From Calcutta comes my husband, from Darbhaga he comes....
Some Reflections on Culture, Memory and Migration

Sadan Jha

September 2018
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A migrant is defined by the lack of embedded-ness, by an uprooted personhood. In the discourse on migration in south Asian milieu, this absence of spatial embedding ironically gets translated as a self which is bereft of its subjectivities and experiences. He or she remains an economic unit, a population which requires technologies of governance and a social being relevant merely for the health of the society. However, in all these three spheres (i.e. economy, polity and society), a migrant is engaged only when he/ she is a commensurate figure. Experiences and subjectivities which are incommensurable are irrelevant and largely ignored in this discourse. Such an apathy is ironical, particularly in the context of South Asia where Dalit studies, gender studies, discourse on the partition violence and the overarching frame of post-colonial scholarships have all harped upon the centrality of experiences and subjectivities in one or another manner. Drawing upon insights from these recent scholarship traditions and their epistemic energy, this paper explores some facets and circuits of subjectivities in and through which the figure of a migrant surfaces. These regimes of subjectivities are narrated and analysed, here, by grounding them in fragments which constitute the journey for a migrant. In this engagement with the journey, the fragments are sutured with each other by creatively mobilizing the perspectives of both micro and macro studies, and in return, the analytical landscape gets conflated with the physical geography to tell a tale. Riding upon the cultural memory of migration, here, the journey commences from Mithila (a geo-cultural region in the north eastern Bihar) and culminates in the city of Surat, (Gujarat), criss-crossing, in between, a wide range of geo-cultural coordinates and metaphors which may help throw some fresh provocations for the study of migration in general and the figure of a migrant in particular.

Keywords: Migration, Mithila, migrant as other, migrant journey, cultural memory, folk registers, migrant in the city, politics of belonging.
Impression
The dervish only wanders
To obtain a vision.
Otherwise, there's bread aplenty
And salt anywhere.³

Introduction
Sohar is a genre of folk songs in Maithili Mithili, Bhojpuri and other languages of Bihar, often sung on auspicious occasions like child birth, marriage etc. A sohar collected by Sankata Prasad and W.G.Archer, published in 1943 begins with:

Hari more ayale kalkatwā se auru darbangwā se ho
Lalnā lei ayale prem chunariyā ta dhani ke manaebii ho
[Hari has come from Kalkatta {Kolkata} and from DarbhangaFor the son, a drape of love has arrived and he will now please her].⁴

Hari is both mythic Krishna as well as the migrant husband in this song. Darbhanga and Kalkatta (and not Calcutta or Kolkata) both are actual locations as well as metaphorical coordinates linking together pain and suffering of virah (separation) as well as the hope of return. At one level, the song is articulated in and documents the time of the present when the beloved has actually returned home on the occasion of the birth of a child, their child. At another level, this time of the present is merely an imaginary one, an elusive one, where hope is ritualized and rendered in singing and potentially bestowed with therapeutic properties. A scholar says that if history is not therapeutic, it is useless. Similarly, if songs loose such qualities, they will be bereft of social moorings and not of much use for a researcher. Returning back to the song, we find that Kalkatta is in the company of Darbhanga. Kalkatta in colonial times acquired a ubiquitous presence in the psyche of this region of north eastern and western Bihar. The region supplied man power and imported longing in return. The city may throw 'ambiguous' charm for males from poverty ridden and 'poisoned villages' (to borrow from Ashis Nandy), but for women it acquired monstrous proportion. A Jhumar makes this plea:

Kalkatta tu jan jaa raajaa, hamaar dil kaise lagi.
Ohi Kalkatta men randi basatu hai, mozraa karihen din raati.
Hamaar dil kaise laagi…
Ohi Kalkatta men malhoriyaa basatu hai, gazlaa lagaihen din raati.
Hamaar dil kaise lagi…
Ohi Kalkatta men tamoliya basatu hain, Birbaa lagai hain din raati.
Hamaar dil kaise lagi.

[O' my beloved king! Don't go to Kalkatta{Kolkata}, how will I keep my heart stay {calm}.
In Kalkatta prostitutes live, performing shows day and night
how will I keep my heart stay {calm}
In Kalkatta malaria resides, with coughing day and night
how will I keep my heart stay {calm}
In Kalkatta betel seller lives selling betel day and night
how will I keep my heart stay {calm}]

Another song, a sohar complains:
Kalkatta sahar badnaam nayanaa naa mane ho,
Amm ke bheje likh likh patiya jodu ke bheje salaam.
Kalkatta sahar badnaam…
Amm ke bheje paanch rupiyya jodu ke pure pachaas
Kalkataa shahar badnaam.

[Kalkatta {Kolkata} is a city of ill repute, eyes are restless,
{he} sends complains to mother but greetings to the wife.
Kalkatta is a city of ill repute…
{he} sends five rupees to mother and full fifty to the wife
Kalkatta is a city of ill repute]

The above mentioned Sohar, is in the form of a complaint in which a normative voice vents anger and discrimination when it says that Kalkatta is a city of bad repute. This city has thrown a migrant's morality upside down. Therefore, while he sends long letters (Patiya literally means letters but may be inferred here bearing negative connotations and implies complaints/complaining) to his mother but a word of greeting (in fact salutation) to his wife. While he sends five rupees to the
mother but a whooping fifty to his wife. It may be a safe assumption that this *Sohar* may be from late nineteenth or first half of twentieth century. Contrasting this *Sohar* with a prose register from late nineteenth century may provide us an interesting slice of history of migration from Mithila region. This is a letter written by a migrant Durmil Jha (name changed) to 'Musamma’t Champabati' (name changed; presumably his wife living with her father (father in law of the letter writer)) which entered into colonial archive only to be retrieved by Grierson who translated and published (but carefully changed the identity of the people involved) *verbatim et literatim* as a sample specimen of Maithili language in his *Maithili Chrestomathy* in 1882:

**II श्री चंपाबती निकट दुर्मिल झा लिखित पत्र II**

स्वस्ति बिरंजीवी चंपाबती के आशीष, आगा लाखमनक जुबानी ओ चीदी साँ अहँ समक कुशलछेम बूझाल, मन आनंद मेल। श्री लाखमी देखि के नेना छोट छान्हि, जेसि साँ ओकर परबरश होइक से अवश्य कर्त्तव्य थीक; ऊनिका माता नाहँ; अहँ लोककिन भरोस तेल कुड़क निगाह रहेन्हि। एक बकस पठाओल अछः; से अहाँक हेतु, अहाँ राखब; बकस में छो ६) टा रुपेआ छचङ, ओ मसाला सभ छङ; से बकस खोली दुइ टा रुपेआ ओ आद्या २ सभ मसाला लाखमी दाई के अपने चुपे देखेन्हि, दुइ टा रुपेआ मसाला बकस अपने राखब; अहँ ले मेजाओल अछः। कोनो बातक मन में अंदेशा मति रखेख; जे चीज बस्तु सभ अहाँक नोकसान मेल अछः; से सभ पहुँँचत, तखन हम निरिचांत हेभ।।

श्री समधी जी के प्रनाम; आगा मोला साह के बहुत दिन मेलेन्हि अहँ लोककिन तकाजा नाहें करैछिएहि; हमणा बेटा जेहन छथि, से खूब जने छह; जतली रुपेआ असूल करूँ, नाहें त पीछू पछटाए। बखारी ह्यान सभ बॉंच लेलेन्हि, एह बेकूँफ के कहाँ तक नीक अकिल हैतैच।।

श्री बबू गोविंद के आशीष |

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[Translation of a letter written by Durmil Jha' to Musamma'it Champa'bati':

After compliments, may you live for a long time. My good wishes to Champábatí: Moreover, I have learnt both from the mouth of Lachhuman, and from your letter that you are all well, and my heart has been pleased thereby. Lakshmí Debí has had
a little child, and we must make arrangements for its support; she has no mother, and I hope that you will keep an eye on her, and see that she gets everything necessary (lit. oil and pots). I have sent you a box herewith, it is for you, keep it. In the box there are six rupees, and some Kábulí* fruits; open the box, and give two rupees and half fruit to Lakshmí Dáí, but give it privately. You will keep two rupees, the remainder of the fruit and the box; I have sent them for you. Don't be unhappy about anything: all your property, which has been spoilt, will be recovered for you; and then only will I be easy in my mind.

My compliments to the father-in-law. Moreover, it is a long time since you have passed Bholá Sáhu to pay the money he owes. You know what sort of temper my son has, so realize the money money quickly, or you will repent afterwards. He has sold all the paddy in the granary. When will the fool get decent wisdom?

