The role of cultural meaning system and place attachment in retaining home ownership while residing in retirement homes in Kerala, India

Nikhil Pazhoothundathil, Ajay Bailey and Inge Hutter

Introduction

Home is a place marked by many life course events. When an older adult leaves her/his home and starts to live in a retirement home she/he has to reconfigure their sense and meaning of home. The shift in place of residence is likely to bring about changes in control over a place (home) and the sense of place attachment (Heywood, 2005). Home can be central to many well-being factors for older adults such as care and care reciprocity (Ugargol and Bailey, 2020); domestic routine and rhythm (Lager et al, 2016); social relationship; religious and cultural practices (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2005; Bailey et al, 2008); life course events; material possessions; memories and emotional investments (Cristoforetti et al, 2011). Home is also embedded with memories, self-identity, sense of security, cherished possessions and family relations. In the Indian cultural context, older adult care is generally seen as a duty of adult children, which means the primary caregiver is usually the daughter-in-law (Liebig, 2003). Urbanisation and industrialisation have increased the workforce participation of all members of the household. This, coupled with migration of children, results in the non-availability of caregivers within the household (Nair and Kumar, 2017). As a result of these changes, formal care services for older adults have begun to receive considerable attention, especially in urban areas. Institutions providing geriatric care such as old age homes have become a source of formal care services as an alternative for traditional informal care services (Kalavar and Jamuna, 2011; Gupta et al, 2014; Bhattacharyya and Chatterjee, 2017; Mayer, 2017; Pathania et al, 2019). According to Müller (2019) relocation of housing is a complex decision-making process as changing the housing environment allows older adults opportunities for self-reflection and emotional regulation. Unlike in the Western context, this study shows that older adults living in for-profit care homes make efforts to retain and maintain their old home, as home is culturally as well as emotionally relevant in older adults' lives.

This chapter focuses on three questions: i) what motivates older adults to retain their (previous) home while currently residing in retirement homes?, ii) how do older adults maintain their previous homes? and iii) how these motivations help to maintain place attachment?

Ageing and institutional care

The study is based in Kerala, India. According to the 2011 Census, 8.5 per cent of the total Indian population are older adults (aged 60+) (Registrar General of India, 2011). The share of older adults in India in 2015 was 9 per cent, which is expected to grow to 10 per cent in 2020, 20 per cent in 2050 and 33 per cent by end of this century. The oldest-old group (80+) is expected to grow faster than any other age group (United Nations, 2019). As per the 2011 Census, the proportion of older adults (60+) in Kerala is 12.6 per cent (Registrar General of India, 2011). Among the Indian states Kerala is the most rapidly ageing state with 97 older adults per 100 children (Subaiya and Dhananjay, 2011).

According to the traditional Indian system the last two of the four *ashramas* (stages of life) – Vanaparsta and Sanyasa – are connected with later life. In the Vanaprasta stage (retirement) life is marked by a transition phase towards spiritual life, where a person has handed over household duties to the next generation (see Chapter 7 for obligations linked to each stage). In the Sanyasa stage (renounced life), the last stage of the *ashrama* system is marked by the renunciation of material desires with more specific focus on spiritual life (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2005). From this perspective, later life can be seen as a process of reducing one's responsibilities and expectations, especially in relation to the home. According to Izuhara (2000), the residential choices of older adults are influenced by family tradition and social norms. The concept of formal care system was introduced by colonial administrators and missionaries during eighteenth century with special focus on poor and homeless older adults. Compared to previous decades, institutional care services for older adults are now receiving considerable attention and importance. Even though in India only a small proportion of older adults use institutional services, the tendency of seeking institutional services is growing and more demand for geriatric care institutions is expected in the coming years when Indian society moves towards further socio-economic and demographic changes. According to the UNFPA study conducted in seven major states in India, 6 per cent of older adults live alone and 16 per cent of them live with a spouse (UNFPA, 2011). India is experiencing rapid population ageing, which will result in the growth of the older adult population in both relative and absolute terms. This is predicted to increase the need for formal care services for these older adults (see Chapters 8 and 10). It is evident from the studies that old age homes are more concentrated

in such regions that are characterised by more rapid rates of population ageing (HelpAge India, 2009; Samuel et al, 2016; Nair and Kumar, 2017; Johnson et al, 2018). According to Help Age India (2009), 14 per cent of the total old age homes in India are in Kerala and the state is characterised as a demographically leading state having 12.6 per cent of the population aged 60+ (Registrar General of India, 2011). According to the Social Justice Department (2019), there are in total 614 care homes registered in the state of Kerala, which include 599 non-government care homes (which include both non-profit and for-profit care homes) and 15 government care homes.

