

# **NETWORKS PERPETUATING LABOR MIGRATION FROM INDIA TO LEBANON: A COMPARATIVE STUDY FROM THE STATES OF PUNJAB AND TAMIL NADU**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Migrant networks play an important role in perpetuating labor migration in both developed and developing world. Economic factors may initiate movements, but social factors like networks linking the supply of international migrants with the demand for their labour shape and perpetuate them. These networks may be informal involving household and community members or more formal structures including labour recruiters hired by businesses seeking workers, professional and at the most extreme end of the spectrum, traffickers engaged in human smuggling (World Migration Report, 2000). As is well known, labor migration incurs not only material costs, but also informational and psychic costs. Migrant networks can reduce information costs by providing specific job information to potential migrants, reduce psychological costs by providing supportive relationship to migrants in destinations, and reduce the probability of unemployment by providing direct job search assistance from fellow villagers. Networks establish links between geographically distant locations. As networks mature, migration costs usually fall (Widgren and Martin, 2002). Empirical evidence around the world has shown that migrant networks have significant impact on sequential migration (Boyd 1989, Massey et al. 1993, Shah, 1998, Zhao2001, Ainsworth 2002).

Theory of Social capital as well as Theory of Cumulative Causation have emerged as major explanations for perpetuation of international migration movements. These two perspectives recognize that migration is a social process, drawing attention to the role of informal and formal institutions in increasing migration. According to social capital theory, migrant networks (personal and social networks of migrants) and migrant institutions (migrant organizations and migration industry) promote further migration (ESCAP, 2002). Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey et al, 1998). The social capital theory predicts that individuals who are socially related to current or former migrants have access to social capital, which significantly increases the likelihood that they will migrate. However, interpersonal ties are

not the only means by which international movements are perpetuated. Over time, migrant institutions develop as structural complement to migrant networks. The theory of cumulative causation elaborates on the propositions of social capital theory. It states the general hypothesis that migration sustains itself such a way that migration tends to create more migration (Massey et al, 1998).

Labor migration to the Middle East has become a very vital feature of the economies of several south Asian countries. India has probably the highest share of migrant workers in the Gulf countries. Migration flow to Middle East makes up almost 95% of entire migration from India. Two important characteristics of migration to the oil exporting countries of the Middle East are that i) the migrant workers to these countries are mostly those who are at the lower end of the spectrum of skills, education as well as income and ii) an overwhelmingly large proportion are temporary migrants who return to India after a short period of contractual employment. Currently, total stock of Indian migrants in Middle East is estimated to be 2.8 million. Data on annual labour outflows from India suggests that there was a steep increase in migration to Gulf between 1991 and 1995 (Annual report, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, 2000-01). For surplus labour countries like India, workers going abroad provide a relief from the critical problems of unemployment and under employment. There is no doubt that Government policies in sending as well as receiving countries have played a central role in initiating and regulating migration to the Gulf in the form of formal institutions and legal rules. However, several studies have shown that personal networks have played very important role in perpetuating migration (Banerjee 1983, Nair1992, Mahmood 1992, Khan 1991 , Nair 1991, 1998, Shah 1995 1998 1999 2000). Hence, the role of informal networks consisting of relatives, friends or community members from the home country is now increasingly recognized as important channel for encouraging additional migration and aiding in the adjustment and sustenance of new migrants (Shah, 1999).

Several studies have reported relatively more success, when migrants moved through personal networks of friends/relatives (Massey and Gracia, 1987, Gunatilleke, 1998, Shah 2000). Shah (2000) in a survey of south Asian migrants in Kuwait found that channel of arranging visa is important determinant of likely success in Kuwait. Migrants from India and Pakistan were more successful than those from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka due to access to more effective networks.

The present paper tries to contribute to the understanding of role of networks in perpetuating migration by undertaking comparative analyses of migrant networks using evidence from the quantitative and qualitative data collected from a sample of 402 migrant laborers - 201 each from the States of Punjab and Tamil Nadu in India working in Lebanon which experienced civil war for sixteen years from 1975 to 1990.