My good wishes to Gobind Bábu.

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* The word masala usually means “spices.” I have, however, argued that here it must be translated as above. [5]

The question is how to engage with such registers? Folklore studies and its perspectives, ethno-musicology, history and sociology and their methodologies can be deployed. The discourse of history, which is my parental discipline and to which I still pay certain allegiance, treats migration largely from the confines of economics and policy frames and is populated by statistical numbers. [6] The discourse of history, even otherwise, pay quite fleeting and almost dismissive look at poetic registers and still remains one essentially premised upon precision of its language and celebrates unambiguous sources for its reconstruction. The prose in such a frame remains far superior to poetry. The challenge is how to engage with these poetic registers not merely as cultural traces, not merely as resources and locations for the winnowing of social and cultural facts which can reflect historical trends, but as dynamic and contested sites for writing about migration.
At another level, such poetic registers in their ambiguity also open up possibilities of looking at geography and the spatial dimensions of migration in new ways. For example in a very popular *Kajri* we come across Banaras, Mirjapur and Rangun all connected to a circuit:

Sejiyā par lote kālā nāg ho
Kachauri gali sun kail balamu
Mirjapur kail guljār ho, kachauri gali sun kail balamu.
Ahi mirjapur se urale jahajiya, urale jahajiya re guiyān urale jahajiya
Saiyān chal gaile rangoon ho …kachauri gali sun kail balamu

[Black cobra is restless on the bed
O’ dear you have emptied out *Kachauri* lane
You have made Mirjapur bustling, O’ dear, you have emptied out *Kachauri* lane
A ship has taken flight from this Mirjapur, O’companion! a ship has taken flight
Beloved husband has gone to Rangoon, O’dear you have emptied out *Kachauri* lane.]

Once again we can ponder about geography which is both real and metaphorical. Connected through historical and economical coordinates, but only after inserting the imaginary or desirous journey routes…flying from Mirjapur to Rangoon. These are historical also in the sense that coordinates keep changing. New place names get added in this oeuvre. Surat, one of the most significant migrant destinations in recent decades is a case to point:

Mehri ke chhorlā ke, kā rahe jarurat
Saiyān gail Surat. Sona as bigār ke ail surat.
Shisha men dekh āpan surat, sai’yān gail Surat
Phulal Phulal gāl āpan pachkā ke
Paisa ke kāran rupwā ail ganwā ke
Barah ghantā duty kail, tabo naikhe jurat
Saniyān gail Surat, sona as bigār ke ail surat
Kheti kar jam ke gharahi, boa tarkārī
Mahangābikai hardam, bate mahāmāri
Mehri ke sojhe rahab, hoib khubsurat
Public Arguments

For the money, losing your {handsome} figure
Saniyan gail Surat, sona as bigar ke ail surat⁹ (translation or gist should be given)

[What was the need to desert the wife, what was the need
Husband has gone to Surat, has wiped off the shine from his golden face
Look at your face in the mirror, husband has gone to Surat
Dehydrating your bouncing cheeks
For the money, losing your {handsome} figure
{you} worked for twelve hours, {yet} have earned enough
Husband has gone to Surat, has wiped off the shine from his golden face
Work hard on the field at home, sow vegetables
{which} sell always costly, {will divide} the illness
{you} will remain in front of the wife, will gain beauty
Husband has gone to Surat, has wiped off the shine from his golden face.]

However, before reaching to Surat, before the husband (Saiyan) has to labour
twelve hours a day and loose shine from his face as the song laments, and before
locating the figure of a migrant by grounding our analytical gaze in the cityscape
called Surat, let us defer the dynamics of destination a little. Let us pay some
attention to the in between- ness which connects the source and the destination. Let
us allow our narrative to travel. Let us briefly talk about the journey without which
the migration cannot happen. Unfortunately, this is the least explored thread of
migration studies in South Asia.

Journey

Saanon sukla saptami jaun garze aadhi raat,
Tum jao piya Malwa, hamjaibon Gujarat.

If on the seventh of the bright half of Sawan, it thunders at midnight (there will be
drought). O dear, you go to Malwa and I will proceed for Gujarat¹⁰ (Christian, Behar
Proverbs, 1891).

This proverb documented in the last decades of the nineteenth century contains the
memory of scarcity and migration. It may be worth noticing that the text of the
couplet does not mention scarcity. It is rather assumed only to be recovered
explicitly as drought in the English translation by a colonial administrator. The act
of translation is an act of intermediation. Let me talk a little about a different kind of mediation. This is about my own subjectivity as a researcher in this exercise. This is about a slice of my own journey to Gujarat of this abovementioned *Dak Vachan* and Surat of earlier mentioned Bhojpuri song.

Pointing towards the negligence accrued to journey in the scholarship on migration, Mythri Prasad-Aleyamma in her work on migrant work force from Bihar, Jharkhand and Bengal working in Trivandrum, Kerala has argued that 'Journeys, rather than settlement, characterise the life of these workers'.

Scholarly apathy accrued to aspects pertaining to journey and travel reveals certain salient features which have predominantly shaped the migration discourse within different disciplinary domains in South Asia. Firstly, an obsession with dividing the discourse of migration in the binary i.e. between source and destination stems from the desires of capital and the empire which treat the figure of a migrant merely as a unit bereft of any subjectivity. Thus, for both these (capital and the empire), while geographies which produce raw human force and finished goods matter, the intermediate processes does not merit serious attention. In this scheme, travel acquires attention only when governance of the intermediary spaces is required so as to safeguard the means of production. Thus, as recent scholarship on the history of indenture reveals, we come across a dense investment in regulating gaze over sea voyages from India to Caribbean and other plantation destinations across the oceans.

Secondly, methodologically, these disciplinary concerns, guided by the larger and invisible logic of capital and the empire, cannot anchor themselves on subjects which are not located in specific geographies, which are constantly on move. Thus, for the subjectivities of migrant figure to emerge, we had to either wait for the literary turn in social sciences or for the interdisciplinary endeavours to tell us that migration as a subject of study can and should not be located within the methodological confines of any one disciplines. The period which witnessed literary turn and a growing urge for interdisciplinary impetus in social science was also a period when post structuralist concerns were making decisive in-roads. These further helped social science to appreciate the significance of looking at processes. However, it may not be far from truth that the discourse on migration in
South Asia largely remained untouched by such developments of social sciences.

Subjectivities and journeys became relevant when scholarship on South Asia started moving away from the centrality of pull-push factors on the one hand and away from the disciplinary domains of economics. Scholarship on politics induced dislocation like the mass exodus in the wake of South Asia's division into nation states of India and Pakistan in 1947 and then again during the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 is a case to cite. However, as we know, until the middle of 1980s, the historiography on the partition violence was driven by the dynamics of high politics, transfer of power (decolonisation in post-World War II period) and conspiracy theories. Until the anti-Sikh riots of Delhi in 1984, history of the Partition in particular and social science discourse on this ordeal was oblivious to the pain and sufferings of ordinary people. The articulation of this trauma was restricted to the domains of literature and cinema. Only, when scholars-concerned citizens started visiting the houses of the victims of 1984 riots, the discipline of history began listening to the long buried pain and sufferings and the partition remained no more merely an event frozen in the past but as an unfinished, unending nightmare and as a process which spilled over from the past into the contemporary. Never before, history in South Asia felt an urge with such a passion to be in the company of literature. Never before, it moved towards anthropology and oral history with such fervour. Never before, it paid a close attention to the memory. Building upon this journey of social sciences in South Asia, I further wish to mobilise this memory, albeit differently. For me, what is crucial is the cultural memory of the migration. It is this terrain where folk registers and literature promise us a wide and open field to engage with the specificities of migration in South Asia. It is in this sphere, an engagement with the journey is neither detached nor fully consumed in the logic of either the capital or the empire. It is here that we can both converse with disciplines as well as remain outside to their methodological rigidity.