Home and cultural meaning system

The concept of home has been extensively used in connection with theories of place attachment and place identity. Place attachment is defined as the emotional bond between person and place and place identity is concerned with the process of forming places as part of one's self-identity irrespective of the qualities or evaluation of those places (Moore, 2000). Home is seen as the place which satisfies people's psychological as well as physiological needs (Maslow, 1955). Based on the literature on meaning of home, Clapham (2011) argues that the well-being of a person is associated with identification and embodied activities. Hence, physical, material and social worlds all play a significant role in promoting the well-being of older adults. Place attachment operates at both the individual and the group level. At the individual level, attachment relates to personal memories, personal experiences and gains. This kind of place attachment helps to create a stable sense of self (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). According to Easthope (2004) a place (home) is constantly linked with physical, social, cultural and emotive worlds. The meaning of home and its material function change according to the changes in life stages of older adults. A study of older women living in congregate houses – a type of multi-occupancy housing in which individuals have a private bedroom but share a common dining room and other facilities with other residents – (Leith, 2006) reveals that older adults are able to conceptualise and evaluate their life situation in response to their environments and try to make a rational judgement according to the available resources and environments.

Any disruption in the physical, social, cultural or emotive attributes will affect the well-being of older adults. When any such changes occur, older adults are likely to adopt coping strategies to mitigate the effect of the change (Cristoforetti et al, 2011). In a study of older adult widows, Cristoforetti and colleagues (2011) found that, in response to loneliness due to the loss of a spouse, older adults use coping strategies such as relocation and personalisation of possessions in order to ensure a sense of continuity, psycho-physical and social well-being. According to Coolen (2008, p 62) 'the

meaning of dwelling is believed to lie in the relationship between the features of the dwelling on the one hand and people's goals and intentions on the other'. For example, Hansen and Gottschalk (2006) found that changes in the life stage of older adults, in terms of shrinking the household size and poor health, motivate older adults to seek a better dwelling place. Through a dialectical perspective place attachment is involved in 'movement and rest' and 'inward and outward' aspects. The inward aspects of a place refer to being part of a place like home where individual and familial relations take place and are separated from rest of the world. Outwards refers to the external world. Similar to interpersonal relationship, place attachment is maintained through proximity-seeking behaviours, where closeness of places provides a sense of safety and comfort, if the place is positively constituted. If proximity is not possible, this sense of place can be achieved through symbolic representation (Smith and White, 2004; Scannell and Gifford, 2014).

The meaning of home varies according to culture. In the Indian cultural context home is considered as the central place to perform various *sevas* (care), that is, culturally bounded duties and services to fulfill intergenerational care expectation and obligation. During adulthood an adult couple is primarily responsible for taking care of their children. When the adult couple become older, they are supposed be taken care of by their children. According to Mayer (2017), expectations about ageing are culturally shaped and influence the way people organise their daily lives and social bonding. The transfer of family property from older adults to their next generation is considered as an important life course event marking the fulfillment of familial obligation driven by social and cultural norms. It has been argued that individual reasoning, perceptions and interpretations are derived from cultural schemas (d'Andrade, 1992; Vaisey, 2009; de Haas and Hutter, 2019). Cultural schemas are shared beliefs which shape individual's perceptions, attitudes and expectations (d'Andrade, 1992; Strauss and Quinn, 1997). Cultural schemas are hierarchically organised and have the ability to instigate action. According to Strauss and Quinn (1997, p 26), when the cultural belief becomes a part of an inner sense of a being they become goal driven and acquire motivational force'. Higher-level schemas, which function as goals, are considered to have high motivational force. Middle-level and lower–level schemas generate goals in interaction with higher–level schemas (d'Andrade, 1992). Cultural schemas are divided in to the following four major functions: representational, constructive, evocative and directive functions (Rutagumirwa, 2018). The representational function involves defining knowledge and beliefs about the world which help individuals orient themselves in the social world. Constructive functions create cultural entities which people adhere to. Evocative functions evoke feelings and emotional reactions. The directive function appears as a need or obligation to do something. For older adults in India, the motivation to retain and maintain

their home for the next generation is driven by the cultural schemas of 'age role expectation' or 'care obligation'. Fulfillment of the care obligation will bring a sense of satisfaction. Additionally, schemas such as love, nostalgia and pride also motivate older adults to retain their home and maintain a sense of place attachment.