The present study is important for several reasons: 1) Migration flow to Middle East from India makes up almost 95% of entire migration from India with networks playing an important role; 2) The study utilizes the firsthand information obtained from the migrants in the host country as well as examines the networks formed in host country, unlike most of the studies done on migrants world over relying on the data collected from return migrants; 3) Comparative study of migrants from Punjab and Tamil Nadu, located in extreme northern and southern parts of India, respectively, with contrasting socio-economic and cultural backgrounds has brought out some interesting similarities and contrasts in the migration networks. 4) Lastly, no study on Indian migrant workers has been undertaken in Lebanon in past to the best of knowledge of researchers,

## **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

### **Data**

The Study is based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected during 1998 from a sample of 402 semi-skilled and unskilled migrant laborers - 201 each from the states of Punjab and Tamil Nadu in India. The quantitative data have been collected through personal interview method using a structured questionnaire to obtain the information on various aspects of migration process. Information on qualitative aspects have been gathered through focus group discussions, case studies, interviews with concerned Government officials in Lebanon as well as officials of the Indian Embassy in Beirut. To understand the role of networks, we focused on the following aspects: 1) The District at the origin to which the respondents belong; 2) Channel of migration –personal networks/ agents / employer directly; 3) Impact of Channel of migration on working conditions/perks; 4) Examination of nature of networks through qualitative data; and 5) Role of networks in the financing of migration. Findings on each of these aspects are reported under “results “. Their implications are then discussed under ‘discussion and conclusions’.

## **The Setting**

Lebanon is a small country, comparable in size to New Hampshire. The country has not taken a census since 1932. However, the Population and Housing Survey conducted in 1996 estimated Lebanon's population as 3.1 million inhabitants (Kulczycki and Saxena, 1999). In contrast with other Arab countries, Lebanon occupies a unique position in terms of its geographic location, history, political situation and religious and cultural diversity. It is the only country in the region, which has a secular government. Its population mainly comprises of Muslims and Christians. Hostility among rival religious groups, unbalanced power sharing arrangements, coupled with other domestic tensions intensified by foreign influences, particularly being drawn into Arab-Israeli conflict led to eruption of devastating Lebanese Civil War from 1975 to 1990 between Muslim coalition (allied with Palestinians) and Christian dominated militias. The civil war had tremendous impact on social, demographic and economic conditions of the country. Lebanon's once thriving economy had been devastated by 16 years of civil war. Given the enormity of the physical destruction in the country caused due to civil war, the country needs foreign migrant labour due to continuing reconstruction requirements.

In Lebanon, major chunk of labor is from the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Although, Indian laborers face competition from Syrian workers due to close proximity of Syria, ease of entry and their willingness to work on low wages, Indian workers are considered hardworking and preferred in construction and other arduous jobs. Due to cultural reasons as well Indian Government's policy of discouraging emigration of women for working as maids overseas; the work force from India does not include many females and therefore consists of predominantly males. Based on interactions with the officials of both the Indian Embassy in Beirut and Lebanese Labor Ministry, it is estimated that the size of Indian migrant workers in Lebanon, mostly unskilled, lies between 10,000 -11,000. The Indian work force in Lebanon is comprised of migrants mainly from the states of Punjab and Tamil Nadu and to a lesser extent from Kerala. The majority of Indian workers in Lebanon are from these two states only.