However, before we return to my own journey, it may be worthwhile to pay attention to the anxiety for direction. The selecting selection of direction of travel obviously precedes the journey here. In the following Maithili song, we find the wife/ beloved pleading her husband not to go east, west and north but he may venture into south:
पूरब दिशा जुनि जाओ लला रे पूरब राख पानि कुपानि
पानि पिवेत कान्हा तोहूँ मरि जैवह.
हम धनि ए लला रहब अकेली मंदिल्ला मे
पौलब होरी भवनमा मे फिरब अकेली रे
कान्हा बातो ने माने।
उत्तर दिशा जुनि जाओ लला रे उत्तरक जंगल भरि बाघ सिंह कान्हा तोरा काटि खेतो
हम धनि ए लला रहब अकेली रे
कान्हा बातो ने माने।
पूर्व में दिशा जुनि जाओ लला रे पूर्वक नारी सियानी
राति सुतैती कान्हा रंगमल मे भी मे भरायत पानी
पुरुषार्थ से नारी सियानी रे कान्हा
कान्हा बातो ने माने।
दक्षिण दिशा तू जाओ लला ऊत्तर बहुधि गंगा माइ
गंगा नहाए कान्हा तोहू जीबि जैवह
दुन मिलि खेलब होरी रे
कान्हा बातो ने माने।
मंदिल्ला मे खेलब होरी भवनमा मे फिरब अकेली रे
कान्हा बातो ने माने।

[O' my dear beloved! Do not venture in the direction of the east, the water in the east
is impure
You too will die drinking that water
I will remain alone in the temple
Will play Holi in the Palace, will wander alone
Kāñhā does not pay heed to my words
Do not venture in the direction of the north, huge lion from the jungle of the north
will eat you
I will remain alone
Kāñhā does not pay heed to my words
Do not venture in the direction of the west, women of the west are smart
In the night they will make you sleep in the palace of love and in the morning make
you fetch water for them
Women outsmart men, there, O' Kāñhā
Kāñhā does not pay heed to my words
Public Arguments

{if you must} you venture in the direction of the south, there flows mother Ganga{Ganges}
With a dip in the Ganga, you will come alive
We both will play Holi
Kānhā does not pay heed to my words
I will remain alone in the temple
Will play Holi in the Palace, will wander alone
Kānhā does not pay heed to my words

The question is what is so special about the south? Is it about the direction or does south serve some metaphorical functions? Usually it is both as such songs often carry nirgun spirit underneath. Secondly, is it specific to Mithila? Is south in the song specifically concerned to south of Mithila and in this way serves a limited documentary function acting as a definitive geographic trace in a regional setting?

By locating this song, in the immediate geography of Mithila, we may find Morang, Nepal in north. This has been always a disease prone, hilly and wild territory in the psycho geography of Mithila. Bengal and Assam are identified with the east, and with the fearful energy of Tantricism and tea plantation respectively. One may equate the west with the regions of Bhojpur and Awadh. In terms of climate, culture and food habits, these are quite distinct from Mithila. For example, while maithil Brahmins are predominantly shakta (one who worships Shakti/goddess) and customarily eat fish and meat, these are considered as profane in the brahmanical tradition of Bhojpur as well as Awadh. For Mithila, the immediate south is the river Ganges, the most pious river for Hindus with a capacity to wash the guilt and free a human being from all the sins. ¹⁴

Folksongs are powerful as they have endurance to accommodate our interpretation. We interpret them, identify with their content and essence in our fashion. Through such interpretations, they continue to remain relevant and attract our cultural selves. In such a zone of meaning making it is difficult to resist the pull. However, with a little persuasion of our critical faculty, we also realize another possibility of contradictory interpretations. For example, south of Mithila is also the region of Magadh, a forbidden territory in the cultural geography of maithil Brahmins.

Secondly, it is not very difficult to empirically establish that a good number of
The gaze outside the Maruti van taxi window also met women sweepers neatly dressed in *sidha pallu* glittering synthetic silk saris. This was an impressive sight. The city was charming, clean and inviting to its visitors.

Folk songs and other such registers in fact share lot of common elements and concerns across Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Angika and even with Avadhi and Braj. Then, the issue becomes doubly perplexing and we are left wondering not with what south mean in Mithila but how to look at south? The reference to Ganga in the south is unmistakable yet it does not stop me thinking about the south in the way I outlined above. Yet, defying the prescription of woman who stayed in the palace, I travelled westward.

**Journey to Surat**

It was a rainy morning, the first day of September in 2007. They said monsoon was receding. We had arrived at Surat from Delhi by Mumbai bound Gareeb-Rath express. Much before reaching Surat, if fact soon after the train left Bharuch junction, a commotion began in our compartment. The passage way was getting populated and bags of all size and shapes were queued at the gates jamming the pathways. We too joined this celebration of wait for the arrival of Surat Railway station. With thirteen big and small bags, one and half year old son, mother and wife, usefulness of jamming the door early was quickly realized.

There was light drizzling at the platform when we de-boarded the train. Hiring taxi was hassle free compared to Delhi and the roads were wide and clean. The downpour in the night and ongoing drizzles had added an extra glaze on the tar surface. This was my third visit. I had earlier come for two short but eventful trips. However, for new visitors (my wife and mother), the city produced both a sense of awe filled with anxieties. Anxiety was about entering into a new unknown urban terrain. Thinking retrospectively, they were probably bewildered. They had expected a much less spectacular cityscape than what they were used to in Delhi. The wide roads, long flyovers and multi storied apartments in City light were beyond their comprehension for an image of Surat, a city located in the western coast of India.

The gaze outside the Maruti van taxi window also met women sweepers neatly dressed in *sidha pallu* glittering synthetic silk saris. This was an impressive sight. The city was charming, clean and inviting to its visitors.
Cities produce 'others'. This is not to agree with the romantic, all inclusive, harmonious and utopian villages of Mahatma Gandhi. Like any other socio-spatial formation or for that matter similar to any other analytic category, cities too are intrinsically constituted in and through different processes which simultaneously generate regimes of otherness and selfhood. Othering in this perspective is inherent and constitutive to the process itself. Away from the hermeneutic engagement with construction of other in meaning making or from psychoanalysis of self, I look at othering as socio-spatial and dynamic process. I attempt to locate this process at two levels. Firstly, a brief analysis is offered to understand implications of perceiving and framing migrants as undesirable other. The gruesome communal outbreak that shook Surat in the aftermath of the destruction of Babari mosque on December 6, 1992 was marked by a surfacing of this figure of the other in quite ironical and tragic manner. This is rather surprising in the context of a city that claims to have cosmopolitan and multi-cultural past. Secondly, this section will unravel the politics of othering at a deeper level—in terms of everyday social life that largely constitute the field of urban experience in Surat. It is at this level, we hope to discover how the mundane detail of urban life and perceptions about people and communities shape the contours of otherness and reveal different shades in the politics of belongingness.

A city known for its diamond polishing and synthetic textiles, Surat is one among the most rapidly growing cities of India. According to a UNESCO study based on Census of India 2001, Surat receives the largest percentage of internal migrants in million plus cities of India. With an official population of more than forty-five lakhs, Surat urban agglomeration stands at the ninth position in the country in terms of population. The city comes under the census category of million plus cities urban agglomeration/city. Surat city, a major stakeholder of this urban agglomeration, was carved out from earlier Chorasi taluka. This new Surat city taluka includes complete area of Surat Municipal Corporation, 31 villages and part of the area of Mangrol (city) and Dindoli (part). The lineage of such a massive urban growth of Surat directly goes back to the decade of 1960s when the city acquired an unprecedented momentum in terms of size as well as population. The area of Surat city expanded from 3.19 sq. miles to 8.84 sq. miles during 1961–71
and several new areas were included within the city limits of Surat for the first time in 1963. With the expansion of city limits and inclusion of new areas, this period also witnessed massive influx of people from outside.

With the diamond polishing and synthetic textile industries, in 1960s, Surat not merely witnessed a massive expansion but also began receiving a large influx of migrant population. Over the decades, some of these groups acquired dominant position in terms of their hold on capital. Communities of Patidars from Saurashtra and Marwaris from Rajasthan are two such groups.

According to a survey conducted in October-November, 1973, covering 1964 families from different blocks, selected through random samples from different wards of this decade old corporation (in 1964 Surat municipality became a corporation), almost every other family came from outside and 16 per cent of the total families came to Surat city only in the last eight years. This report further claims that one third of emigrant families came from different states of India, but mainly from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. 25 per cent of emigrant families were from the same Surat district. Such heterogeneity gave this city 'a cosmopolitan character'. The report also seems to suggest that a large number of problems and difficulties that the city was facing in the early years of 1970s had their roots in the growing dimensions of the city. Migrants and lower caste population had a fair share in creating such problems. It reports that all kinds of crime increased during the last two decades. A caste wise break up has been provided showing 'a majority of the history sheeters belong to low castes, including the SC and ST. A large number of them—32 out of 47 belong to the scheduled Tribes—Halpatis, Gamits, Chodhuris, Talaviyas etc. The number of non-Gujaratis among them, say, Maharastrians and South Indians is not small'. The report adds that the city remained no longer a peaceful one and most of the participants responsible for making this city disturbed place were migrants. The study concludes by offering following suggestion: “Looking at the existing amenities, land and hazard of health, Surat has reached its optimum level of population. Therefore, efforts should be made to check migration to the city from other parts of the state and country.”

