This paper aims to understand the life of Indian labor migrants in the post-migration phase. To understand the cultural aspects of labor migrants is to understand their everyday life activities. Migration for contemporary young migrants, which is the core interest of this paper, is about experiencing a new life in a new country, thinking about the present, and planning the future. Getting a job, starting a business, partnering with fellow Indian workers, or marrying a local South African—these encompass the idea of assimilation and adaptation. This paper looks at the cultural aspects of migration that drive labor migrants to South Africa, with a focus on the Indian business district in Johannesburg, Fordsburg, and the flea market area, which is a hub for South Asian businessmen and labor migrants.
Indian labor migration to South Africa is not a new phenomenon. It has been an active process since the British Empire expansion in the mid-nineteenth century. Indian migration to South Africa has seen changes in many things over the years: practices of food and clothing habits and usage of modern technologies, to name a few. Cultural performance theory offers an in-depth analogy of understanding culture within the activity of everyday lives of migrants. In this article, I aim to answer the following questions:

1. What is new about the contemporary Indian labor migration to South Africa?
2. How are certain cultural habits practiced by labor migrants in Fordsburg?
3. How do young Indian labor migrants maintain their interpersonal relations in the smartphone age?

Examining the cultural performances of migrants in Fordsburg, I will demonstrate the ways in which cultural habits change in the migration process. I also investigate the reason for selecting Fordsburg. Did they select it because of the familiarity and easy access that allow practicing certain cultural habits, or is it because of identical cultural arrangements that offer shared linguistics and food practices? “Smartphone migration” is a new emerging concept which has evolved in response to the advancement in technology. This concept motivates migrants’ performances in the host society concerning their lifestyle, which includes eating, clothing, and general habits of day-to-day life. Mobile phones and electronic devices amount to changing lifestyles in the modern era. If this research was done some twenty years ago, there would not have been much discussion on this topic. But in the modern-day scenario, one cannot help noticing changing lifestyles among labor migrants and the usage of mobile phones that demonstrate their achievements. When I am talking of smartphone migration, I do not intend to focus on the aspects of the smartphone only. “Smartphone” here is used in the context of Madianou and Miller’s (2012, 170) work on media and migration, where they observe that growing communications is becoming a reality which is “radically transforming interpersonal communication at a distance.” In their study, they demonstrate the way female Filipino migrants keep in touch with their families with the emergence of such devices, which have helped them manage their relationships and govern social contacts.
over long distance. In these exchanges of communication, many things that seem obvious now were not easily possible for migrants a few years ago. Hence, application of the term “smartphone” in the context of young Indian migrants specifies the era of migrant experience that I am talking about.

**INTRODUCING FORDSBURG**

Fordsburg, in central Johannesburg, is an interesting study because it is a globally connected locality hosting 15 to 20 thousand visitors every month from all over the world. Fordsburg replicates the diversity of the global city of Johannesburg in miniature but with a distinct sub-continental flavor. It accommodates hundreds of migrant laborers from within Africa and South Asia.² Fordsburg has attracted Indians and others from the subcontinent since its emergence, and over the years it has been successful in creating its own identity. Fordsburg was planned to be a “white only” area during the early decades of twentieth century. But after the miners' strike in 1922, the plan was halted (Brink 2008).³ Later, after fifty years, Fordsburg came under the jurisdiction of the state development authority, which reconstructed the area and formed an “Indian only” business shopping mall, “Oriental Plaza.” Since then, there has been an active presence of Indian business and laborers in Fordsburg (Rugunanan and Seedat-Khan 2012). Prior to 1994, it was mainly local South Africans and a few Indian laborers who worked in Fordsburg, making it an ethnic enclave. But after 1994, it was young and skilled laborers not only from Gujarat but from all over India who flocked to Fordsburg—mostly artisans, chefs, electricians, barbers, I.T. technicians, and a few with business capital. Hence, this paper classifies two categories of Indian labor migrants: post-1994 and post-2000. This distinction makes it easy to identify the economic and social consequences of migration. Post-1994 migration offered viable opportunities to the migrants, as the economy was new so it accepted the diversification of trade. After 2000 onwards, there has been different set of migrants who have come to South Africa. Therefore, this paper engages with the post-2000 migrants only. The migrants discussed here are mostly the ones who came to escape the communal riots and political oppression in Gujarat.
METHODOLOGY

This research is primarily based on the ethnographic study undertaken from December 2012 to November 2013. It revolves around the lives of four young Indian labor migrants from Gujarat. Two of them are Muslims, while two are Hindus, in the age group of 20 to 30 years. The findings are based on a series of semi-structured interviews and observation of migrants in their work place and residence in Fordsburg and the flea market (see figure 1). Archival sources in Museum Africa and the South Africa History Archive (SAHA) have been a great help in describing the past conditions. The core interest of this paper is to study young migrants, in particular male migrants. Female participants were not included because of their limited presence in Fordsburg and their reluctance to offer interviews. Therefore, most of the findings are based on a young male migrant’s life.

CULTURAL PROCESS

Migration is an ongoing process that adapts to the latest developments within social, economic, and cultural formations. In the case of contemporary labor migration, the challenge of adaption to a new society is at the core of labor migration. Based on these assumptions, I will advance my arguments and explain how labor migrants adapt themselves to a new environment and try to assimilate cultural, economic, and political practices of the host country. Assimilation theory, according to Faist (2000, 204), is the gradual socio-economical, and also cultural and behavioral, adaption of an immigrant. Assimilation theory, therefore, can be understood in light of the studies on the cultural aspects of labor migrants in Fordsburg, which will be further elaborated in this paper. Oonk’s work (2013) has derived the possibilities of understanding cultural, political, and economic conditions of South Asian migrants in East Africa. His study analyzed the performance of migrants in the host society and their changing habits over the years. According to his study, a migrant who is settled in the host society for centuries is still a stranger due to the food, clothing, and other cultural habits. His findings were a result of historical and ethnographic observations covering wide history of two centuries between 1800 to 2000. Taking from his observations, this study will add further information to the scholarship of South-
South migration, particularly the lives of migrants from 2000 onwards in South Africa. It will study the everyday life of labor migrants as a cultural process. Studying migrants’ lifestyle in light of changing habits is significant because of the immediate visible impacts that dictate the everyday life of migrants.

