# WHEN EVOCATIVE THINGS TRAVEL: THE ROLES OF MATERIAL OBJECTS IN THE PROCESS OF MUSLIM MIGRANTS' SETTLEMENT

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# Abstract

This thesis examines materiality, migration and settlement through the roles objects play in supporting Muslim migrants, to negotiate the uncertainties associated with settlement in an unfamiliar location. It focusses on the objects which Muslim migrants bring with them when they immigrate. This study occurs amidst challenges faced by members of the Muslim community following the Christchurch Mosque attacks on 15th March 2019. I approach the roles played by material objects by putting a lens on the past, present, and future biography of those thing. This focus upon the biography of objects supports a narrative inquiry into participants' experiences, of six Muslim men and women living in Auckland, New Zealand. Using in-depth interviews with an open-ended interview schedule, my study explores the complex meaning those objects hold for the participants. Regarding 'the past' it finds that migrants chose objects with which to travel based on the utility of those objects, on the memories those objects hold, their status as gifts or as inheritance, and of the culture and faith they symbolise. Regarding 'the present', the findings indicate that the objects support the exercise of faith, the acquisition of knowledge and the holding to tradition within the migrants' new environment. Regarding 'the future', the findings indicate that migrants want to pass their objects to their next generation for the maintenance of their identity, beliefs, memories and practices. This desire is shared by men and women. This thesis concludes that the objects with which Muslim migrants travel assist in the constant negotiation of the self, as occurs with the journey from migration to settlement.

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# Chapter One

## The Migration Journeys of People and Things

### Introduction

I migrated from Bangladesh to New Zealand three years ago on September 21st, 2017, to be with my husband who was already living in New Zealand. Having spent most of my life in Bangladesh, I am very attached to things from there and it was a very difficult decision to move to New Zealand. This was my first experience of living in a non-Muslim country and I was stressed about the struggle that would come with being with different languages, cultures, religions, and history. I brought a large number of things from my country not only because I was worried about whether those things would be available in New Zealand but, also, because they are things that are familiar to me from my childhood. Years of using them have made those objects a source of comfort.

Every migrant knows that once they cross the border, the place they call home is no longer their home in the way it once was and that maybe there is no turning back. The country which was previously their home forever is now a place to which they will return only as a visitor. The meaning of the room in which they slept, the things they use in the home, the people they associate with home, and their home itself will change. The notion of 'home' now exists only in memories as a sanctuary that will only open when they visit their homeland for a limited time. Migrants try to forge a sense of home in their destination country, which is one of the reasons it can be important to take a piece of home in the form of material objects.

Even before immigrating, I was familiar with the significance of objects in that I am a "hoarder." I keep all the little things that remind me of places and events in my life, even if they do not hold any monetary value. When deciding what to bring with me to New Zealand, I made a list of things that remind me of my family and the home which I was leaving behind. Some things reminded me of my childhood and I felt emotional because I could not bring all of them with me. I could not easily decide what to choose and what to leave behind. I kept questioning myself: which pieces are more important? I brought mostly practical things such as clothing, shoes, bags, jewellery, cooking pots, utensils, spices, and dry foods. I even brought

my pillow, hair mask, and towels because I was stressed that these things would not be available in New Zealand. I was well aware that if I forgot to pack my favourite things, I would not be able to see or use them for a long time.

My personal narrative illustrates how our relationships with objects are complex, being both instrumental and emotional. After arriving in New Zealand, I began to sense a tension that exists in the process of settlement. I started to question myself about the role of things in supporting my settlement in New Zealand. One day, I asked my husband about the things which he brought from his country of origin. Like me, he mainly brought useful things, like money, blanket, clothing, raincoat, his prayer mat, and tupi (prayer cap). Then I asked him about his most favourite thing. He was thinking for a moment and replied that it is a poster of his own picture which I gifted him, with many handwritten wishes for his birthday after our marriage. He always keeps it with him wherever he goes. The poster has a big empty space with his picture to one side and the space is filled with lots of good wishes and advice written by his family and relatives. He said, *"if I follow this advice, I would be a perfect human being".* I asked him why he felt like that. He replied that it was because the poster had so many nice and spiritual points of advice from his parents, parents-in-law, and relatives, which he believes he should follow. He also added that, these comments were made by the people who are really close to his heart. He also remembered that when he read it for the first time, he had tears in his eyes and that it was the most valuable gift he had ever received on a birthday. I asked him about which piece of advice or comment was the most precious. He replied that his mother's advice was the most valuable comment. When we were talking about it, he chuckled with teary eyes and said, *"when I will read it after 20 years or more, maybe most of the people who wrote those beautiful comments for me would not be there, but it (the poster) will be always there with me, wherever I go."*

The narratives of my husband and I are profound personal statements, but they raise important sociological questions about the role of materiality in the process of migration and settlement, especially of Muslim migration. Our stories draw attention to wider issues including the relationship between people and things, the role of materiality in everyday life and in migrants' settlement, the decision-making processes that go into the choosing of things, and the importance of familial memory when migrating. These issues suggest a number of questions. What do migrants do with the material objects they carry with them from their home countries? Do they use such objects to stay connected to past lives, to remember others, or to be treasured

for other reasons? What type of objects do the work of creating continuity with the everyday practices of their lives being left behind? How do things support the migration journey and settlement into the host country? These questions contribute to the discussion of how migrants make use of material objects to manage their relationships and social networks in a new country, how they perceive the materiality of the objects and engage with that materiality, and which logics structure the intersection of people and things in their respective movements.

This research initially emerged from my own experiences as a Muslim woman migrating to a western country. The roles that these objects play in my own story of migration conveys the insights that material objects might potentially help the migration and process of settlement. I am interested in exploring other Muslim migrants' experiences of moving to New Zealand from another country.

## Muslim Experiences of Migration and Materiality in New Zealand

This research explores the relationship between Muslims who have migrated to New Zealand with the material objects with which they have travelled. Although the earliest Muslim presence in New Zealand dates back to the late 19th century, in the last 20 years the migrant population in New Zealand has significantly increased. The Muslim community of New Zealand is a rapidly growing group but it remains very small, comprising only 1.3 percent of the total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2019). The number of Muslims in New Zealand according to the 2018 census is 57,276 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018), having increased 24 percent from 46,149 in the 2013 census (Stuff, 2015). The Muslim community of New Zealand is not homogenous; it consists of people from different ethnicities, races, nationalities, and cultures (Dobson, 2013). About three-quarters were born overseas, mostly from Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Middle Eastern, and African countries. The majority of the Muslim population live in Auckland with a minority living in Wellington, Hamilton, Christchurch, Palmerston North, and Dunedin (Shepard, 2006).

The significance of Muslims in New Zealand goes beyond their (small) numbers or cultural diversity. Rather, they have been the target of focused racism, as demonstrated in the killing of Muslim people at the Al-Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic centre in Christchurch on 15th March 2019. Since the Christchurch attack, there has been growing concern about the safety and wellbeing of Muslim migrants. The New Zealand Chief Human Rights Commissioner,

Paul Hunt (2019), states that "casual racism can lead to the stereotyping, and the stereotyping can lead to the othering… and as soon as you start treating others as alien it's close to demonizing, and demonizing can slip into the 15th of March." Hunt believes that attention needs to be given to shortcomings in the country's approach to human rights, such that a "mature debate" about human rights occurs, and the balance is struck between free speech and hate speech. He notes: "There is Islamophobia, there is racism …. This is not 'political correctness gone mad.' It is a matter of life, death, and human rights. Disrespectful words and actions give permission for discrimination, harassment, and violence." New Zealand is not the only place where there have been increasing reports of Islamophobic remarks and actions, with increases in such reporting common (Hunt, 2019 cited in Walters, 2019). In New Zealand, the Muslim community is no longer a stranger to institutional terror and of oppression inflicted by racism. This can only affect its members' senses of social cohesion and their sense of what it means to 'settle' in this country.

While there is considerable international and local research on migration and on migrants' settlement, including Muslim migration and settlement, very little research considers the role of material things in supporting the settlement process. There is a gap which exists in New Zealand for substantive academic research on the challenges associated with settlement as experienced by Muslim men and women migrants, and of the role of material objects in those migrants' processes of settlement.

This research investigates how six Muslim people who migrated to New Zealand make sense of the things they brought with them. This thesis also brings a gendered perspective to the investigation, through a consideration of the accounts given by both Muslim men and women. While the experiences of women in relation to material things can be readily found within academic scholarship, there is a dearth of scholarship that focuses on men's experiences. As a result, I include both Muslim men and women in this study to identify gendered differences in the roles played by objects in the course of migration.

My research picks up on these ideas by exploring the biography of things and people, and the relationship of Muslim migrants with the material objects with which they travel. The biography of things starts when migrants are deciding what to choose, followed by the narratives created by migrants on the processes of arrival and settlement, in conjunction with the material objects they have brought with them. In the last stage, migrants decide what to do

with these things in the future. These choices depend on many factors including the intended duration of their stay in the new country, gifts from loved ones, as well as connections with specific objects that are infused with special meaning. In the process of migrating to and settling in a new place of dwelling, objects carried from the prior location of residence can play a significant role in the active (re)creation of a home as well as the conversion of 'spaces', such as houses, into 'places' of home (Rapport & Dawson, 1998; Rensel, 1997; Salih, 2003; Weiss, 2005). People surround themselves with biographical objects to develop their personalities and relationships around them. The strength of relationships can be indicated where material objects are chosen with the help of family members and/or where such choices reflect desires to keep treasured items within the family. In *The Comfort of Things*, Daniel Miller (2008, p. 286) explores the idea that people, objects, and relationships are intertwined:

> Material objects are viewed as an integral and inseparable aspect of all relationships. People exist for us in and through their material presence. An advantage of this unusual perspective is that sometimes these apparently mute forms can be made to speak more easily and eloquently to the nature of relationship than can those with persons.

These insights encourage us to reflect on the relationship between things and the people who own them and in this instance the roles those things might play as people move from one country to another. They draw attention to how migrants attempt to achieve a sense of continuity and of how they recreate 'home' using objects they bring with them (Povrzanovic & Humbracht, 2013). Sometimes, migrants might display objects in their homes intentionally or unintentionally to define who they are, and what they like, what is significant to them, as well as where they come from. The significance of material objects is embodied in the way people carve out specific meanings from their domestic environments and out of the feelings associated with everyday domestic objects (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Like people, things also have 'biographies' as they go through a series of transformations due to shifts in time and space after migration, and these things have the capacity to transform a new place into a home. Using the notion of a past, present, and future biography of things, I approach this study with the following research questions:

- How do migrants make decisions about what things to bring with them when they move?

- How do those material objects support the process of settlement in New Zealand?
- How do migrants imagine the future of those material objects?

I approach these questions as a female Muslim migrant, that is as an 'insider' to the study. An insider-researcher generally shares an identity, language and pragmatic background with the study participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and has insights from her own lived experience (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). Along with other advantages, the insider status allows quick and more complete acceptance by participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). As an insider, the researcher can identify the self-understandings of members and their ethnic, cultural groups, amidst the personal stories told by their research participants. In addition, the personal disposition of an insider shapes the connections the researcher forms with participants through the languages she uses, the knowledge she acquires, and how she interprets and reports her findings throughout the research process (Jankie, 2004). As an insider, I acknowledge that this positioning has allowed me access to people's lives I might otherwise not have had and has enabled me to visualize the research questions in terms of my own identification as a Muslim migrant woman.

## Roadmap of the Thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters. This introductory chapter has presented a context for the current study and has indicated how the study will proceed. The following chapter reviews the literature related to challenges faced by migrants during settlement and of roles played by material objects to mediate the pathway of the settlement. A number of themes emerge from this review of literature including memory, nostalgia, everyday practices, and the biographical narrative of both things and people. The chapter reveals a gap in the existing scholarship into the role of materiality in Muslim migrant's settlement process. That scholarship has tended to generalize across cultural groups such that particular cultural experiences, including those of Muslim migrants, are rendered invisible. The present research fills that gap through its consideration of material things that Muslim migrants bring with them from their home countries and how those objects support them in their process of settlement. A gap also sits in existing research on the experiences of Muslim migrants both men and women around gender dynamics, a gap that my inquiry seeks to help fill. Chapter Three describes the methodological approach of this research as well as the methods I use to carry out the research. In addition, I introduce the participant cohort and the interview structure. I also outline the analytic strategy

employed in the interpretation of research findings as well as ethical considerations related to the research.

Chapters Four to Six comprise the findings of this research and reflect three themes related to the role of material objects in migrants' navigation of their experiences. Chapter Four examines migrants' decision-making processes about the things they choose to bring with them. Here, I consider how migrants have chosen things and why they choose these objects. Chapter Five examines how those material objects help migrants' settlement in the new country. I explore the extent to which the meaning of these material objects changes or remains same due to shifts in time and place. Chapter Six discusses the future of the objects that participants have brought with them to New Zealand, including how participants account for newly emerging meanings associated with their things. In this regard, I also discuss gender differences in people's relations to those objects and their futures.

Chapter Seven brings together the findings from chapters Four to Six, in a discussion on how objects help sustain migrants' experiences of comfort, security, and familiarity. Consideration is given to whether this reflects migrants' desires to construct new identities or attempts to preserve prior identities. Gender differences are also seen to be at work in this and are discussed in detail. The final chapter summarises the thesis in a manner that highlights the roles of material objects as a site of ongoing negotiation. I consider how different types of negotiation allow migrants to accomplish continuity amidst the dislocating effects of settlement.

# Chapter Two

## Matters of Migration: A Review of the Literature

### Introduction

This chapter reviews scholarship on struggles related to migrants' lives, on the material objects that accompany migrants in their transition journey and on how migrants' perceptions are modified or remain constant towards the material objects they bring with them after migration. Firstly, it considers the existing scholarly findings on challenges of settlement faced by migrants. Secondly, the review explores the social significance of materiality. Thirdly, this chapter considers scholarship that brings these two fields together. That literature explores the role of material objects carried by migrants from their home countries in helping those migrants to overcome the difficulties associated with settlement.

In considering the focus of this study, it is crucial to consider not just the relationships between migrants and the materiality of the objects they carry with them as they move country, but also the way these objects mitigate challenging experiences associated with migration and how they thereby facilitate settlement. The discussion on migrants' challenges of settlement and on the roles of material objects in those migrants' everyday lives are thereby closely related. The role of materiality in migrants' settlement processes has generated a large volume of academic attention but less is said about the experiences of particular groups. Here, I focus upon the experiences of Muslim migrants and, as such, explore the modest scholarship developed thus far on the problems of settlement they face.

### Migration and the Challenges of Settlement

Current scholarship on migrant experiences and the challenges posed by settlement focuses upon a range of matters, including incongruence between the home cultures of migrants and that of the society of settlement; identity change; and disruptive levels of stress. I shall now briefly review each of these themes. Migrants face several challenges due to the incongruence between their home culture and the society of settlement. This incongruence stems from socio-cultural factors including migrants' differing expectations of education, employment and wellbeing (Marlowe, 2011). Differences are noted between the physical environments of host

and home countries' religions, their educational processes, and their workplace practices. Each kind of difference may create challenges for migrants. Differences relating to culture can lead to states of cultural distance which might obstruct settlement in the new society (Zlobina, Basabe, Paez, & Furnham, 2006). Obstruction could take the form of language barriers, different educational curriculum, lack of employment opportunities, community attitudes, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and anxiety around future outcomes. More cultural learning is required by migrants to 'fit in' because of differences in culture. In turn, these differences create tension and risks for migrants as they adjust to the host culture (Ward, 2001; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Cultural, psychological, and behavioural changes cannot be easily escaped by individuals going through a process of acculturation (Berry, 2005). For young immigrants, the task of adapting successfully is especially difficult in a western environment as they face the task and challenges of physical as well as emotional maturation and acculturation (Sam, 2006). The language barriers, the sufferance of bullying in schools and the adaptation to new types of food, clothes, and customs are additional challenges for immigrants' children (Shenfield, 2017).

Muslim peoples in New Zealand comprise a relatively new immigrant group of minorities. As such, the Muslim minority group is in a precarious situation with regards to cultural exclusion and seclusion. Though Muslims believe in a common faith, the Muslim population is ethnically and culturally diverse (Shaver et al., 2016; Nisa & Saenong, 2019). For example, the terrorist attack of March 15 in Christchurch affected whānau, survivors and eyewitnesses from around twenty-two different countries of origin (Royal Commission of Inquiry, 2020). Muslim migrants face additional challenges because of diversity within the Muslim community and in the attendance that is required to the diverse needs of adolescent members of that community, specifically regarding the transmission of religious and cultural knowledge (Kolig & Kabir, 2008). For that reason, the retention and re-creation of cultural heritage safeguards migrants' senses of family coherence and facilitate their abilities to cope with adversity (Falicov, 2007, 2013; Sagy, Shani, & Leibovich, 2009; Walsh, 2006). In developing social coherence within their communities, migrants participate in culturally embedded behavioural practices to cope with losses accrued during migration. These practices support cultural continuity by connecting past to the present, and by transforming destination cultures into familiar places (Falicov, 2007).

Identity-making can be a recurrent part of an individuals' subjectivity and this can be challenging for migrants because of their ongoing need to negotiate between the socio-cultural expectations associated with two different locations: that of their home country before migration and their new host country after migration. The relations between the host community and migrants are complicated, nevertheless, the ability of migrants to create a new identity as newcomer is related to effective integration and interaction in a new place (Stockdale & MacLeod, 2013). Migrants utilize acculturation strategies and embrace new cultural practices to adapt to their new communities, which brings a change in identity and changes in everyday practices that attune daily routines to their new location (Gomez-Estern & Benitez, 2013). For others, it is important to retain the cultural practices of their homeland. As simple as this might sound, a study on changes within Muslim immigrants' senses of identity in Japan highlights the difficulties involved. Onishi (2005) found that Muslim migrants use different approaches for survival. For some, this involved re-embracing Islam along with distancing themselves from Japanese culture. She argued that cultural differences between Muslim and Japanese cultures were complex. Undoubtedly, there is an emergent tension as migrants straddle their different worlds and seek to both integrate to the new society and to hold onto their sense of self. At the end, the participants in Onishi's study chose to retain their identity as Muslims by re-embracing Islam despite trying to accommodate a changed identity. During the process of migration and settlement, loss appears as inevitable because of the needs to both hold to an identity and to change that identity in the context of the new culture and environment.

The process of settlement causes distinctive challenges for many immigrants and refugees that create more stress than the regular stressors of everyday life. These involve stress related to the experience of relocation itself, to the lack of social support networks, to the difficulties in sociocultural adaptation, and to living in a possibly prejudicial host environment (Ahmad et al., 2005; Berry, 2006). Research suggests that the majority of New Zealanders have a "racially tolerant attitude" (Masgoret, Ward, & Vauclair, 2011, p. 2) and that they support multiculturalism. However, the political and social climate in New Zealand is not exempted from the worldwide wave of Islamophobia. Numerous government reports and cases of racism towards Muslims reported in the media demonstrate the spread of Islamophobia following 9/11, which has negatively impacted people's emotions and perceptions about Muslims in New Zealand (Kolig, 2010). Sultan (2016) also revealed the changes of media attention towards Muslims after the '9/11' incident and reports of several news articles where Islam and Muslims

were targeted. Since the attacks at the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch on 15 March 2019, concerns about Islamophobia in New Zealand have become even more prominent. Poynting (2020), Quince, Kanji and Palumbo-Liu (2019) focus their studies on the wider concerns of Islamophobia in settler societies – explaining that the Christchurch killing is not a rare incident due to association with settler colonialism, but that racial violence pervades everyday multiculturalism. This is a very challenging context for individuals when their social and religious identity is seen negatively by the wider society, and especially so when they are migrants. It is well established that religion is a supportive mechanism for many people that decreases stress and improves physical and mental health (George, Ellison, & Larson, 2002; Hackney & Sanders, 2003). When intergroup anxiety or conflict exists, a person's religious affiliation might offer a way of preserving group identity, of boosting community engagement, and of supporting adaptation (Aydin, Fischer, & Frey, 2010; Sirin & Katsiaficas, 2010). Religious adherence "thrives" in circumstances where there are contrary pressures on identity and behaviour, such as is the case for Muslim migrants living in Western contexts (Jacobson, 1998, p. 238). Regarding this, a study by Luong and colleagues (2009) contends that Southeast Asian immigrant parents sought religious support to preserve their sense of hope through, for example, praying at home. In addition, South Korean immigrant parents indicated that religion and spirituality were strong coping mechanisms and sources of comfort, peace, and hope (Kwon, 2016).