Various studies emphasise the importance of possessions in later life for promoting a sense of continuity, comfort and security (Sherman and Dacher, 2005; Cooney, 2012; Meijering and Lager, 2014; Stevens et al, 2019; Coleman and Wiles, 2020; Pazhoothundathil and Bailey, 2020). According to Seo and Mazumdar (2011), the use of cherished possessions is culturally embedded. The authors further emphasise the importance of cultural values, values, traditions and preferences in older adults' lives, especially when they are in a displaced space. In this study, we look at how cultural schemas and emotions motivate older adults living in care homes to retain their previous home and what different strategies older adults use to maintain their home.

Study site and profile of participants

The material for this chapter comes from a qualitative study conducted at two retirement homes for older adults located in the Kottayam district of Kerala, India, between June and December 2015. One of them is a faith-based retirement home and the other is a secular retirement home. To maintain the anonymity of the respondents, we use pseudonyms for both the participants and the retirement homes. In this chapter both these homes are named as 'Trinity' (faith-based) and 'Sahya' (secular) respectively. Trinity is generally aimed towards middle-class older adults. This three-storey retirement home is managed by a Christian missionary group led by nuns. A separate chapel is built inside the retirement home and masses and prayers are conducted every day. There are separate staff for cooking, washing and cleaning. Each older adult has their own separate room with attached bathroom and toilet facilities. Older adults residing in this retirement home are from nearby areas. Since there are no nursing care facilities, only able-bodied older adults are accommodated in this retirement home.

Sahya is situated in a hilly village area and is aimed towards upper-middle-class groups and is managed by a trust. Compared to the faith-based retirement home, it is newly built and clearly identified as a secular home. Most of the residents had previously lived abroad as they had worked in countries such as the United States and Hong Kong. This retirement home accommodates both able-bodied and non-able-bodied older adults, as they have nursing care facilities. The home also has a library, a lift, WiFi, vehicles, air-conditioned rooms and a garden. Separate trained staff are deployed in each department for supervising, nursing care, cooking, cleaning, washing,

gardening and security. Every week three doctors visit the home to perform medical check–ups.

The participants were recruited with prior permission in both settings. Each retirement home is considered as a case study. To get permission for the study a written request form was submitted to the supervisory board of each institution. Since these retirement home managers are very keen to maintain the privacy of the older adults, it took several days to get the permission for the study from the managers, particularly from the Sahya retirement home. Several visits, phone calls and email communications were made to ensure the permission from Sahya. Before starting the first interview, three visits were made to each retirement home to build a rapport with the older adults. Later we sought separate permission from older adults and caregivers. We did not recruit participants who were sick and could not give consent themselves. Each participant was informed about the research before their participation and their consent was recorded. Photographs were taken with prior permission of the retirement home and participants.

We conducted 24 interviews in these homes. At Trinity 13 individual in–depth interviews were conducted. These interviews included seven females, five males and one caregiver. Among the participants two were couples. All the older adults were economically independent. They were receiving retirement pension because either they themselves or their spouses had worked in government service, especially within Kerala. At Sahya a total of 11 interviews were conducted comprising six female, four males and one caregiver.

Data collection

We conducted in–depth interviews to obtain rich information about the life history, life experiences associated with home and place-making practices of older adults in retirement homes. In–depth interviews help i) to gain a detailed insight into the research issues from the perspective of the study participants and ii) understand the socio–economic and cultural context in which people live (Hennink et al, 2011). Semi-structured interview guides were employed. The interview guide was prepared in English and was translated into Malayalam, the local language. Interviews were conducted at the personal rooms of the older adults. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. Interviews were conducted up to the point of data saturation.