The difficult question we need to ask is who are these migrants? When every other
family comes from outside the city, who speaks on behalf of the city's original self? In such a scenario, can there be a search for who migrants are and who are the 'original' inhabitants? If yes, what can be the yardstick for such a definition—time spent in the city? Can a Maharastrian living and working in Surat for thirty years be considered as migrant when compared to a Ghanchi who came to the city merely few years back? It is difficult to sustain this line of enquiry and the division between migrant and non-migrant may not be pertinent if not pitched at another level—at the level, where city produces alienation and perceptions of others at different layers. It is only investing focus at these different and subtle layers of everydayness one can engage with the narratives that surfaced in the nightmare of Surat. What is intriguing in this saga is both the figure of the migrant as well as the process of othering through which the politics of the city defines its shade of belongingness. The report, with which we began this section, is both symptomatic of such a politics as well as a crude reminder for the mindset which was to play vital role in coming decades. Twenty years after this report, when the city exploded in communal fire, a frame was already ready for scholars to identify and blame the perpetrators.

**Migrant as Perpetrator**

Babri mosque in Ayodhya was demolished on December 6, 1992. Following this watershed event in the annals of secular democracy of post-Independence era, a massive communal outbreak took place in Surat leaving an official figure of about 185 dead in the city. 95 per cent of those killed in the riot were Muslims. This was the second highest death toll for any city in India and amounted to more than half of total number of deaths taken place in December riots across the state in Gujarat. By an estimate, the city suffered a loss of Rs.500 crore. 250,000 powerlooms producing goods worth Rs.25 crore per day remained closed during the riots and curfew resulting into a loss of a wage of Rs. 2 crore a day for the city's 4 lakh powerloom workers. Associated works like dyeing, processing, warping, texturing and textile mills also remained closed during this period. A study has shown that the aftermath of the riot transformed the cityscape by segregating neighborhoods along religious lines. This study observes,

“Nanavat, Shahpore and Muglisara, these three localities are so adjacent to each
Apart from the orgy of mass violence, post Babri mosque demolition riots also left intelligentsia bewildered for the reason that 'the long spell of caste and communal peace since 1948 in a city which had remained insulated from the violent incidents and movements of 1956, 1969, 1974, 1981 and 1985-86 in the state was broken'.

It has been remarked that 'while the immediate reason was the post-Ayodhya over reaction by religious zealots', riots exposed the vulnerability of the 'growth model'.

The riot was catastrophic not merely for those who faced its brutal violence and for the city in general but it also came as a shock for those who loved the city, cared for it and believed in the theory of harmonious social existence of different social groups due to mutual economic interdependence of communities. Reasons were sought and projected in order to overcome this shock and comprehend the brutality of the event. In the descriptions, the events of the riot were quintessentially marked by the clear understanding of self and other, victims and perpetrators, Hindus and Muslims among those who faced the whirlwind. Jan Breman writes,

“There can't be the slightest doubt what so ever that most of the hunters came from among the horde of labour migrants who have flocked to Surat. The victims, the
next of kin of those who did not survive, and other eyewitnesses are unanimous in naming the 'kathiawadi' diamond cutters, the UP 'bhaiyas' and the Oriya 'malis' operating the powerlooms as the main culprits. As if to confess their guilty implication in the pillage and massacre an exodus took place in the days immediately after the pogrom."

Similar binaries knowingly or unknowingly cropped up in a number of commentaries and analysis of the event. In such accounts, those who belonged to the city were contrasted with those who did not and the onus was largely transferred on to the later.

For example Pravin Sheth looked at the events as 'a degeneration of a city'. In the core of this theory of decay rests the carnal of an 'original city of Suratilala (standing for a carefree, peace loving, easy-going commercial culture)' which was 'inhabited by educated forward castes followed by the industrious business castes'. He traced the roots of the fall of this city by going back to the decade of 1960s, arrival of 'Hiraghasus (or diamond cutters) mainly illiterate Kanbis from Saurashtra', 'labour immigration from backward areas' of Khandesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. Such a trajectory of infiltration of illiterates into a landscape inhabited by 'educated forward castes' was followed in this analytical scheme with an easy flow of illegal incomes from smuggling and bootlegging activities, mushrooming of 'jhopadpatis' (slums), emergence of *nouveau riche*, local dons and slum lords. Sudhir Chandra rightly points out, “In popular memory the city was remembered as having forever been free from any kind of group violence. Let alone the disturbances of 1669 and 1795, even the riots of 1927-28 did not figure in the Surtis' collective cognitive map.”

For Jan Breman, the temporary and underpaid migrants working and living as 'footloose proletariat' supplied the force of perpetrators. He was 'intrigued' that the members of 'this underclass' and 'victims of the criminalized economic regime that reigns the city' were 'singled out as the ones who did it'. However, much against his wish he remarked, “it seems that any other explanation than just to refer to the brutal lumpen behaviour of an alien mass not rooted in the polished 'surthi' tradition is considered to be superfluous”. He goes on to add, “The power and patronage structures and the economic interest groups were taken over by the new
class of entrepreneurs, the nouveau riche and the mafias. They and the de-classed lumpen elements and the underclass of migrant labour brought with them their own political sub-culture. They hardly had any stake in the system and no interest in the city's traditional liberal, peace-loving and easy going patterns of life.\textsuperscript{39} This is not to deny that he also offered to see the pogrom in a slightly different perspective and brought into consideration the pathetic conditions in which migrant workers work and live in the city, their insecurities, the sexual exploitations and repressed anger of these male who then transformed from victims into perpetrators.

However, unlike Pravin Sheth, Jan Breman and other such dominant narratives, there also exist other reports that contradict the theory that the orgy was largely done by single male migrants. These are accounts that speak volumes about not merely mass killings but violence perpetrated by those who were known, had a shared relationship and who betrayed the trust. 'The nightmare of Surat' an article by three women scholars (Kalpana Shah, Smita Shah and Neha Shah) does not attempt to fix the guilt on migrant outsiders and brings the ambiguity quite evocatively. In this report, we find that muslim localities and Muslim women were attacked by mob consisted both by people coming from Varacha Road (a neighborhood largely populated by diamond cutters) as well as local Hindus who had otherwise a good relationship with Muslims, who had agreed to maintain peace and who were patrolling (the neighborhood of Vijaynagar-2 where the incident took place) together with muslims. But 'when a mob of 15,000 people came from Varacha Road, the local Hindus joined up with them… Hindu women were throwing stones, acid and hot water from the terrace on those who were trying to escape'. Muslim women were dragged, raped and killed by 'men mostly from the neighboring societies and they were married men'. The authors of this report write, “The large-scale plunder and destruction would seem to confirm that 'local' residents actively helped communal elements by pointing out their Muslim neighbours. It is alleged that informants were tipped Rs. 100 for the identification of each Muslim house or shop”.\textsuperscript{40} In another case, a victim pointed that people from neighboring societies of Udaynagar and Prabhunagar who were North Gujaratis and Harijans respectively joined the mob.\textsuperscript{41} Sudhir Chandra has also pointed out that “Like Bombay around the same time, Surat saw significant Dalit participation in the riot as sections of dalit under-class played an active role in the violence”.\textsuperscript{42}
The theory of male migrant perpetrator has also been contradicted by the active presence of women from affluent sections in the acts of violence and looting. Kalpana Shah and others report:

“It is impossible to generalize about the participants in the looting. The free for-all was joined alike by upper and lower castes, rich and poor, rustic and anglicized. Women entered the jewellery shops where they frantically searched for the correct size of gold and silver bangles or rings. They went into furniture shops to hunt for furniture of their taste, inside sari and readymade garment shops to match blouse pieces for the looted saris and pick up the right size of dresses. They also took shoes that would fit them from the footwear shops. The looters came on foot or by scooters and cars to help themselves to whatever they desired.”

Comparing these accounts on the composition of the mob of the perpetrators are perplexing yet reveals a deep grudge against migrants. They have been often labeled as the source of conflict, degeneration and crime. Such a grudge is ironical as Surat, like any other industrial city, has catered a large percentage of migrant population. Thus, this grudge also points that while people think themselves as belonging to city and its civilized citizen they almost reject others in most cases their neighbours and co-workers as belonging to the same landscape. We have noticed that in that nightmare (as mentioned above), the perpetrators were not merely migrants but people from same localities, those who were invested with faith. In order to engage with such perpetrators from within we need to move to the manner in which cityscape in the last fifty years have crystallized the fuzzy boundaries of self and other. This is more a story of city’s flirtation with modernity.