These themes of incongruence between socio-cultural situations, of identity change and of stress related to the process of settlement will resonate through the present study. What is largely missing from such scholarship is research related to the role of material objects. Many studies exist on migrants and their process of settlement, acculturation, and integration. However, there is a dearth of research related to the role of material objects carried from home countries and on the role such objects play for migrants as they settle in the new society. While thinking about the process of migration, it can also be helpful to consider the role of the material world in its capacity to help mitigate some of these settlement challenges. The next section turns to the role of materiality and considers its significance for this research, in terms of migrants' religious, cultural, and social identities.

## Materiality

This thesis is not only about movement of people from one place to another as it also concerns the movement of things from one place to another. Under new materialist theory, objects are more than just inert things used by humans to create the social but, instead, ought to be understood as agentive components that shape the social with similar capacities to those of human actors. Under this framing, the ontological field between humans and objects is "flattened", "de-centering" humans as the principal drivers of any phenomenon (Appadurai, 2015, p. 221). Objects simultaneously enable and constrain action, a point that is seemingly obvious and yet profound to the extent that liberal/humanist theories of agency traditionally privilege humans as the sole driver of social change. Kopytoff (1986) suggests, in this way, that things have their own life histories. Things have connections to time and place. Like persons, objects may be born when they are first made, live social lives as they are entangled in various relationships with humans and other objects, and then die when they are finally destroyed or abandoned. The telling of their stories, Kopytoff (1986) argues, can provide insights into the social worlds those objects inhabit. Scholars working on materiality draw attention to the following issues related to the lives of objects: the relation between people's values and material objects; the role of objects in sustaining gender difference; the way reciprocal gift exchanges establish and preserve social relationships; the role of objects in the mediation of human perceptions of reality; and the physical effects that follow.

The relation between material objects and social values is especially significant. Daniel Miller (2008) defines materiality as a theoretical perspective which tries to recognize people's ideas, beliefs, and connections through the lens of material culture. For him, "material culture matters because objects create subjects much more than the other way around" (Miller, 2008, p. 287). Miller draws on Pierre Bourdieu's (1973, 1977) idea that our everyday practices convey and strengthen our fundamental values, remarking that material items play a meaningful role in this procedure because our interactions with them might be repetitive and not thought about, letting those objects "determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour, without being open to challenge" (Miller, 2005, p. 5). By this means, ordinary items, like cooking pots can be important even though individuals who use them never think of them as special. For example, ordinary pots can shape cooking practices for people, including migrants, by creating nostalgic memories of domestic environments and cuisine. As a result,

ordinary objects can unintentionally form and reinforce the cultural and social identities of their users.

Objects as reciprocally given gifts play a central role in the establishment and preservation of social relations. For Mauss (1954), social relationships depend upon the exchange of material objects as gifts. In making such an observation, Mauss made a strong distinction between gifts and commodities. Gift exchange works to strengthen relationships that already exist through the numerous commitments those relationships involve. This contrasts with commodity exchange, where people act independently because emotional commitments are not necessary (Strathern, 1988). Not all agree, however. Arjun Appadurai (1986) has cast doubt about the inclination of researchers like Mauss to draw such strong distinctions between gifts and commodities and argues instead that objects pass through different "regimes of value" (Appadurai, 1986a, p. 4). In this regard, Appadurai (1986) points out that "things move in and out of the commodity state" over the course of their social lives (p. 13). Kopytoff (1986) adds that a biographical approach to the study of objects is needed to understand the commodification of things as a process. He believes that the process of following a single object during its lifetime helps us to see how an object can be created both into a generalized, impersonal commodity and into a singular, inalienable thing which may carry different meanings and values at the same time when perceived by different people. As such, there is no essential distinction to be made of an object, as to whether it is a gift or a commodity. For example, Kopytoff asserts that a jewellery maker would see his watch as just another product. However, for Kopytoff his watch may also become a treasured heirloom object, where it is inherited from his father (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 80).

Appadurai (1986) also suggests that objects mediate our sense of reality and can produce physical effects that go beyond their mere symbolism. In other words, while mediating human social relationships objects are social through the role that they play in the framing of people's perspectives. They act as "mediants" (Appadurai, 2015, p. 222). Mediation is specified as "the operation or embodied practice" carried out by a mediant, while materiality is the "site of what mediation—as an embodied practice—reveals" (Appadurai, 2015, p. 224). Mediation and materiality are thereby co-constitutive; every mediant needs a material form, constructed on a cycle of mediations grounded in a materiality. This focus upon mediation builds on Georg Simmel's (1978) idea that value is produced through the exchange of objects, rather than from either objects themselves or their processes of production. In a similar vein, Appadurai (1986)

suggests that within the exchange of objects a complex set of social relations and points of contestation arise, these being the sites requiring mediation. It is through a close examination of an object-centred sociality that we can thereby understand how objects influence the value of each other and of the points of contestation that allow the meanings of value to change over time.

So far, this chapter has reviewed literature on challenges faced by migrants when moving from one place to another and when seeking to integrate into the host society. The chapter has also discussed scholarship on the role of the material world in shaping people's understanding of self and other. In the following section, I review scholarship on the role of material objects in the support of migrants' processes of settlement.

## Migration and Materiality

Migration interrupts normal routines, sometimes breaking what Bourdieu (1977) describes as doxa—a set of unquestioned and inherent concepts regarding the order of the natural and social world. For migrants, a new type of environment implies new ways of interacting with people, involving new kinds of behaviours, new modes of movements, and new kinds of corporeal experiences. In this period of dislocation, they might draw their attention to everyday objects and practices and the comfort they offer. These objects can evoke nostalgia of home, of loved ones and of the past, offering a sense of continuity in the new environment. This shift in the importance of everyday objects and practices amongst migrants is illustrated across current studies of migration, diasporas, and material culture (Miller, 2008; Parkin, 1999; Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Objects that remind of times gone by and of places left behind are seen to have emotional significance for migrants.

Leaving beloved people and things behind is a major challenge faced by migrants. Migrants might find everyday material objects, practices associated with them, and the comfort they provide helpful while facing crisis in their new life. Ideas and identities that were embodied through everyday practices begin to change as migrants try to redefine themselves in their new environments, through an intentional use of traditional objects brought by them, in the performance of everyday tasks. The archaeologist Naum (2012, p. 93) describes this in the following way:

> If certain routines and artifacts are salvaged in this situation, they may receive a new meaning transcending the ordinariness of the everyday. They may become a point of anchorage for immigrants in their new environments, ways of expressing identities, and at the same time they may act as reminders of the past.

Typical of such insights, Albanian immigrants in Greece have been seen to possess items 'from home' and to consider that these items including photographs, "acquire prominent status as touchstones of cultural and biographical narratives enacting embodied, sensory connections with sites, sounds, environments, textures, and landscapes of enfranchisement and belonging" (Moussouri & Vomvyla, 2015, p. 105). The capacity of such objects to maintain connections with the homeland simultaneously generates a greater sense of connection with the adopted land that can help migrants to navigate potential experiences of exclusion.

The impacts of shifting on material experiences encompasses more than attachments to objects from home. Migrants are always confronted with new material objects when they move to a new place and these new things can also help them to settle. If materiality can contribute as a significant stabilization device and confirm safety and security by means of dealing with familiar things, the material world of the new environment can also modify migrants' perceptions of themselves. In an illustration of this, Elia Petridou (2001) shows how students from Greece who migrated to England were bringing packets of food from their country of origin and cooking them for new friends to evoke feelings of home, of belonging, and doing so in a natural and cultural environment that also feels completely foreign. These practices of mixing what is familiar with what is unfamiliar can restructure migrants' systems of social interaction, can introduce existential stability, or can grow space for a new sense of self.

When migrants struggle after migration, personal treasured material objects can become a memory of people and places left behind. Habermas and Paha (2002) describe how objects develop this capacity to evoke memories, where they were not initially associated with what has been left behind. They found first-generation African transnational migrants in Durban whose few items of material culture had grown in symbolic value because of their everyday use. The authors concluded that such objects trigger memories of home, of beloved ones and of those who had passed on before migration. They have proposed the term "memory objects" to describe these things, objects that do not appear to invoke memories, but which gain

"mnemonic attributes" as the migrants move country (Habermas & Paha, 2002, p. 3). This differentiates such objects from souvenirs and mementoes.

My study explores this same interplay between objects and memory amongst Muslim migrants. Towards this end, Tolia-Kelly (2004), has discussed how material objects act as touchstones of memory as well as symbols of identification for Asian women in Britain. She found that mementos of home act as "precipitates of re-memories and narrated histories" (2004, p. 314). For Tolia-Kelly, the idea of "re-memory" is an optional social narrative to memory that differs from that of memory in that it does not produce an individual, linear, biographical narrative but is a "conceptualization of encounters with memories stimulated through scents, sounds and textures in the everyday" (2004, p. 314). In another study, Tolia-Kelly (2004) observed South Asian women who migrated to Britain from Kenya. She found that they often have special spots in their London homes to display special furniture pieces and home decorations that they carried with them from Kenya. Even crafted items that they regard as 'tourist kitsch' while dwelling in Kenya were now appraised as touchstones of memory and symbols of identification, signifying their experiences of migration and the voyage of life (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Her participants reportedly felt that these mementos offered unexpected connections with their past life, and thus conserved their reminiscences and sense of nostalgia connecting them with their diasporic background. Subsequently, 're-memory' that draws from ordinary objects carried by migrants from home countries has additional capacities for the development of new memories. Wilson (2005) goes further, pointing to the ambiguities in the work played by nostalgia in the meaning of objects in the homes of sojourners. She tries to comprehend how individuals experience and deal with homesickness when living away from their native country, and what the symbolic significance of the objects they have in their homes might be. Several sojourners in her study felt that having such objects in the home was troubling so tried to not use them because they triggered memories, revealed nostalgia, and evoked feelings of homesickness. Others in her study, however, sought sanctuary in those objects because they felt that these objects helped them to cope.

Material objects help to re-shuffle past relationships for migrants. Migrants might redefine their relationships with family members or friends left in their home country through gifts they have received from them. This may happen as those gifts become treasured objects in the new country with the passage of time. This re-shuffling of past relationships through the gifted objects also reveals the nostalgia of family and of other social relationships when migrants are

going through difficult times during and after migration. A range of studies speak to this general phenomenon. Goldsmith (1994), for example, reports that Mexican women often migrated to the United States with seeds for their vegetable garden and describes those seeds as being "passed from mother to daughter from time immemorial" (p. 141). Therefore, a squash or a rose sown in the garden was not just an ordinary plant, it was more a living representation of the relationship between mother and daughter, between home and homeland. The location where a stillborn child was buried, and the tree sown by a son later killed in battle are also described as ways that relationships with family were embedded in places, plants, and things, the memories of which helped women to be connected to their gardens and their family members. This illustrates the way that "kinship can be layered within everyday objects, and their sentimental value realized and celebrated through their use" (Holmes, 2018, p. 6).

Foxhall (2012) observes that objects can also build and maintain emotional bonds in the absence of face-to-face interactions. As a contemporary example, Foxhall speaks of a wooden spoon she inherited from her grandmother's sister, a woman who passed away before Foxhall was born. She also considers the emotional significance of loom weights in ancient Greece—objects that young women inherited, used, and brought with them when they moved in with their husband's family after marriage. A further study by Kamptner (1989) found that personal possessions of this kind appear to play a salient and meaningful role in many developmental tasks and challenges. One's belongings may enhance mastery and control in the face of losses; they may act as mood modulators; they may represent ties or bonds with others at a time of life when social losses tend to be greater (p. 182). In summation of this point, when migrants face loss and changes in their lives due to migration, they may remember their past family and social relationships that they left behind through objects that have been gifted to them.

Inherited objects can add another dimension in that they help to preserve intergenerational relationships between the living and dead. Heirlooms are often valuable for migrants, not only as gifts but also as a way of remembering their ancestors. Helen Holmes (2018) observes that one of the ways everyday material things produce and nurture relationships between the living and deceased is simply through their being passed on through families. Holmes (2018, p. 11) distinguishes between four types of "material affinities" that are involved in this passage of objects including, inherited mundane objects in use, handed down objects, repurposed objects, and objects as family reminders. This variety underscores the importance of things in bridging

past and present and, in the case of migrants, especially important relations with deceased family members left in the country of origin.

In the context of Muslim migration, religion and faith is an important feature of settlement into a new place. Archer (2001) observes that religious identity enables young Muslims to eliminate cultural loss while unifying those ones with a global community of believers. Kong (2010) suggests that religious identities can be a powerful and decisive means for young people to disrupt negative and potentially discriminatory discourses. In New Zealand it is apparent within what Kolig and Kabir (2008, p. 274) call a "diffuse practical sense of ethnic and cultural tolerance". By this, they mean that amounts of discrimination are relatively low and support for integration is mostly high but that few voices are heard that actively promote a positive picture of Muslim immigration. In this vein, Smith (2002) indicates that Muslims are sometimes deemed to be foreigners if they sustain their religious affiliation, possibly indicating that integration could be "at the price of . . . becoming less Muslim" (p. 14). This is an important context for understanding the relationship between Muslim migrants and the role of material objects in their lives. Several scholars have investigated objects related to memories, souvenirs, and heirlooms in the maintenance of identity under difficult social conditions but there is a dearth of scholarships on objects related to faith. There is thus little known about the role played by religious knowledge related to those objects and by the practical utility of faith related objects in assisting Muslim migrants to settle in a Western country. In an extension of this observation, there is even less known about the influence of gender upon Muslim migrant's choice of and relationships with objects as they settle in new countries.

## Conclusion

This discussion has provided an overview of scholarship pertaining to migration challenges, to materiality, and to the role of material objects in migrants' everyday life. From that scholarship, I have identified challenges migrants face when they are settling in a new place. Several themes emerge in this scholarship that are useful in the context of this study: memory; nostalgia; everyday practices; the biographical narrative of both things and people; comfort and safety; identity; material things as commodities but also symbolic of affective relations; and a sense of belonging. In New Zealand, further academic research is required to investigate the specific challenges of Muslim migrants during the process of settlement, of the role that material things might play in their migration journeys and of gender differences involved.

My research examines how Muslim migrants settle themselves in a new spatial and social context as well as the material objects these migrants choose to carry, preserve, or pass down. It builds on the scholarship outlined here by exploring the reasons why particular material objects are chosen, the role that such objects play in supporting them during the process of settlement even as such objects may invoke feelings of loss. In the following chapter, I explain my approach to this study. I describe the methodological framework and research method I have used to advance this study and my emphasis on Muslim migrants' material objects in their transitions from home country to host society.

# Chapter Three

## Research Methodology: Researching Things that Matter

### Introduction

This research focuses on the material objects Muslim migrants carry with them when they migrate to New Zealand, and of the meanings those objects have for those ones, including the roles the objects might play in mediating the settlement process. As such, the nature of this study is exploratory lending itself to a qualitative methodology. In qualitative research, the researcher examines what happens in such situations and, most importantly, what those events mean to the participants studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Qualitative methods are appropriate for this study because the focus is less on the objective choices that migrants make and more on the subjective meaning that sits behind their choices.

I elected to use a methodological approach that would enable people to share their everyday experiences and insights into their decision-making as migrants. While the focus of this research is on the role of material things, it was always going to involve talking with people which would allow me to better understand the relations between things and people, especially in relation to Muslim migrants' processes of settlement.

This chapter is divided into two broad parts. The first part discusses the ontological underpinnings that frame the research methodology employed in this study. The rationale for using the qualitative method is described in further detail, along with a justification of the narrative research approach that also guides this research. This justification focuses on materiality and the ontological turn that gave rise to my interest in the complex relationship between people and things. The second part describes the methods employed. The recruitment of participants is outlined as well as the structure of the in-depth interviews. How those interviews were analysed is also discussed. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the ethical concerns of the research.

## Qualitative Approach and Narrative Inquiry

The choice of research methodology and method should always be determined by the research issue and question (O'Leary, 2014). This research lends itself to a qualitative research methodology. The goal of the qualitative researcher is "to recognize lived experience and collective meanings of individual's everyday social worlds and realities" (Dwyer & Limb, 2001, p. 6). Qualitative researchers study actions in their natural settings – in people's 'everyday' worlds – in an effort to speculate on the significance of those actions or to interpret phenomena around those actions, doing so in terms of the meanings people convey to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative methods clarify human behaviour within the framework of the social structures in which that behaviour has taken place (Flick et al., 2004). Ritchie et al. (2014) states that it is appropriate to exhibit phenomena in fine detail and in participants' own terms. This is achieved through identification of the meanings people draw on as they act, through the negotiation they undertake with one another over those meanings and through identification of the roles those people imagine themselves playing as they interact.

The specific qualitative approach taken here is that of narrative inquiry. Heath (1986) suggests that narratives, or stories, exist in all societies, that these narratives are produced in predictable ways, and that they can be shared in oral or written form. Narrative research is the study of those stories, of how human beings use narrative to order their experiences of the world (Gudmundsdottir, 2001). The purpose of narrative inquiry is not to seek objective, decontextualized truths but to reveal the meanings of individuals' experiences (Wang & Geale, 2015). This involves paying attention to memorable and interesting knowledge that brings together layers of understanding about a person, their culture and how they have created change.

Narrative inquiry works as a medium by which we systematically gather, analyse, and represent people's stories as told by them. The narrative approach weaves together a sequence of events, usually from a few individuals to form a cohesive story. The narrative researcher conducts in-depth interviews, and sometimes reads documents, identifying themes of commonality. In other words, the researcher identifies how individuals' stories illustrate the larger life influences that have created them. Narrative inquiry captures personal and human dimensions of experience over time, taking account of the relations between individual experience and cultural context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

This research draws on a narrative approach, interpreting participants' migration stories to understand how they make sense of their experiences and perceptions. I talk with people about their experience of migration, paying attention to how their stories are told, to understand how they perceive the world around them as well as make sense of their experiences. The personal story consists of the feelings, tensions, hopes, desires, and social circumstances in which these experiences take place. Narrative inquiry is less about the analytical method of deconstructing data into coded piles and common themes and more about creating research texts that represent the complexity of people's experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Narrative inquiry will allow me to situate myself alongside the participants and to build a personal relationship during the inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Indeed, this method enables me to enhance the scope and intimacy of the research encounter and offers the chance for participants' contribution in, and influence over, the research process (Bijoux & Myers, 2006).

In addition to participants' stories of migration, I also focus on the narrative of the material objects they carried with them from their home countries, which potentially helps them in the process of settlement in New Zealand. As such, my focus on material things also demands a methodology that accounts for the ontological turn, an important point to which I now turn.

## A Methodological Focus on Materiality

The archaeological interest in the biographies of object, as developed at the turn of the millennium, was part of a larger trend of examining how objects could be seen as active in social life (Hodder, 1985, 1992; Hegmon, 1992; Stark, 1998). If culture were to be understood as meaningfully constituted through practice, it would thus be possible to examine objects' roles in that process. Drawing inspiration from the writings of Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1984), which highlighted the recursive nature of structure and practice in daily life, archaeologists looked to theories of materiality and material agency to upend the standard distinction between 'subject' and 'object' in the roles of humans and things and to observe how objects had the capacity to act back on humans in the shaping and constraining of human action (Dobres & Robb, 2000, 2005; Dornan, 2002; Joyce & Lopiparo, 2005; Meskell, 2005).

This research considers the ways that material objects might act as an anchorage for Muslim immigrants who have migrated to New Zealand. When things move or are moved from one location to another, mobility undoubtedly disturbs their social lives (Appadurai, 1986). The

impacts of shifting on material experiences encompasses more than attachments to objects from home. Migrants are always confronted with new material objects whose procedures of sorting, assessment and domestication usually adjust their approaches to deal with their new context. And if materiality can contribute as a significant stabilisation device and confirm safety, security and acknowledgment for migrants by means of dealing with familiar things, it can also modify their perceptions of themselves. It can restructure their systems of social interaction, intersect a logic of existential stability, or grow space for a new sense of self through the overview of new or unknown objects in their everyday routines and practices of consumption.