Ethical clearance

Prior to conducting the data collection, the study was submitted for ethical approval and was approved by the Institutional Ethics Review Board of the

University of Groningen. Retirement home authorities and participants were informed about the study objectives and the interview process. Interviews were conducted at the convenience of participants after obtaining informed consent to conduct the interviews and to audio-record the conversations. Photographs were taken with the prior permission of the retirement home authority and older adults. Observations were done without making any disturbance for the personal privacy and community life. Privacy and anonymity were maintained.

Data analysis

The interviews conducted were in Malayalam and later translated into English. Atlas.Ti.7, a qualitative software package, was used for data management and analysis. For analysis we adopted the board principles of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006), which involved various stages such as developing codes, defining codes, coding data, describing codes, comparing codes, categorising codes, conceptualising codes and developing theory. Two main cycles of coding were applied (see Table 9.1). In the first cycle of coding, primary codes were developed both inductively and deductively. Primary codes were developed through line-by-line coding of each data set, which enabled the researcher to stay as close as possible to the data. In the second cycle, code families or themes were developed through grouping different

Table 9.1: Themes and codes emerging from data

Theme	Codes
Emotional attachment towards home	Ancestral home, caretaker, family property, feel missing home, feeling happy, connect with native, interpersonal relationship with neighbours, ownership, place attachment and memories, place and role, pride, place wanted to stay.
Reasons to leave home	Changes in care relation, changes in family value, changes in norms, death of spouse, changes in meaning of place, feel insecure, feel loneliness, free from household work, health issues, need for care, retired life, lack of assistance.
Strategies to maintain homes	Caretaker of family property, condition of home, elements of fictive kinship. Interpersonal relationship with extended family members. Interpersonal relationship with neighbours, proximity of possession, visit own home.
Attachment to things and places	Material possession and interpersonal relationship. Place and memories, pets, cherished possessions, possession at home.

primary codes based on common attributes guided by analytic research questions. From the primary codes that we identified, we focused on code families for 'Emotional attachment towards home', 'Reasons to leave home', 'Strategies to maintain their homes' and 'Attachment to things and places' where we employed secondary codes. The data presented in this chapter mainly come from the interview data.

Results

Current living situation

The older adults living at Trinity had primarily worked in India especially in government sectors and were economically independent as most of them were receiving their own or spouse's pensions. The spiritual way of life, associated with the Catholic faith, was one of the important features that attracted the older adults to select this particular retirement home for their retirement life. Trinity is situated close to a hospital and only accommodates older adults who are able-bodied as there is no facility for nursing care. This retirement home is surrounded by a wall which features Bible quotes. Inside Trinity, common rooms are decorated with pictures of Jesus and other Christian figures. The prime administrator is a Catholic nun. Though she is younger than the residents the older adults call her 'mother'. Each day starts with mass at 6am followed by prayers at 12 noon and 6pm. Besides this, older adults pray in their rooms. Community prayer times and dinner time are the main opportunities for older adults to meet each other. Playing cards is the main leisure time activity. As most of the older adults have emigrant children; they occasionally travel abroad to spend their time with children. There is a specified time for visitors. Older adults are free to visit their homes and relatives, but it is recommended that they return to Trinity before the commencement of evening prayer at 6pm.

Sahya, the secular retirement home, has more facilities than Trinity, such as air-conditioned rooms, WiFi, a garden, a library and other services. This retirement home accommodates both able-bodied and non–able-bodied individuals, and they have the facilities and staff to provide nursing care services. Compared to other institutions, it is considered to be more luxurious as most of the residents are retired returning migrants. Indeed, a few of the older adults have US citizenship and they receive a social security pension from the USA. Though each room has separate television facilities, some older adults prefer to watch films in the common TV room. This then becomes an occasion to meet and share time with other older adults. As the older adults give more importance to privacy, visits to other rooms are reported less often. Common meeting points are the garden, the TV rooms, the corridors and the dining hall. The celebration of birthdays is a common practice, in addition to the celebrations of festivals like Onam (a

regional festival), Christmas and New Year. Some older adults have their own cars. The retirement home has its own car and driver which can be used by the residents. There is no restriction on visitors. Older adults are free to leave the retirement home, which enables them to visit their homes occasionally. Older adults use modern communication technologies like Skype as well as WhatsApp to communicate with children living abroad, and with friends.