Regarding the cultural aspects of labor migrants in Fordsburg, I noted significant changes happening in the life of laborers which directly affects the business district. As Oonk (2013, 112) stated, “Cultural change is inevitable, but even more so for migrants.” It is a part of large consequential debate of inter-mixing of races, ethnicities, castes, religion, regions, and professions. In such diverse spirits of interaction, culture can be considered as a focal point of change in the lives of migrants. Culture in this context refers to practicing certain habits (food and clothing) and performances of daily activities in a new working and living space. According to Oonk (2013, 6.111), migrants who are seen as settlers have two options, which is either to reproduce the original culture (pluralism) or adapt to the new environment (integration). In the following section, I will introduce culture as a part of the process with respect to the changing lifestyles of migrants, particularly the food and clothing habits of new migrants. This interaction gives the sense of acculturation among new Indian labor migrants. The process of acculturation and social integration of migrant laborers, according to Richmond (1988, 109), is “as complex

Figure 1. View of the flea market on weekends. Author’s photo.
as the societies involved in the international movement of people.” In Fordsburg’s context, the social integration of migrants is a complex phenomenon. There are layers of cultural performances which determine the acculturation. These are food, clothing, and lifestyle, which are the outcome of advancement in technology that ensures the integrity of migrants into the host society. Based on this contention, I will build my arguments to capture ongoing changes in the lives of migrants in South Africa.

Individuals migrate for economic gains and a productive lifestyle. According to Marx (in Wolff 2002, 112), workers sell their labor to acquire enough money to buy the necessities of life. To the contrary, in the smartphone age, as we can see in Fordsburg, young migrants sell their labor to buy a certain lifestyle, which becomes a necessity of life. Hence, the necessities of life for a worker in the classical Marxist understanding are bread, clothing, and shelter, which minimally keep the “body and soul together” and thus become the minimum standard of living (Brooks 2002). But for a modern-day young migrant, born and brought up in the age of neo-liberal globalized world, the necessities of life increase with the demands of consumerism. The current standard of living for a worker, according to Brooks, is quite high than the historic standards which is to have a “nice house full of electronic kit, a car in the driveway, and a freezer full of food” (ibid.).

**LIFESTYLES OF MIGRANTS**

“Lifestyle migrants” are those who migrate to gain a “good life.” These migrants are mostly from the developed countries who undertake migration to be “anti-modern, escapist, and to reinvent self” (Benson and O’Reilly 2009a, 2009b; O’Reilly and Benson 2009). It is mostly seen as retirement migration, leisure migration, or otherwise seasonal migration. Such types of migrants, as explained by O’Reilly and Benson (2009), are relatively affluent migrants who are not necessarily rich but also are not poor. Migrants mostly migrate from the North to South or within the North. Migrants in the UK migrate to Cyprus, Turkey, or rural parts of France; similarly, migrants from the USA migrate to other countries like Mexico and elsewhere. This means North to South migration takes place on the notion of “lifestyle.” Here, lifestyle means to have a “quality life” as opposed to a “better life” (O’Reilly and Benson 2009, 5). Having a quality life is to have good housing, weather,
climate, and atmosphere, and is usually considered as a certain kind of lifestyle. This perspective is taken from the European/American view, but what a “lifestyle” means for a young Indian labor migrant—who is not migrating to enjoy the perks of cheap costs, a healthy climate, and freedom from individualization and excess taxes—is different. Various literatures have been produced in the recent years which focus on the quality “lifestyle” of migration (Duncan, Cohen, and Thulemark 2013; O’Reilly and Benson 2009; Huete, Mantecón, and Estévez 2013). These works mostly aim to understand the reason for migration which is to gain a better life. This is an observation undertaken in the first-world movement. A quality life is something which is not discussed in the space of Fordsburg. It is a distant idea, in contrast to the Northern world. This section will explore the possibilities that are created by migration in the Global South. The “lifestyle” phenomenon is taken for granted by the scholars who tend to achieve the Eurocentric observation that fail to address certain concerns of lifestyle if studied in the southern context. The migrants in Fordsburg offer an alternative observation to the theories of the North. Fordsburg migrants present the overview of active migration process taking place in the Global South. It is a salient connectivity of the two important points of the periphery.

The migrants discussed here come from the rural parts of Gujarat, with few exceptions coming from the urban cities of Ahmedabad and Surat. It is interesting to note the changing lifestyle of migrants. When I talk about lifestyle, I am referring to the ways they communicate, do business, interact, and use modern technologies, like mobile phones and tablets, which are often discussed among the migrants. It is totally different with the attribution of “lifestyle” mentioned by the above mentioned scholars in the North. “Lifestyle” for young Indian migrants is similar to the lifestyle of the rich in India; that is, they replicate lifestyle patterns in India. They do not to escape Indian conditions but reinvent and appropriate basic attributes that make one modern. Hence, according to them, being modern is to carry electronic devices and to wear certain clothes. Therefore, the notion of “lifestyle” here will be studied with perspectives different from those suggested by the scholars from the North.

Ghoolam (2012–13) is a good example of the experiences on migrants. Ghoolam, when he first arrived in Fordsburg two years ago, was a different person, shared his employer (Latish 2013): “He was shy, polite, and never used to look into the eyes of foreigners or elders
as a mark of respect. He always kept his voice low and did the things extremely fast, as he was used to get the things done in India. There, people want you to finish the work fast—fast and very fast.”

When I interviewed him, I saw the changes in Ghoolam’s lifestyle. He was no longer shy, he talked to people with more confidence, and he dealt with customers his way. He had no one above him to direct his duties. Most times, he’d anticipate what his job would be, and then complete the work even before being told. His voice demonstrated his level of confidence. He trained new arrivals who were not used to the new working environment.

Ghoolam is an example of how the lifestyle of a person can change in a new environment in a short span of time. Ghoolam is a young migrant in his early twenties from the Kathiawar area in Gujarat; he was working in a cloth shop in Mumbai before coming to South Africa. Initially, he said he “was a village boy, very shy person who had limited access to the lifestyle of university-going youngsters in Surat.” He always wanted to be like the university students of Surat; he appreciated their lifestyle and made the decision that lifestyle was all that mattered to make you a decent person. And thus, the hunt for a better lifestyle drove him to South Africa.

Migrants perceived South Africa as an alternative option to the Europe or America. For them, it was a country with diverse job opportunities and ranging business options. South Africa, being the leading economy of Africa, offered positive dreams for the future. It is more “modern,” said Ghoolam, than the Congo or Rwanda. Lifestyle, then, for the modern-day youth, is one of the main reasons to escape situations where they cannot afford a decent lifestyle.

There is an interrelated connection between the lifestyle and food and clothing habits of migrants. A lifestyle refers to everyday activities, including performances involving smartphones, while food and clothing habits are part of the changing migratory experiences, which are in the wake of advancements in media and technology. Everyday activities of labor migrants discipline their behavior, which is inspired by the food and clothing habits. Lifestyle, on the other hand, is something to be demonstrated in public. Hence, it becomes important for one to manage the overall components of life in migration. Usage of modern technologies, like smartphones and tablets, among migrants is highly visible. The connection of technology and migration is an emerging concept which is studied by Madianou and Miller (2011a) in their work on migration and the incorporation of technology in communication.
for migrants in the UK. Migration involves the separation of families. Hence, the means to communicate becomes pivotal to stay in touch with the family back home. In the smartphone age, once all the costs are met, communication becomes easy and accessible for the migrants who have communication devices (Madianou and Miller, 2012). Communication for a migrant becomes important to maintain interpersonal affiliations and contacts, now made easy by the availability of technology. There lies a stark difference between the mode of communication a few years ago and now. It was mostly letters that governed personal communications for migrants a few years ago (Madianou and Miller 2011b). But now, due to the advancement in technology, the mode of communication takes a different route. The main concern of this paper, however, is not to examine the impacts of communication devices but to ascertain the way these devices have brought change in the experiences of migration. Migration here, as will be discussed later, is a source of capturing moments, conveying messages, bragging about achievements, demonstrating richness, and demanding respect. It is a matter of pride for someone to have the latest phone and have a crowd gather around him. It is because most migrant laborers cannot afford a smartphone back home.