How objects are entangled with each other and with humans across space and time is crucial to this study. How the meanings and value of things can be transformed through their circulation was brought to the foreground of anthropological studies more than 30 years ago with the publication of *The Social Life of Things* (Appadurai, 1986b). Mauss (1924/1954) and Malinowski (1922) have contended that the connections between persons and things are culturally variable, and not represented in the same manner in every society. Appadurai's book presented not simply a re-engagement with the role of material objects in social life, however, but, also, an exploration of how objects themselves have social lives, with meanings and values that may be situationally specific and shift over time, as they circulate and traverse different "regimes of value" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 4). This idea is valuable for my study because the connection between theorizing the biography of things and how those things map onto the biography (and mobility) of people across borders will help us to understand the role of material objects in the process of Muslim migrants' settlement. If we weave these two approaches together, we will be able to consider how qualitative research helps meaning-making from the narratives of migrants life across two different time as well as place and the ways that materiality shape our lives.

## The Research Methods

### Recruiting Research Participants

The population of this study is Muslim immigrants, both men and women (aged 18 years and over), who have lived in Auckland for at least two years. This profile ensured they had lived in Auckland long enough to be able to reflect on their process of settlement. The use of this profile was also a pragmatic decision in that I am based in Auckland and the research design required

face to face in-depth interviews. I mostly used my own personal networks within the Muslim community to recruit participants, including through my workplace. One of my supervisors also introduced me to a participant. At first, I contacted potential participants via phone and email and sent them an information sheet that outlined what taking part in the research involved (refer Appendix A). Those who were interested contacted me directly to discuss the research in further detail, sent back the signed information sheet and we arranged to meet at a location of their choosing, either their home or a cafe.

The group of six participants comprised NZ citizens, permanent residents, and people with non-residential status. Their nationality was varied, with participants having arrived in New Zealand from Iran, Maldives, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. I spoke to prospective participants in their native language where possible (Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu). I purposely sought to gain a diversity of perspectives regarding gender, given migration is such a gendered process (Maupin et al., 2011) and given that existing research suggests class and gender influences how people remember and the role that objects play within memory (Habermas & Paha, 2002; Visser, 2012). Participants of different ages were also sought as well as different lengths of time in New Zealand because I felt these different cohorts could contribute a range of experiences regarding their processes of settlement.

Social networks as a primary medium for recruitment can be beneficial in qualitative research. My networks provided me with access to a diverse nationality of participants who share a similar background to me, albeit with different migration stories. Indeed, my own personal background as a Muslim migrant was a significant methodological feature of this research and supported the recruitment process. I share common ground with my participants in that I too am a person who has migrated to New Zealand. I migrated voluntarily three years ago to be with my husband. This allowed me to claim 'insider status' in that I share at least some of the same characteristics as my research participants, for example, ethnic, religion or location-based commonalities (Taylor, 2001). In the context of this research, insider status supports my capacity to build my understanding of the data (Taylor, 2001) because I can use my experiences and our shared knowledge to better understand the context of participants' migration experiences and their life experiences in a new country.

I also used Waters' (2015) snowballing method as a criterion for choosing participants for this study. Waters (2015) reflects on four key principles with regard to when it might be appropriate

to use snowball sampling: (1) research should not be focused on an especially sensitive issue; (2) participants should not experience undesirable consequences as a result of their contribution; (3) the researcher is a member of the community being researched (so share some experiences, at least); and/or (4) participants are associated with some kind of social network, for example, an Islamic community organization or Facebook. Following Waters (2015; see also Noy, 2008 & Heckathorn, 2011; Browne, 2005), participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method.

### Interviews: A Guided Conversation with Participants

Patton (2002) suggests that in-depth interviews are used to generate in-depth responses about people's experiences, observations, thoughts, ideas and knowledge, in the context of their situated environment (O'Leary, 2014). They act as a guided conversation in which the main goal is to collect rich and comprehensive data from participants to understand their experiences of a specific topic or situation (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). A researcher can also examine how a concept is defined and understood by their participants through a consideration of the life conditions and experiences of the interviewees.

The interviews used for this study were based upon a thematically organized and open-ended schedule of questions, and carried out in person which permitted the interview to progress as a "form of conversation" (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 178). The open-endedness of the interview allowed the participants to provide as much detailed information as they wished, and, following Creswell (2007), it also allowed me as the researcher to ask analytical questions as a means of follow-up. I started by asking participants to share stories about the material things they brought with them to New Zealand, including how they chose these objects, the objects' current significance, and how the meanings of those objects had changed since arriving in New Zealand. This approach was designed to allow participants to tell their experiences and life story on their own terms. Some examples of specific questions that were asked include:

- What is your migration story? Where did you migrate from? Who with?
- What kinds of things did you bring with you when you migrated, and how did you go about choosing those things?
- Can you tell me the story behind choosing your most treasured object? What kind of value do you place on this object?

- Why is this item so special to you? In what way does [this object] help you create a sense of home or belonging in New Zealand?

The semi-structured interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and each interview took place in a location of the participants' choice. I gave participants a copy of the interview schedule in advance of the interview, so they had a chance to think about their migration story, the things they travelled with, how they chose them and why they were so important to them, and the roles these things may have played as the participants settled in New Zealand. Asking people about the things they possess can be viewed as unusual. People may think that material goods are of little consequence in their lives until they have an opportunity to think more deeply about their influence and meaning in their everyday life. I hoped that the provision of advance notice would generate greater depth in the narratives and more considered and thoughtful responses due to participants' ability to prepare.

Throughout each interview, I took photographs of participants' chosen objects. Where possible, the photographs were taken *in situ*. For example, if an item was stored in a display cabinet, the photograph of the object included the cabinet for additional context. Participants could also choose to be included in the photograph and some chose to do so holding their treasured objects.

All interviews were voice recorded (after receiving written consent), and notes were taken when needed throughout the discussion. This enabled me to concentrate on what my participants were saying without any disruption. Moreover, this also aided analysis as, once transcribed, it helped me to refer back to the detail of each interview and the context in which comments were made for thematic analysis. I discuss in more detail below a return visit to some participants for points of clarification.

## Data Analysis

I transcribed each of the interview audio files. In addition to the recorded spoken words, I also included lengthy pauses and exclamations, including laughing, signifiers of distress, and hesitation in speech that might indicate uncertainty. I excluded intonations of voice, non-verbal sounds, and physical expressions such as shrugs, and sighs (Tuffin, 2005). The interview transcripts allowed me to become very familiar with the data and enabled thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis was utilized because it allows a lot of flexibility in the interpretation of the data. Thematic analysis requires working systematically through the data to uncover, interpret and report patterns and meanings (Ritchie et al., 2014). I carried out this process manually rather than relying on software programs so that I could completely engage myself with the content of the data. I broadly followed the thematic analysis framework put forward by Braun and Clarke (2006) who suggest using six steps to accomplish coherent thematic analysis. Firstly, they argue that analysis should involve a continuous engagement with the interview data which requires reading and re-reading the content. Doing so enabled a familiarity to develop with the text and with the recorded interviews so that tone of voice that participants used to articulate meaning aided the form which the conversation took.

The second phase of thematic analysis involved an initial creation of codes. The notion of 'codes' refers to "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88. see also Boyatzis, 1998). I then generated a list of relevant themes from these codes, the third stage. This was done through a "mind-mapping" technique of clustering codes around potential emergent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). At this stage, I colour-coded each potential theme so that I could easily identify them.

Fourthly, the themes were then reviewed and refined. This involved several related themes merging, as well as some being discarded, especially in the case where there was less data to support them. I then assessed these themes in relation to the entire data set which allowed me to detect additional data within themes that had been overlooked previously.

At this stage, the story emerging in the data took an unexpected turn. Interestingly, I was concerned that the information gleaned from the interview was not enough to sustain my analysis. Most of the participants agreed that their treasured object helped them to feel a sense of belonging in a new country and two of them did not state their position clearly. This produced a sense of conflict because I was concerned about the lack of disclosure. For this reason, I returned to those participants who had not clearly stated their position to arrange a brief follow-up interview following the same procedures of the primary interviews. I planned a topic guide based on their migration stories which asked directly if they think these objects became significant due to shifts in time and location. If yes, how and what ways these material

objects help them to feel a sense of belonging in New Zealand. The follow-up interviews lasted around fifteen to twenty minutes (refer Appendix D).

I chose to use a 'latent' kind of coding, in an attempt to identify hidden meanings or inherent assumptions, ideas, or beliefs which may outline or inform the descriptive content of the data. The analysis becomes more interpretive when coding is latent because it requires a more innovative and effective role on the part of the researcher. In this regard, Braun and Clarke (2012, 2013, 2020) repeatedly rehearse a debate within thematic analysis as to whether codes and themes 'emerge' from the data or reside within the data. They suggest that the answer is neither. Instead, the researcher performs an effective role in interpreting codes and themes and progressively recognizes which of the codes and themes are appropriate to the research question(s). Analyses that apply latent coding can often overlap with other aspects of thematic analysis in that the language used by the participant can be employed to interpret deeper levels of meaning and meaningfulness (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this same way, Ritchie et al. (2014) advise researchers to confirm that analysis is grounded in the data, while also being mindful of the co-constructed and situated nature of the data.

The fifth step in the analytic process was to identify and label these themes. This involved me critically reflecting on the reasoning behind the 'story' of each emergent theme. Again, some themes were merged, creating fewer thematic categories overall. The last and sixth step involved writing about the emergent themes, providing an account of the data and the analysis that goes "beyond description of the data and make[s] an argument in relation to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). It is through this writing stage that I realized an important temporal connection between the identified themes. While some content spoke to participants' decision-making about material things while planning their migration journey, other themes spoke to the ways that material things supported their settlement once they had arrived in New Zealand. Similarly, it became clear that some themes also spoke to their future intentions in relation to these treasured material goods. It was on realizing this that I decided to frame my 'results' chapters according to the different stages of participants' biographical journeys or narratives. This begins in the past with decisions made by the participants about what things they would bring on their migration journeys. Next, I turn to the process of settlement and the role played by those objects in supporting migrant settlement. Finally, I look forward in time, focusing on participants' intentions for those objects in the future. Within each of these three temporal stages, sub-themes emerged including objects related to faith, utility

and tradition; objects gifted by loved ones; and the passage of treasured objects to the next generation through inheritance.

## Ethical Issues

The study was declared "low risk" by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. Participants received information sheets that outlined the research, including the scope of the study and research aims, and their potential contribution after taking an initial interest in participating. I informed them that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw or remove aspects of their information up to two weeks after their interview. They were informed that our conversations would be audio-recorded but they could pause the recording at any point in our discussion. They also had the option of not answering specific questions if they were not comfortable. Each participant signed a consent form, confirming they agreed to take part, before the interview took place.

After the interview I provided each participant with a transcript of our conversation. Participants had the opportunity to review their transcript and any photographs taken of their chosen objects (with or without them in the photograph). They had two weeks to review their transcript and photos and decide if they wanted to revise the transcript or remove any content.

All participants were asked if they wanted to keep their identity confidential. I suggested that they use pseudonyms if they were not comfortable using their own identity and some of them chose to do so. A complicating factor in this research is the use of photographs – either of the treasured object or the person with their object. This potentially makes confidentiality difficult to ensure because some objects might be readily attributable to an individual. Therefore, issues of confidentiality were negotiated with each participant. Together we decided whether photos of their chosen object should be used. My greatest concern was ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of my participants due to the relatively small Muslim community in Auckland. Personal information about potential and contributing participants were stored in a secure location and password protected laptop. Published data did not contain any information or hints of the participants' identities, except where I had approval to do so.

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach adopted in this research, as well as detailing the research methods. I have discussed the benefits of employing qualitative research that takes account of the materiality of people's lives, especially in the context of migration. The chapter has also discussed the research methods employed, paying attention to the nuances of carrying out insider research with a minority migrant population, as well as the analytic approach taken.

The next four chapters turn to the research results, reflecting, as discussed above, the past, the present and the future biographies of things. Chapter Four is the first of the findings and considers how migrants make decisions about what to bring with them when they migrate from one place to another. Chapter Five turns to the process of settlement and the roles material objects play in that process. Chapter Six addresses participants' future intentions for the objects they brought with them – in other words, the future biographies of those treasured items. Finally, Chapter Seven discusses more specifically how these material objects facilitate settlement in New Zealand.

# Chapter Four

## "I don't want to leave anything behind": The Challenge of Deciding What to Take

### Introduction

Material things can play an important role in the migration journey. While facing the challenges of migration, they can be a source of cultural connection. The experience of leaving the familiar cultures of one's home country is challenging, and objects provide a sense of continuity with one's homeland which can help to sustain significant life changes that happen after migration. When people move, they bring with them their own sets of beliefs and practices that reflect their individual and group identities (Anthony, 1990; Herr & Clark, 1997). Material objects have the capacity to foster a sense of belonging and these objects help migrants to maintain their belief and practices in new lands. The meaning of everyday objects can change after migration as migrants invest emotion in their possessions by thinking about them as a tangible connection to their former life and those they left behind (Carr, 2018; Naum, 2015). Thus, things are important. Choosing material objects to bring with them is a matter of great concern for migrants because things can help them to remain connected to their memories of homeland and to support the maintenance of their distinct cultural practices and beliefs. However, the process of choosing what to take when there are significant limitations on what can be taken is a difficult one.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how people select what they will bring with them when embarking on the migration journey. I explore the motivations for selecting particular material objects. The chapter begins with a discussion of the instrumental things that people bring with them. Here I focus on how ordinary useful items from participants' homelands become special in their everyday lives in New Zealand. I also discuss how these instrumental objects gather new affective meanings through the way they trigger memories of home, loved ones and the past. The second section considers the role of relationships for migrants in choosing what to bring with them. Here I consider the influence that personal relations play in

decision making, regarding choices about what to bring, the special significance of gifts, and of objects related to culture, inheritance, and faith.

## Things that are Useful

Choosing things to bring on one's migration journey is challenging and often involves a weighing up of what might be needed or useful and what might be personally meaningful. Utilitarian or instrumental objects refer to those things that support everyday life in practical ways. They are often items that are taken for granted and are not commonly thought to possess deep emotional significance. Migrants often chose instrumental or useful objects because utility was their greatest concern. They chose things that would be helpful to them when they arrived in New Zealand and these types of material objects had to be prioritised given they are necessary for survival. Participants brought an array of useful things with them such as clothing, shoes, and bags. One of my participants states:

> *There were so many things which I brought from Bangladesh. I chose mostly my clothing, Bengali sarees, handbags, jewellery, makeup, perfumes, and bedsheets. I knew that clothing is very expensive in New Zealand and Bangladeshi imported clothes are highest selling items in New Zealand. I kept all my favourite things in my bed and chose the most favourite from them. I chose those things because I did not want my favourite things to leave behind.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

Utilitarian things can take on greater significance in new contexts than in previous homelands. Migrants may leave behind material objects which are meaningfully connected with their past (Hoksins, 2006; Tilley, 1991; De Leo, 2012), given the significance they instead place upon practical objects they feel they will need. This participant chose things in accordance with her personal everyday needs. Things like clothing, handbags, jewellery and bedsheets are mundane things that assist in everyday life. Clothing, however, is a special type of material object that connects with the body and social world in ways that other objects cannot. Clothes can "speak a universal sentient language since they are both for, and of us as human beings across class, gender, racial and national boundaries" (Ash, 1999, p. 131). The intimacy of the relationship (physical and symbolic) between clothing and the wearer places clothing as a certain kind of

material objects that can reflect the realities of the lived life. It also reflects the relationship between material objects, everyday practice, the body, and the self. Clothing was selected by Sarah because it has abundant meaning for the self (Solomon, 1985). Sarah chose to bring traditional Bengali Jamdani Saree because she wanted to take a piece of her culture in the form of clothing. She wanted to use it in an unknown country where most of the people do not know about her culture, wanting to flaunt her culture by wearing it. Thus, while the clothing she brought was of an instrumental kind, it was also so much more than this, representing culture, her understanding of self, and her everyday world. Interestingly, Sarah was also concerned about the cost of replacing goods in New Zealand and this drove her decision-making. This was closely linked with her desire not to abandon the everyday things she habitually used in her homeland.

In addition to the cost of things in New Zealand, participants were also concerned about the environmental context. Sadi describes his baffling situation when he could not bring his most useful items. He chose things to bring in light of the changeable weather conditions in New Zealand, because it is cooler than his home country of Bangladesh. This led to him giving priority to the most useful items he needed during winter. This concern about the weather is reflected in comments he makes about how he made decisions on what to bring:

> *When I was packing my luggage, there were several important things which I could not bring because of weight issue. I brought clothing and shoes because I knew that clothing is very expensive in abroad. I also took raincoat, umbrella, socks, and blanket which were more important because it is very cold here than Bangladesh.*
>
> *(Sadi, Bangladesh)*

Here, Sadi makes a pragmatic decision based on his knowledge of the weather conditions in New Zealand, alongside concern about the cost of things and the limited baggage allowance available to him.

So far I have been discussing useful objects that support people as they enact their everyday lives. Clothes, shoes, bags, bed sheets and blankets each possess a utilitarian quality; they will be helpful in participants' new lives. But such objects also begin to develop further and deeper meaning as participants think about their potential utility in their adopted country. Participants

felt those everyday 'useful' things had the potential to also evoke memories of what would become their past life and of the people who were key features of their life at home. Even clothing and the most regular useful objects grow new-fangled senses through their migration journeys and can take on a mnemonic function for those who use them. As Mariyam explained:

> *When I was moving, it was quite difficult for me to choose things because I was leaving Pakistan for the first time. So, I had to bring a lot of things with me, to start from scratch, like my clothing, bags, shoes, jewellery, and everything. Again, the wristwatch and jewellery box are useful items which can serve a purpose for me like, I can wear the wristwatch and I can store my jewellery in the box.*
>
> *(Mariyam, Pakistan)*

Since it is Mariyam's first movement out of her home country, it was quite hard for her to choose things to take. She resolved this by mainly choosing things which served two purposes at once: things that are useful to her and things with which she is emotionally connected due to the way they remind her of family; they are utilitarian memory objects. The jewellery given to her by her grandparents, for example, is used often but it also is considered a memory object in that she expects it to trigger memories of significant periods and people of her pre-migration life. These changing meanings suggest greater attention is needed to the way that the meaning of things builds in unexpected ways, often materialising as a combination of the pragmatic and symbolic.

The following reflection from participant Ilyas also brings together issues of everyday practices and personally meaningful objects. The reflection demonstrates, again, the significance of instrumental objects that also have symbolic significance:

> *The most treasured thing which I chose to carry was a Parker pen and I bought it from Saudi Arabia. I started using it when I was 20 years old and studying in secondary school. Since then, it is with me always wherever I go, and it is very valuable for me.*
>
> *(Ilyas, Maldives)*

*Figure 4.1: Ilyas's Parker Pen*

Ilyas' Parker pen is an interesting example of an object that is both instrumental (useful) and symbolic (meaningful). Ilyas has used this Parker pen for the last 44 years since he was at secondary school. It is one of the most precious things in his life at the same time as being useful (see Figure 4.1). For him, the Parker pen memorializes his school, college, university and work life. He always carries it in his pocket and he thinks of it as an extension of his body. He has used it to write poetry and his thoughts in many political issues. Since he has used this pen for such a long time, he is habituated to its use, which is why he chose to carry it with him. Interestingly, a sense of class is also apparent in the way Ilyas talks about the pen, particularly his reference to the specific brand of pen. Parker pens cost considerably more than other everyday pens, but they are also valuable because of their high quality and durability. Though such a pen provides good writing quality, it is not commonly used in Maldives because it is more expensive than a regular pen. Thus, the pen and all it symbolises speaks to Ilyas' everyday practices as well as his subject position as a professional educated man.

Moving to a new country is a move to the unknown. Everything that is familiar and known in one's homeland is left behind in the migration journey. For some participants, the process of gaining knowledge about where they were moving to was of utmost importance. For one participant, Mofazzel, this manifested as a decision to bring a book 'The World Almanac' that serves as an artifact of knowledge about New Zealand (see Figure 4.2). For Mofazzel, understanding cultural differences between his homeland and New Zealand was important and for this reason, he chose an educational book of New Zealand to help him understand various cultural differences he might experience. He was especially concerned about understanding Māori as the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand.

