

## Migration to city from south falling

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MUMBAI: Rashid Ahmed has lost count of the number of tenants he has sheltered over the last two decades at his humble one-room tenement at Antop Hill. A native of Kasargod in north Kerala, Ahmed arrived in Mumbai in the 1970s and went on to set up a successful business, his address going on to become the sole reference point for thousands of migrants from the Malabar region looking for a ticket to the Gulf or an opportunity to learn a trade. But business these days is lean. "I get barely a handful of tenants from my hometown or from the neighbouring towns," he says.

The declining number of south Indian migrants at Antop Hill is symbolic of a larger trend visible across areas like Matunga, Chembur, Mulund and Dombivli. Once seen as enclaves which recorded a steady influx of migrants from Kerala, Karnataka, AP and Tamil Nadu, the flow here has dwindled to a trickle.

"It's no longer a viable economic option to come to Mumbai," says S Venkiteswaran, chairman, Bombay Tamil Sangam trust.

Bal Thackeray might be pleased to hear that (the Sena's earliest crusade against 'outsiders' in the late '60s had targeted South Indians or 'lungiwallas' as the Sena mouthpiece Marmik would derisively refer to them). Thackeray, who then targeted other groups such as Bangladeshis and North Indians, might not, however, be as sanguine about another statistic—southern migrants have been replaced by UPites and Biharis who are making their way to Mumbai in ever-increasing numbers, propelled by the support system provided by friends and relatives already in the city.

**Data analysed by the Centre for Research Methodology department at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)** corroborates this conclusion. Migration from the south, which was 10% in 1961, came down to 6% in 2001, while migration from UP and Bihar has increased from 8% to 12% in the same period.