Ghoolam said, “I had Nokia 1100 model for years, and all I could with it was answer the phone or else play [the] snake game in boredom. It had limited facilities. I used to get annoyed, sometimes even jealous, after seeing people from the upper class [who] used to always flash their latest phones with heavy pride. We used to see it with great admiration. I could not afford it, and I could have never bought it in India.”

There is a reason why he could not have bought it ever in India. Smartphones in India cost more or less 10,000 rupees. That is the price which a small retailer/petty businessman, who invests in his shop and sells things with cheap margin, can afford. As the business grows, he reinvests his capital in furthering his business on a larger ground. Ten thousand rupees is also a good price to start a small business. Therefore, if a person coming from poor rural background, who earns around 4,000 to 5,000 rupees per month, receives an extra 10,000 rupees, he first thinks of his house and family needs, rather than getting into mobile phones, tablets, and other electronic gadgets, because those things carry no priority. The class of labor migrants coming to South Africa are mostly from these backgrounds. Therefore, they would have never bought a smartphone at the expense of their family needs. For
example, Ghoolam is son of a laborer who, along with his family, lived in shacks. He started working by the age of 16 to support his family. When he migrated at the age of 20, he started sending some money home to improve the basic conditions of his family. He now makes decent money to proudly show off his Galaxy S series smartphone to his colleagues in the flea market. He further explained the need for smartphones, saying, “It is useful for one to communicate without paying, by using [the] WhatsApp application of BBM.” Once a migrant has new phone, he develops what I call the “technological attitude,” where a migrant never misses an opportunity to display his phone or tablet. The migrant also begins to talk in a different tone with confidence. The humility of being a migrant seems to fade away slowly, and now he thinks that he is technologically equal to other people, so he is able engage with people that he used to adore or even envy. For example, bragging about his latest purchase, Ghoolam said, “Aaj kal ka zamana sirf BBM aur WhatsApp pe chalata hain bhai. [These days everything starts with BBM and WhatsApp.] It is easy for me to communicate with BBM, since I cannot attend the calls during working hours [kaam che bhai kaam].”

When I first exchanged my number with Ghoolam, he asked me to send the BBM pin. I responded that I do not have a Blackberry. Then he asked to me to send a WhatsApp message, and I said I have neither of them. He replied, flabbergasted, “Which world are you living in? Seems like you are lost in the old generation. Here everything is adjusted with these new devices, if you need to stay in touch you will have to get connected, or else I won’t write you.”

And until today Ghoolam has never sent me a message or called me. When I met him after three months, he was proud to show his new Galaxy tablet phone (see figure 2). This shows that migrants are aware of the latest developments in technology; they make sure to keep themselves updated with the latest phone applications and software in the market. Secondly, Ghoolam can now take the pictures, make videos, and upload them on his Facebook page for his friends in India, to keep them updated about his life in a foreign country. And finally he can Skype with his family and his friends, who also have one of the smartphones sent by Ghoolam.

Beyond talking about the benefits of having a smartphone, Ghoolam never mentioned the economics of lifestyle; rather, he avoided it. “Economics of lifestyle” means the costs that come with the maintenance of a lifestyle. It is the amount of money he spent in
buying the device which he could have been sent to India to invest in some property, or which he could use to buy some consumer goods. Instead, maintaining his preferred lifestyle is more important than the overall management of life. Ghoolam’s lifestyle has indeed changed from what it was in India. He can now brag about his achievements by flashing his mobile phones, using new technological devices in public and sending WhatsApp messages to his colleagues. The important thing to notice in Ghoolam’s lifestyle is that, while he was not necessarily enjoying his life in South Africa, since he always talked to me about returning to India, he was trying to convince himself about the fruits of his sacrifice and hard work. The things that he always envied in other people are now part of his life, and he can now help his family and relatives to afford such a lifestyle. It is difficult for his family in India to get on the internet and Skype with him, but after sending the smartphone to them, he can now see his family and communicate often, which was not possible for the post-1994 migrants. It is because of the emergence of Skype and other modern devices a few years ago.

Madianou and Miller’s work (2011a, 2012) explicitly discussed the way communication in the modern age became a means to convey a certain type of messages. Initially, it was an expensive and difficult task for a migrant to get on the phone to communicate back home. But after the invention of modern devices, a migrant can choose among the various options he or she has: “calling through a landline, mobile
phone, or Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), or via applications such as Skype” (Madianou and Miller 2012, 170). “Skyping” culture has increased enormously among labor migrants. It seemed to me almost all of them Skype with their family and friends. For some, it is a comfort to see their children and wives; for others, it is to provide assurance to their parents that they are not getting spoiled by the lifestyle in a foreign country like Africa. Additionally, exhibiting this modern lifestyle is not only particular to young migrants; elderly migrants demand such smart devices as well. One of the elderly migrant Ahmed asked his fellow colleagues to get the latest smartphone for his younger son who had just passed his university undergraduate course in Surat. He had promised him a good cell phone if he scored good marks in the examination. He told his colleagues that, “My son always asked for the smartphones since his friends in the university were equipped with such devices. I could have never afforded to buy him [one] during his university years, but now I think I can fulfil his demands.” Hence, we see migration is seen as a source to cope with the needs of achieving certain dreams relating to consumer goods—in this case, mobile phones and electronic gadgets.

Labor migrants working in the lower rung of hierarchy tend to ignore their condition in the host country; instead they celebrate their achievements back home. Massey et al. (1993, 441–42) discussed the motivation for a labor migrant to work in the lower scale of the occupational hierarchy: Though the foreign job might be lower in status, a labor migrant “does not view himself as being a part of receiving society.” Hence, when they are working in a low status job, migrant laborers do not see themselves as lower, because they are not concerned with the hierarchies in the host country. Instead, they have people in their home country as audience to their achievements. That is why they send latest consumer goods back home, which act as motivation to work in the host society. Sending mobile phones and tablets from South Africa is not a compulsory fashion; some might just send the money to buy in India, or some might ask for a second-hand device in Fordsburg to send home. Such gestures are seen as an attribution of becoming a responsible adult male for the young migrants who have migrated to prove themselves in their young age. In order to demonstrate masculinity, Osella and Osella (2000) observed in South India that displaying certain cash wealth amounted to regaining the status of adulthood among the gulf migrants (the migrants from Gulf States). In Fordsburg, displaying electronic gadgets and sending
latest technological devices have become important to demonstrate masculinity, instead of displaying hard cash.