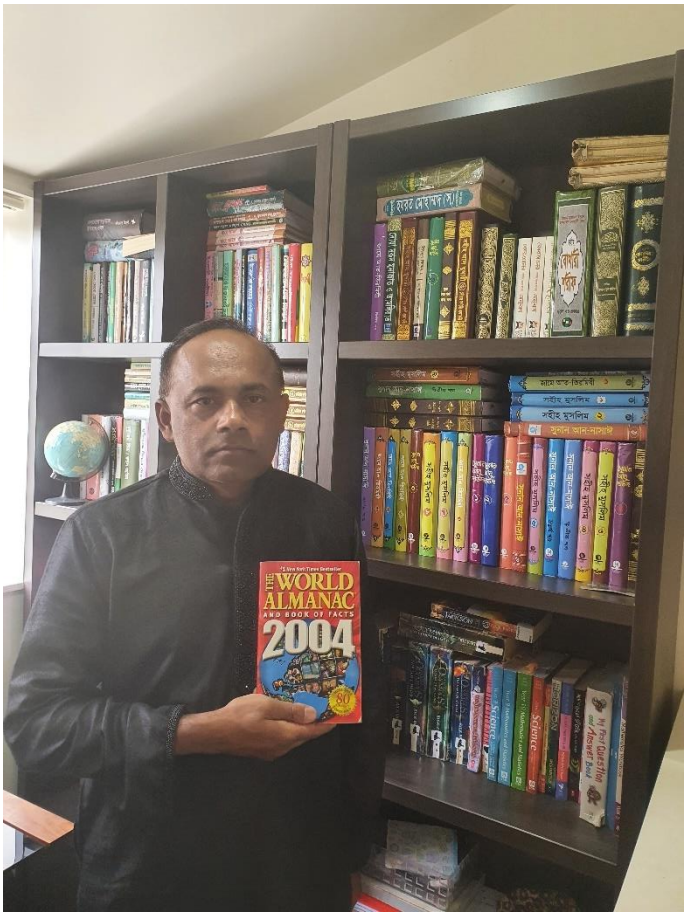


*Figure 4.2: Mofazzel's Book-The World Almanac*

> *I brought a book which is called 'The World Almanac' with me because when I applied for my visa, I had the curiosity to know more about New Zealand, its history, economy, politics, and culture in brief because it is completely different from Bangladesh. After reading that book, I came to know about Māori, their history and culture. I chose "The World Almanac" book because I might need it for information when I will arrive in a western country like New Zealand. The information about more than 200 countries of the world's economy, population, culture, GDP, GNP, climate, minerals, and history is available in this book.*
>
> *(Mofazzel, Bangladesh)*

Mofazzel was curious and wanted to know and understand his new homeland. As such, knowledge acquisition was a key driver when deciding what to bring. Ingold (2010) argues that '"knowledge" is an ongoing activity rather than an object or definable entity' (cited in Marchand, 2010, p. 1). This idea is reflected in Mofazzel's decision to bring 'The World

Almanac' with him. He chose the book because it offered him the opportunity to learn more about the population, weather and economy of New Zealand. He thought this knowledge would make his life here smoother, but he also seeks knowledge simply for understanding. He felt it would develop his personal knowledge as well as bridge the space between the two places. Educational scholars often argue that the transmission or learning of knowledge should be recognized as social, participatory, and embodied development (Ingold, 2000; Geurts, 2003; Downey, 2007; Grasseni, 2007; Hahn, 2007; Marchand, 2007). This idea is reflected in Mofazzel's stance towards seeking and gaining knowledge. Interestingly, the book is now considerably out of date and current information is readily available online. However, Mofazzel still uses it because he is habituated to using this book and it has become such an important symbol of his knowledge acquisition and the labour he has invested in becoming a member of and contributor to New Zealand. In addition to objects related to utility, objects related to memory are also noteworthy because they are related to familial sentiments held by participants. Objects that invoke emotion or connections with people are valued by the participants for the way they signify important relationships and serve in a symbolic sense as memory objects. The following section will discuss the objects that participants chose to bring with them which relate to their memories of home countries.

## Objects Related to Memory

Objects related to memory are valuable personal possessions that provoke thoughtful or instinctive memories of homeland, culture, childhood or past life and social relations (such as family and friends) allied with one's homeland or birthplace. Photographs and objects often serve as aide-memoires when migrants must leave loved ones behind (Habermas & Paha, 2002). Photographs were an important feature of my conversations with participants, with many choosing to bring old and recent photographs of cherished people and places (see Figure 4.3 below). Participant Ilyas who migrated from the Maldives sought to refabricate a motherland atmosphere through old photographs he thought would help him to remember family and friends in his new environment.

*I brought few albums of my childhood photos, my wedding albums, some pictures of my family members. Since my youngest age I used to collect stamps, coins, and notes of different countries which I also brought with me.*

(Ilyas, Maldives)

*Figure 4.3: Ilyas's Photo Albums*

The participant described himself as a 'keeper' and he sought to recall his memories through the things he possessed. His collection of childhood photographs and family albums help him to remember his childhood, his past and his family. Such special private objects can be supposed to have agency in that they activate sensitive responses and inspire communal effects and activities (Gell, 1998; Harrington-Watt, 2014; Wall, 2010). This is the case for Ilyas in that his special memories are effectively stored within the albums, providing affective access to evocative people and places.

As discussed in the quote, Ilyas also chose to take a collection of coins, bank notes from different countries and stamps with him (see Figure 4.4). He had carefully preserved these things from his childhood for more than 40 years. His collection reminded him of his own childhood and past and so it was considered important that he to take it with him on his migration journey.

*Figure 4.4: Ilyas's Collection of Coins and Stamps*

These objects reflect Turkle's (2011) notion of "evocative objects" in that the coins and stamps are "companions of our emotional lives" (p. 5). For Ilyas they have become the focal point of his introspective memory, producing a sense of love, fondness, connection and memory (see also Sarup, 1994). Such items have no use-value but their value arises from their capacity to hold memories.

Objects that migrants carry can serve as aide-memoires of the world where they were born which can help fabricate a sense of belonging, and attach them with their beloved ones (Ryden, 2018). These ideas are reflected in Ilyas' decision-making. Interestingly, Ilyas's wife helped him to choose which things to take with him and which things to leave behind. Ilyas was not alone in turning to loved ones to help make these important decisions. Most participants' relational contexts influenced the selection of material objects to bring on their migration journey, a point I unpack in greater detail in the following section.

## The Influence of Relationships in Decision Making

It is difficult for migrants to decide which things to leave behind, which things to take, and which things will serve them most in their new country. And in some cases, this difficulty is resolved by turning to others – family, friends and loved ones – to support their decisions. This is entirely appropriate in the context of Muslim family life. In many cultural contexts, the

person is understood not as an independent entity but primarily as a relational entity. In these cultures, relationships define the self, and the person is viewed as connected with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Triandis, 1989). The dependency on relational contexts for the choosing of material objects represents the bond between the self and these important familial and social relationships. Participants often accepted help from their family and friends when making their decision about what to take, especially when they felt baffled because they could not decide between the many things they were unable to take. Interestingly, the act of choosing objects with the support of loved ones also served to maintain and strengthen the relationship.

Different relationships with different people shaped the decision-making practices of participants. A number of participants relied on their partners when choosing, discussing with them what they should take and what they should leave behind. Dr Nazy is a good example. She migrated with her husband to New Zealand 27 years ago. Dr Nazy turned to her partner for advice about what to bring and he advised her to bring important objects that are related to their shared faith, such as the holy book, The Holy Quran as well as cultural artifacts, such as a sheesha. He suggested these items because they share similar cultural and religious backgrounds, and these items reflect both of their religious and cultural practices. Together, Dr Nazy and her husband agreed on which things to carry from the beginning and their decisions were informed by each other and their shared interests and values. She states:

> *Whatever I have chosen, I have chosen something that my husband and I used to love together.*
>
> *(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

Dr Nazy and her husband chose things related to their Iranian culture and faith. As both are Muslim, they gave importance to things related to religion, for example, The Holy Quran. For both of them, it was unquestionable that the holy book not to be brought with them. Also, sheesha is very close to their culture and it was paramount to them that it accompany them on their journey. This particular sheesha is more than thirty-six years old and is very decorative (see Figure 4.5). The body of the sheesha is around 20 inches tall and the metal is sterling silver. A bowl at the top of the head holds the tobacco and the ashtray of the sheesha is copper

in colour with long chains with a star hanging from it. The design features blue beads and is intricately carved. The hose is finely woven with a black pipe in the end.

*Figure 4.5: Dr Nazy's Antique Sheesha*

They chose to bring this antique sheesha because these type of sheesha are not available in New Zealand but, more importantly, Dr Nazy was very happy to bring the sheesha because it signifies the relationship she shares with her partner and the things they did together in their homeland. This example from Dr Nazy illustrates the significance of relationships, practices and memories shared when deciding what to bring. Important relationships also underpinned participants' decisions to prioritise gifts when deciding what to bring. The next section turns to this idea to explain the role of gifts received by loved ones in the decision-making process.

## The Significance of Gifts

Gifts were often chosen by participants to bring to the new land because there is something special about gifts, especially those that are gifted by people who love them. People have symbolic and emotional attachment to gifts that can endure across time and place (Habermas

& Paha, 2002). Gifts have special significance because they are often given on special occasions, such as at the time of marriage, at the time of departure, and when someone special has died. Gifts given by parents on different occasions can sometimes have even more special meaning since they become imbued with familial meaning. Participants' decisions about what to bring were often informed by gifts given by their parents and other nearest ones.

Numerous participants told me that they brought with them things that had been gifted to them. The materiality of gifted objects serves the purpose of remembering and sharing memories of the person who gave it to them, especially when they are used in everyday tasks. Gifts given by parents are especially valued because those gifts nurture an emotional bond with those parents as well as with the object itself. The gifted objects were varied, sometimes comprising everyday useful objects while on other occasions the gifted objects were sacred things, including a prayer mat and The Holy Quran. Sarah illustrates the importance of gifted religious objects:

> *The most treasured thing is The Holy Quran because it is the most precious item because of my faith and my father gifted it to me.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

When Sarah was leaving Bangladesh, she chose to bring The Holy Quran which was gifted by her father after her marriage. She brought it because her parents wanted her to do Khatm-e-Quran after coming to New Zealand. By reading it, Muslims can learn the significance of not only doing the work to develop as individuals, but to also aim to benefit, inspire and uplift others in kindness and virtue. Her parents wanted her and her husband to be practising Muslims and hence, they gifted it to her. This conveys the importance of The Holy Quran for the Muslim people. Gifting it on marriage is also symbolic, asking for ease and happiness in marriage and thereafter to the creator. As a Muslim, The Holy Quran is the most precious thing, and Sarah carries with her wherever she goes (see Figure 4.6). The fact that it was also gifted to her by her father only amplifies its symbolic value.

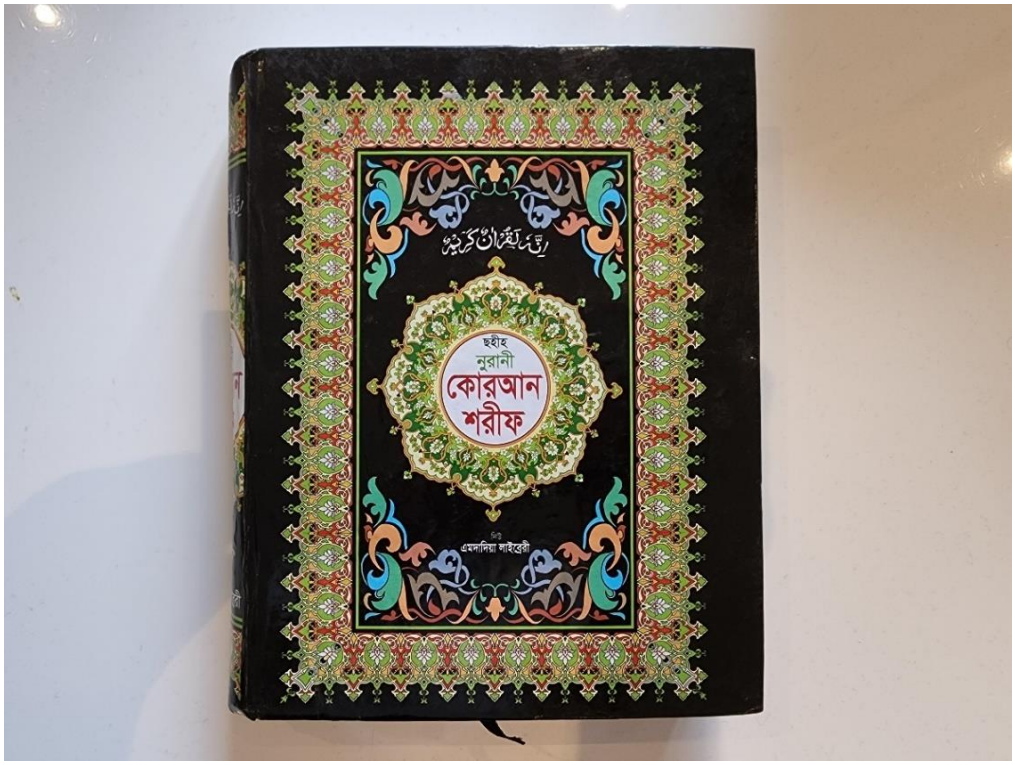


*Figure 4.6: Sarah's Holy Book*

Sadi also received a religious gift that he decided to bring with him to New Zealand. The story revolves around a bottle green prayer mat with a picture of a golden dome on top (Figure 4.7). He was given the prayer mat by his mother, who in turn had received it as a gift from her mother (his grandmother). The gift is a valuable thing both to him and his mother because it was bought from Saudi Arabia during Hajj. This prayer mat is a treasure for them both as it evokes the memories of Hajj and it became especially precious for him when he started using it.

> *My mother gave me a new prayer mat brought from Saudi Arabia and this is the most valuable thing for me. It was a gift for my mother given by my grandmother.*
>
> *(Sadi, Bangladesh)*

The prayer mat holds symbolic significance for Sadi. We can see an interpersonal context because he did not inherit the prayer mat directly from his grandmother, but it instead passed through the hands of his grandmother and mother before it came to him. This means the prayer mat holds additional intergenerational value as well as helping to maintain his religious identity as a Muslim. The prayer mat is significant for the performing of prayer five times a day because

the practice of Salah is obligatory for Muslims. The prayer mat has been bought by his grandmother, it has been stored by his mother, and now it travels across the world with him to a new place where he can use it to retain his religious identity.

*Figure 4.7: Sadi's Prayer Mat*

Other participants also told me stories of their decision to bring objects that had been gifted to them by their parents. For instance, Mariyam described a pink jewellery box that she now uses but that was gifted to her mother by his father when they first met before their marriage (see Figure 4.8). It has different sections for storing jewellery and features a lovely doll that spins when the jewellery box is opened. She also mentioned a wristwatch (shown in Figure 4.8) that was gifted to her mother by a famous Pakistani actor who is their family friend. The wristwatch is aged with a beautiful brown leather strap:

> *I brought jewellery box that my father gave to my mother when they first met thirty-five years ago. I also brought my mother's twenty-five years old wristwatch given by our family friend Pakistani famous actor Moin Akhter.*
>
> *(Mariyam, Pakistan)*

Given the jewellery box was a gift given by her father to her mother during their first meeting, it poses both relational and sentimental value. Mariyam received it as a gift from her mother when she was leaving Pakistan for the first time. She chose to bring it because she could feel not only her emotion but also her parents' emotion because of its sentimental value. This gift is significant because of the collective and affective memory of her parents' first meeting and also because her mother used the jewellery box for more than thirty-five years.

*Figure 4.8: Mariyam's Jewellery Box and Wristwatch*

Mariyam's mother had also used the wristwatch for a long time before gifting it to Mariyam. Mariyam used to wear it occasionally in Pakistan and her mother gifted it when she was leaving. Since she arrived in New Zealand, Mariyam now wears the watch on many occasions. For Mariyam, these gifts have become even more precious because looking at them and using them brings back memories of her mother and the people associated with the story of the objects. She also chose to bring gifts received through inheritance, because it is very closely tied to rites of deceased following the death of a loved one. I turn to the importance of inherited objects for participants now.

## Inherited Objects

The objects that individuals preserve after someone has passed can be a dynamic way in which they recall that person. Odom et al. (2010) has described how relationships with the deceased one continues to evolve, often mediated by inherited objects. In other words, the eternal reality of the death of a family member can be remembered through particular objects. Consequently, inherited items were an important feature of participants' decision-making about what to bring with them. Mariyam who lost her grandfather, for example, states:

*I have a chain that was gifted to me by my grandmother and a pendant in which, 'Allah' is written, gifted by my grandfather but unfortunately, I lost it. To be honest, some of these things are quite emotionally important and precious to me because my grandfather has passed away.*

*(Mariyam, Pakistan)*

The emotional mayhem caused by the death of her grandfather deeply changed her attachment to the pendant. Not only was the object a symbol of her faith, but the object also holds a special space in her heart as she was very close to her grandparents. Having been received as a gift, it was a reminder of her grandfather, and in a wider meaning it has the sense of their Islamic belief because "Allah" is written in the pendant. Unfortunately, even though Mariyam tried to safeguard it carefully, she lost it after she arrived in New Zealand which is still painful for her to talk about.

Following the death of a loved-one, objects may be gifted formally through a will or informally through the distribution of personal belongings. Dr Nazy's parents, who have now passed away, gifted her a 50 to 60-year-old Holy Quran. It is a medium size book with a red cover. The pages are quite worn, unsurprising given their age, and the fonts as well as designs are made in golden color. They gave it to her when her mother was unwell because they knew that she would not survive. They gifted it because they knew she is a strong believer of God, and loves aged things. Dr Nazy described her holy book in the following way:

*The most treasured things which I brought is my holy book, The Holy Quran which is 50 to 60 years old, and my parents gave it to me when my mother was unwell. It is with me all the time even when I sleep.*

*(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

The gifting of a holy book is personally meaningful to Dr Nazy for three key reasons. First, it reflects her religious belief. Second, it is particularly special because her parents gave it to her. And third, she appreciates and values old and aged things. These three things led to her

unequivocal decision to bring the holy book with her to New Zealand. Participants did not only choose things that were gifted or were received as an heirloom. They also chose things related to their culture and traditional heritage. The next section will focus on cultural artifacts which participants chose to bring to New Zealand.

## Cultural Artifacts

Migrants' personal things are "emblazoned with reminiscences, feelings, connections, and stories that reveals and express facets of individual and cultural self" (Duggan & Gandolfo, 2011, p. 316) and they support the prolongation of migrants' cultural practices (Povrzanović Frykman & Humbracht, 2013). This means migrants' things are close to their emotions and memory. Material things are also imperative in the maintenance of a national identity. The use and collaboration with material things such as jewellery, flags or national dress, represent national identity "in an ordinary temporal way over an intricate web of beliefs, presumptions, habits, portrayals and practices" (Wiltgren, 2014, p. 309). Things help to produce and shape national identity. Dr Nazy explained things related to her culture as following:

> *I brought an Iranian style wooden spoon gifted by one of my fans and a traditionally wool woven wall hanging bag where we hang newspaper or magazines.*
>
> *(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

She and her husband love to collect things which are antiques and which also represent their culture and traditional heritage. As described above, they chose to bring a wooden spoon that despite being old-fashioned, was still important to her. It was used hundreds of years ago as part of an Iranian culture and it was gifted by one of her fans. Another example of an item Dr Nazy chose that reflects her Iranian culture was a traditional Iranian bag that Iranian people use for hanging the newspaper. The dark brown bag is more than twenty-five years old and is distinct because it has the face and hands of a monkey on the front (see Figure 4.9). It is a wool knitted bag crafted by Iranian women of high reputation. These kinds of wool crafted bag are very common in Iranian households and are a significant part of Iranian culture.

*Figure 4.9: Dr Nazy's Wool Crafted Bag*

In migrants' lives, material objects are "a means of conserving and representing the anecdotes and materials of their past" in the present-day (Duggan & Gandolfo, 2011, p. 323). Hence, the nostalgic showcasing of cherished items in the home can assist as symbols of a lost past and as continuous memories of family and communal histories that should not be forgotten; such things serve as "the portal to a realm of memories" (Peled, 2017, p. 231). Notably, the subsequent statement of Dr Nazy is illustrative of the affiliation of the participant towards collecting, conserving material objects, and indulging in memory through antique objects:

> *I brought few favourite antique things with me when I came to New Zealand. I am really fascinated by antique things because it reminds us about our past. Our country's people also like that we keep our culture alive. One of them is Sheesha which is more than thirty-six years old. Another show piece I think we bought that from Italy and that is also very old.*
>
> *(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

She is very fond of antique things so she decided to bring several antique pieces which she feels connects her with her own culture and country. She does not use the Sheesha (discussed earlier) anymore. Rather it appears as a showpiece in her living room (see Figure 4.10Figure 4). The rarity and age of the objects she owns have played a vital role in her process of choosing things. She believes that every antique thing tells a story about her past and evokes memories connected with her family and culture that she would relish while living in a new country.

