

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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A Process-Oriented Approach

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