The obvious question, then, is how to differentiate between who is a migrant and who belongs to the city? How to differentiate between who is and who is not a Surati? We also need to ask, whether by clubbing migrants as other, are we not making the category a monolith and homogeneous? For example, the community of Ghanchis, which is regarded as a Surati community came to the city in the 14th century as a 'refugee'. According to Banshibhai, a committee member of the Surti Modh Vanik Mandal, “Ghanchis did hijrat (migrated as refugees) in the 14th century when Allaudin khilji had attacked Rajasthan and the northern Gujarat region. Modheshwari temple has fifty five forms of castes with which emerged- Modh
Vanik, Modh Patels, Modh Kshatriyas etc. Ghanchis came here during the 14th century as refugees and settled in Kot Vistaar with Muslim areas close by. If you look at Kanskiwad, then Jhampabazaar is close by, Haripura, then Bade khan na Chakla and all these areas are close by. The Muslims gave shelter to the Ghanchis by giving them houses near their own localities. Initially, they were kept in oil pressing work (Ghani) and that's why they were called Ghanachi which has become Ghanchi today. Muslims were also in this profession and that's why some Muslims also have Ghanchi surname. Gola Ranas were called as Japanese because they used to replicate fake quality product, like today we have china maal. During those days, Japan used to have those low quality products, in bulk production. Ghanchis were called as Germans because we used to work very hard day and night and could sustain heavy work load.”

Like Ghanchis, Golas too migrated to the city as Bhargav Jethanandas, a 53 year old manager of the Navapara Urban Co-operative housing society Ltd in Moti Golwad area says, “I am not sure. It is quite controversial. Some people think that we are the lineages of Maharana Pratap whereas some think that our origin has been in Surat from the start. Janardan Karamdas Rana is 56 years old too mentions that Rana Samaj came from Khambhat, we were actually the watch guards of Maharana Pratap in Rajasthan and when the Mughals attacked, we had to run from our houses and we migrated to Khambhat. I believe that people are trying to project themselves as people from higher caste and community and so they have come up with the stories saying that they are the “Vansaj” (lineage) of Maharana Pratap...We are still unaware of our history.”

In this scenario, when history tells us that those who were migrants came to perceive themselves as Surati, the line dividing who and who does not belong to city becomes blurred. The emphasis on life style, attitude towards work and profit driven personality are key differentiating factors in the social perceptions and circulating stereotypes about marwaris and kathiawaris.

Apart from these attitudinal differences, spatial dynamics plays crucial role in creating and crystallizing the notions of otherness. This is quite evident in the case of neighbourhoods having both Muslim as well as non-muslim population in Kot Vistaar. For example, Sabana Mazahar Sheikh who stays near Jain Chintamani
Derasar, near Muglisara Road says that on the other side of her road is the neighbourhood of Shahpore, a mix area where multi religious communities have been living together since centuries. She is a Sheikh married to a Vohra Muslim (a Kanungo from Sunni Vohra community). But, the social fabric is fast changing in the area as non Muslim families (particularly Jains and Hindus) are leaving the area. This exodus, she speculates, may be due to the economic reasons or owing to a sense of insecurity among these communities. Inter community love affairs too are responsible. Old dwelling patterns are changing and new apartments are constructed so there is an inflow of Muslims in this area.

It may sound ironical that though Muslim neighbourhoods are closely linked with Hindu majoritarian neighbourhoods, in most of the responses and conversations, Muslims rarely figure in the list of others. This is certainly not because they are considered as similar and malleable. It may be because Muslims are pushed to the status where they are no longer competitor in the economic sphere. Socially the chasm between Muslim and Non-Muslim has widened and deepened to an extent that two hardly interact, deal with one other or socially intermingle. To recognise as other, some kind of relationship, proximity at physical or mental terrain is required. It seems that relationship has been severed beyond repair.

Mustaq Sarfo, a 48 year old Sunni Bohra (Juma) who has a shop of motorcycle seat covers at Shahpore and lives in Sagrampura candidly laments that after the Babri Mosque demolition, the relationship with non-Muslim neighbours have changed. Karim Muhammad Malbari, a 46 year old Sunni Muslim says that once upon a time he had a name and a reputation. He was wrongly implicated for cheating slum dwellers as he belongs to specific community. He was under police investigation and had to be out of city for two years. He blames vernacular media for this. We may report various such individual cases of victimhood. In these cases, 1992 Babri mosque demolition and the communal violence which followed thereafter play crucial role.

In most of the interviews with respondents belonging to Muslim community, it was found that earlier generation was in diamond or in textile industry. These respondents primarily belonged to lower income who worked for petty jobs. Their fathers too were in auxiliary (i.e. electrician, plumber etc) works but such works
were directly or indirectly linked to diamond and textile. Salim Khan from Maharashtra was an electrician in a mill for 30 years. He came to Surat in 1984. He says most of the Konkani Marathis joined powerloom. Mainly 500 families from his tehsil around Jalgaon, Khandesh and Boldana came to Surat at that time in mid 1980s. They were living outside the Kot Vistar, in the periphery of the extending city at that point of time: Sumul dairy, Katargam and Ved road, Patel Nagar. These neighbourhoods were largely heterogeneous in composition consisted of lower caste, scheduled tribes and Muslims who were working in the powerloom sector and largely from Maharashtra, Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Nazrul Sarifuddin has a cycle repair shop and who stays near Motiwala compound. His father was in powerloom. His native place is Khandesh and he still visits Khandesh during religious functions along with his family. While staying in Rampura Tekri, he witnessed that Muslims had good relation with Mahyavanshi, Valmiki and Vankar community (all three are dalit communities).

Interviews also reveal that Muslim community largely shared a good relation with dalits. Both Muslims and dalits have shared a history of working together in powerlooms. However, this is true only for the first generation migrant Muslims and Mahyavanshis. Second generation from both these communities have moved away from powerloom or core jobs of powerloom to service sector or in petty businesses in the case of Muslims. 1992 communal riots became a watershed moment even at this level. A little earlier, the powerloom machines began moving out of Kot Vistraar areas to the peripheries from late 1980s itself (as we noticed in previous conversations). In such a scenario, what was true for pre-1992 in the old city became new social reality for newly expanding migrant colony in the periphery. Thus, a new social constellation emerged at the periphery which will be discussed in the section on neighbourhoods.

Before extending the argument further, we should also keep in mind that muslim society is hardly a monolithic social unit. A distinct and cohesive social unit within muslim community is of Bohras. The Bohra community's residence in Surat is mostly concentrated in and around Zanpabazaar, Begumpura in Surat. Their existence in the area has given multiple varied responses.
Zanpabazar hosts a special mosque for the Bhoras which is an integral part of their religious as well as social life. The manager in the mosque says, 'The Bohra head, Rasul-ullah pyagambar was in Mecca Medina some 1400 years ago and at that time, he moved to Egypt. The Bohras lived in Egypt for 900 years. Our Sultanate ruled there. After that, the sultanate moved to Yemen. Then the Bohras shifted to Ahmedabad in 1568 A.D, then some moved to Jamnagar, then to Kutch, then Mandvi, then Ujjain, after that Burhanpur and then to Surat. I have always liked Zanpabazar, our spiritual head was born here. Unki inayat hai humpe (His blessings are on us). This mosque is best in the country. Every Bohra comes to Surat to pray here.”

Therefore, Surat holds a special place among the Bohras in India as their religious head Dawoodi Burhannuddin was born here and most Bohras wish to be settled around the mosque. Some also live or gradually shifted to Udhan and Nanpura area owing to increasing congestion in the area. Zanpabazar is part of Begumpura and residents of the area expressed their discontent concerning the rapidly changing landscape of the area. Once a quiet and peaceful neighbourhood of their own, the area started changing after the textile market spawned a filthy environment and sprawling flyovers covered Surat’s skyline. Marking a stark difference from the rest of the area, this road has well designed pavement. There are small palm/coconut trees. The colour of the buildings is pale yellow or ochre. The windows are carved beautifully and birds find their way here. Their chirping which penetrated the overall quaint nature of the area gives an impression of care and attention. But exactly from the next lane usual filth, dirt, dilapidated wooden house mar the usual landscape. Usual traffic scene, parked tempos bent with fabric and yarn, and the incessant noise of loading, unloading, negotiations and vehicular traffic make the environment unbearable for residents to live.