*Figure 4.10: Dr Nazy's Sheesha in Her Livingroom*

Antique things do not only allow her to reminiscence. They also signify her class position because antiques are bought mostly by upper-class customers. Within the context of migration, socio-economic status and the circumstances of the migration experience influence an individual's connection to material objects from their homeland (Svasek, 2012). Habermas and Paha (2002) suggest that persons of higher social classes most likely keep personal objects for use as mnemonic aids, also noting that women tend to do that more than men, a point I return to later in the thesis.

Dr Nazy inherited a lot of antique things and is also knowledgeable enough to buy them when she sees them. When travelling in Italy, for example, she bought an antique lamp (seeFigure 4.11). Although the object is not part of her own culture, she recognizes it as another example of keeping culture alive through relations with material objects. She brought the lamp because she loves to collect antique pieces and, in this way, she feels she can embrace culture and allow culture to thrive.

*Figure 4.11: Dr Nazy's Antique Showpiece*

Pink (2009) advocates the use of an 'emplaced' ethnography to explore people's multisensory associations with the materiality and environments of their daily lives. The concept considers the relationships between bodies, minds, and the materiality and sensuous nature of environment. These ideas align with participants' decisions about prioritizing what to bring with them. Many participants discussed bringing food products with them, sometimes because they were concerned that these goods might not be available in New Zealand and sometimes because their sensory experience of those food products were felt so deeply that they did not want to leave them behind. Reflecting Rabikowska (2010), and Brown and Paszkiewicz (2017),

the transport of traditional foodstuffs, both home-made and commercially produced, enables migrants to feel 'homely' in the new place of residence. In demonstration of this point, Sarah noted about her own choices:

> *There were so many things which I brought from Bangladesh. I brought cooking pots, spices, dry food, and kitchenware items.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

Sarah's chosen objects, including spices and dry food resonates with Pink's ideas about the role that the senses play in connecting a person with their past life. Sarah brought spices to cook in her own indigenous style and dry food to feel the taste of homely food. A recent study of British Poles by Brown and Paszkiewicz (2017, p. 57) describes the act of bringing back food from the motherland as "bringing back a little bit of paradise". Food carried from home is an influential sign of comfort, legacy and health that is bound up in a sensuously nostalgic yearning for one's homeland. It is not surprising that migrants miss their families and wish to see, hear and touch their cherished ones, but they also crave the native foods, smells and tastes related with family and their homelands (Baldassar, 2008). The sensory nature of food and the ability to reproduce foods from home enables a sense of continuous belonging with the culture they have left behind while residing in a new place, potentially many miles from their familial birthplace (Rabikowska, 2010).

Relatedly, the domestic practices migrants engaged in at home that required the use of material objects also shaped their decision about what to bring. As noted in the quotation from Sarah above, importance is placed on being able to replicate her everyday practices when she comes to New Zealand. For this reason, she chose to bring traditional cooking pots and kitchenware items to ensure she could cook in indigenous styles and experience the same taste as the native food she consumed.

The desire to bring foodstuffs was undoubtedly gendered. Muslim countries are traditionally patriarchal with women largely responsible for the private domestic sphere while men are largely responsible for the public sphere. There are gender differences in the way that men and women relate to objects and their importance given within a family, signifying that "it is vibrant

that ideas of 'summing up the family' and 'holding memories' have not as much of emotional worth for men than they do for women" (Pearce, 1998, p. 95). Most of the women participants chose to bring things related to the domestic sphere and most of the men chose to bring things related to utility. Here, we can see gendered perspective with regards to the process of choosing objects.

Thus far, I have discussed objects related to faith, including faith-based objects, because of their status as gifts or inheritances. The next section turns to this topic more directly, noting the significance of objects related to faith to these participants.

## Objects of Faith

Muslims believe their book, The Holy Quran, to be the literal word of God and it reminds them of their sense of duty as Muslims. The significance of religious identity as a Muslim migrant played an authoritative role in their decision making about what to bring with them. For Muslims, faith or belief in Islam is the foundation of life, shaping their way of life and determining how they think, act and perceive life in general. Indeed, research has shown that religion can be considered a "surrogate family" for young migrants (Cao, 2005, p. 183). Given the importance of religion in their lives, faith related objects are considered to be sacred and create contentment in the life of a Muslim individual. All the female participants, without exception, talk about objects related to faith when discussing what they decided to bring with them.

> *This Quran is with me all the time even when I sleep. I chose to bring it because reminds me of my origin and I feel that God is with me.*
>
> *(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

> *The most treasured thing is The Quran because it is the most precious item I got as a gift from my father. Again, these are words of Allah (SWT) that is sufficient for guiding mankind, and I feel serene when I do Quran recitation.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

*I think the most treasured thing which I brought is The Quran. Whenever I would get homesick, I would just read it. I feel that I am close to my parents and Pakistan.*

*(Mariyam, Pakistan)*

The choice of bringing The Holy Quran displays the faith the participants had in the past while living in their home country, their desire to maintain their faith in the present after they arrive in New Zealand and of their faith in a future that remains immersed in religious practice. The religious items have a role to play in prompting their duty as Muslim. The parents of these participants wanted them to follow the duties of a Muslim, for example, praying Salah, reading The Holy Quran, Sadaqah, and fulfilling other familial duties. The presence of The Quran enables this.

Religion is significant in determining daily behaviour (Warren, Lerner, & Phelps, 2011) and migrants will undoubtedly wish to continue specific religious practices and rituals following migration, which will require certain objects. The Holy Quran is an important ritualised object. Similar to Dr Nazy, Sarah and Mariyam brings holy Quran because they used to read it in their home country and their parents want them to continue doing this in New Zealand. Sarah chose The Holy Quran because this book is a significant part of her life and she wants to follow the guidance in her everyday life. She also chose it because she feels relaxed whenever she does recitation. Mariyam chose to bring it because she wants to perform religious practices while living in New Zealand, in this way, she remains connected to her homeland. Mariyam, who received The Holy Quran as a gift from her parents on her wedding (see Figure 4.12).

*Figure 4.12: Mariyam's Faith Object - The Holy Quran*

To bless and protect the couple, The Holy Quran is held during 'Rukhsati' over the bride's head as she leaves. 'Rukhsati' is a wedding tradition of a bride's farewell by her family. A significant tradition of Mariyam's marriage ceremony has been observed with this Holy Quran. Her parents bought a small size holy book to gift her because it would be easier for her to carry as she was moving to New Zealand from Pakistan. The Holy Quran has a captivating glittery brown cover with golden Arabic calligraphy and a design of flower on top. In addition to this important ritual, Mariyam believes that the book provides answers to all her questions about religion and life. In both examples, Sarah and Mariyam gain a sense of tranquillity when they recite it not only because their holy Quran were gifts from their parents but also because they feel a strong connection with creator and home.

## Conclusion

The process of deciding what to take when migrating from one country to another can be challenging for migrants because they must negotiate many things, including juggling the

uncertainties and lifestyle changes in a new country. There are also constraints about what they can bring because of limited weight issues. Naum (2012) argues that migrants try to replicate their former lives and traditions by using things from their home country to adapt and seek comfort with the changes and losses that migration can bring. My research has shown that people struggle to decide what to bring with them from one side of the world to the other. Symbolic, emotional and cultural objects are of greatest significance to the participants in this study because these objects offer them a sense of connection to their homeland and people.

In this study, migrants chose instrumental things as well as faith related objects over any other goods when making decisions. Utilitarian objects were the most essential items for them as they are the primary means of survival. They applied different means to choose these objects and their decision-making process of choosing material objects depended upon many things, including relational and familial contexts. This led to them prioritising practical objects that were also gifts from loved ones, objects that facilitated their reminiscence of past life, objects related to inheritance, as well as cultural artifacts and objects related to faith. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these objects brought from their home countries have helped these Muslim migrants to settle in New Zealand.

# Chapter Five

## Things Matter: The Role of Material Things in Supporting Muslim Migrants' Settlement

### Introduction

The previous chapter discussed migrants' processes of choosing things to bring with them and the influence of relationships in their decision making. This chapter discusses the role of materiality, specifically, the role of objects in Muslim migrants' settlement. I argue that exploring migrants' relationship with things is useful for deepening the understanding of Muslim migrants' settlement process. While there is considerable research on migrants' settlement processes, there is little research on the role of material things to help facilitate settlement. Objects have life stories, in much the same way as people. The "interrelationship between life stories, biographies and material goods" provides a useful way by which we can talk about the interrelation of materiality and migration as a systematic framework (Rosales, 2010, p. 509). The biographical story of things in the migration context starts from people choosing an object to carry with them to a new country in the first instance, before storing, displaying, or using the object in their chosen destination, sometimes featuring the object in their everyday lives in different ways. Migrants might look to these objects for support as they seek to integrate into their chosen homeland at the same time as remaining connected with their country of birth. Such objects might also help migrants to establish a new social identity in their new setting. These ideas are the focus of this chapter.

In the following, I explore the extent to which the meaning of chosen objects changes over time due to the migration journey, an idea that Appadurai (1986) describes as the "total trajectory" (p. 13) that begins with objects' origins as commodities. The trajectory starts from the manufacture of the objects, through processes of exchange, distribution, consumption and beyond. It is the 'beyond' in which I am most interested, exploring the meaning of the commodity as it potentially shifts across time and in different contexts (Appadurai, 1986). Three types of objects were given prominence by participants and are discussed here: objects related to faith, knowledge, and cultural tradition. Most of the participants talked about

religious objects comforting their existence and of an intensification of connection with those religious objects following migration as they try to adjust in changed circumstances. Some chosen objects were also associated with the acquisition of knowledge about the country to which they immigrated, knowledge that could be leveraged to help the process of settlement in New Zealand. In addition, these objects support migrants to have a sense of security as a result of knowing more about the practices of the local community. Another common kind of object chosen by participants were those objects associated with cultural tradition, which could bring a sense of belonging and continuity amidst in an unfamiliar setting. Discussions with participants about these objects were conveyed in the language of emotion: of happiness, comfort, satisfaction, and so on. I show that objects related to everyday practices play a role in the settlement of Muslim migrants.

## The Role of Faith Objects

Things related to faith are considered of greatest significance to the migrants in this research because of their ongoing presence in these people's religious and cultural lives. In the context of migration, 'spiritual capital' is seen to generate tangible advantages in the form of support as well as intangible advantages in the form of faith (Ebaugh, 2003; Hagan, 2008). The role of faith related objects in migrants' lives is reflected in the participants' talk about what is important to them. For participants, religious items may play several roles when they practise religion as a devotee after transition. Migrating can result in significant loss and participants try to seek comfort and to forget the issues of loss by returning to the religious items that were so familiar to them. Respondents most often listed religious items such as a prayer mat and holy book as their most cherished possessions.

> *I have got other Holy Quran, but that special one should be just beside my bed, and I don't move it. Even sometimes, when I became upset, I just hold it tightly and I talk, then I am okay. I feel relieved and it really helps. I feel like it's special because of my parents and they are not alive anymore. They gave it to me because of that it's even more connected to me emotionally. This book is special not only because they gave it to me, but it is more valuable because it's about my belief, I believe in God. At the end of the day, we are Muslim.*
>
> *(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

*Figure 5.1: Dr Nazy's Holy Book Beside Her Bed*

The photograph in Figure 5.1 shows the bedside table where Dr Nazy always keeps her special holy book, something that gives her comfort, given it is close to her even when she is asleep. She believes that the holy book is special for several reasons. Firstly, because she brought it from her home country. Secondly, this book was gifted to her by her parents when her mother was severely sick, and they knew she was counting her last days of life. Thirdly, and most importantly, the book is significant because of her belief in God as a Muslim. The special significance of the holy book supports Dr Nazy, helping her to feel secure and comfortable as she settles in New Zealand.

The religious values and beliefs of the migrants' home country may also influence how they engage with social difficulties, including how they cope with disappointment. For the participants in this study, objects were the vessel with which they started an unknown journey to an unfamiliar place. More specifically, religious objects acted as an anchor for the migrants as memories of past practices helped them to find stability and relief. Whenever Dr Nazy feels sad or emotional, she seeks comfort from the book which helps her to feel relieved. Ever since migrating to New Zealand, the meaning of the holy book as a material object has been amplified owing to the presence of comfort which emanates from the object, now that she lives in a foreign country which does not yet feel wholly familiar.

The comfort that Dr Nazy derives from the holy book reflects what migrants in other situations have described when discussing the role that religious objects play for them when seeking relaxation and recovery from discomfort (Joshi et al., 2008). Migrants who hold religious beliefs seek their comfort from the religious items they carried from their home countries and these items afford them a sense of home that assuages some of their struggles. Luong and colleagues (2009) found that Southeast Asian immigrant parents needed religious support to preserve their sense of hope, though, for example, praying at home. Religious objects play a shield against the trauma and stress throughout migrants' journeys. Most of the participants in my study chose to carry the religious items related to their faith with them, just as Dr Nazy does when she holds the Quran close to her, to feel comfort when in need of assistance. While discussing these objects of belonging and their locations in which they sit in the home, comfort is an intricate state, a collection of senses which exhibited significant factors of making oneself 'at home' (Noble, 2002). Participants, including Dr Nazy, speak of being comfortable in a material sense, but also in terms of having sensory satisfaction pertaining to their emotional investment in special objects of faith.

The reference that Dr Nazy makes to the holy book as a gift from her (now deceased) parents reflect observations made in other research on migrant experiences about the role of 'relational embeddedness'. Relational embeddedness refers to the extent to which people are located within networks associated with their countries of origin and that serve as a source of social capital (Portes, 1998; Kloosterman, Van der Leun, & Rath, 1999). Although used here in a different way, migrants in this study chose objects in accordance with their loved ones and use those objects to maintain and further build a sense of solidarity with them; they are relationally embedded through their close association with those who love and care for them, motivate them, and influence their lives in critical ways. This idea resonates within Dr Nazy's narrative of migration. Dr Nazy highlights that her parents who have passed away gave her the book, thereby creating a sentimental connection to it. After coming to New Zealand, she and her husband (who has also now passed away) have prayed through that holy book whenever they wanted. She said, *"My husband used to read at least two lines out of that book every single night before his bedtime. He was very appreciative and he prayed always, and we are very close with our culture".* She also now remembers her husband's everyday practices of reading and praying using the book. The book has developed great prominence indicating the way it is relationally embedded in their lives and familial and cultural contexts.

The possession and importance placed on faith-related objects by participants illustrates the way that the meaning of things changes over time, in this case intensifying. The meaning linked with a thing and the intensity of attachment to it, is not motionless over time but changes as the person evolves, along with changes to the function the object plays (Myers, 1985). Material things act as a medium of sensory attachment for migrants in their new lives, including in the way they personally grow and develop over time. In her study of adults' retrospection of their childhood attachments, Myers (1985) observed that "emotionally important things are a symbol of and contributor in a person's growth and change" (p. 6). The same quality of emotional attachment can be seen among my participants regarding faith related objects. With the passage of time, the following respondent became more affiliated with the object given by her father (The Quran), as she follows the guidelines from this holy book. For the participant, the material thing in the form of the holy book led her to a specific lifestyle in relation to her new setting. This idea is reflected in Sarah's comments:

> *My emotional connection is strong with The Holy Quran because it is not only given by my father but also something which connects me with my religion, my Allah (SWT). Since my childhood, I was taught to learn Arabic before I could read and write Bengali or English. I feel living in a new country did not change my outlook to my holy book but yes, it helped me feel the connection more than ever before. This holy book helps me to feel personally connected to my Almighty, my religion, my family, my culture, and my community in New Zealand.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

The participant feels a sensory connection with the holy book, a connection that has intensified since her transition to New Zealand. By acknowledging the sensory potential of material objects, Olesen (2010) argues that in most cases, the value of objects is recognized based on their capacity to create bonds with personal senses. This is quite similar to Sarah's case: the faith-based object gave her comfort in a non-Islamic country, and this comfort helps her in the process of settlement. For Sarah, when the objects related to faith cross the border of her home country they became more valuable, as a source of comfort for her. Her attachment to this holy book directs her lifestyle including her long-standing religious practices. Sarah became cautious upon moving to New Zealand because she realized she is now living in a non-Islamic

state and that this brings more responsibility as a practicing Muslim. Sarah's comments on the intensification of connection that she feels with the religious object points to personal developments that come with that connection, in the context of the new country.

The significance of treasured objects emerges in different stages of people's individual migration journeys (Belk, 1997). The objects related to faith play distinct roles in various circumstances and attachment to them bring home-related supports as migrants adjust to changed circumstances. Mariyam realises the value of the holy book after coming to New Zealand and the knowledge gained from the holy book assists her as a guide. Through use of the book, she can also differentiate between what is wrong and what is right, which helps her to choose the right way of life. These points regarding personal development in different stages of life become significant in Mariyam's discussion of how the meaning and use of objects has been changed, when she does not have the frequent chance and regularity to get back to her parents and to ask them questions related to her religion, culture, and lifestyle.

> *I think when we were back home, we take religion, culture, and our family for granted. We don't want to dig deep into religion. But when we moved here, there's obviously a culture shock after coming here. So quite recently, I have just decided that if I'm doubtful about something, I need to do my own research because I'm a grown up now. I cannot just rely on what my mom told me. With the Muslim clerics, it is quite difficult to choose what's right and wrong because there's so many options and constant contradiction. Even Quran encourages us to seek knowledge. I've just decided that if I get confused or if I need guidance for something, I need to do it myself from the book to teach my daughter. I always go back to this holy book to seek knowledge and guidance.*
>
> *(Mariyam, Pakistan)*

Mariyam rarely used the holy book in Pakistan, but she started using it frequently after coming to New Zealand so she could resolve confusion regarding her religion and life to educate her daughter about their faith. Mariyam's experience confirms the observation by Grayson and Shulman (2020) that retaining an object which is indubitably and substantially associated to a memorable past event assists a person. In Mariyam's case, the holy book helps her to practise religious duties and reminds her how she lived her life in Pakistan. Migrants use their objects

related to faith to perform religious practices and they carry it with them across the borders when they migrate, and then, live simultaneously between their countries of origin and destination. This state of 'in-betweenness' creates personal challenges, but religion and the objects associated with it, can play a prominent role in meeting those challenges.

Migration is "a transformative practice including a separation which can be seemed in terms of loss" (Naum, 2015, p. 72). Everyday life routines and practices are interrupted when people migrate to a new location, and as they face increasing isolation and estrangement. A study done on the faith-related perspectives of migrant workers by Vallejo (2018) asserts that migrants can practise their religion and have faith as they struggle with the challenges. As declared by one migrant worker participant in his study, "trabajando duro todos los dias", that means one must work hard every day (p. 46). Their faith and objects related to faith help them to deal with challenges that they face every day while working hard. Naum (2015) argues that migrants would reproduce parts of their former lives and customs by using things from their motherlands to survive with the depth of changes and loss that migration brings, and therefore address the sense of loss felt during the process of migrating. Mariyam describes many instances of how objects of faith helped her before, during and after migration. For Mariyam, the holy book acts as a saviour in her life, providing support whenever she felt lonely because of homesickness.

> *Initially, whenever I would get homesick, I would just read my holy book. I could feel that I am close to my parents and Pakistan. Again, in the sense that I could pray to God to make things easy for me. This book reminds me of my parents and all the things that they've gone through and the kind of lives that they've led. They have had ups and downs. So, I resort a sense of comfort from this book which reminds me of my creator and those special memories with my parents.*
>
> *(Mariyam, Pakistan).*

Mariyam's nostalgic comments introduce another dimension to the intensification of connection a person might feel toward religious objects upon migrating to a new country. Whenever she feels downhearted, she reads the holy book and remembers how it evoked a sense of comfort as she witnessed the struggles of her parents and the life they led as Muslim. When she was about to migrate, she prayed to God to make everything smoother for her in a

new place. Through this holy book she remembers the special memories of her home life in Pakistan and the way it involves her emotional bond with her parents and Almighty. This holy book not only lessened her homesickness but also helps her to feel the impression that she is in Pakistan with her parents.