## **Indian Migrant Labor in Lebanon**

The Indian migrants are found working in various sectors of Lebanese economy ranging from factories manufacturing various goods, construction workers, in service sector such as driver, cook, etc. to those working in clubs, petrol pumps, hotels etc. Most of the migrants who came to Lebanon earlier were either illiterates or dropouts at school whereas among the

recent migrants, a substantial number is found graduates. Irrespective of their educational level, the bulk of migrants were engaged in unskilled, semi-skilled and menial jobs. By and large, migrants from both the states were predominantly of rural origin, mostly young, less educated, unskilled with almost half of them being unmarried. Migrants were from large joint families with poor socio-economic status in terms of asset base like land holdings, housing quality, basic amenities and consumer durables, shop ownership etc., although Punjab migrants came from relatively larger families with better asset base and housing amenities compared to Tamil migrants. Prior to migration, most of them were employed in casual rural occupations with poor income and unstable employment. One special feature of Indian migrant workers in Lebanon is that they are predominantly Hindus unlike in other gulf nations. This is mainly due the fact that Lebanon being a multi ethnic and secular country has no preference for a particular religious group that acts as pull factor for Hindus.

The above profile is indicative of their poor job and earning potential in home country as well as poor economic status of their family. In addition to the strong demand for labour in the Middle East, the wage differentials between countries of South Asia and Middle East continue to be large enough to act as a strong pull factor motivating migration, despite a decline in wages in recent years. Key among the push factors that motivate migration is the desire to improve one's standard of living. This explains the migration pressure on them to migrate to countries where even with their low education and being unskilled worker they can earn many times more salary as compared to those working in similar occupations in their home country.

## **RESULTS**

### **Regional Selectivity**

To understand the role of networks, we examined to what extent the respondents shared community origins. People should be more likely to migrate abroad if they come from a community where many people have migrated and where large stock of foreign experience has accumulated than if they come from place where international migration is uncommon (Massey and Garcia Espana 1987).

Our quantitative data revealed that most of the respondents in our study belonged to only three districts in both the states as evident from Table 1. In case of Punjab migrants, out of 17 districts in the state, as many as nearly two third of the respondents were only from 3 districts located contiguously –Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar and Kapurthala, amongst which

Jalandhar alone accounted for almost 27 % with Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala accounting for about 19 % and 18 % respectively. In case of Tamil migrants, spatial concentration was even more striking. Out of 16 districts, 42 % of respondents were from one district –Sivaganga alone, while about 17% and 13% were from Ramnathpuram and Tanjavur, respectively. This district along with two other districts -Ramnathapuram and Tanjavur accounts for nearly 73 %-almost three fourth of total migrants from the state.

**Table 1: District –Wise Distribution of Migrants from Punjab and Tamil Nadu**

Punjab			Tamil Nadu		
District	Number of Migrants	%	District	Number of Migrants	%
Jalandhar	54	26.9	Sivaganga	85	42.3
kapurthala	38	18.9	Ramnathpuram	34	16.9
Hoshiarpur	36	17.9	Thanjavur	27	13.4
Nawansahar	18	9.0	Chennai	11	5.5
Ludhiana	12	6.0	---		
Moga	10	5.0	--		
Ropar	9	4.5	--		
Patiala	8	4.0	--		
Other nine Districts *	32	15.5	Other twelve Districts *	44	21.9
Total	201	100.0	Total	201	100.0

Note: Other districts include those districts, which had less than 5 % of total emigrants.

### **Channel of migration –Role of networks**

To investigate the reasons for striking regional concentration of migrants, channels of migration, i.e., the recruitment agents, friends/relatives and direct hire (making a private arrangement with an employer in the host country) were investigated. Another channel of recruitment –Government recruitment agency is hardly used. Therefore, that has not been included in the analysis. Channels of migration are given below for 3 major districts from both states and all other districts have been clubbed together.