Initially, if a labor migrant came to South Africa, his primary aim was to repay his debts back home and build a house in his village to demonstrate his achievements. It was because of the nature of migration process. Migration during those days was primarily undertaken to repay the heavy debts taken at home. Nowadays, having modern devices in the village and talking on Skype has become part of a changing lifestyle, which I call “smartphone migration.” Smartphone migration is a modern-day form of migration wherein migrants migrate with various aspirations; they move not only for economic necessities but to enhance their lifestyles back home. It is slowly, not radically, shifting from the traditional attributes of lifestyle. The lifestyle discussed in this section involves demonstrating the ability to consume goods that are expensive in the Indian market. Smartphones, like Galaxy Tab and Blackberry, and tablets are products which range between 20,000 to 30,000 rupees. Hence, possessing smartphone makes migrants appear modern and wealthy. Therefore, after gaining certain wealth, one of the first things they do is to get the latest smartphone. Of the migrants that I interviewed and observed, everyone possessed smartphones. Having a smartphone becomes very important for a migrant in Fordsburg; it is projected as the basic necessity of the migrant. Most of the time, family members in India demand such devices from migrants in South Africa to brag about their migrant relatives’ accomplishments. This scenario appears contrary to the traditional process of migration, wherein a migrant from rural parts who migrated to the developed world used to buy land back home. Buying land was a “prestige value” to demonstrate the achievements. In this case, there is no such major effort taken by the migrants to buy land back home. Instead, they spend their earnings on purchasing technological gadgets and consumer goods for the “prestige value” (Massey et al. 1993, 452).

The discussion leads us to think about “modernity.” “Modernity” is not a static term but changes according to culture, location, language, and profession. Talking on the broader analysis of the Global South, the term “modernity” appears similar on some vocations in different societies of the Global South. In Indonesia for example, being modern is to have a “modern lifestyle” (Rigg 2007, 59). Similarly, in Thailand, being modern is to be able to buy the accessories that define modernity, which includes modern (Western clothes) and consumer goods, like technologically advanced gadgets, from “mobile phones to personal
stereos” (Rigg 2007, 62; cf. Osella and Osella 2000). This has given rise to the “consumerism” phenomenon. As Rigg (2007, 67) mentioned, the pressure to become modern has “infiltrated every crack, corner and fissure of the world” in the Global South. To cope with the pressures of modernity, migrating to a space of wealth is seen as a possibility. This pressure is widely seen among the working class youth of the Global South, be it Indonesia, India, Thailand, Laos, South Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Nepal.

For a modern youth migrant laborer in Fordsburg, modernity amounts to a degree of achievement. Rigg (2007, 44, 139) has shown that the desire among the youth of Global South is to attain a certain degree of lifestyle. Similar patterns can be seen in the context of Indian labor migrants who tend to migrate to search for a (new) “modern” life. In case of Ghoolam, as mentioned above, it was lifestyle that mattered the most, and his quest for modern life style brought him to South Africa.

**CHANGING CLOTHING STYLES**

In this section, I will try to explain clothing habits among labor migrants, as a part of their shifting lifestyle. Changing habits among migrants is seen as a course of “adaptation,” as explained in Herskovits’s *Acculturation* (1938), where a person “hybrids two cultures; own and other.” Taking from this explanation, I argue that changing food and clothing habits are part of the “adaptation processes” among new migrants in Fordsburg. The process of “adaptation” according to Richmond (1988, 111) is a multidimensional process in which, “acculturation interacts with economic adaptation, social integration, satisfaction and degree of identification in the new country” of arrival. Oonk’s work (2009, 2013) on Indians in East Africa recorded the changing food and clothing habits in detail from the late nineteenth century onwards. While analyzing the changing dressing habits among the elite business class of Indian migrants, his study gave an overview of the South Asian dressing sense (clothing habits) in an abstract way, without focusing on the overall aspects of South Asian’s class and regional diversities. According to him, clothing habits represented class, profession, and identity for the labor migrants. During the early years of the twentieth century, Indian businessmen dressed in suit and tie when it came to the transnational businesses, while they preferred
wearing traditional and religious clothes in shops and in community functions. In the present-day context, this has totally changed.

Nowadays, according to Oonk, wearing traditional dress and practicing certain dressing habits among the settled migrants in East Africa is not visible in the new generation. Clothing habits during the early years of the twentieth century carried certain values and resources of identity. Today, it does not necessarily carry the same values as it did in the past. In order to avoid the abstract generalizations, I will look at particular classes of Indians: the working class, traders, and new migrants in general. These three classifications will further my argument to identify the changing habits among migrants after coming to South Africa. These observations are necessary to locate the differences seen among migrants. Changing habits offer a clear picture of the migrant’s acceptance of “adaptation.” I will explore the trajectories of how a migrant changes, or if he does not change at all. I will furthermore situate the argument of changing habits among migrants as part of a modernization process. During my ethnographic research, I closely observed the changing habits of clothing and food among migrants. They included migrants coming from differing age groups, regions, castes, and religions. These aspects are important to locate the argument, for in India, food habits are especially determined by these factors. Clothing habits also matter but do not have relevance in the modern-day era, because clothing habits have changed to Western styles of shirts, pants, and jeans. Finally, I will observe the effects of clothing on the appearance of a person. I shall ask the question of whether a migrant laborer maintains his hair style, beard, and earrings to reproduce his identity along with the Westernized clothes he wears.

For Muslim migrants in Africa, clothing signifies one’s identity as being a Gujarati, demonstrating pan-Islamic and Arab connectedness. This appearance is somewhat similar to the Indian Muslims in South India (Osella and Osella 2007). Clothing for a Muslim man becomes an important aesthetic artefact of identity. Migrants are cultural and symbolic bearers of the village/religious identity, which is represented in the closed community performances in Fordsburg. To understand the changing habits of clothing among Muslims, I turn to my respondent Ghoolam. Ghoolam comes from a Sunni Muslim background. He was hired by one of the Sunni Muslims, who also comes from Gujarat. Ghoolam’s appearance is a distinctive representation of a young Indian Muslim. He maintains short hair, with less style employed to the sideburns, beard grown to emulate Prophet Muhammad, and
occasionally applies surma to his eyes. He wears a black kurta to avoid the buri nazar (evil eye) of people; jeans rolled from the bottom so that if he happens to visit the Mosque he will not take the dirt along with the jeans he is wearing; and finally a good pair of branded sports shoes. He manages his modern lifestyle with these gestures. He does not want to feel like a village man by wearing only white kurta, so he prefers using different shades of kurta. He wears jeans instead of pyjamas; and some accessories like necklaces and wrist bands, to add a modern touch to this dressing. Apart from Ghoolam, there is another Gujarati who works in a juice shop and who serves as a good example of representing modernity through clothing habits. Shoaib (2012–13) was recruited by one of his distant relatives, who is a South African Indian now in his late forties. Shoaib’s appearance gives an impression of his educational background and maturity in dealing with customers. He is more of a sports loving person who can engage in a discussion on sports. This is evident in his appearance. He wears a skullcap to cover his head, grows a beard like Ghoolam, wears a Barcelona football club T-shirt, jeans rolled from the bottom above the ankle, and a pair of branded sports shoes. The significance of this appearance is the influence of Tabligh-i-Jammat, who encourage their followers to maintain the “pious” look in society. Shoaib’s appearance is some way similar to Ghoolam’s appearance, but there lies a distinction in the personalities of both Indian Muslim migrants, which will be discussed in a short while.