Cultural obligation and emotional attachment towards home

In Trinity, 9 out of 12 participants, and in Sahya 6 out of 10 participants retained and maintained their earlier houses while residing in the care homes. The analysis of the interviews revealed a range of reasons for older adults to retain their homes. One is the older adults' cultural obligation to retain their home for the next generation; another is that older adults are emotionally attached to their homes in various ways. Home was not just seen as a shelter. It is imbued with memories and roles – it is part of their identity. For the older adults, home is a central place where interpersonal relationships are maintained within the household (with husband, children and parents) and people outside the household such as neighbours:

> 'when I went there yesterday, a special feeling passed through me. I became very happy (…) The plants have grown into big trees of fruits and herbs now. They were planted by my husband. Sometimes I collect the fallen fruits on the ground and take with me here (Trinity) (…) nowadays all of them have built huge mansions. Our home was the only big house there years before.' (Mary)

Home and its surroundings are filled with memories of family members (deceased and living) such as spouses, parents, siblings and children. Given the right kind of support (social, physical and daily needs), the older adults we interviewed would have preferred to have lived in their own homes, rather than a care home. This preference is rooted in their emotional attachment to home and the memories it encompasses. Women were more vocal than men about their emotional attachment to their previous homes, as they had tended to bear the main responsibility for domestic tasks and providing care.

> 'I used to grow some crops like tapioca and coconut. I was actually hesitant to leave home. My three kids my husband..their souls rest there. But I was forced by everyone. Yet, still I've to take care of my home, no!! … it's quite difficult to leave one's home forever, right!! To leave them, to see decaying, to get our property lost. Still everyone

asked me why and for whom I should cling on to that home all alone …Yes I miss my home (…) I can take care of the affairs there(home), and maintain my small farm. I never get a minute to make myself sit down for a moment there (home).' (Elsamma)

Home is also associated with place identity, family roots and sense of pride. As such simply transferring home ownership to the next generation will not fulfil the familial obligation. In the context of international migration, older adults perceive that it is their cultural and familial obligation to retain and maintain the home for the next generation as home could act as a source of pride, place identity and potentially could motivate migrant children to return to Kerala.

'I feel very bad about leaving my house in which we lived for long and living here. The house is deserted or else it should have been safely given to someone to look after. So I feel that it (home) is orphaned. I am sad about it.… If our son is here. Suppose one day if he wishes to come back from America. We want to preserve it for him and grandkids even though they won't come. One day our grandkids can say they have their home in India. They can be proud of it.' (Philomina)

For some older adults, home is important because of the painstaking efforts they had to take to build the home. Even though ownership status was transferred to the next generation, older adults felt greater attachment towards a particular home, because they constructed it with their own earnings. They perceive/look upon their home as their child. Many of the older adults had invested their lifelong economic savings in these homes.

'Of course the house at Madras … There were two houses. I had one built for each children. Then the son in America said he doesn't need a house. So we sold it. And one is remaining. Another son and family stays there.. It was I who had constructed the house. Like a mother give birth to her baby, I had gone through various pain and struggles to make it. I delivered my home, like a mother. Ha ha. So, there I have more attachment to them.' (Nainan)

For an older adult like Omana, who has lived most of her life outside Kerala, home and its immediate surroundings have helped her to reconnect with her identity after returning to Kerala. It is the respectful behaviour of neighbours, the beautiful surroundings and the concern shown towards her that make her feel more welcome. Omana, for the most part of her life, was an urban dweller and was used to the anonymity that comes with living in modern metro cities. After the death of her husband and the migration of

her children, she found new bonds and attachment to a small village where her house is located.