The material culture of the home can be used to investigate realizations of the self by focusing on the self-creation of the subject through interaction with the object in what Miller (1987) calls process of objectification. A 'process of objectification' is facilitated by the point at which the subject's interrelationship with a specific thing can start a process of self-creation (Miller, 1987). In particular, the bonding of a person with a treasured object is a self-made process. The bonding with objects varies between persons and sometimes it is based on age and gender. The religious objects in the context of ageing and gender are extremely crucial in adult migrants' lives. A study by Wapner, Demick and Redondo (1990) observed that older women had substantially more treasured possessions, and those objects were mostly related with self-other relationships. In addition, women were more likely than men to attach with objects that served a comfort function. Their interpersonal relationship with the objects grows with the passage of time because migrants rely on these objects to seek comfort. For the participants in my study, the significance of material objects depends on several specifications, including for example, culture, religion, and the way of life in which they have grown up. Since childhood, the most familiar object of the household for Sadi is the holy book 'The Quran'. Connections between comfort, relational embeddedness, intensification of feeling, personal growth and rituals come together in Sadi's reflection on his connection with this particular religious object. He states:

> *Since our childhood, we are taught to pray in prayer mat by our parents. My parents used to pray Namaj, and I used to stand beside them but did not have any clue about Namaj or prayer because I was a kid. I tried to imitate them like the way they are praying. I used to pray a lot back in Bangladesh and I told myself that I will always pray when I will go abroad. Whenever I pray, I think about my country, and I pray to Almighty for my parents, relatives, and friends because I miss them. I pray for their happy and healthy life. I feel relieved when I pray for them.*
>
> *(Sadi, Bangladesh)*

Sadi used to pray in Bangladesh using the prayer mat but it exemplified a different meaning for him when he came to New Zealand. In Bangladesh, he used to pray through the prayer mat that Allah (SWT) would fulfil his desire to study abroad. After coming to New Zealand, he was driven emotionally to pray for his family and relatives. The elements of Sadi's account shows that attachment to objects is not only linked with life events, but also time, self-discovery, personal growth, and achievement. This resonates with Kopytoff's observation (1986) that things have biographies, just as people do. Emotional attachments with objects related to faith frequently provoke feelings such as warmth, pleasure, and sadness. Objects related to faith not only activate different emotions and symbolize feelings but also offer a means of making us content, that helps in the settlement process. For Sadi, the interpersonal relationship with the objects has grown with the passage of time because he was using this object time since childhood and he is using it to seek comfort upon arriving in New Zealand.

Material objects, specifically those objects associated with religious belief, support the participants in this study to sustain spiritual practices as well as to assist with the settlement processes. The spiritual practices help them to pray regularly and celebrate religious festivals with their community which eventually helps them to adapt and settle here. Above the local and national adherences, religious practices help to bolster senses of cultural belonging, identity, and membership. Migrants generate spiritual capital through objects related to faith and when most other possessions must be left behind, this capital persists. The narratives from most of the respondents offers a sense that faith related objects act as spiritual capital for them. Other kinds of connections also exist with the objects brought by participants in this study, including those related to the acquisition of new knowledge. It is to those that we now turn.

## The Role of Knowledge Acquisition Objects

The acquisition of knowledge regarding the country of destination is significant for migrants because when people migrate, they often have little information about where they are going. Living and working in a new country brings several difficulties. By gaining proper knowledge migrants may overcome these complications and build appropriate skills (Meyer, 2001) that, in addition, can culturally embedded so to help enable communication (Williams, 2006). Such knowledge becomes important, for example, when applying for a job and needing to 'sell' oneself at an interview. Knowledge of the destination language is especially important, acting as an invisible facilitator (Csedo, 2008). Knowledge acquisition was important to some

participants as they chose what to bring with them on their migration journey. Mofazzel, for example, chose to bring The World Almanac book because he thought the knowledge it contained would be useful to him. In the quote below he tells of how he uses the new knowledge he gains from 'The World Almanac' to help manage his new lifestyle and identity in New Zealand, as well as to increase his self-confidence. He states,

> *I feel, this book does not have direct economic value, but I might get questions in a job interview which I can answer from this book. So, I feel this book served me indirect economic value if I get the job.*
>
> *(Mofazzel, Bangladesh)*

The book serves a range of purposes for Mofazzel because it not only helps him acquire knowledge about New Zealand but also potentially helps him to get a desired job. Mofazzel believes that he might be asked questions in job interviews about the New Zealand economy and culture and if that is the case, he may be able to answer such questions from the knowledge he gained from this book. Being a Bangladeshi Muslim migrant, the knowledge gathered from this book gives him sense of security in an unknown country.

Migrants develop new habits within their adopted country, as they use the objects they bring with them in different ways. These new habits might involve new practices that bring security that helps to mitigate the struggles associated with migration. When the background of local people is unknown, information can be assumed by observing their habitus, noticing their taste, clothing, and activities (Bourdieu, 1984). Mofazzel was keen to know more about the host country and relied on the book that he believed may help him to know about his surroundings. His preference for using this book over other means offers a sense of the role that objects play for him in the acquisition of knowledge:

*I always believe, 'The World Almanac' has helped me to change my outlook living in a new country and even my attitude. The cultivation of crops, land, population, economy, culture, and climate of New Zealand is different from my country. I could gain information about all of it and judge the difference between two countries. I could find out any information anytime from this book because the internet and google were not that much available 25 years ago. The information has been updated or changed a lot in the last 25 years, but I always use it when I need to know any information not only about New Zealand but also about other countries of the world.*

*(Mofazzel, Bangladesh)*

It is interesting to note that Mofazzel believes that 'The World Almanac' book has facilitated his viewpoint and attitude about life after migration. He compares his old life to his new life and tries to make sense of the unfamiliar things in a new country. He also gets a sense of security from this book which is apparent from the frequency with which he consults it on information about New Zealand and world history. He is habituated to using this book and he still uses it frequently, often comparing the culture, economy, population, and climate of New Zealand with Bangladesh. He has repeatedly relied on this book because access to the internet from which we might now seek information was limited 25 years ago, when he first bought the book. The value of this object has remained constant for him, with him becoming habituated in his use of it even though more updated information is available online.

So far, I have been talking about objects as though they are distinct from the bodies that use them. But there is often a close connection between the objects migrants bring and their bodies. Indeed, the most significant personal space for people is their body and what they can carry on or with the body (Lyman & Scott, 1967). A participant from Maldives, Ilyas, is a good example. Ilyas decided to bring a Parker pen when he migrated to New Zealand. He has used the pen since his adolescence and into adulthood on a regular basis. As a previous retired minister of the Maldivian government, Ilyas had used his Parker pen to write about various issues related to his political roles and can recall instances of using the pen to write letters to the President of the Maldives on various political issues. He states,

*I really love this Parker pen because it is with me mostly all my life. I always carry this pen with me like my body parts and it's always in my pocket for regular use. I retired from my Maldivian Government job in 2017 when I came back second time in New Zealand. My hobby is writing, and I used to write letters to the president of Maldives with this pen. I prefer to write with pen rather typing by mobile or computer. I like to write down my thoughts about rising political issues and poems.*

*(Ilyas, Maldives)*

Ilyas has carried this Parker pen for 44 years and without it, he feels uncomfortable. It is as if the pen has become a physical part of him. Since his college life, Ilyas has used this Parker pen and he still prefers writing with it rather than typing because he feels he can record his opinions and feelings of his heart better with a pen than with a computer or mobile phone. He believes that his mind works well when he holds the pen to write, producing valuable knowledge as well as special recollections of his life experiences. Ilyas's position is reflected in the scholarship that shows that objects may offer pathways to reminiscence of previous events, remote places, and significant others (Graumann, 1986; Radley, 1990; Sherman, 1991).

This section has shown that some objects are useful for the acquisition of knowledge and for a sense of certainty about a country. Not only do some objects assist the participants in knowledge acquisition, but some also speak directly to their cultural tradition and heritage, inducing traditional clothes, food items and jewellery. For many migrants, traditional food items may evoke the distinctive homely taste, special clothing items can represent specific cultural practices, and other traditional objects can remind one of one's culture and heritage. It is to such matters that we now turn.

## The Role of Traditional Objects

The decision to take traditional objects from home countries is a seemingly common one because those objects help to preserve migrants' cultural identities. A study by Mehta and Belk (1991), for example, compared the sense of belonging amongst Indian immigrants in the U.S.A and Indians living in India. They found that objects played a role in the maintenance of collective identity and of its assembly/reassembly abroad. Group identities were conserved by Indians living in the USA through celebrations of Indian holidays, consumption of Indian

foods, and the wearing of Indian clothing. The traditional artifacts used in rituals possessed by Indians were particularly effective to maintain appearances and self-perceptions of being Indian. Correspondingly, this is also apparent in the account given of migration by Sarah, a Bangladeshi participant in this study. For Sarah, the traditional Bangladeshi clothing like the Bengali sarees promotes her cultural identity.

> *I also brought traditional clothes, different type of traditional Bengali sarees including my most favourite Jamdani, and traditional jewellery.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

Sarah brought Bengali casual clothes and sarees including a Jamdani which is a famous traditional attire of Bangladesh. Jamdani sarees are hand loomed, intertwined fabric made of cotton, which was historically made out of muslin. It is considered the most artistic and finest textile of Bangladeshi weavers and represents the legacy of hundreds of years. By choosing to bring this item with her Sarah is preserving an integral part of Bengali tradition by carrying and wearing the saree in New Zealand. In a similar way, the pieces of jewellery she chose to bring from Bangladesh are also special because they have the traditional touch of her culture and some of them are gifted by her 'very nearest and dearest'. Even if the object is simply a pendant or bracelet, it signifies the Bengali cultural heritage because the design is quite distinct. These traditional objects help her to feel a sense of belonging and continuity in an unknown country, which helps her to settle in New Zealand. Olesen's (2010) research reveals similar relationships with things, pointing out that the bodily and visual attributes of ethnic objects are cherished for their capacity in conjunction with other elements of the local environment of the country of origin, to create a sense of stimulation. After arriving in New Zealand, Sarah began to value the sense of emotion emanates from these objects she brought to the unfamiliar setting in which she now found herself and wears them.

The meaning attributed to objects changes for migrants due to them shifting location. For some, migrants begin to link those things with their past lives, looking to these objects as mementos of and as emblematic points of connection with the culture and significant others that they have left behind (Bih, 1992; Joy & Dholakia, 1991; Mehta & Belk, 1991). The things that migrants travel with also remind them of what interests those objects have served them in the past.

Morley (2000) cites a series of ethnographies in the city of London where objects directly related to the migrants' past lives have the creative ability to transform and/or adapt meaning beyond themselves, and in keeping with the interests and life strategies used by those who possess them. All objects, independently of their kind, purpose, use or presence, can participate in the (re)making, negotiating, and acknowledging of a person's place in the world after the shifts of location.

Food is of this kind. Food provides a simple means to strengthen identity through the processes of selecting certain food items and cooking specific dishes. Food, lifestyle, and everyday practices can help migrants feel at home after they move (Beer & Chen, 2007; Kershen, 2002; Petridou, 2001). These practices become especially important for a migrant community when they face hurdles in their political, economic, and social lives (Keeler, 2009). A comment from Sarah reflects this point:

> *I brought special traditional spices, dry food, cooking pots and few kitchenware items. Sometimes, I try to cook Bangladeshi traditional food like my mother. I enjoy it because it is something connected to my memories, my mother cooking at home.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

The flavour of domestic food is special for migrants as most of the traditional ingredients are unavailable in foreign countries. The meanings of domestic food for migrants go beyond the means to meet a basic human need when appropriate food ingredients are difficult to obtain. At stake with that challenge is the role of the senses in the negotiation of food, as an object. Pink uses the idea of 'movement' to understand this (Pink, 2009; 2012) Pink was interested in similarities in how people sense their surroundings as they migrate, and how they sustain these environments through the creation of a sensory aesthetic of 'home'. This could involve the sensory/material organisation of the home using native food ingredients, through the cooking of traditional food. The cooking with native spices recalls the tastes of traditional cuisines. Therefore, migrants try to maintain their consumption practices and preserve their traditional cuisine for a considerable period (Tolksdorf, 1975). Gunew (2000) further argued that consuming ethnic foods is a vital strategy embraced by migrants to connect their former life with their present one. In this vein, Sarah brought dry food and traditional spices to feel and

recall the taste of foods from her homeland, as well as to feel the essence of locally-grown products in her new societies.

Few things are as reminiscent as well as sensorial for migrants as cooking with traditional cooking pots. The urge to use traditional cooking pots and kitchenware items is also evocative for one participant because they offer a strong connection with the homeland. For migrants, the most ordinary local things can play a renewed importance as an "aide-memoire" of the homelands and everyday life that migrants left in their country (Naum, 2015, p. 73). In this same way the meaning of local objects, such as a cooking pot, was amplified for Sarah when she realised the worth of them in a new cultural setting, one that is completely different to the memories associated with her home country.

## Conclusion

Material objects have both symbolic and functional uses for the participants in this study. It is noteworthy that even functional objects can gain symbolic significance. The aspect of gender is also clearly visible in terms of the choices made and use of material objects during settlement. Most of the female participants use emotive or symbolic things compared to male participants who were more likely to use instrumental or functional things. For women, symbolic objects help them to feel comfortable, secure and settled in New Zealand because these objects support them to adjust in challenging circumstances by helping them to forget the issues of loss. However, for men, practical functions and the frequent usage of these objects in their everyday life provides them a sense of security and belonging because these objects help them to retain their identities. All the participants use these objects explicitly for reminding past events, practices and in fond of memory of loved ones, particularly where those objects had been gifted. They also associate these objects with deceased family members, with their personal growth, and with cultural and social identity as well as with nostalgia associated with cultural and religious rituals practised in their home country. The strength of relational bonds anticipates further symbolic significance of material objects, mostly for women participants during the settlement period.

The overall significance of objects increased due to changes in circumstances, and they stand to become more valuable after settlement, throughout their frequent utilisation with the passage of time. We have discussed the past and present states of these material objects. The next

chapter will turn to future biographies of these objects where we explore migrants' wishes for their most treasured objects.

# Chapter Six

## The Future of Things: Exploring the Biography of Materiality

### Introduction

Objects develop their own life histories as they move from person to person and place to place. In the anthropological literature it is acknowledged that 'things' have a social life (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986). The social life of things can help us understand the work they do in assisting people to not only meet their physical needs but, also, to feel their surroundings and to create their identities in ways that can be known to others (Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen & Kurzweil, 1986). The material objects people use define the surroundings, lifestyle, and practices of those people. In other words, objects define the way of life people choose to lead. People and objects develop into an interconnecting system. If we intend to understand such a system, we must recognize the circumstances that people and objects are participating in, for the creation and recreation of each other (Carrier, 1991).

In the previous chapter I discussed the way that Muslim migrants chose faith related objects, utilitarian objects and traditional objects, the familiarity of which helped them to settle in New Zealand. This chapter looks beyond the process of settlement to focus on the future placement of treasured material objects that participants have brought to New Zealand. All the participants wish to pass on such items to members of the next generation, sometimes because the objects were gifts, sites of memory and/or symbols of a legacy and markers of an identity for which they wish to be known. In this way, such objects are imagined as belonging also to their next generation, with each object helping to securing the long-time family connections and other personal relationships beyond the death of the owner.

### Passing on the Most Treasured Objects

Passing on material objects can be a way of affirming family relationships. Numerous personal and household objects, some evidently ordinary in nature, could be symbols of familial identity and reminiscence. Evidence of this dates back as far as the Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval periods, where refurbished and reused personal objects served to consolidate family relationships (White, 2008). Roman objects, including coins, jewellery, and spoons were

purposefully placed in Anglo-Saxon burial places and settlements have also been identified as sites of such material things in later mediaeval burials. Several of these items have been discovered on deserted Roman locations, and there is a possibility that these were passed down through generations that crossed the transition from 'Roman' to 'Anglo-Saxon'. The passing on of things is relevant to this chapter in that things can gain in symbolic value as they pass through generations. The longevity of these objects might have been infused with superficial amuletic or magical powers, as perceived and valued by Anglo-Saxon peoples for their role in inheritances, passed from one generation to another. These objects are magical and special for them because those are relics of previous 'Roman' ancestors. Indeed, magical and special meanings are believed to sometimes coincide. If a member of an 'Anglo-Saxon' family found a vintage object with apparent protective or magical properties, this could have been cherished and given to other family members, maintaining its foundations in the ancient past but achieving familial symbolism in the present. While here I am discussing ancient Rome, these ideas are relevant to the present study as each participant talked about their plans for passing on specific things to future generations. Whatever the special qualities attributed to the objects concerned, each of them wanted to pass those objects on in order to secure connections between generations and to keep the memory of their time on earth thriving.

The passing on of objects was articulated in different ways and different contexts, including gifting, memories and inheritance. Objects that are passed on as a gift allows the next generation of migrants to consider them as both family treasure and objects of their ancestors. However, those gifts from loved ones could also be integrated into a family's collection of cherished things. Additionally, it could build on to something special in the family narratives to be passed down to the next generations of living family members or forgotten with the deceased. It is to those that we now turn.

## The Passage of Treasured Objects as Gifts

From a sociological viewpoint, gifts may serve numerous social functions including the conveying of identity, the exercise of control and subordination, and the specification of group boundaries (Schwartz, 1967). Gifts say things that are emblematic of the qualities of both gift giver and receiver. People often give gifts to re-confirm or establish their connection with others, which means that these gifts are a reflection of both the giver and the receiver. Gifts are also used to convey the significance of interpersonal intimacy, to establish new relationships

or to restore reciprocal commitments that need rebuilding. Our first example involves a participant from Pakistan who received her holy book as a wedding gift from her parents. She wishes to gift the book one day to her daughter because she feels her daughter could take guidance from it.

> *I want to pass this holy book to my daughter. So that she can seek the same kind of comfort and emotional attachment that I seek from the holy book that my parents gifted me. My duty is to make my daughter's integrity strong enough so that she can pick what is right and what is wrong. I would want her to take help from my book the same way that I did. So, I want her to have same kind of connection with it the way I have.*
>
> *(Mariyam, Pakistan)*

Mariyam wants to pass this holy book as a gift to her daughter because she wants her to feel the same level of comfort and emotional connection she has experienced with it. She believes that the development of her daughter's morality is her responsibility so that she might make rational choices in her life. She wants her to seek guidance in the book so that she can choose between right and wrong, as Mariyam herself does when she is confused about anything in her life. Mariyam's narration of responsibilities as a mother is manifested in the passing on of her possessions through gifting. Mariyam's gifting of the holy book represents a means of continued parental giving in her daughter's later years, a demonstrable symbol of caring and provision that expand beyond her daughter's youth and relative dependence.

Mariyam's comment is illustrative of the existence of gender differences in how men and women interact with objects, including the role of women in being largely responsible for future generations (Pearce, 1998). In this sense, women tend to gift objects that preserve memories as well as objects that signify emotional attachments. Pearce has also claimed that treasured things are often passed down the female line in a family, suggesting "that material culture is matrilineal" (Pearce, 1998, p. 95). This is arguably because women are associated with the roles of caring and nurturing (Miller, 1976; Gilligan, 1982) and consequently are considered to be better able to look after them compared to men. In Mariyam's case, she wants to pass it down to her daughter because she believes her daughter can nurture this object the same way she did. The interpersonal relationships that Mariyam shares with her daughter

derives her desire to gift that book to her because she has looked after it. Again, the gifted object is embedded with the care of multiple generation of women.

'Doing family' through the bestowing of gifts is the ultimate act of strengthening familial relationships and of building family responsibilities to safeguard the continuation of family over time. The gifts that are given become symbols of these relationships. It is women who generally more likely "perform the responsibilities implied by family, and continue the family connections" (Cameron, 1990, p. 29), with their own and their partner's families (Finch & Mason, 1993). Upon the death of a family member, it is also women who supervise the distribution of possessions. This is not to reflect the point that women are more suited to these tasks than men, but women often take responsibility for dealing with family obligations. This is not to suggest that male participants did not gift things. However, the things they wanted to gift to others were typically of less emotional or symbolic value and instead had some practical usage. All the male participants wanted to share why they gave more emphasis to instrumental objects. In most cases, they formed habits through the use of specific objects, and they wanted to pass those material objects as their memory to preserve intergenerational relationships with the next generations. These habits are formed as a part of their everyday life and the participants did not want to pass on the things, they also wanted to pass on those practices.