**Table 2: Channel of migration of Indian Migrant Labourers to Lebanon  
by District for Migrants, Punjab**

District	Channel for Migration					
	Agent		Friend/ Relative		Employer	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Hoshiarpur</b>	21	(58.3)	13	(36.1)	2	(5.6)
<b>Jalandhar</b>	33	(61.1)	17	(31.5)	4	(7.4)
<b>Kapurthala</b>	24	(63.2)	14	(36.8)	-	-
<b>Others</b>	33	(45.2)	35	(47.9)	5	(6.9)
<b>Total</b>	111	55.2	79	39.3	11	5.5

**Table 3: Channels of Emigration of Indian Migrant Labourers to Lebanon  
by District for Migrants, Tamil Nadu**

District	Channel for Migration					
	Agent		Friend/ Relative		Employer	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Sivagangai</b>	21	(23.5)	61	(71.8)	4	(4.7)
<b>Ramanathapuram</b>	8	(23.5)	24	(70.8)	2	(5.9)
<b>Thanjavur</b>	11	(40.7)	15	(55.6)	1	(3.7)
<b>Others</b>	22	(41.8)	25	(45.50)	7	(12.7)
<b>Total</b>	62	(30.8)	125	(62.2)	14	(7.0)

From Table 2, it can be seen that in case of Punjab, overall 55% and in case of 3 districts- Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala, around 60% of migrants emigrated through agents, while in case of other districts, almost equal proportion of migrants (less than half) emigrated through agents as well as through friends /relatives. Table 3 indicates that in case of Tamil Nadu, about 62 % emigrated through friends /relatives and only about 31 % emigrated through agents. In case of three districts of Tamil Nadu especially Sivaganga, and Ramnartapuram, Tahnjavur, majority of the migrants (about 56-72 %) emigrated through

friends/relatives. In other districts, just like Punjab, less than half moved through agents and friends /relatives each.

### Relation between channel of migration and working perks/conditions

We found that most of the migrant labourers from India in Lebanon earned low salaries between US \$150-300, although these were much higher than their earning potential at home. Majority of labourers worked 48 hours a week although some had to work even beyond 60 hours a week. The employer provided mostly migrant labourers living accommodation. A comparison of working and living conditions of migrant labourers from Punjab and Tamil Nadu reveals that on an average, migrants from Punjab were having higher monthly income; they worked for relatively less number of hours; they had higher wage per hour; and better living conditions in terms of housing as compared to Tamils. However, on the other hand, more Tamil migrant labourers were provided free accommodation by employer, a much larger percentage of them was provided free work permit and more of Tamil migrants were provided free air tickets to visit India periodically. These better conditions in terms of perks for Tamils implied relatively more potential for savings and remittances in spite of having slightly lower income. Question arises - "does the channel of emigration have any relation with the working conditions in destination country?"

**Table 4 : Perks available to the Indian Migrant Laborers in Lebanon by Channel of Migration, Punjab and Tamil Nadu**

Type of Perk	Punjab			Tamil Nadu		
	Channel of Migration			Channel of Migration		
	Agent	Friend /Relative	Employer	Agent	Friend /Relative	Employer
<b>Accommodation given by employer</b>						
Yes	112 (84.8)	58 (93.5)	7 (100)	60 (96.8)	116 (92.8)	13 (92.9)
No	20 (15.2)	4 *	- (-)	2 *	9 (7.2)	1 *
<b>For work permit and residence card</b>						
Employer pays	23 (17.4)	12 (19.4)	6 (85.7)	39 (62.9)	81 (64.8)	13 (92.9)
Migrant pays	106 (80.3)	50 (80.6)	1 *	14 (22.6)	29 (23.2)	1 *
Shared between employer and migrant	3 *	- (-)	- (-)	9 (14.5)	15 (12.0)	- (-)
<b>Provision of ticket by employer for visiting India</b>						
	10	9	5	26	29	3



Yes	(7.6) 122	(14.5) 53	(71.4) 2	(41.9) 36	(23.2) 96	* 11
No	(92.4)	(85.5)	*	(58.1)	(76.8)	(78.6)

Note: 1. Percentages are given in parentheses.

\* Percentages are not calculated where cell frequency is less than 5.