> 'On my birthday on March 1st in 1999 we moved to the house (..) And then, while we were residing there, we were on top of a hill. When looked sideways we could see many other hills stretching away. such a beautiful place and we had such a beautiful life. On the second or third day, I just went out on the hill for a walk; there was a poor house down there. One lady was standing at their gate. She asked me, "Amma (mother), what are you up to?" I replied, "I was going for a walk." As I walked a little further, an old man asked me, "Amma (mother) where is your vehicle, do you want me to call a vehicle?" That moment, I will tell you, honestly, I thought, "This is my identity, this is who I am, I come from here, and this is my home" it was so stronger feeling and it was such a happy feeling, because we stayed in Mumbai, we stayed in Hong Kong, we stayed in Ethiopia and all we hardly knew everybody. We don't even remember their names and they don't even remember our names. Now this is a person who knew me for two days and called me 'amma'(mother).' (Omana)

Home is the place embedded with various emotions such as love, pride, identity and sense of belonging, as well as memories of people and events that motivate older adults to retain their homes while they reside in a retirement home.

Reasons for leaving home

Older adults prefer home as their first choice of residence over any other alternatives. We asked in the interviews about their motivations for leaving their home and choosing a retirement home as their residence. Participants mentioned a range of reasons such as lack of security, health issues, loneliness, migration of children, discrimination at home, loss of a spouse, weather issues and older adult abuse (see also Chapters 8 and 10). However, feeling lonely due to the loss of a spouse or migration of children and health issues were the main reasons behind the decision to move to a retirement home. But for some older adults there was no single reason, rather it was the cumulative effect of multiple reasons that made them make the decision to move into a retirement home.

When older adults feel that they are not getting the care expected from the family, they experienced distress. Sometimes this led to feelings of being discriminated against. Feelings of discrimination seem to be prominent among those older adults who were single and did not have any children.

'After my brother's death I stayed in my home for two years. My friends, who are Nuns, they told me it was not good to stay in my home. They thought that, I am unmarried and problems might arise with my sister-in-law and her children. That I might be a burden to my sister-in-law. I should move to an old age home. It's their way of thinking. I never thought like that at first. But after my brother's death, after sometimes I felt uneasiness in my sister in law's behavior. Once we went to visit a relative, she (relative) wondered who will take care of me when the time comes. I took care of my parents. My sister-in-law and her daughter kept quiet. They could have been said that, they will. Could have been just said … they didn't. I noted that. So I decided to come here. Such occasions. To be frank I felt discriminated. I haven't said this to anyone.' (Alice, unmarried older adult)

The ability to live alone at home in later life rests on a person's functional health and sense of safety (van den Hoonaard, 2009). Some older adults think that it is not safe to stay alone at home because of security reasons. In the interviews older adults mentioned instances of murder and robbery of older adults residing alone at home in nearby villages. They also read about similar incidents happening in and around Kerala in newspapers. For example, during the fieldwork, we found numerous news reports: *The Hindu*, a widely read daily newspaper, reported on 22 January 2015 the murder of an older adult couple in Pathanamthitta district by a migrant labourer who stayed at a deceased older adult's outhouse. Another paper, *Madhyamam*, reported on 10 July 2015 that two older adults were found dead with stab injuries at their residence at Perambra in Kozhikkodu district around 8.30 pm on Thursday. Police source said the accused committed the crime while he was attempting to loot the house. Such horrifying incidents motivated some of the older adults from middle- and upper-class backgrounds to move to retirement homes.

'My only daughter left after her marriage. After that also I stayed there (home) for some time along with a servant, then I fell ill. Ah. … its chikungunya. After that we could not find a servant for some time. We have some difficulty in getting a servant? … Then how can we live alone. Then I slept alone for a few days. A neighbour used to come at night for company. She doesn't have husband and children. Then the two of us. … We will leave the lights on till morning. Because, we now read such things in paper. The thieves and the murder. So, then our fear is over our life.' (Molly)

Sometimes cultural norms associated with marriage and preferred place of residence led to older adults living alone at their home. For example, in the

case of Mathew: though he had three daughters, none of them and their husbands were prepared to stay with him. As per Syrian Christian cultural family norms, after marriage the girl should reside at the husband's home and take care of her parents-in-law. Cultural norms of adoption in Syrian Christian families allow parents who do not have a son to adopt a son-in-law and family and retain residences. As all three of Mathew's sons-in-law were also the only sons for their own parents, the possibility of adoption was not possible.