Shoaib came to Fordsburg from Gujarat three years ago on a visiting visa. In his early twenties, he started to work with the local South African businessmen who employed him two years ago. Shoaib had to work hard to impress his boss, who eventually decided to continue his contract. He has applied for a work permit. Shoaib is a modern guy with both traditional and religious affiliations. He wants to be the young modern guy of the twenty-first century, but also does not want his boss and relatives to feel that he is Westernizing himself. Shoaib is struggling to maintain modernity in clothing habits, along with being a pious religious person. In this struggle between him and his cultural affiliations, he finds his way out. His clothing is a compromise of his modern outlook to be a sincere Muslim man. Although he is aware of the fact that his grown beard and folded pants are his choice, he does not want people to feel that he is the same rural man from Gujarat. So when he speaks to you, he talks with the adapted South African Indian-Black mixture of accents, uses the newly invented words
by young people like calling, “bru” for “brother,” “dog” for “friend,” “What ye’ doin’?” for “What are you doing?” He stresses his accent on particular words to sound like a South African. He avoids Indian slang of English, which makes him feel like a new migrant.

When I communicated with him for the first time in Hindi, he replied in English. Months later, after getting to know him personally, he still continued to answer me in English. To differentiate himself from other new arrivals, he attempts to speak differently; he also does this because he will most likely continue living in South Africa, which is a process of “anticipatory socialization.” Fanon (1970, 13) explains the idea of language among non-white speakers. The ability to grasp a certain language puts one in a dominant position, but above all, it means to “assume a culture.” Moreover, it is evidence of “dislocation and separation” from the group one is born in (ibid., 19). Furthermore, discontinuing the normal way of life is to disregard the past, which according to Giddens (1990), is a mode of modernity that implies the discontinuity with the past. For Shoaib, avoiding Indian slang is to incline towards modernity, an action to overcome the rural and traditional barriers of the past. This way, we can see how language affirms one to disregard the past, the discontinuation of which is considered as symbol of modernity.

Ghoolam and Shoaib come from different parts of Gujarat. Both have arrived almost in the same year. Both are young Muslim men in their mid-twenties. They escaped rural barriers to become modern and sophisticated persons. They have applied for a work permit. Both speak good English and deal with customers of diverse ethnicity. They are confident about their life in South Africa than in India. Both of them exhibit their respect towards religious norms and also practice their modern lifestyle. Clothing habits have changed their appearance. Their appearance has modestly changed and both are happy to compromise their culture and tradition for the stake of their dressing habits. These two stories of Ghoolam and Shoaib are visible with almost all young Muslim migrants in the Fordsburg flea market. It is the best example of managing modernism with tradition. Luckily they are successful in this, for they receive no complaints from family members and elderly employers. Modernity for young migrants like Ghoolam and Shoaib is what Rigg (2007, 67) called, “the lingua franca of connection.” It becomes a staged demonstration to have the dual representation of being a Muslim and a fashionable person, which is a self-representation of a “progressive” outlook. Osella and Osella
(2007) studied South Indian Muslims’ clothing styles. Dress code for a Muslim man is a reference to the “Islamic idioms of modesty,” and in Fordsburg’s sense, it is a global style of Islamic “decent dress” that confirms a separate identity of growing Muslim realization. This shift is a response to the growing awareness of being a Muslim. Hence, we can see that clothing style for a Muslim migrant is a way to affirm certain beliefs and to root one’s identity in a different space. The dress is the signature of fashion statement and social prestige for young men in Fordsburg. As Ghoolam rightly put it, “Posh clothes, luxurious lifestyle and traditional affiliations are something very important to most of us.”

Moving further, I will give an account of two Hindu migrants and their clothing habits. It is necessary to compare Hindu and Muslim migrants because, in India, dressing habits are heavily “produced, performed and read through” the fine distinction between Hindus and Muslims (Osella and Osella 2007, 8). Muslims’ dressing style is ideally concerned with the conservative get–up, as opposed to the Hindu style which takes the shape of being liberal. Conservative style is observed with the religious norms, like wearing the pants above ankle and not having styled shirts and jeans. Whereas the liberal style refers to having styled clothes, wearing low-waist jeans, having tattoos, pierced ears, and skull-necklaces. In the following examples, I argue that maintaining dressing habit is not only about religion or tradition, but also about background, profession, and culture. During my study, I closely observed Hitesh (2012–13), a self-employed petty businessman trading in Indian women accessories; and Bharat, a barber who has come to South Africa about a year ago. In these two examples, I will show that time, age, and profession matter for a person to assimilate in a new environment and change according to the local standards. Changing oneself to be more local can be done easily by clothing habits, and I will try to prove this in the following examples.

Hitesh sells Indian accessories imported from India in the flea market. Hitesh arrived in South Africa fourteen years ago from Surat. He works for a petrol company SASOL during the weekdays, and on weekends, he trades in the flea market. He owns a space for a stall, made of two tables. Being Hindu, his appearance makes him look different in the Muslim-dominated flea market. His hair cut is in a “crew cut” style with some light colored brown tints on the sides. His right ear is pierced with a gold ring. He wears golden bracelets and finger rings on both hands. His right arm has a small tattoo.
invisible to the viewer. His clothing style appears more modern than his Muslim counterparts. He wears Armani T-shirts and Diesel jeans; his pair of shoes often changes, for it depends on the type of clothes he is wearing. If he has shirt and jeans, then he wears leather shoes; if he is wearing T-shirt and sleeveless gilets, he prefers wearing sports shoes, or if it is cold, he wears boots. Seeing Hitesh on different occasions was a different experience altogether. Every time I saw him, he had something new to show. If asked, he would continue talking about his new pair of shoes, necklace, or bracelets. And immediately he would refer to the person who is selling those. Needless to say, all the brands are pirated ones imported from the nearby Chinese market. He uses himself as a model for someone else’s business in Fordsburg. Hitesh is a well-known personality among the traders of flea market. Whenever I saw him, he maintained a low profile and did not interact much with other people except his neighbors. He never lost an opportunity to brag about his high level diplomatic connections and channels. “Apna connection Jooma (Zuma) ke office main bhi hain. Mere visa ki baat wahan tak chal rahi hain.” (I have connection with Zuma’s office as well. I am in the process of getting some confirmation on my visa.) Although his statements are vague and untrue, Hitesh is not worried of its reactions and outcomes. Once, a neighbor was picking on Hitesh for his flawed statements. He was mocking Hitesh for his untrue behavior. But this did not stop Hitesh from starting another topic. Hitesh always had something to contribute to discussions. During a conversation about my work experience in London, he stressed that his sister stays near the Gatwick Airport. He said he would ask her to meet me once I go back to London. “Before departing to London please do see me. My sister is in London, will give you her address, you can see her and house as well.” Although this is unnecessary, he wanted to emphasize that his sister is based in London and that she now owns a house in London. Talking about politics, he endorsed his connections with the local African National Congress politician. His stall is situated on one of the entry points of flea market, so he greets almost all the customers that enter the gate. He talks confidently and never underestimates his value. He is sure that he is a person whom you can get along with.