The table 4 indicates that the contrast of working conditions in the two States, cannot be explained in terms of the channel of emigration – whether through agent or through personal network. However, in both the States, in most of the cases, emigration directly through employer led to securing better terms of contract including the perks. It is significant that this type of emigration is generally arranged through a close family member of the emigrant living in Lebanon.

### **Nature of networks**

To find out why channel of migration –personal networks or agents was not found correlated with the working conditions /perks, we carried out detailed qualitative investigations in the nature of networks through focus group discussions, interviews and case studies. It was learnt that earlier, mostly the network of relations/friends brought the migrants and they used to be taken care of, initially, by them. However, of late, the system has become more commercialised with agents coming to the picture, whose primary motive is to earn commission. It was found that emigration of Tamil migrants was relatively well organized through a few major Tamil Agents based in Lebanon having nexus with big companies in organized sector in Lebanon. They had their sub-agents spread out in rural and urban areas of Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, the migration from Punjab was not so organized, taking place mostly through numerous agents based in India or migrants themselves working in Lebanon, acting just like agents. Mostly, migrant employees themselves working with some employer obtained sponsorship and work permit from employer and then sold them to prospective migrants in Punjab, thus effectively playing the role of agent. There were, thus, numerous such migrants acting as agents in case of Punjab and to a lesser extent in case of Tamil Nadu.

Our finding based on qualitative data that majority of Punjab migrants came largely through agents is at par with the finding regarding their channel of emigration based on quantitative data. However, finding regarding major role of Tamil Agents/sub-agents in emigration of Tamil migrants through qualitative data is at odds with our finding through quantitative data that majority of Tamils migrated through friends/relatives. From the focus group discussions, and other qualitative data, it was found that by and large so called friends /relatives in case of Tamil migrants too, were also acting mostly as a sort of agent, promising the prospective migrants in their native area to arrange a good job in Lebanon. Already

employed Tamil migrants in Lebanon manage to obtain from their employers the required visas at a price for the person recommended by him at a much lower than those charged by employers from the recruiting agents. These Indian contacts made money through charging commission on sponsorship/visa /work permit, although the migrants were given the impression that these payment were being made to middle men/agents/employers, etc, and not to him. Thus, the prospective migrant remains under the impression that his contact is facilitating his migration in Lebanon on friendly/family basis without any charge. This tendency of making money in the process of facilitating migration has been compounded by the fact that each already employed migrant had emigrated after paying a lot of money for visa, work permit etc., therefore, the more enterprising amongst them compensate their own cost of emigration, by recovering some money from other migrants who may belong to his village or may be otherwise known. Whatever the name, by and large, they are also sort of agents working for money, although friends/relatives may not cheat as much as a regular agent. Apart from this, even when migrants came through persons based in their area who are actually sub agents of bigger agents based in Lebanon, they feel that they emigrated through friends. They don't realize that they are actually in the hands of agents who pose as friends/acquaintance of their native place. This is the reason that migration in Tamil Nadu is chain migration through seemingly personal networks but these networks are by and large now commercialised composed of agents/sub –agents. This is why in our study, no association could be found between perks/benefit and channel of migration except in those cases where migration was through a very close relative like father /brother. Similarly, migration in Punjab is again a chain migration, legally or illegally, as migrants working there bring other emigrants, mostly acting as agents.

We found that by and large Punjab migrants enjoyed relatively higher wages but poor perks like free accommodation and free work permit, compared to Tamil Migrants. Reason for contrast in working conditions of the migrants from the two states of India is partly related to differences in the nature of agents facilitating labor migration from these two states of India. It is clear that emigration of Tamils is much more organized through a few major Tamil Agents based in Lebanon having generally nexus with big companies in organized sector in Lebanon, while the migration from Punjab is not organized, taking place more through agents based in India or migrants themselves working in Lebanon, acting just like agents. Tamil Agents based in Lebanon mostly brought the migrants on legal visa and got them employed in the organized sector. Tamil Agents based in Lebanon negotiate regarding wages and other conditions. Though generally a part of monthly wage of the migrant is shared