Those who give gifts and are the recipients of gifts form a range of bonds that go beyond the immediately 'social' kind. Gifting practices of reciprocity also create connections between home and destination country as well as between the dead and the living. The Māori concept of 'The hau' – "spirit of the gift" (Sahlins, 1972, p. 151) – urges us to think about acts of reciprocity and how these shape the object given and received, rather than taking objects as a given. Mauss (1990) explained it as a spiritual force and that a gifted object has some kind of supernatural power, which seeks to return to its original owner or place of origin. Mauss asked why gifts must be repaid: "what power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?" (Mauss 1990, p. 4). In the case of the deceased, the final act of repayment is not possible. The gift from the deceased to the recipient is an act of reciprocity but they have no agreement about 'payment'. In other words, the gift symbolises the totality of social, political, economic, kinship, religious, rational, and personal relations of the deceased in a society. The recipients try to preserve the gift as a symbol of holding those significant relations of the deceased, an act of acknowledgement by the recipient to, symbolically at least, return the gift. The gift is profoundly loaded with power, and Mauss encourages us to recognize and

investigate the pyramids of power that shape exchange. The same is found with the act of exchange termed as "préstation totale" – or "total contract" (Mauss, 1990, p. 188). He suggested a transaction tends towards gift or commodity depending on the nuances of the relationship between the donor and recipient involved. The spirit of gift exchange owes a good deal to Bourdieu (1977), who has extended a yet underemphasized aspect of Mauss's analysis of the gift (Mauss, 1976, p. 70). Bourdieu (1977) emphasizes that gifts create obligations that must be reciprocated, and failure to do so places the recipient in a subordinate position. The aspect of reciprocity cannot be diminished even though no material gifts can be given in return to the dead. Even though the repayment for the gift is not possible to the dead, the recipient can use the preservation of those things as a means of repayment. This practice of preserving a gift assumes that gifts will always be repaid. This type of reciprocity can be exhibited valuing the material objects especially by cherishing the connection between the living and the dead and acknowledgement in terms of family.

Sadi, from Bangladesh, understands the role that reciprocity – the giving and receiving of gifts plays in the anticipation of death. He understands that exchange involves not only the object being gifted but also the values associated with it. He wants to gift his prayer mat to his next generation, a prayer mat that he also received as a gift from his mother. His comment illustrates how objects, social relations, and social identities collectively criss-cross not only location, but also time as it is shared across borders and generations. As Sadi states,

> *I want to pass my values, norms, and belief through my prayer mat to my next generation. I want them to use my prayer mat to pray on it. I hope they will do 'Dua' (pray) for me.*
>
> *(Sadi, Bangladesh)*

Sadi talks about how he is practicing his values, norms, and beliefs through that prayer mat. He believes that the next generation can assume their ancestor's principles through subsequent use of the prayer mat and, through their practise, they will learn the significance of praying. When material things are the centre of attention for the next generation, they can reveal the significance of those objects for their migrant ancestors. The whole act is reciprocal because the donor has the pleasure of knowing that his values and practices are being continued through the receiver.

As we talk about the tangible form that objects can take, as migrants look to pass them down to members of the next generation as gifts, we need to also take account of the role played by intangible elements of the object. A notable kind of intangible element that participants speak about is memory. Material objects can be treasured for the memories they support. It is to this that we now turn.

## The Passage of Treasured Objects as Memories

Material objects play significant roles when they are involved in significant events, as they trigger personal and shared memories. Objects can become powerful cues for memory as they carry people's past with them. When a relationship between the objects and memories has been established, it implies that the ownership represents or can remind of one or more memories. A solid connection to memories is recognized to be a contributing factor of attachment with objects. Preserving, showcasing, or using objects within the home enable us to connect with the past, getting the object closer to the present or storing it away and giving us permission to forget (Kirk & Sellen, 2010; Van Gennip et al., 2015). People often engage in practices of passing on their memories to their future generations when they grow older through the passing on of such things (Lindley, 2012). People pass on their autobiographical memories to the inheritors in whose possession the objects often perform as vessels, becoming key sites of connection between past and future (Ahde-Deal et al., 2017; Kelly, 2016). People often pass souvenirs and special things to facilitate the process of remembering to their next generation.

Objects that are initially valued for their practical use may change their meanings where their value comes to lie as a source of special memories. The following example from Mofazzel illustrates this idea and his book 'The World Almanac' can be identified in this way, as objects of memories whose histories and social lives surpass their meaning as useful objects. Mofazzel talks about the book with which he travels in this way:

> *I will keep it as a part of life and it will have the same significance in all my life. I believe it will be more as a memory of me or as a gift to my daughter than a useful material thing because every information in this book is updated today which is available online.*
>
> *(Mofazzel, Bangladesh)*

Mofazzel is enthusiastic about the 'The World Almanac' book and wants to take care of it as long as he lives. He wants to pass it to his daughter because of the importance it has had throughout his adult life. A sign of its important role in supporting pleasant memories (it is 'a part of life') comes from his acknowledgement that the book is not particularly useful because the information it contains is no longer up to date.

Memory helps to provide identity with continuity amidst major changes in a person's situation. Memories plays a role in building up connection between an object and self (Ahde-Deal et al., 2017). Therefore, it follows that the memories linked with objects held in families – those that we inherit as well as those originating from our individual direct practices – are exceptionally powerful because they establish a "specialised circle of memory" (Misztal, 2003, p. 95). The comment from Mofazzel supports observations that have been made about the ability of objects to support migrants' memories of migration. Personal objects, especially everyday utilitarian things brought by first-generation migrants, often become very special in their daily lives, triggering memories of home, loved ones and the past (Habermas & Paha, 2002) and these objects are profound in assisting migrants to deal with the effects of cultural shifts. Following migration, material things can hold a kind of energy that is transferable to next generation. The warmth and physical proximity can be felt, re-enacted, and remembered through the material objects given by significant others. For first-generation migrants especially, material objects brought from the home country act as a powerful connection between the home and culture that has been left behind. In Mofazzel's case, 'The World Almanac' produces profound material connections by maintaining memories of two homes across borders and forming close ties to his place of origin even if they are two distant locations. Material objects can be treated as symbols of difference within the context of the new society, as some cultural things allow people to differentiate themselves from the new place. For Mofazzel, the material continuity and the perceived normalcy of lives stretched across borders through knowledge acquisition from this book but his daughter who was born in New Zealand may find that the same object work for her in different ways. For his daughter, it has more symbolic value compared to functional value – remembering his father and how important the book was to him. For both, the same object become narrative tools for an intergenerational sharing of knowledge, practices, and interconnection. For instance, this book is a memory of Mofazzel for her daughter because the information of the book has become outdated. Again, the objects may become a source of long-lasting bond between several generations as members of the successor generation engage in similar practices. This latter point can also be seen in the experience of

Ilyas, the previous minister in the Maldivian government who had migrated to New Zealand. The pen with which he wrote as a politician is the site of pleasant memories of that role, and memories he hopes his elder daughter will share.

> *After five years, I feel this pen will be in the drawer with me until I lose it. I will pass my pen to my elder daughter because that will be a memory of me for her. She understands my lifelong connection with this Parker pen…. She will get it when I die, and it is the best memory of me for her because it is special for me.*
>
> *(Ilyas, Maldives)*

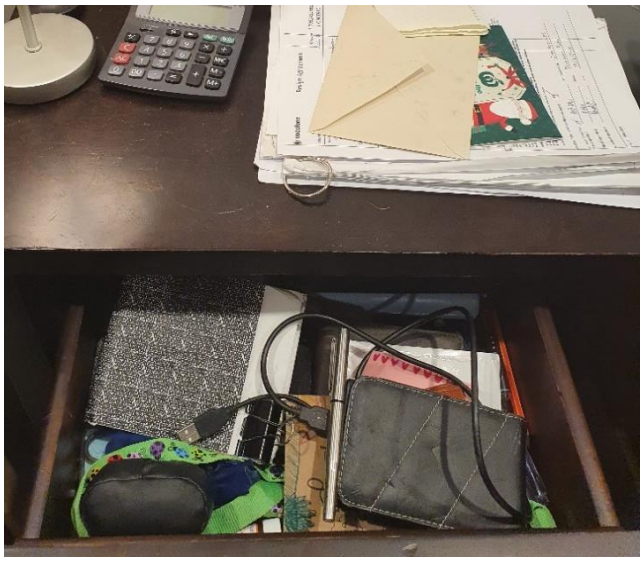

*Figure 6.1: Ilyas's Parker Pen Inside the Bedside Drawer*

The importance of the pen has not faded for Ilyas with the passage of time and he still keeps the Parker pen in his bedside drawer (see Figure 6.1). He wants to give it to his elder daughter as a memorial because his daughter is close to him, and she acknowledges her father's feelings with the Parker pen. She understands her father's sentiment and why her father kept that Parker pen with him all his life as well as how valuable it is for him.

The capacity of objects to trigger memories has several benefits, but it may also have unpleasant effects. Individuals who like to 'hoard' may have a dilemma in letting go of possessions because they fear losing the associated memories (Hartl et al., 2004; Kyrios et al., 2018). This can be seen, for example, with people who shift into aged care homes, who readily recall objects they have had to leave behind (Stevens et al., 2019; Phenice & Griffore, 2013). Ilyas is afraid of losing the Parker pen because he feels if he loses it, he will also lose his memories. This implies the fact that he is a hoarder and this pen acts as a way of retaining connections to memories. For him, retaining memories is more significant that he gathered since his college life by using this Parker pen in several events.

Material objects can be carriers of memories associated with beloved persons. The exteriors of those objects hold "physical imprints or traces from the activities in which they are caught up" with those loved ones (Knappett, 2002, p. 108). Imprinted in this way, the objects host memories. These material things do not stand for somebody in a symbolic way but, rather, are more directly connected with the physical uses to which the loved ones had put them. This can be seen with the holy book that Sarah received from her parents. The physical connection she has as receiver of the holy book, supports a material connection begun by the giver. The participant wants her next generation to use the holy book as a source of guidance, as she has done.

> *It will be with me forever till the time I am alive. I want to pass it to my children as a memory of me, my husband, and their grandparents. I want them to take the guidance the way I did and follow the pathways of Islamic belief. I believe, they will also value my holy book the way I value it.*
>
> *(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

Sarah wants to pass the holy book to her children because she believes it will help them to perform religious practices like their mother. The practices of faith are imprinted upon the book, such that the physical book becomes a source of memory for the next generation. In her absence, her practice with that book could be a guidance for her children.

The passing down of material objects to others to continue practices is a special instance of inheritance. The passing of objects through inheritance is unique because the obligation to return the gesture does not apply. The obligation cannot happen because it is broken by death. The special gifts left as inheritance frequently signifies the obligation associated with it and sometimes transformed into memories. Now we will turn to those.

## The Passage of Treasured Objects as Inheritances

Family dynamics become evident through the relational aspects and passage of objects in terms of family legacies to the next generation. Finch and Mason (2000) speak of this as a practice of "doing, reasoning, and working [inheritance] out in your own relationships" (p. 165). This suggests that personal and symbolic attributes of family relationships are expressed through

inheritance. While relationship dynamics are the focal point of this approach, the role of interaction is indirectly expressed. Inheritance performs a vital role in the giving of assets (Sussman, Cates & Smith, 1970; Cates & Sussman, 1982a, 1982b). Passing treasured objects through inheritance is special and specific objects that are passed on appears to play a role in the very continuation of a family identity over time.

Planning to pass things on to the next generation is important for people, especially for migrants as they carried, preserved, and maintained the material things for so long in unfamiliar surroundings. It is quite usual for the older generation to plan the future of their things as they wish that some of their possessions will become heirlooms. Older generations may create a will that outlines their intentions or simply tell people about how they want their possessions to be divided among the family. The participants in this study want to create a legacy for the upcoming generation, so that the members of that generation can feel their ancestors' social identities. The passing on of objects related to faith, as a legacy within family, is most common for the participants of the study (as discussed in the previous chapter). These religious objects hold special meaning for the participants and the cultural life they lead, and they hope the next generation will participate in those same beliefs and practices. These objects convey a form of support and comfort for most of the respondents and they chose to pass down the legacies of those treasured objects so their next generation can feel the same. The interview with Dr Nazy indicates that she not only wants to pass her holy book as a legacy to her son and grandson but also that she wants her legacy to be maintained. The bond is strengthened by material objects between the dead as the giver of gifts and the living as receivers. This bond becomes the sign of an eternal connection, and that type of connection is created through 'legacy'. The following comment from Dr Nazy illustrates the significance of object as inheritance for her:

> *I love the way of passing things to generation by generation like our father and mother did. I am going to pass my holy book to my son and grandson because it is a great feeling. I want to pass it because it has meaning. It had and it has, and it will have meaning in my life till the time I am alive. I mean nowadays you cannot push children, but they can see how I live. I believe this holy book will look after my son and grandson the way it is looking after me. The way I raised my son, I believe this holy book will be everything to him because whatever I respect and believe I kept it for years and years.*
>
> *(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

The participant is a devout Muslim and wants to pass the holy book which she inherited through her parents to the next generation so that they can follow the same path she has followed all her life. She wants them to have the same values and faith, and she wants them to care for this book in the future as she knows how significant it would be for the younger generation as a legacy of her own life. She hopes that they too will experience the comfort and security that she felt while sleeping with the holy book beside her in her bedside table. She holds a strong belief that the passing on things to the next generation as an inheritance would establish an eternal connection among the generations.

## Conclusion

This chapter has identified three key elements related to the future of the objects treasured by participants in this study: gifting; memories; inheritances. These elements protect the material objects, they pass the objects as a symbolic or instrumental gift; they convey memories associated with these objects; they pass the objects as inheritances to their next generation to be reminders to the next generation of their religious practices and the way of life they led. All the participants of this study anticipate they will pass their most treasured objects on to members of the next generation. They also believe that, in doing so, they will be known by the next generation. The analysis above shows that passing on things to the next generation is done differently by men and women. However, the intention of passing things on is similar. All the female participants want to pass on their symbolic objects with a view to sharing their memories and emotional attachments, and most male participants chose to pass instrumental objects that they believe will be the bearer of their memories and identities to the next generation. From this we can conclude that these types of material objects are passed on to have effects on family relationships, including symbolic and instrumental objects which have the power to affirm connection with the next generation.

# Chapter Seven

## The Comfort of Things: Negotiating Comfort, Security and Continuity through the Material World

### Introduction

The role of material culture is inseparable from the settlement processes of migrants because "our material existence is inseparable from things" (Sarabando, 2015, p. 604). My research supports this observation by showing that material things brought from home countries helps Muslim migrants to feel settled in New Zealand. Before leaving their home country, migrants decide which material objects they will carry and which they want or need to leave behind. They choose objects based on a few factors, for example, how useful an object is, whether an item was gifted to them by loved ones, as well as other attachments they have with the material objects that have special meaning for them. The book by Daniel Miller (2008) named *The Comfort of Things* challenges sceptical theoretical interpretations of consumer culture and materialism which often present objects as artefacts of socio-economic structures rather than things that have personal meaning. My research has shown that things have more than economic value. They have symbolic value which helps people to perform their everyday practices and beliefs. Material objects may help the settlement process of migrants and offer a means to lessen the difficulties they face when they merge 'old' lifestyles with new. In my study, material things such as religious, traditional, and utilitarian objects offer a sense of home and belonging when migrants must deal with instability arising in their everyday lives from migration.

Throughout the process of migration, tension exists around the formation of identity in the host country, for which material objects brought from the home country play a mediating role. In the age of migration, identity is not an inherited, ascribed, nor achieved status, but it is the status that migrants seek to maintain amidst a community of 'strangers' (Castells, 2015; Horenczyk et al., 2013). Migrants engage in identity change in numerous ways. Some seek to integrate with the host community. Others find themselves performing practices of 'home' with much more enthusiasm than non-migrants perform their practices of home, because of their

'hyper culture' position (Askegaard et al., 2005). In my study, all my participants remain close to the identity associated with their homeland.

Objects can help this process of negotiation (of identity) into which migrants are placed. Objects can do so by taking on the status of 'surrogate selves' (Jacob & Malpas, 2013). Here it implies that, our sense of self is embedded within our relationships and engagement with materiality, such that neither the self nor objects can be understood without the other. In this form, objects can provide migrants with a space that is askew from 'themselves', enabling them to generatively reflect on changes their identities are undertaking. Within this study, the participants use the material things brought from their home countries to not only support the settlement process through a fostering of comfort, security, and continuity. They also use the same objects to actively work with the loss, change and struggle they have endured while settling in a country with languages, cultures, and religions unfamiliar to them.

## Between Comfort and Loss

People may express themselves through their possessions and the domestic material objects with which migrants travel may create the comfort, familiarity, and security they need to which help with settlement in the host country. While revealing the intricate relationships between objects and people, Miller (2008) observes that "the relationships between people and objects, or between people, objects, and other people, not only represents an aesthetic, or an ordering of values, but provides a sense of comfort" (p. 296). This sense of material comfort may take several forms, from tangible sensuality to the intangible satisfaction of familiarity. For the participants in this study, this type of comfort, familiarity, and security acts as a support system during their settlement process in New Zealand. The following comment of Dr Nazy reflects that any places she goes she will feel the sense of comfort and security because of the presence of her holy book. She states,

*Any country I went, I was Muslim, I am Muslim, my holy book is The Holy Quran….Whenever I have that book, everywhere is my home. That sense of home I feel wherever I go. But that book must be with me. I can tell how? This country is safe compared to others, the safest country. But I wouldn't say it because I feel safe with that book only. We believe in Islam and Muslims believe that it protects us even if we are here or any dangerous place.*

*(Dr Nazy, Iran)*

From her previous experience of traveling to many countries, she feels New Zealand is the safest country of all. But her feeling of safety does not solely relate to being in a safe country but is more concerned with carrying the holy book wherever she goes which gives her a sense of security. The Quranic content contains the fundamental Islamic beliefs and ultimate guidance from Allah (SWT). She follows that in her everyday life, and it has the same significance since the beginning of her life, even after shifting to New Zealand. She knew from her previous travelling experiences that every country is different and anywhere she chose to migrate will certainly have many new things which she needs to adapt and accept. The sense of comfort is always there for her amidst all these changes in life because she carries that book. She feels a sense of security, comfort, and assurance in New Zealand because as a Muslim woman, she believes the book will protect her.

The creation of home is a constant mediation of transnational belonging and local attachments (Ehrkamp, 2005). The construction of home attachment is the first step for migrants to settle themselves in a new country. Pakistan-born Mariyam tries to create an ongoing negotiation between home attachment and transnational belonging by using her most treasured object. Throughout this process, objects related to faith help her to settle in New Zealand.

*Allah has always emphasized in 'Quran' quite a lot on the right of the neighbours, general moral values, and things like that. 'Quran' tells us to be kind to your neighbours and even to the people that you don't know. You need to smile at them and give greetings. So, in that way, yes, this book helped me to adapt in New Zealand…… 'The Quran' doesn't tell me to judge people. I basically follow the rules so that kind of made it easier for me to connect with the people in New Zealand.*

*(Mariyam, Pakistan)*

Following the guidelines stated in The Quran itself helps the participant to settle in her destination country. Even though the participant was previously living in her home country where the religion of Islam is dominant, she could not give greetings to strangers because the social norms are different. After arriving in New Zealand, she is aware of the cultural difference and she tries her best to use the knowledge she gained from the holy book to connect with New Zealanders which, in turn, helps her settlement process.

Material things brought from their home countries can provide a sense of security for migrants when they face struggles in their new life, and they compare those struggles with their old life. Miller (2008) used anthropological approach to demonstrate how to read people through their belongings, suggesting that material culture signifies individuality and connectivity. For him, "material culture matters because objects create subjects much more than the other way around" (Miller, 2008, p. 1). His book *The Comfort of Things* is not just about how individuals express themselves through material possessions, it is also about how people create themselves (intellectually and emotionally) with the help of material things. For Mofazzel, his book helps him to be knowledgeable enough so that he learnt to adjust himself in a western country because 25 years ago, there were very few migrants living in New Zealand and they could share very little information. He states:

*I felt that they had different cultural heritage and I need to assimilate with them. I was very cautious about my identity as a Bangladeshi that if I did something wrong my country would be blamed. I never wanted to do any mistake, dishonesty or bad attitude that might create bad impression about my country and me. It helped me a lot to lead a positive lifestyle……My book helps me to know about social as well as cultural arena of New Zealand and gave me ideas how to behave and how to make myself included. I never knew about these words like Māori, Paheka, Samoan and Kiwi, their language, culture, religion, and way of life. It also helped me in my personal life by enriching my knowledge regarding the population and their lifestyle in New Zealand.*

*(Mofazzel, Bangladesh)*

Mofazzel could feel the change in his lifestyle, and he was trying to judge the difference. There is a tension that exists between his present life and his imagined future. Even though the future cannot be predicted, his book could prepare him with the knowledge that is expected of him. His reliance on the book signifies that he is a knowledge-seeking person and with the help of the material book he could be familiar with his surroundings. He could create his identity as emotionally stable and intellectually knowledgeable in a new environment with the help of this book.