From the above narration, one thing to notice is his confidence in talking to recent acquaintances like me. He is successful in proving his statements true by the way he dresses and the way he talks. For example, in India, wearing a white starch shirt or kurta places one in a dominant
position, describing the affiliations to certain political organizations. Similarly, in the trading space of Fordsburg, Indian migrants wear certain clothes that inscribe the richness of the social identities that they carry. Hitesh maintains his richness by gold rings on his ears and fingers. He wants you to believe him. Two things are noticeable here: first is his appearance, and second his way of conversing. He has a dominant position which is often visible during the discussions among his colleagues in the flea market. It is due to the fact that his clothing provides proof of his modern outlook and people think him superior because he is aware of many things happening around the world. Clothing here is a matter of dominance, placing someone in a high ranking order among labor migrants.

A second example is Bharat. Bharat arrived in South Africa on a tourist visa in September 2012. Bharat used to work in his village as a barber in Gujarat. He comes from the “mesuriya” caste which mostly engages in the barber profession. I was introduced to him by his colleague, Ashraf (2012–13), when I went to get a haircut. With my Hindi accent, he guessed that I was from Mumbai. He immediately started to chant the Marathi dialogues used in Hindi movies. He always talked to me in Hindi, unlike Shoaib who stressed on the usage of English. His appearance showed that he had just arrived from India. His ears were pierced; his hair style was a clone of Shahrukh Khan’s new haircut from the Hindi movie, Jab tak hain Jaan (2013). He dressed in a simple T-shirt that had name of his shop, blue jeans, and slippers. Talking with him, I discovered that he had arrived a month ago and was getting to know the locality. Bharat (2012–13) was still a shy person; he rarely engaged on issues other than Mumbai, religious festivals, and club parties. I assumed it was due to the fact that he had no other area to engage with me apart from these, or that he did not want to talk about something he did not have knowledge of. He talked about Mumbai because he had been to Mumbai. About festivals, he would talk about Diwali and Holi, drawing a comparison between the Indian way of celebration and the South African way of celebration. And regarding club parties, he was a young man in his early twenties who wanted to enjoy South African life, like any other university student, so he always engaged me on these issues. He could not confidently discuss some issues that he was not aware of, unlike Hitesh who would engage with you on any topic. Bharat once lied me that he was a married man. Later he revealed that he did not feel like telling the truth to a stranger, but over the course of time, when I
become more familiar with him, he was more open and confident in discussing his personal issues. In this case, we can see time is important for Bharat to demonstrate trust and developing confidence. But for Hitesh, confidence was something he carried with him. Time and fact did not matter to him as much as it did to Bharat.

Bharat was still trying to adjust to the new environment. He did not speak English; rather, he preferred Hindi or Gujarati. He was obsessed with Hindi cinema, which is visible among most of the Indian youth across any class. He demonstrated his love towards his favorite actor by his hair cut. Whenever I saw him, in the time span of ten months, he always had either an orange T-shirt or his working apron. This might be due to the fact that he works in the barber shop; therefore, there is a risk of getting the hairs on clothes. So he wears the T-shirt to avoid the contact with the hairs and, secondly, he prefers this way of life. He would not come into the limelight of flea market, he just wanted to keep it low and live his life. He had plans only for three years in South Africa and then he wanted to go back. He did not want to continue staying in South Africa; therefore, there was no need for him to become a modern person and show his style to the people whom he would not contact after three years. He just wants to work hard, accumulate wealth, and go back to India.

Above illustrations of changing habits were observed in the young migrants of diverse classes and religions. However, there is also a striking change visible in the clothing habits of older migrants. Most of the traders in flea market who are aged 30-plus maintain their modest clothing by wearing traditional dress or decent shirt and pants. One can easily describe the class of a person based on their clothing habits. The workers in the shops wore low profile cheap shirts and pants, which were less shiny and bright; whereas owners wear more sophisticated shirts, sweaters, jackets, shoes, attar,\textsuperscript{13} or rich fabric \textit{kurta} pyjamas. In this section, we have seen changing clothing habits among Indian migrants in South Africa. Previous works done on the Indian indentured immigration to South Africa and Indian labor immigration to East Africa show the way clothing has changed over the years (Oonk 2009, 2013; Bharati 1972). A survey of pictorial archives demonstrates remarkable change in the dressing habits of Indian immigrants in South Africa. The famous picture of first boat arrival in South Africa and passengers disembarking the boat highlights the changing circumstances of dressing habits among labor migrants. Desai and Vahed’s (2010) work contains rich archival photographs.
that cover Hindu, Muslim, and Christian Indian immigrants during the nineteenth and twentieth century.\textsuperscript{14} The poor, rural, peasantry look of the indentures is seen in the photographs. Similarly, Oonk’s (2013, 2009) work analyzed the changing dressing habits of the Indian business class in East Africa. Pictures presented in the book helps one to understand that dressing determined one’s position and status in society. It carried moral and social responsibility. Dress provided an opportunity for one to get away with the past conditions and redefine oneself in a new culture (Desai and Vahed 2010, 170–71, 194). Similarly, in the present era, exposure to foreign culture and the struggle between youth class to maintain their traditional affiliations are best seen in their dressing habits. Young Muslim migrants present themselves as modern young Muslims, whereas for Hindu migrants, religion does not matter when it comes to clothing habits.

It must be understood that clothing provides a distinct identity and affiliation with a certain religion. It provides a shift from the Islamic idioms of modesty to Hindu idioms of free styling (Osella and Osella 2007). There are no special requirements to maintain their appearance for Hindus, but Muslims need to be in the traditional space and do not want to be too Westernized. Muslims are warned against being Westernized. Clothing is an invitation for further discussion about the lifestyle of a person. Therefore, a Muslim young migrant follows his own style of compromise between religion and modernism, what Osella and Osella (2007) called a negotiation between “decency and desire for fashion” among young Indian men. Apart from religious affiliations, the amount of time spent outside India and one’s profession matter for a person to recognize himself with modern clothing. Clothing in this context is a gesture of a person’s activities, his past and future. And very modestly, it is demonstrated by every actor of the flea market.