between employer and the agent, but more often work permit, accommodation, trip cost etc., is provided to the migrants. This is for the simple reason, as these agents want their trade of importing labour in Lebanon to flourish, they make some effort to get reasonable perks to migrants through their co-ordination with employers, although the wages are generally on the lower side. On the other hand, Punjab migrants mostly emigrated through numerous agents in Punjab who brought them illegally Punjab migrants quite often had to find the job themselves or in nexus with the associates of the agents in Lebanon. They are sent to far flung areas of Lebanon, in factories in unorganised sector, distant farms and some times in houses. Here migrants mostly get low wages initially, but more enterprising Punjabi labourers keep on changing jobs and generally, after some time manage to get higher paying jobs by virtue of their industrious and risk taking nature, but get less of perks available in organized sector like work and residence permits, accommodation, return air tickets for periodic visits to home, etc. Even when they worked in organized sector, being illegal, they were not shown on the rolls of factory and deprived of the various perks available to other laborers on the rolls of factory. Focus group discussions also revealed that Punjab migrants being mostly illegal were more vulnerable to exploitation at the hands of agents and employers due to their dependence upon them for protection from arrest and deportation. It is noteworthy that three districts in Punjab, from where most of migrants of our study emigrated are part of Dab region that has a long history of migration and a well-developed network of agents with frequent instances of exploitation and cheating of migrants being reported.

### **Role of networks in financing of Migration**

Emigration to the Gulf countries has been, and continues to be. a costly proposition particularly since the migration boom of the 1970s. Even though the physical hazards of emigration which had claimed hundreds of lives earlier have ameliorated, the financial burden remains heavy (Nair,1998) Migrants have to pay for the cost of securing visa , passport, work permit, contract etc which becomes a heavy burden for majority of migrants who are either unemployed or belong to socio-economically poor households with low incomes. These costs may be somewhat reduced if they have a close relative arranging for the visa who may arrange trip directly through employer. Most of the migrants finance the trip by raising resources through family sources, mortgaging/selling their property including house/land, taking loans at very high rate of interest or a combination of these. This implies that those who move have some means at least to finance their move, although they may resort to taking loans.

We found a unique institution of financing migration, whereby initial move was financed by friends /relatives or even agents in Lebanon. Migrant repaid the cost incurred on his emigration every month out of his wages in Lebanon itself. This is why unlike most of the studies; we found that 5-10% of the respondents were totally destitute –poorest of the poor. We defined those respondents who at the time of emigration did not have any income source, did not own any land, even a house and basic goods such as radio or clock and were living in mud houses without any amenities as the poorest of the poor. Going by this criterion, 5% of migrants from Punjab and about 13% of migrants from Tamil Nadu fell in this category. These respondents resorted to 100 % debt for financing the migration. Indeed, it is found that such migrants who came to Lebanon like this spent couple of years just paying back the loan.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Our findings regarding regional concentration (Table 1) supports the findings of other researchers on the subject that incidence of migration is largely region specific. Nair reported (1998) “ A salient feature of labour migration to the Middle East is that roughly half the migrants are from the State of Kerala, and 44 per cent are from three districts in Kerala which have a high proportion of Muslims”.

Findings regarding channel of migration in both states (table 2 and 3) bring out the role played out by networks in furthering the migration process, which led to migration selectivity from 3 districts only out of 16-17 districts in both the states. However, the networks are different in both the states. In case of Punjab, it is the networks of agents, which have become well developed particularly in the region of Doab with long history and well developed traditions of migration where three districts- Hoshiarpur, Janlandhar and Kapurthala are located. In case of Tamil Nadu, it is networks of friends /relatives which are perpetuating the migration and concentrating it by and large in three districts – Sivagangai, Ramnathpuram, and Thanjavur. Thus, in both the states, majority of migrants were from a few selected districts only and they came largely through one particular type of networks - formal or informal. Our quantitative data supports the view that incidence of emigration is largely region specific and networks --- formal as well as informal networks play crucial role in making migration a chain process and a self-perpetuating phenomenon as evidenced in other studies (Shah, 1998; Nair, 1998, World Migration Report. 2000). This supports both theory of social capital and theory of cumulative causation.