Samina, lives in Noorani Complex in Begumpura. It has four floors and she lives on the third. The area is surrounded with small offices bearing the hoarding,- 'Yarn/taakaka supply yahan se hotahai.' (Yarn is supplied from here). Samina is in her forties. She wasn't wearing traditional rida at home. Instead, she was wearing palazzos and a shirt. When someone from outside comes she wraps a dupatta around her. Pleasantly she offers chocolate; a customary Bohra tradition of offering
Samina's family is planning to move to Burhani Park, an upcoming housing project in Bhestan this year. Their Maula who has passed away recently, started this project in 2010. Samina says, 'He had purchased a huge plot in Bhestan and developed it for the Bohras. Just like the area in Zanpabazaar. The Burhani Park in Bhestan has a garden, residential buildings and our mosque. It is very beautiful and quite organized. Our Maula gave one bedroom flats to those people who do not own a house. This is my brother's house. So we got a flat for five lakhs. It's normal price is seventeen lakhs and those bohras who are rich have bought them at the regular price. There are other houses as well, like two bedroom, three bedroom etc at something sweet to the guest. Though originally from Surat, she moved to Amalsar, Billimora after getting married almost twenty years ago. Her husband worked in a transport company in Amalsar and earned only 2500 Rs per month. Though, among Bohras working under someone is a rarity and the Maulas always encourage people to take up their own business, her husband tried to set up business but failed several times. Her financial condition was visibly weak but she wanted to give her two sons good education. She sent them to St. Joseph School in Amasar. Maintaining a good life there was increasingly difficult. Her brother who used to stay in Surat saw her plight and asked her to move to Surat. She took permission from their Maula and when he said yes, they shifted to Surat around six years ago. She is presently living in her brother's house without paying any rent. Her brother has moved to Yemen to work at a Bohra mosque there. He volunteered a lot when the mosque was in construction in Surat (Zanpabazaar). He would gift gold to write on the walls of the mosque, he would lift bricks and tiles during the construction. The authorities and their Maula were so impressed that they sent him to Yemen for working in the mosque. Currently, her husband works in the trust and though he doesn't get much, they believe in whatever Maula gives them. Samina says, 'He finds ways for giving us. For example, my brother is helping us out with everything. So, it is the Maula who is giving us through my brother.' But Samina plans to move out from this place as well. She says, 'This area used to be quiet and peaceful. During our times, we could see one or two rickshaws here. But after these flyovers were built and the textile market came up, the area changed. We see so many tempos full of fabric. There is always traffic around. The area seems filthy now. Thank god, we are shifting from this locality.'
different prices. The three bedroom is for thirty eight lakhs. Many bohras in this area have bought those houses so that they can one day shift there and live peacefully.’ When asked what is the reason for choosing a far away area like Bhestan she said may be the Maula wanted to find a peaceful area, little further from the city, which isn’t like Zanpabazaar.

These housing projects are initiated by the Bohra religious leaders and cater to a particular religious community reinforcing authority of its leader and the solidarity among the community which is orchestrated and controlled through a centralized system. The enforcement is double in the sense, that it claims spatial assertion through religious sectarianism. The trend follows. Such a segregated residential pattern is practiced across the city. Exclusive residential complexes, gated communities, townships, neighbourhoods have come up to cater specific social groups.

In this regard, a small notice visible on the entrance of the Hathifaliya sheri is symptomatic of such a segregation along communal lines. This states that – “Shri Rammandir Zanpabazaar Hathifaliya: This sheri (lane) is exclusively for the Hindu community. Anybody who is not a Hindu, should not try to purchase a house in this street.”

Another way is by cordon off from rest of the neighbourhood. Jignesh bhai once mentioned, “The Bohras have also come in our street, Chowki Sheri. They close their curtains and never interact with anybody around, apart from other Bohras.” This sentiment is evident in Jignesh bhai’s description of the Muslims (Bohra) as well as in Dattubhai when he said, ‘you know, the Bohra community was nearly coming to
Salma in her fifties, lives in the third floor of Hyatt building in Zanpabazaar. The house is small, with two rooms and a kitchen. Salma was also not wearing Rida. She spoke in broken English while simultaneously washing clothes in the washing machine. She said she has moved to this house twelve years back. Before that she lived closer to their mosque in Zanpabazaar. She talks about a family problem which led her to leave her spacious in-law house, with all facilities to this smaller one. She was born and brought up near Crawford Street, Victoria Terminus in Bombay. Before marriage she loved her batch mate in Bombay but the boy's family didn't accept her because his elder brother had a love marriage and he left the family so the family always felt scared that if Salma comes to their house, she would also take the guy away from the family. She got married to her husband in an arranged marriage. They came to see her in Bombay. She was really young and her husband was 16 years older than her. Therefore, her parents disapproved this marriage. But the groom's family kept on insisting and Surti Bhoras have lots of importance in the community because they are rich. So at last she agreed to get married. When she got married and came to Surat she described the locality of her in-laws, Zanpabazaar an affluent and posh area. They had maids in house as well. But the area was a mixed ethnic locality. Salma says, 'A lot of Hindus, Muslims and Bohras lived there. It (the relationship) was very cordial. A Gola family lived right across our house and during those days, we didn't have telephones. The gola family right across had a telephone and my parents would call me on their phone and they would call me to receive.' They never had food at each other's place, but it was a social interaction,

But the case of Bohra residential township is significantly different in three aspects. First, here the assertion to secure their own space is not coming from a dominant, majoritarian group. Second, the segregation and marginalization is not visibly forceful. Third, unlike other housing projects where real estate agents play big role, here a religious leader is forthrightly involved in real estate and catalyzing a mono-ethnic communal environment.
where they used to invite each other for marriage and social function. A Hindu cook would prepare their meal in the wedding and their sitting arrangement was separate. But now the area has changed completely. *Now only Surti Bohras live there. All those who were rich, bought houses in that street, even our house was purchased by a rich Surti Bohra.* Salma thinks the Hindus must have moved to their exclusive locality as well. She also feels threatened, by the Hindu boys where they are currently living. She confesses that during 2002 riots Hindus protected them but now the area has changed after the New Textile Market. Her narratives indicate that the area has become very crowded and probably these new elements are outsiders. She identifies them 'asravalis' who tease her daughters and expresses how they are helpless and lives a life of fear under constant threat for their life.

**Layered difference within Community**

Salma's narrative further teases out the conflicts within a seemingly homogenous community. Her in-laws house was spacious big and they had four-five tenants as well. She says her sister-in-laws were jealous of the fact that she lived in such a spacious house with so many facilities such as maids. So they asked her father in law to divide the property among four brothers. So then that house had to be sold and the money was distributed. Her husband had a shop in Rajmarg in Bhagal. During the time of commissioner Rao (a municipal commissioner of Surat in 1990s who is widely credited for his role in cleanliness drives, realignment of roads and demolition of illegal constructions), the streets got realigned and the entire shop was removed. Salma continues, *'My husband felt as if he lost his hands. He had no other place to go and work. We were ravaged in a day... This used to make us so sad but we lived through it.'*

During such struggling time she didn't receive any help from their religious leader or Maula. Salma compares their Maula as Chief Minister and says, *'Do you think it is possible to meet the mullah? One needs to have lots of money for that. The mullah doesn't help. We never even get to meet him so how would he know about our problems. And for the loan, we need to have gold to put for guarantee, or a house. How could we put our house? This was the only thing we had. And even the installments for the loan are very high. Our income was almost next to nothing so we didn't take any loans.'* Even the daily tiffin from the Bohra mosque is not a sweet
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charity by the mosque. As Salma continues, ‘everyone has to pay at least 500 rs per month (for the tiffin from bohra mosque). When my financial condition was very poor, I had asked them if they can send the tiffin for free but they didn’t.’

Samina and Salma's narrative about the characterization of Mulla is starkly different. On one hand, Samina's family has always received blessing from the Mulla, both financially and socially, Himaida struggles her way through.

Salma also talks about a section of Surti Bhoras who are known as gaamwaalaas. She never knew about this section of her own community when she was in Mumbai, but in her in-law's house there were some tenants who were from Koka Peesa village. They are also called saat gaamna amongst Bohras. Against the rules of Bohra community, they work at people's house or wedding functions as maids. Salma expresses disdain towards them while saying, ‘but Gaamwalas are usually very poor and no one gives them daughters or takes their daughters. They live mostly in Udhna, Kali Pul and Rustampura, near the Hills Nursery high school. I was so surprised in Surat when I saw that the Bohras differentiated saying, these are gaamwalas, these are Surtis etc. We never did that in Bombay.’

The difference within the community in socio-cultural and economic terms affects their spatial location in the city as well as in the house. While respectable, Surti Bohras live in Zanpabazaar near their mosque, the Gaamwalas mostly live at outskirts and even when they live in the main city, they live either as tenant of wealthy Surti Bhora or work as their house-maid.