> 'Let me explain. I've got three daughters. There's a custom of adoption. Here, the son in-law will be adopted by the family of the daughter after the marriage. That is, instead of sending the daughter to husband's home, son in-law is supposed to stay at wife's family, after marriage. That's followed in the absence of a son in the family. But, all three of them disagreed with this system. All of them were the youngest ones of their families. So boys were not ready to leave their families. Some sentimental feelings, you know. We stayed at home. We (with wife) prayed, again prayed and finally took a decision.' (Mathew)

Mathew also felt that he had no special attachment towards his home, though his daughters, grandchildren and relatives felt that their ancestral home needed to be maintained. The ancestral home was the pride of the family members. These expectations also put additional pressure on the older adults to retain and maintain the ancestral homes.

> 'Seven years ago, when I left my home and sold my property, everyone blamed me that I did some kind of foolishness, that I don't love my family. My children and grandchildren were actually sad about this. And they won't find their mother's house there anymore. I told them, that there's no need get sentimental about it. At the time of our departure, we must leave behind whatever we have. We won't take anything with us. My cousins blamed me. I ruined Tharavad (ancestral home). They were also born and bought up there (ancestral home).' (Mathew)

Health-related issues motivated older adults to leave their homes. Severe health issues, such as heart attacks or strokes, which happened at home, made the older adults to think twice about staying alone at home. Since they were not co-residing with anyone at home, they would find it difficult to reach a hospital in time. Therefore, the older adults feared that their life would be at risk if they remained at home. When a husband is shifting his place of residence from home to retirement home, his wife also moves with her husband to the retirement home.

'No he wasn't so happy at first. He was a little sad because that house belonged to him. So it was not so easy to give up soon. One incident took place when we were in home. My husband fell ill. We were alone. (…) they (neighbors) were not always available. So it was very difficult for us to get help from them. As we called them for help they'd find reasons to avoid us. I called four or five of our neighbors. None of them responded. Finally, Achayan (here husband) himself drove to the hospital. We survived that day. It led us to decide that living alone wouldn't work out good..' (Theresa)

Ageing, changes in the role within the household and not feeling safe were reasons to push people to seek other residences. An example of this is Ninan, who was once the head of the household. After his wife's death he felt lonely at home. Being alone at home he had the feeling that he was becoming a watchman at home. Additionally, misunderstandings with his daughter-in-law further motivated him to leave home and move into a retirement home nearby, enabling him to remain close to his siblings and other relatives in his home village.

'It was after my wife died and I became lonely that... I felt so. Yet I lived alone for some 7–8 years. Then as I got older, as I reached 80–85 … It could be anytime. Then in emergency cases … How many people die alone! My own father-in-law, he was at home, alone, and when the children came home, he was lying there, dead. How many such incidents take place. Then, thieves. The problem of thieves... We are sitting alone. To think so, the situation has come as this. To live alone after wife died... If they(son and daughter-in-law) leave at 8am, they would come by 5 only. We sit alone bored at home, then thieves would come and murder us (...) She(daughter in law) likes to have me stay there (home) only. Then I can be a watchman for the house. (laughs). Isn't it any different from being a watchman?. Having an old man … With her, such a slight misunderstanding (…) There's another thing, I have allergy. Dust allergy. There in Madras dust is increasing day by day (…) So, considering it all, here is a secure place to be in.' (Nainan)

Older adults who have the experience of living abroad are exposed to new styles of living arrangements. The values of independent living and a focus on individual well-being also motivate older adults to choose retirement home instead of living with their children. For example, Omana. She does not want to stay with her daughters as she wants to live independently. At the same time, she is old and not able to stay alone at her home. Her children, being concerned of her safety, recommended her to stay at a paid retirement home. Hence, it is the collective decision of the entire family.

'After he (husband) passed away my daughter took me away to the US. And I came back in the meanwhile my daughter–in–law had been in need of me to stay with her. I had told that I would live alone. I wanted a place of my own. They wouldn't let me stay alone in Peerumedu (home). So we had to lock it up at Peerumedu.' (Omana)

The narratives show that there are a range of reasons that motivated older adults to leave their homes. The death of a spouse, migration of children or cultural norms regarding the place of residence after marriage, kept older adults alone in their homes. This intensified the feeling of being alone and created a sense of insecurity. Health issues and the quest to live independently also motivated older adults to leave their homes and take up residence in a retirement home.