Findings based on table 4 clearly bring out that recruitment through agent or personal networks had no bearing upon securing better terms and conditions of employment. This is in contrast with the findings of some other researchers who found that those came through friends /relatives got better salary and were happier than those coming through agents ( Nair, 1992, Khan ,1991 , Shah, 2000).

When we tried to understand the reason for the above contrast though qualitative data, we found that a few organized Tamil Agents based in Lebanon were responsible for bringing many Tamil migrants legally, whereas whole lot of agents based in Punjab and in Lebanon were instrumental in emigration of many respondents from Punjab, quite often through illegal means. Shah had found "despite the continuing important role of friends and relatives, a unique feature of Asian migration to Middle East is commercialization of the process. Agents in sending and receiving countries are involved in the trade of manpower as if it were a consumer good. The process is driven by the huge profit that agents can make by selling visa. The sponsor in the receiving country also stands to gain substantially from the sale of visas". (Shah, 1995). Our study has found evidence of further commercialization, where even personal networks behave by and large ( except where close family members) like agents to benefit from provision of jobs for the relatives /friends. This is why we did not find any distinction between working conditions related to channel of emigration. In addition, we also found evidence of exploitation of migrants especially those cases where migrants were brought through agents illegally as in Punjab.

The finding about participation of poorest of the poor is in contrast to other studies of Kerala Migrants where it was found that "Participation of the extremely poor (i.e. without land assets, housing facilities and employment) was negligible (Nair, 1998, Sekar, 1993). Since emigration is costly and presupposes contacts, influence and ability to canvass financial resources, the poorest persons (landless agricultural labour belonging' to the lowest caste hierarchy and known in India as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes) have not until now participated, to any noticeable extent, in the emigration process, a situation noticed in almost all studies made in Kerala" (Nair, 1998). In our study, poorest of the poor in both the states although more so in Tamil Nadu have participated in the emigration process, though on a very limited scale. It appears that in spite of being totally asset less, a small proportion of migrants from both states have been able to mobilize resources through loans perhaps on the strength of their future earnings in Lebanon. In this sense, our study finds direct support for the Social Capital theory of perpetuation of international migration whereby social capital is being converted into

financial capital. The key characteristic of social capital is convertibility –it may be translated into other forms of capital notably financial capital. Thus, we find direct evidence of the conversion of social capital. This also indicates some support for the theory of cumulative causation as more and more migrants move and finance the move of increasing number of migrants known to them and the process feeds on itself.

To conclude, our findings provide support for the theory of social capital as well as theory of cumulative causation. We have found evidence that movement of more and more migrants to Lebanon tends to create stimulus for increased migration making it a region specific self-perpetuating phenomenon. Its widening reach is proved by the finding that even those without any means find it now possible to move through such networks. Further, it is not only interpersonal ties but also commercial institutions like recruiting agents, which help in sustaining and perpetuating international movements. Even employers are included in these networks as they get assured supply of labor through their existing employees as well as recruitment agents. One interesting finding is the evidence of increasing commercialisation of personal networks blurring the distinction between personal networks and institutions like recruiting agents as many of the existing migrants try to profit from the process and reduce the costs incurred by them in their own emigration. In this sense, there is a shift away from migrant networks to migrant institutions. We also found evidence of severe exploitation of migrants, especially in those cases where recruiting agents brought the migrants illegally as mostly in case of Punjab migrants. Thus, migrant networks /institutions may not always be beneficial and may be source of much exploitation of migrants through nexus between employers and agents.

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