On the other hand, resentment against the Bohra Muslims is echoed, possibly because of their financial well-being. Jignesh bhai believes that the Bohras migrated from Mumbai, selling their property and invested in the shops in Surat, bought houses in this locality and have been earning a lot of money. Someone else also said that their spiritual guru, Dawoodi Sayeed favours business and gives loans to Bohras without charging interest. Nayeembhai thinks that the Bohras have migrated from Yemen and most of their family members and relatives live in ‘foreign countries’ and that is why they have a lot of money.

Dharmesh bhai's brother had to get rabies injections and he says, “If I go to any
other hospital, I'll have to pay two thousand rupees but in the Maskati Hospital, I have to pay only fifty rupees.” Dharmesh bhai adds to this, “The Bohras built this hospital. They have a lot of money and they do charity as well. When this hospital became very famous and catered to a lot of people, the SMC purchased it and made it a public hospital. Otherwise, earlier it was mainly for the Bohra community.”

In the responses from migrants from Maharashtra, the axis of the process of othering further shifts. Here, Kot Vistaar itself emerge as other as we find an eerie silence, lack of any trace of Kot Vistaar in most of the responses dealing with the everyday life of these migrants.

Despite coming from low caste and economically disadvantaged strata of life, they have no complaint against the city life. Also there hardly exists any rupture between city and village life and its understanding. There is a longing for village but no bitterness about city life.

An absence of complaint for the city can be easily seen in the narratives of Somesh bhai, a Maharashtrian auto rickshaw driver. He lives in Pandesara in a one bedroom and a kitchen accommodation. The hall in this small house is nicely decorated with a picture Shivaji Maharaj adorning the wall. He initially lived in this house as a tenant and later purchased it. This is in a Maharashtrian dominated segment of this industrial neighbourhood. He said that it is a better house to live in compared to his house at his village in Maharashtra. He is 46 year old and has been in Surat for past 30 to 35 years. He left his village and came here for good employment in Surat.

He spent his early life at his native village in Amravati, Maharashtra where his father Suresh bhai was a farm labour. Somesh bhai informed that his father also had very good land but due to irrigation problem it yielded crop only once in a year. He often visits his native village on festival or for other social occasions. His ancestral house is still there and one of his brother lives there with his mother. He also sends some money to them from Surat.

In 1985-86, at the age of 16-17 years, Somesh bhai came to Surat and started living with his Uncle who was working in a Diamond factory. His uncle's elder son was driving auto rickshaw in the Surat city on rent at that time.
His uncle was in *Ghat* work (Shaping the Diamond) Department and Somesh bhai joined the same. Most of the workers were *outsider* and some of them were from his village. Even the owner of the factory was from Saurashtra. As he learned the skill, his salary increased quickly—from Rs.350 to Rs.1200 per month within a year. In the beginning it was tough but after sometimes when he was earning money, he made up his mind to work there. He had good relationship with all the workers. His best friend was Vikrambhai from his own village with whom he had played together in childhood and they knew each other well. Somesh bhai recalled that they often went for lunch or snacks with him around area at Pandesara.

After two-three years of job in a Diamond factory, he was fed up and decided to leave the job. His friends and colleagues tried to convince him without any success. His cousin used to drive auto rickshaw and Somesh bhai had learned driving too even while working in the Diamond factory. After quitting the job, he began driving the rickshaw. He subsequently got married in his village. With the help of dowry and by selling some land, he purchased the house. Later on in 2006, he also bought his own rickshaw and lives 'a very happy with his small family. He often went to his village at Maharashtra in vacation time and spends his whole vacation there.

While a good number of respondents belonging to first generation of Maharashtrian migrants maintained their love for the village without any lamentation for the loss, Ashok bhai (another Maharashtrian migrant) tells a twisted tale. 'Talking about the city he said that though he lived here from many years he always missed his village and their life. Though he was poor and didn’t have more facilities in his village, the life was very peaceful there. People were connected with each other with heart and feeling. In the early days when he came here for work he never thought about settling in the city. He thought to return after getting some money. But this city did not let him did so. In the beginning when he came here he 'felt like he was in a rural area'.

In the narratives of the periphery of city life four Surti castes are absent from the narrative. In case of Nitin bhai Ghadiyali who lives in Ambaji Road, his neighbours are Kohli Patel, Muslims, Brahmins and 'proper surtis'. Whereas, for the migrants who mostly stay at the periphery, they never mention any 'proper surti' caste as their neighbor.
For Rajesh bhai Badgujar, he came to Surat from Maharashtra Nandurbar and he is living at Surat since about 30 years. He is a businessman and runs wholesale vegetable business in Shardar Vegetables Market right now. And at present living at Pandesara, Udhana Road at Surat with his family. Talking about himself, Rajesh bhai said that he came to Surat at about 17 or 18 years of age and from that he living here and doing his business. At present he is about 49 to 50 years of age and his wife is about 44 years of age. He is living in his own house at here from about 20 years. He said that it is his own house and the other houses neighbouring to his house is also under of his ownership. Rajesh bhai said that there are 35 rooms which were given on rent by him around his house. He charged about 500 to 600 rupees from each room holder as the monthly rent. The most of his tenant are Marathi and came here to get good employment. Some of them are either connected with the diamond business or with the Textile market. Some of them are having their stall of Vegetables, Tea, Fast food etc. Talking about his working place he said that his colleagues are from different communities i.e., Gujarati, Marathi, Kathiyawadi, U.P-Biharis etc. and they work together and having good relationship with everyone.

With a shift in our analytical location and focus, we find ourselves in the middle of narratives and lives which are full of warmth towards the city and obligatory towards what this urban landscape has bestowed upon them. This is a city traversed by migrants, their struggles and their achievements. The detail in and through which we get a glimpse of this city of migrants may be trivial and banal, the *mise en scène* may be dotted with small houses having worn out plasters on their walls. For this is a city where the past is no longer a territory of loss but a terrain of struggle and achievements. Here, their desires have found a dwelling.

**By Way of a Conclusion**

I grew up in Darbhanga, a small town of north Bihar. It was a large old house with a well and a courtyard in the middle. The house was a ruin which was purchased and restored by my father. Our native village was merely 29 kilometers away. Yet, it was Darbhanga with which I identified myself. The house, I grew up with, stayed in, even when I moved on and even when my father sold it after his retirement. Yet, it is ironical that this house from Darbhanga (which has stayed in my memory and in...
my dreams) was always named as der (i.e. Darbhanga wala der; that residence of Darbhanga) a term which essentially conveys a sense of temporary residence.

After matriculation, I was admitted to Patna College and my accommodation (till the allotment of hostel) was arranged in a rented room in Ranighat, a lower middle class neighborhood not far from my college. It was evening, the time for my brother and brother in law to leave. They had accompanied me to make all the necessary arrangements. We three walked down the busy Ashok Raj Path and at the Patna Market, they moved further to return back home. I turned back alone towards my new accommodation. Deep down, a realization began sinking in. I had acquired the status of a migrant. The feeling of being alone in the city continued with varied intensity and longevity.

After intermediate, I moved to Delhi for my undergraduate and continued to stay there for another fifteen years. Delhi was intimidating in its vastness and imposing built environment. Yet, there was open, accommodating and embracing attitude which was soothing for a migrant like me. For the first time, I was given a label. I became a Bihari. Gradually, the city acquired certain familiarity, more and more migration from kith and kin followed and the feeling of being alone in a city gave way to a wide and layered sense of being in a community. The label Bihari continued too but hearing it became less and less a matter of enragement. I had developed certain kind of numbness by now. Deep down, I had distanced myself. In retrospect, the category, Bihari had acquired a neutral connotation for me in the sense that I was both owning it yet was less anxiety ridden about this ownership. However, a different term, which had come in vogue around this time (1980s and particularly in 1990s), occupied my mindscape. The term was 'Delhi brand'. This was more in circulation in Mithila and it was used for those single male migrants from the region living in Delhi who were employed in well recognized government departments. Obscurity of their job profile in the eyes of the society back home, temporary and vulnerable character of their employment and certain identifiable loudness in their personality all contributed towards this category called 'Delhi brand'. While the label Bihari was an imposition made by the society at the 'destination', Delhi brand was an internalization of migrant conscience by the society back home. The term Bihari came back to the foreground soon. This time it
was in aggressive and violent manner. By now, we had already moved to Surat, a city in western India. Not far from Surat, Mumbai and few other cities of Maharashtra witnessed massive violence against north Indian migrants, particularly those coming from the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These attacks began in February 2008 and were preceded by derogatory remarks against the Chhath, an auspicious festival for the migrant population from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. These attacks (in cities like Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad, Beed, Nashik, Amaravati, Jalna and Latur) were reportedly led by Maharashtra Navnirvan Sena created an overall environment of fear and exodus of a large number of migrant workers from areas like Pune and Nashik. Again in the month of October same year, students from these states appearing for Railway recruitment in the examination centres of Maharashtra were attacked.46