**FOOD HABITS**

As mentioned above, religion dominates the clothing habits of migrants. Let us now investigate what happens in the case of food habits, which mostly depend upon the caste and religion of a person. Most Muslims are strict followers of Islamic dietary requirements. A migrant does not make compromises in his food habits. It is also due to the fact that Fordsburg is a Muslim-dominated area where one can easily find Halaal food. Also, it is obvious that there are no
pork-related items sold in Fordsburg, at least from my observations. If they existed, then it might be a secret place of trading. It is because of the dominant Islamic presence that pork and other non-religious practices, like consuming alcohol, is discouraged. In this section, I will briefly explore food habits among migrants and argue that food habits have not changed among migrants. It is because Fordsburg is an Indian area where one can find all the dishes of an Indian kitchen at an affordable rate. Secondly, take-aways, which are mostly Western food, do not impact the taste of migrants for Indian food in Fordsburg. I also observed alcohol consumption among young migrants, despite the community’s opposition. It is taken very seriously that there is only one pub near the trading space of Fordsburg. On the other hand, food business is taken seriously; Fordsburg accommodates twenty-five to thirty restaurants providing different dishes of sub-continent cuisine.

An entry into Fordsburg during weekends surprises a commuter who has been there during weekdays. The environment of Fordsburg is entirely different on the weekends. It is overcrowded; people struggle to find parking space for cars. Even walking on the streets is a difficult task, since the sidewalks are crowded with people and hawkers. The crowd is mostly finding its way to enter in one of the restaurants. People come with their families and children to spend some time shopping and eating different Indian cuisines. There are different restaurants providing different tastes of India with variety of regional cuisines. Dosa Hut is famous for the South Indian cuisine. Another restaurant, Bay Leaf, has Biryani speciality from Bangladesh. Similarly, in the Karachi restaurant, we get to taste the Pakistani kebabs. Additionally, some restaurants like Kaashif’s Fusion offer Indian-European mixture. It has creamy sauce with hot curries that accommodates variant, newly discovered food needs. Restaurants like Swaruchi have a sign of “strictly vegetarian.” People who practice strict vegetarianism are mostly from the Hindu caste. Additionally, apart from the South Asian restaurants, there are various Western franchise food chains like KFC, Steers, Nando’s, and Chicken Licken, which offer contemporary Western style chicken. Apart from the posh restaurants, there are stalls that serve food on streets. It is mostly take-away food that targets poor labor migrants working in Fordsburg, who tend to eat the food because it is reasonably cheap as compared to others. Fordsburg is like a vast food plaza where you can eat parcel food and buy spices, groceries, and all kinds of Indian and South Asian food. Food is the center of attraction for customers coming to Fordsburg (see figure 3).
Figure 3. Food and clothing dominate the flea market trade. In this picture, we can see the food court beside the clothing stalls. Author’s photo.

Figure 4. Chaat being served at the flea market. Author’s photo.
The above was about the taste of people coming to Fordsburg from elsewhere, but what about the people who make this food or those people who sell this food? The workers that work in the restaurants tend to have their food in the restaurant itself, and the ones who are working elsewhere either bring their food from home or eat in the nearby restaurant. Mostly workers do not go to restaurants; rather, they eat their lunch in the shop. Ghoolam and Shoaib eat their lunch at their work place, which is brought from home. Migrants mostly prefer cooking by themselves, at least for dinner. During one night, I was invited to the “boarding” residential place of Ghoolam’s friend. On entering, I saw one person was cooking rice in a big pot for ten people, and on the other stove, dal was cooking. If the boarding is shared by Muslim migrants, then they usually eat meat twice a week. The responsible person of the boarding house buys the food from Fordsburg market, that is, groceries, vegetables, meat, and snacks. The food is cooked alternatively by the residents depending on their availability. It is already decided who cooks on which day of the week. Hence, there remains no confusion on the responsibility. An important thing to note here is that nobody thinks of changing their tastes and habits as they do with clothing. They strictly follow their dietary requirements. Among the Muslims, they only eat Halaal food and avoid going to the restaurants where non-Halal food is served. I could not see any Muslim migrant eating non-Halaal food; they mostly bring lunch cooked at home, which is mostly the leftover of the last night’s dinner.

Regarding Hindu migrants, I saw meat eaters and vegetarians. This means the migrants who come to Fordsburg are from different castes. For Hindu migrants, caste influences eating habits. Bharat, for example, comes from the traditional “mesuriya” caste which is predominately a barber caste. Likewise, Ashraf and Ghoolam come from artisan caste, and Hitesh is a Brahmin. I could not get the census of caste, as it was an uncomfortable discussion for them to have. It is because most of them come from the caste considered to be lower in the Indian caste system; hence, they avoid discussing about caste, which makes them feel lower. But migrants like Hitesh were comfortable talking about their caste, as they belonged to the Brahmin caste, which is an upper caste.

Regarding the eating preference, whenever I saw Hindu migrants eating, it was either some snack like chaat16 (see figure 4) or samosa, which means either they do not eat meat in public or they practice
vegetarianism. Hitesh often offered *chaat* whenever I visited his stall. He once invited me to have drink and food at his place, but refused to consume the meat due to his caste practices. He said, “I am pure vegetarian. I am not allowed to eat the meat. How can I eat the meat? It is not permissible.” But when it came to drinking habits, they were free in discussing about it. Hitesh told me, “We can go and have some alcohol, eat good food, but no meat. I do not eat meat.” Bharat also said the same: “We can spend some time during the weekends, there is a bar around the corner but let’s not think about meat.” This might be because he wanted to show me that he was from a caste that practices vegetarianism, mostly upper castes. I could not get access to the personal eating habits of migrants. I suspect some of them, who have come in the last ten years, eat beef as well. It is because of local African friend’s network and the easier availability of beef in South Africa than in India. It is also as cheap as chicken, and with more nutrition. Apart from having African friends, they are surrounded by Muslim colleagues, friends, partners, and employers. Their eating habits might have influenced them as well. Oonk (2013, 115), in such case, put it as “vegetarians in a meat-eating society,” referring to the Hindus living in East Africa.

