary? Did you save from your salary?

7) Were you paid regularly?

8) Did you hold a formal job contract?

9) What was your job contract like? How many hours did you work every week? Did you have work -breaks/ holidays?

10) Did you know women from other countries who worked in the country where you were working? Where were they from? Did they hold the same job as you?

11) Did you complete the period stipulated in your job contract? Why or why not?

12) How did your employer treat you? How was your general health? What happened if you got sick? What was your accommodation like? Did you get breaks from work? Did you have privacy?

13) Did you feel safe and secure while in the Middle East? Did you encounter problems associated with your visa and / or passport?

14) Any other problem (s) that you encountered? What happened? What did you do?

15) Did you have any problem with communication? In which language did you talk to your employer?

16) Did you keep in regular touch with your family? How?

17) Overall, how would you evaluate your experience in the Middle East?

18) Did you have contact with Bangladesh embassy or consulate in the country (for example, for visa related or any other problem that you might have encountered)?

19) Was there any other form of support for you there?

20) Were your expectations about the Middle East experience met? Could you elaborate?

21) Anything else you would like to add?

V. Experience upon return:

*Tell me about how you are doing now.

1) Do you have a job now? Do you earn?

2) How did you use the money that you earned in the Middle East? Did it help you and/ or your family?

3) Do you live with your family?

4) How are you being treated by your family members and community? Do they look at you the same way they used to before you went abroad? What has changed or not changed? Why? If you are married, how has your relationship with your husband or child(ren) changed? If you are not married, how has the Middle East experience influenced your marriage plans?

5) Overall, do you think you are better off now than before your going abroad? Why or why not? Could you elaborate?

6) How have you changed as a result of your migration? Do you think you are the same person now or not? In what ways?

7) What recommendations would you make to the government for others going to the Middle East as migrant workers?

8) What other support would you wish for in this process?

9) Would you go back again?

10) What advice would you give other women who are planning to go to the Middle East?

11) Anything else that you would like to add?