These attacks on north Indian migrants in Maharashtra are not standalone incidents in the history of migration. In the case of Mumbai, it has a long history which go back to the politics of 1960s and in the history of the subcontinent, there are various parallel examples which tell us how migrants acquired a label of outsider and became targets of condescending gaze in the city. In the case of violent attacks on south Indian migrant population of Mumbai in 1960s, Shiv Sena was at the fore front which was formed in 1966 to safeguard the interests of what it termed as 'sons of the soil'. Protests were launched in particular against South Indian migrants who, it was claimed, had monopolized secretariat and clerical jobs in Bombay in that period.47 In Mumbai and Maharashtra, these attacks had definite political strands with electoral dividend at stakes. However, as I mentioned earlier, these violence are rooted in a larger mindset and history of looking at migrants in specific manner. In this history, Mumbai and Surat are connected to each other in othering the migrants and in labeling them as outsiders, one who does not belong to the city, one who has no right to the city spaces. This larger history is not confined to electoral politics. As I have tried to unpack in the section on the city, this politics is quite dispersed and knowledge production at very sophisticated terrains of critical social sciences is firmly implicated in this politics. The mindset which blamed single Oriya male migrants for the post-Babri Mosque demolition riots of Surat in 1992, uncritically subscribing to the FIR versions puts the onus of urban tension in the early years of 1970s in Surat squarely on the lower caste population.
(as we saw in the section on the City). This genealogy easily goes back to the early decades of twentieth century. To track this genealogy, let us briefly move to Calcutta at the turn of the twentieth century and observe how the mark of criminalization was imposed on migrants and how they were termed as 'Goondas'. Although various scholars have argued that the term 'Goonda' came into being in 1920s, Debraj Bhattacharya extends the origin further backward. He notes that by 1910s, the Marwaris were employing 'extra darwans' or toughs from north India. For Bhattacharya, “there is clear connection between these upcountry 'durwans' who were being brought in and the term goonda. In all probability, the word originally referred to them and was then used more widely. What is also clear is that many of these 'durwans' who were brought to the city by the Marwaris to act as their toughs soon got out of hand.”

Recapitulating different strands, varied registers, fragments of experiential narratives and scholarly discourses mentioned in this essay, I find myself standing along with the wife who stayed when her husband migrated to Kalkatta (Kolkata). In that Sohar (mentioned in the beginning of this essay), when she voices her anxieties pertaining to the ill repute of Kalkatta (Kalkatta sahar badnaam nayanaa naa mane hot), little did she know about the branding of her husband as a 'goonda', as a tough. It is the history which whispers in the ears of the folksongs and alerts
her about the politics of otherness which shapes the identity of her migrant husband in the city. She keeps waiting as a *Virahini* and in turn gets circulated with a yearning ‘*ghar kab aaoge*’ (when will you return home)?

**Notes and References**

1. The term migration has specific connotation and trajectory in social sciences as well as in official registers like the Census. It has been differentiated from nomadism or wandering. Yet, at the core, it is about the movement of people, about their dislocation and relocation. I am harping back on to this essential feature where ‘to migrate’ is ‘to move’.

2. Here, I wish to refer Carlo Ginzburg’s usage of Kracaeur’s perspective. Ginzburg mobilises this perspective to bring together techniques of micro and macro history, Ginzburg writes, “according to Kracauer, Marc Bloch offered the best solution in his Feudal Society: a constant back and forth between micro and macro history, between close-ups and extreme long shots, so as to continually thrust back into discussion the comprehensive vision of the historical process through apparent exceptions and cases of brief duration. This methodological prescription led to an affirmation of a decisive ontological nature: reality is fundamentally discontinuous and heterogeneous. Consequently, no conclusion attained apropos a determinate sphere can be transferred automatically to a more general sphere (what Kracauer calls the ‘law of levels’).” Carlo Ginzburg, Micro history: two or three things that I know about it, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.20, no.1, Autumn, 1993, p.27. As it is clear, in this framework the relationship between different scales of observation is neither pre given nor sealed. It is open and creatively mediated one.


4. Except the translations of the letter of Durmil Jha to Champawati and the couplet of Dak Vachan (mentioned later; which are reproduced from the original compilation by Grierson and John Christian respectively), all translations are done by myself. I am deeply apologetic about the quality of these translations. A poetic rendering which can capture and render the bare minimum of these songs in English, requires care and skill which has so far eluded me. The idea is to at least communicate a broad and rudimentary sense these songs convey.

Folk registers are mobilised towards study of what can be termed as historical geography. See, Camille Buat, “Between Desh and Videsh: exploring the spatial imagery of mobility in the Bhojpuri cultural tradition”, Paper presented in a conference on *Cultural Practices of Labour in Migration*, jointly organized by TISS Patna and Department of English, Patna University, Patna, 21 April, 2018. However, my usages of the term geography or history continue to be in small letters, unless otherwise specifically point towards specific disciplines.

Kachaudi gali... a kajari by Malini Awasthi, available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsRi3bBRluk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsRi3bBRluk)

Album: *Satyan Gaila Surat*, Bhojpuri Nach Programme, Artists: Geeta Rani, Shams Jamil, Pappu Puskar, Shadid Aslam, Arvind Tan Tan, T-Series, available at:
See Anil Persaud, “Transformed Over Seas: 'Medical Comforts' aboard Nineteenth-Century Emigrant Ships”, in Marcel van der Linden and Prabhu P Mohapatra eds., Labour Matters: Towards Global Histories, Studies in Honour of Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009:22-56. He writes, “The year 1838 marked the beginning of 'democratization' of sea travel for non-whites. It was in this year that health aboard the ship, for example, became the state's responsibility. This, whether intended or not, was the beginning of a change in the way in which non-white emigrant, in this case the coolie, would relate to and understand their body's health. For many, in addition to this being the first time seeing the sea, it was also for most their introduction to the hospital and to allopathic medicine. In this way, the voyage was a preparation for what was to come, as the state's obsession with the body of the labourer would not abate for the entire period of their indenture”.


This song has been classified under the genre, *faug* or songs for the occasion of the festival of *Holi*. Anima Singh, *Maithili Lokgeet*, Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2015/1993, p.340.

I am thankful to Shruti Jha for sharing this interpretation with me.


22 Shah, Urban Tensions: 84 and 86.


30 Desai and De, Hindu Muslim Relations in Gujarat, 45. This report further writes that the “most striking ghetoisation of Muslims has taken place in Rander Road zone. Most of the societies on the strip of the bank of river Tapi have been constructed in post 1992 period. At present there are around 20 to 25 housing societies with exclusively Muslim population”. (Ibid,47).


36 Sudhir Chandra, “Of Communal Consciousness and Communal Violence:
37 Breman, “Anti-Muslim Pogrom in Surat”, 739.
38 Sheth, “Surat Riots—1”, 151.
42 Chandra, “Of Communal Consciousness and Communal Violence”.
44 We shall have more opportunities to observe spatial segregation of communities along religious lines when we discuss neighbourhoods in detail.
45 See Sadan Jha, "Santosh Radio ne Gadhe Insaani Rishte", in Rakesh Kumar Singh ed., Media Nagar 02: Ubharataa Manjar, Delhi: Sarai-CSDS and Vani Prakashan, 2005:169-173. Here, I have argued for a case of coming together of migration and commodity culture in the making of this term called 'Delhi brand'.
47 This may be seen as a nativist agitation where nativism refers to the reaction against 'outsiders' or those believed to be 'outsiders'. Mary F. Katzenstein writes that “The Party (Shiv Sena) was organised originally to protect the interests of the 'local people', a term with a range of meanings (one whose mother tongue is Marathi; one who identifies with the 'joys and sorrows' of Maharashtra) that have varied in usage with the Sena's changing perceptions of the political expediency”. Mary F. Katzenstein, “Origins of Nativism: The Emergence of Shiv Sena in Bombay”, Asian Survey, Vol.13, no.4, April 1973: 386-399; also see ram Joshi, “Shiv Sena: A Movement in Search of Legitimacy”, Asian Survey, Vol.10, November 1970:967-78.
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