There is another possibility that cannot be denied, about Hindu migrants not eating beef at all: It might be due to the reproduction of religious identity in the dominantly Muslim neighborhood. Sometimes eating habits help them to represent their religion and caste identity. This is seen with dressing habits, when a Hindu migrant represents himself differently from the Muslim in his dressing style and maintains that differentiation. But to what extent a Hindu migrant practices different eating habits is unclear. It is unclear due to the fact that, Hindu religion comprises of different castes, and it is the caste that disciplines eating habits. Moreover, being a vegetarian depends on the deity. If someone is a believer of Shiva, then he avoids eating meat on Monday; if he believer in a deity of Sai, then he avoids eating meat on Thursday. Each day is dedicated to a particular god, and it depends on the deity’s preference of god. Therefore, observing someone eating meat on a day will not answer the absolute question of food habits. Some might say, as it is said in India, “We are vegetarian except Sundays.” This means that, people want to stress their vegetarianism, inclining towards Hinduism which prohibits meat eating, but nevertheless consume meat due to the caste consent. Due to the mentioned reasons, the possibility of their eating habits remains uncovered. However, what I could observe
was that Hindu migrants practice vegetarianism in public and also respect religious festivals. If they do respect these festivals, then it does not necessarily mean that they practice vegetarianism.

Hindus in Fordsburg are not homogenous, unlike with Muslims when it comes to food habits. However, an important thing to note is that nobody has shifted towards the South African habit of eating Boer rolls, steak, pap, or chicken fries and chips. During my field work, I have never seen a migrant going to KFC or Steers. All either ate the food made at home or prefer an Indian restaurant, because, as mentioned earlier, there is an availability of different Indian cuisines at affordable rates.

To sum up, this discussion concludes providing the changing habits of food and clothing among Indian labor migrants, who are becoming part of cultural process, of “acculturation.” Changing habits of food also depend on the liberty of an individual. Since transactions carried out in the space of acquaintances have some limitations, which, according to Faist (2000, 193), “curtails the freedom of individual involved in significant ways.” This can be elaborated with the example where some young migrants want to try food of African or other cultures, but they are not able to do that because of the constant watch and continuous observation of the Fordsburg area, which prevents them from practicing certain habits. References like this open up the possibilities of respect and fear among young migrants, which is restricting their freedom of individual choice in significant ways. Changing habits of food and clothing give an understanding of the life of new migrants from India to Africa. The life stories and personal experiences of migrants provide useful insights on the contemporary situation of labor migrants’ changing habits in the new work space. Based on food and clothing habits, one can see how a community disciplines itself. Disciplining comes from the norm that has been practiced by the community in a new space. Migrant labor has to adapt to the new rules made by the host community, and this is how they discipline themselves in order to gain access to the host community. This might be voluntarily or by force, but one cannot challenge the settled rules of the host community. If one challenges or behaves contrarily, then he might risk of losing his livelihood and reputation, which means being ostracized by the community.
CONCLUSION

The cultural process is an ongoing phenomenon in a migrant laborer’s life. In this paper, I have shown the way culture plays an important role in the life of labor migrants, with a specific focus on four labor migrants—Ghoolam, Shoaib, Hitesh, and Bharat—deriving from their life stories and everyday activities in the working space of the flea market and Fordsburg. Lifestyle, food, and clothing habits provide an on-the-ground situation of Indian labor migrants. The way a young migrant sees himself in the trading milieu of South Africa and how he responds to the ongoing process was an interesting shift. There were many cases which challenged the existing theories of labor migration. It can be said that it is due to the change in the classical modes of migration. Migrants coming to South Africa are the products of advanced technology and improved ways of communication. Many factors influence present-day migration, which evolves with the traditional approach to migration. Indian labor migration to Fordsburg becomes an important study to intervene the labor and capital movement from India to Africa. Findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature of the South–South migration. It is in conversation with the existing theories and academic literatures on Indian labor migration. This study argued that labor migration is influenced by the advancements in technology and is in response to the new world order of migration. We have seen that cultural habits influence migrant’s appearance, eating, and conversation habits. However, interesting questions arise as to how these migrants manage to continue their lifestyle in the competitive market and how they respond to the economic challenges. The definition of lifestyle changes in the context of Fordsburg. In the era of the smartphone, carrying technological devices and tablets makes one an international personality. It gives a sense of pride and adopted dominant position in the group of friends and family. Lifestyle is seen as the perk of migration. For a young migrant, it carries layers of identities. Depending on the context, lifestyle becomes part and parcel of the migration deal.
NOTES

1 This article is a chapter of ongoing research, “Indians in Johannesburg: An Ethnographic Study of Indian Labor Migration.” I am grateful to Prof. Dilip Menon, Prof. Worbys, and two anonymous reviewers for their critical comments in finalizing this draft.

2 For more on this, see http://www.fordsburg.com/fordsburg_square.htm.

3 The miners’ strike was a violent protest undertaken by the white miner workers against the Smut government. The protest went so wild that, Smut government had to use heavy artillery and air force to control the situation.

4 Based on multiple stories of labor migrants.

5 WhatsApp and BBM are applications that offer affordable messenger services, available to smartphone users.

6 For Giddens (1990, 1), “modernity” is the social life or organization which emerged in Europe (the West) from about seventeenth century onwards, and which spread, more or less, worldwide (Rigg, 2007).

7 Surma is antimony applied by Muslim men during special occasions, like Jumma, Friday prayers.

8 A kurta is a loose shirt predominantly worn by males, which has different styles; it can be as long as below the knee, or short until the waist.

9 It is taboo among most South Asian cultures that people have wrong intentions towards you, for this might affect your life. So in order to avoid it, one wears black, by way of kurta, surma, or a dot of kajal (Kohl).

10 Tabligh-i-Jammat is an Islamic movement which has evolved from the Deobandi movement. Their primary principles are inspired by the works and life of Prophet Muhammad. The movement was started in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi in India. For more, see http://tablighijamaat.org.

11 The importance of gold for a male migrant is explained in Osella and Osella’s (2000) study. They observed that gold chains and gold ornaments on a migrant man’s body is one of the strongest identity performances.

12 Apart from haircut, clothing style is heavily influenced by the movie industry in India (Osella and Osella 2007, 8).

13 Attar is a perfume used mostly by the Muslims in South Asia.

14 For more on this, see Desai and Vahed Inside Indian Indenture (2010). A Muslim indenture who made fortunes after the termination of his contract is seen dressed in a typical rich Ismaili bohra style with cap, beard, and suit (13). Similarly, for a Hindu migrant, wearing a turban, having pierced ears, a shaved beard, and occasionally a forehead “bindi” marked identity (238). Another picture of Indian immigrants (coolies) arriving in South Africa at the port had all of them wearing white shirts, dhoti, and heads covered in turbans (59). Dressing amounted to a representation of one’s religion and prestige in society.

15 “Boarding” is a house that accommodates at least ten to twelve immigrants in two rooms. They have one bathroom and kitchen. It is shared according to each one’s shift. One of the migrants rents the house on his account, then he invites people to stay with him. Sometimes, they sleep on the floor with mattresses, or sometime they have their own bed. The person who wants to stay in the boarding has to pay a certain amount which covers his accommodation, food, and electricity and gas bills.

16 Chaat is a typical Gujarati savory dish made from flour and which can be eaten with boiled potatoes and sweet and sour tamarind juice.

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“Smartphone Migration”


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