Miller asserts that things in one's home say something about their owner, because things in a person's home have been gradually accumulated as a manifestation of that person or household (Miller, 2008). People keep every object in their house for a reason because every object that exists in a home is a part of wholeness, a system of objects. The above comment by Mofazzel reflects that his book helps him to gain knowledge about the destination country which in turn provides him a sense of security.

Not all of my participants gained comfort from the things they brought with them. Migration also brings experiences of loss regarding identity and this was deeply felt by some participants. The material objects can induce dual implications when we use that to control our relation to loss, that might also provoke us with undesirable and unanticipated remembrances of those losses (Hallam & Hockey, 2001). The material objects can help to overlook these losses but at the same time also remind these losses. Ilyas, for example, could feel the tension between his

past and present life because objects brought from home countries might have other impacts on those life of individuals. There is a significant difference because the narratives of Dr Nazy, Mariyam and Mofazzel discussed above have a state of continual growth but for Ilyas, he could feel a sense of loss because something was changing but unsure what it is. Hence it means that, sometimes objects evoke memories over which we have no control and things may thereby bother us no matter how much we try to forget. Ilyas faces the similar situation sometimes when he remembers his past life of residing in Maldives without his family.

> *My case is little different about migration because my family was already living in New Zealand for 7 years and after that I joined them. When I searched for the Muslim community, we found that many Muslim family lives here who are from Maldives and we have great connection with them…. I used to write letters to my wife and daughters with my favourite Parker Pen. Sometimes, when I am writing with that pen, I can remember those lonely times when I used to live in Maldives alone without my family.*
>
> *(Ilyas, Maldives)*

Objects acted as a redeemer for Ilyas when he was living in Maldives. When there, he could express his emotions in words through writing letters to his family as he was missing them. He used to hear from them about New Zealand as the most peaceful country and assumed that living here must be more comfortable and safer than anywhere else. After coming to New Zealand, the Parker pen which helped Ilyas previously to deal with loss, could now bring back the feeling of isolation he faced when he was without his family in the Maldives.

Migration can also provide opportunities for the emotionally challenging task of revaluating past and present relationships, with decisions around objects enabling the migrant to externalise the task (Marcoux, 2001). Moving becomes a means to rearrange relationships and memories by bringing them back into consciousness, by making them explicit and for deciding which ones to reinforce through choices made about objects, which ones to leave or put on hold. This idea was reflected in some participants' comments. For example, Sadi states:

*I was happy after coming here in first two months. After two months, I used to feel very lonely without my family and think why did I come here? Again, I started praying regularly in that prayer mat and I felt good. I can feel the sense of belongingness in New Zealand whenever I am praying through my prayer mat. I feel like I am in Bangladesh with my family around.*

*(Sadi, Bangladesh)*

For Sadi, the movement from one country to another helped to reshuffle the relationship with the person who gifted him the most treasured object. The significance of family relationships changed for Sadi when he started missing his family while living alone. When he began praying with the prayer mat, he could feel the sense of home and belongingness after praying every day, the same feeling he had when he was praying in Bangladesh in his own home. Throughout the early period of his adaptation and settlement in New Zealand, objects related to faith brought from his home country helped him to deal with feelings of estrangement and discontinuity in the new environment.

The familiar sense of taste and smells help the migrants to develop an instinctive connection between their home country and their new country (Longhurst et al., 2009). Sometimes, it is related to their food habits and everyday practices such as grocery shopping. For instance, shopping at the Halal butcher, which offers not only 'nostalgic' goods that cater to the flavours, religious beliefs and habits of migrants but also a significant place for socialisation and chat (Ehrkamp, 2005). Shopping at the halal butcher and grocery store creates a prospect in which all the senses are involved through the visuals, smells and tastes that resembles migrants' home country. These senses are much significant for the migrants because they connect them with their memories of lost past, family, and community.

*Whenever I miss my parents, friends, and relatives I try to hear Quran recitation. It really helps me because I did not have any idea about leading a life in western societies. But after coming here, I do believe that whatever I brought from Bangladesh help me to adapt here…. For example, it is written in Quran to eat halal meat. In Bangladesh, we could find halal meat everywhere. But in New Zealand, there are few specific butchery shops where we can find halal meat and local foods. Again, we can eat halal food from very few restaurants which sells halal food.*

*(Sarah, Bangladesh)*

To create a sense of familiarity and counter the feelings of isolation from family she seeks help from her holy book and tries to follow the guidelines from it because that holy book imposes rules on how meat ought to be processed. The local halal butchery shop has become a common place where Sarah can socialize with other migrants from her community. She tries to recreate the familiarity of Bangladeshi food and home she left behind. Although her most treasured object is a faith related object, it also became a memory aid about places, events, and people while guiding her lifestyle, including her meat consumption. For Sarah, religious objects are a treasured possession that facilitate her life journey and initiate a profound bond to memories of lifetime support, comfort, and sense of connection (Jarrett, 2013). These memories help Sarah to be familiar and to settle in a western country like New Zealand.

My research focuses on how material objects brought from countries of origin help all the participants throughout their process of settlement by re-creating a sense of home. In doing so, ideas of Miller (2008, p. 302) who argues about the concept of a dangerous "cult of the individual". Individualism is associated with seclusion, and living alone with failure, something his participants were concerned about. This response suggests a longing for relationships with family, friends and the community. For Miller, material objects are connected to these relationships, stating that "people exist for us in and through their material presence" (Miller, 2008, p. 286). My research reflects these ideas. Most of the participants keep gifts given by loved ones and things related to their faith in their house which suggests the significance of their relationships and root of their belief in religion of Islam. They maintain their identity as a Muslim and at the same time they are also passing down those things to their next generation to preserve their beliefs. Several participants could also recall their past, their

relationships, the demise of loved ones, a sense of loss, and their changed circumstances through those same material objects. The significance of objects in sojourners' homes represents that for some, things in the home can induce feelings of homesickness while for others things can support them to deal with those similar feelings (Wilson, 2005). The domestic material objects in their houses are not insignificant or selected by coincidence. These things are chosen consciously by them to re-create a sense of home which indicate an individual's past identity, connection to the past, and connection to family. The connection with these things helps to accelerate the continuity of their identity by holding the migrants' attachment with the home and the past when they are living in a foreign country.

## Conclusion

In the shape of material objects, migrants bring a piece of home to their new country where they are living. Most of the participants did not try to reconstruct a new identity, and to a great extent they try to preserve their original attributes of past identity by performing cultural and religious practices. However, there are some types of tensions involved in identity re-creation between holding to an identity and changing that identity in the context of the new culture and environment. I unfold two expressions of tension or anxiety arising from the sense of loss and change regarding reformation of identity in a new environment. The first is between the past and the present, and the second is between present and future. The tension is existing in the fear of the past is gone, what present is unfolding and what is coming in future. They are unsure or unknown of the role that material objects play in the negotiation of that change and these feelings could create a sense of loss. Their experiences of change in the sense of self have given rise to different ideas about how their identity can be recreated and reactivated because migration develops migrants' identity by introducing new codes of behaviour, understanding, and learning in the host country which boosts their continual growth and personal development. As a result, loss and change are apparent in the different stages of migration.

Nowhere is that negotiation of loss and change more evident than in migrants' desires for their objects' futures beyond their personal lifetimes. The participants in my study each want to pass down those treasured material objects because of their desire to maintain their presence as ancestors to their descendants, in the form of material objects. By doing so they are creating their existence in future life not only for the individual self but also of the material objects. The ultimate truth of their desire is to create continuity enacted through things. Their future

aspirations reveal that they want to pass down these things so that they can create a bridge between past and future and be remembered to the next generation in terms of their belief as well as practices. The passing down of objects, stories, and practices enables migrants to hold on to a sense of agency regarding their presence with future generations and to confirm that the past continues to exist in the future.

# Chapter Eight

## "Negotiating the Past, Present and Future through the Material World"

### Conclusion

This thesis has brought two fields of scholarship together migration, and materiality. This amalgamation has enabled me to examine how material objects help migrants' settlement in New Zealand. It offers new insights on how migrants negotiate their identities amidst changes in location and time. Migrants travel with material things they anticipate might give them comfort. But the comfort they acquire in a new country is not the same comfort which they had in their home country. As a result, they are aware that comfort has changed due to changes in location, but they try to secure for themselves a sense of 'home' through those objects, knowing that this is also some kind of negotiation that they undertake. This sense of negotiation continues even if these things are very close at hand to the migrants, such that they feel secure in the possession of those objects. Migrants are very close to those objects that relate to their past identities, especially those associated with religion and culture. In terms of a final stage in the biographies of things, migrants may feel unsure what will happen to those objects when they die, and they may think of passing those objects to people who will value these things the way they had. Even if these stages of the biography of things show up like a linear narrative, time is not as straightforward as it appears. The variety of roles that material things play in the settlement process of migrants allows the process of meaning-making to move back and forth in time and space, including times before the migrants had moved country, to a time beyond their death, and back to the present time and place they live now. The study suggests that migrants continue to negotiate changes in time and space through their engagement with material objects.

The purpose of this research is more than to simply describe the role of material objects in the everyday practices of migrants as it also illustrates the relationship between migrants and material objects. It illustrates this relationship through the idea that objects have a biography that runs through the temporal states of past, present, and future. The focus on the past, which

is first discussed in Chapter Four enables us to see how migrants choose the objects with which they will travel. It has shown why they chose those objects, the influence of relationships in their decision making, and the different kinds of significance that objects have depending upon whether they are gifts, related to faith, have practical utility, were inherited, or contain memories. These findings support a range of further questions that could be explored in future studies, for example, how, prior to migration, objects influence decisions to migrate?

The lens of the present, which appears most prominently in Chapter Five, enables us to understand the role that those objects have played for migrants as they settle. It shows that the role of objects changes due to shifts in time and location. These insights raise further questions, including what type of changes in time count for migrants' settlement process, and what kind of shifts in location really matter for migrants in their process of settlement. The discussion shows that, for these research participants, the objects come to play roles associated with faith, with the acquisition of knowledge, and with the maintenance of tradition. While not discussed in detail, this research also raises question about the age of migrants and its influence on their relationship with things, for example, do objects play different roles for teenagers and adolescents? Regarding location, what type of difference might geographical location make? This chapter also interprets different experiences and opinions of participants through the lens of a gendered perspective. This perspective suggests that women believe sensory objects help them to feel comfortable and settled. However, for men, objects related to practical function, and the frequent use of those objects in their everyday life provides them a sense of security and belonging. These reflections on gendered perspectives raise more questions involving what type of objects help women and men who migrate to experience more positive adjustment during settlement?

The focus on the future, found in Chapter Six, enables us to explore the future of these objects, of what will happen to them when the respective research participant passes them on to their next generation. The research participants believe that the new owner will treat their most treasured objects with the same significance as they did. This raises interesting questions about the continued biography of material things, including querying the effects these objects might have due to the changes in ownership. Related questions include what type of changes in practices might occur due to the passing on of these objects to the next generation, and how might the symbolic and affective value of these objects change over time due to the new

relationship: Will it have the same significance to the new owner? Will the new owner take care of it in the way the previous owner did?

Chapter Seven reflects upon the settling-in experience of the participants through material objects as a way of discussing the significance of the findings from chapters Four to Six. In this chapter, I built on themes from the findings chapter, identifying how they are interlinked with each other by using participants' narratives. This chapter also introduced the idea that faith, knowledge, and utilitarian objects evokes feelings of comfort, familiarity, and security which supports these participants to settle in New Zealand. In my study, both Muslim men and women participants suggested that they have differences of opinion on how they have comfort, familiarity, and security through material objects brought from their home countries. Further research could explore more specifically how Muslim migrants negotiate overt prejudice, racism and discrimination through their engagement with potentially conflicting objects that appear as a sign of their social, cultural, and religious identities.

In that final chapter, I also step back from the detail of the research findings and take into consideration the conceptual implications of this research. It is evident from those findings of the experiences of migration and settlement that the research participants enter an ongoing negotiation with people, with place, and with things. That negotiation turns upon a relation between comfort and loss. The research suggests that the presence of treasured object helps to minimize the challenges of migration and improve the processes of settlement for Muslim migrants in New Zealand.

I began this thesis with a personal reflection of my own migration narrative as a Muslim who has recently migrated from a majority Muslim country. It encouraged me to think critically about the role of material objects in my own and other migrants' everyday lives. My personal background and my position as a Muslim woman migrant researcher have been challenged throughout this research, which relates to the status of being an 'insider'. Traditionally, research was considered more robust and 'objective' if the researcher was an outsider to the researched group (Parikh, 2020) but my insider status allowed me to ask different questions to my participants while being aware of my own complex relationship with objects brought from my home country. The process of doing research with other Muslims has revealed the challenges of settling into a new place and has ruptured my position as a Muslim migrant in New Zealand, producing a degree of discomfort within me. These issues were primarily

associated with my own insider knowledge and role ambiguity as a researcher. Initially, because of my previous background as a Muslim migrant, my participants appeared to assume that we shared common knowledge on topics discussed in the interviews. I tried to probe with more questions with regard to their experiences, in ways that would bring to light differences between us. In doing so, however, I continued to be drawn into a state of role ambiguity that is associated with the duality of roles in which I found myself (being both researcher and migrant), and of conflicts between those roles. At times, this experience caused me a degree of confusion, however, role ambiguity also benefited me in terms of developing my research skills. Exploring these issues and challenges contributed to a wider understanding of my insider status as a researcher in the research journey. Overall, these issues were pertinent to my research journey and have enabled me to further develop a range of useful reflexive practices that I can now bring to research.

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# Appendix A:

## Information Sheet

### When Evocative Things Travel: The Roles of Material Objects in the Process of Muslim Migrants' Settlement

**WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?**

Kia Ora, my name is Shahnaj Sultana. I am carrying out a research project as part of a Master of Arts degree in Sociology at Massey University, Auckland. My religion is Islam and I migrated to Auckland about three years ago to be with my husband.

My research seeks to better understand the roles of material objects in the process of migrants' settlement.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH?**

Settling in a new country can be challenging. This research aims to help us better understand the roles of materiality and how it helps Muslim migrants to settle in a new place. More specifically, the purpose is to explore the things people bring with them when they migrate to New Zealand, as well as what those things mean to them. I am interested in how those things help people settle and make a new home for themselves. This area of research has been underexplored by scholars in New Zealand.

I would like to talk with Muslim migrants, both men and women who are aged 18 or older. Participants must have lived in NZ for at least two years and can be NZ citizens, permanent residents and non-residents from any Muslim country.

As someone who meets this criterion, I would like to invite you to take part in this study.

**WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?**

If you decide to take part in this study, I would like to meet with you in your home or other place that you are comfortable to talk with you about your migration journey. I will ask you few questions about what brought you here to New Zealand and about the things you decided to bring with you. I'm really interested in hearing what these things meant to you at the time you migrated but also now that you are settling in NZ. I hope that you will also be comfortable showing me your most treasured thing.

Our conversation will take around 60 to 90 minutes. I expect our discussion will be no longer than 90 minutes but if need to, we can speak longer or arrange another time to continue our conversation. I would like to audio record our conversation. This will help me with my analysis later. After our discussion, I will create a full transcript of our recorded conversation. I will give you a copy of the final transcript to review and confirm before using in my thesis. This will give you time for final 'go ahead' before I include it in my research.

With your permission I would also like to take photographs of the things you talk with me about. You are not under any obligation to appear in the photograph too, but you can if you wish.

**YOUR RIGHTS SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO TAKE PART**

You are under no obligation to take part in this study. Should you decide to take part, you have the right to refuse to answer any question and ask that the audio recorder is switched off at any time. You can also withdraw parts of your interview or your full interview from the research up to three weeks after we meet.

All information you share with me will be kept confidential in a password protected laptop. You can (if you want) choose an alternative name to be used in my thesis and any other publication arising from the research. Your audio recording will only be accessible to me and after I complete the thesis, I will delete the recording.

It is possible that the photographs we take of your objects will identify you. But we can talk together about how best to manage this. Any photographs taken will not be used without your permission.

I do not foresee any kinds of risks or problems arising during our conversation because this study is primarily based on your life story. It is possible that sharing your migration story might make you emotional. But my hope is that you will enjoy the chance to share your migration journey.

The information you share with me will be used in my thesis and possibly in conference presentations, other written publications and in teaching.

**WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?**

If you are interested in taking part or if you have any questions about this research, please contact me or if you prefer, my supervisors. Our contact details are given below.


**Researcher**

Shahnaj Sultana

Mobile: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]


| **Supervisors** | |
|---|---|
| Dr Trudie Cain<br>Senior Lecturer in Sociology<br>Email: T.Cain@massey.ac.nz<br>Mobile: +64 (09) 414 0800 ext. 43903 | Dr Warwick Tie<br>Senior Lecturer in Sociology<br>Email: W.J.Tie@massey.ac.nz<br>Mobile: +64 (09) 414 0800 ext. 43730 |

**[THANK YOU for your consideration!]**

**Shahnaj Sultana**

# Appendix B:

## Consent Form

### When Evocative Things Travel: The Roles of Material Objects in the Process of Muslim Migrants' Settlement

I have had the details of the study explained to me in my preferred language and any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study up to three weeks after my interview with Shahnaj.

Please tick to indicate you consent to the following-

- I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio recorded.
- I agree/do not agree to photographs of my chosen things being taken during the interview.
- I agree/do not agree to photographs of me being taken during the interview.
- I want/do not want to receive a transcript of the interview the before agreeing for the interview being used in the thesis.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Participant's name:

Signature: Date:

# Appendix C

## Interview Schedule

### When Evocative Things Travel: The Roles of Material Objects in the Process of Muslim Migrants' Settlement

1. **Can you please tell me about the story of your migration?**
    - Where did you come from? With whom or were you alone?
    - Why (economic, leisure, education retirement, steppingstone to elsewhere etc)?
2. **Tell me about how you chose the things that you brought from your home country?**
    - What were the [items] you brought from your home country?
    - What was the reason behind choosing those [things]?
    - Who helped you to choose these objects?
3. **One of the things I'm really interested in is the way that things, material objects, play a role in our migration journeys. Can you tell me about the most treasured thing you brought from your home country?**
    - What was the story behind choosing those material object?
    - How did you acquire the object?
    - Who gave it to you? And why?
    - What kind of value do you place on this object?
    - Why is this item so special to you?
    - How is this object related to your culture or religion, if at all?
4. **Can you show me your [by this time you will know what it is so you can be specific]? I'm interested that where do you keep your [name of item] in your home.**

- Why do you keep it here? Have you always kept it here or has it moved around a bit?

- Is it okay if I take a photo of your item here where it usually is kept? Would you like to be in the photo?

5. **We often have emotional connections to things.**
    - What kinds of emotional connections do you have to this particular [item]?
    - What ways this object provoke emotional experiences in your everyday life?
6. **One of the things I'm interested in in this research is the way that people create a sense of home in a new country, when they've migrated from somewhere else. I am interested to know:**
    - Does this [item] help you to feel settled in New Zealand?
    - How has [this item] helps you to create a sense of home or belonging here?
    - Do you feel living in a new country has changed your outlook towards this [thing]?
    - Does this [thing] changed its meaning with passing years since you brought it from home country?
7. **Sometimes the meaning of things we own changes over time - what is special one day isn't so much the next. How has the meaning of your [item] changed over time?**
    - Where do you imagine [item] will be in 5 years' time? Do you think it will still be significant you? Or significant in the same way or will change?
    - Sometimes when things are special, we consider passing them on to others as part of an inheritance. Do you want to give/pass it on to someone else? Who? And why?
    - What do you think this object will mean to them?

**That's all about it from me. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your migration journey before we finish?**

## Thank You

# Appendix D:

## Topic Guide for Second Interview

Hi (name),

Thanks for agreeing to meet me again today. As a result of your first interview, I would like to clarify a couple of points that we did not adequately cover. Are you fine with that?

1. Do you think this object became significant due to shifts in time and location? If yes, how?
2. What ways this material object help you to feel a sense of belonging in New Zealand?
3. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

**Thank You for Your Time**