Older adults' strategies to maintain non-resident homes

Older adults residing in retirement homes take a range of efforts to maintain or care for their non–resident home. Methods to maintain homes are i) letting out the home for rent, ii) allowing a trusted person to reside in the home without rent, iii) visit often to take care of the house, iv) asking relatives or neighbours to take maintain the home, v) appointing a staff for the purpose vi) transferring the ownership of house to a very close blood relative (siblings, nephews/nieces or other extended family members).

Since older adults are very much concerned about their home, they want a trusted person to take care of it for them. At the same time, older adults who had bad experiences with a person who rented their home, later allowed a trusted person to stay at their home, free of charge. The influence of religious leaders and family friends is a crucial element in this decision making. Older adults were always concerned about how to protect their home. One of the strategies is to give their home to others for a temporary period but on a rent-free basis. Since it is not for monetary benefit, they would usually give it to a trusted person.

Here, in the case of Pushpa and her husband, they gave their house for rent for an initial period. Later they found that the person was not keeping their home in an acceptable way, so later they gave it to a group of nuns, based on the recommendation of a priest from their church. Now they are happy that the nuns are looking after their home.

'The house is in custody of nuns. They will keep it clean. Now it's not for rent. First it was rented but they used it roughly and the maintenance was costly. Nuns who came in service of the church were searching for a home. The priest (congregation priest) recommended it. It's for two years. Now they are living there. Sometimes he (husband) goes there.' (Pushpa)

For those older adults who have given their home for rent, it is not the monetary benefit that is important but the assurance that their house is being looked after and cared for by the new residents. The joy and assurance that their house was in good hands motivated older adults to share their furniture and other kitchen utensils.

> 'Now it's (home) rented (...) it's very close to here (Trinity). So I do visit home once in a while. … They are very good people, maintain our home very well as their own. That is important more that the rental amount. So I rent it them for a small amount which they can't get anywhere near.' (Molamma)

Those older adults who were single, transferred their ownership of their home to close blood relatives, such as siblings. Since they don't have an offspring to transfer their wealth to, they are happy to pass their home to a close blood relative. Cultural norms regarding the transfer of wealth also play a role in this decision making. Following cultural practice, wealth and property of those who are unmarried transfers to their closest blood relatives, such as siblings, nephews and nieces.

> 'The house and property in Kottayam was in the name of me and my brother. But I, Why should I have it! I gave it to him without his consent.' (Alice)

Due to fear of letting their house go to ruin or being misused by tenants, older adults took the responsibility of visiting the house to keep it clean and tidy. Even though no one was actually living there, older adults who could afford to hire domestic helpers and therefore found staff to take care of their home, properties and pets.

> 'I had given it for rent to a man. He has left now. My home has reached such a pathetic condition! It looked like an uninhabited place. He has turned it upside down. So far as my children are abroad, it's my responsibility to take care of my home, no! That's why I visit there, even if I'm not well.' (Mary)

> 'It is still there. It is being maintained still. Two staffs are maintaining it and we are giving them salary too. … We used to go once in a while. … Even if it is here, we have two people. They are even more dependable than our son. We have a driver. We helped him to start a taxi service. They all see me as their own father. I see them as my own children. … We trust them. They have our house key with them.' (Jacob)

Emotional attachment towards their home motivated older adults to retain home ownership. The above narratives show that older adults deploy different strategies to retain and maintain their home.

Attachment to things and places left at home

Possessions left behind at home by older adults range from photographs to plants and pets. Older adults are ready to share their possessions like kitchen utensils, furniture and electronic equipment such as TV and air conditioning with tenants.

> 'I kept some of our possessions like photos, TV, washing machine in a separate room. It's closed and key is with me. I allowed them to use our furniture. Since they already have TV and washing machine they don't want ours.' (Molamma)

Older women in the study reported how attached they were to the domestic possessions they had left behind. Theses possessions, such as cooking utensils, were an integral part of their daily rituals when they lived with the whole family. Due to this feeling of attachment, more women in the study felt sad over the unutilised condition of their kitchen utensils at home. So, they were ready to give them to others who were needy, especially to poor neighbours who respected them. Home possessions also included trees planted by family members. They were happy to take fruits from these trees back to their retirement homes after making a visit home, but not because they wish to have it; it simply evokes the memory and emotional attachment they feel towards their spouse and home.

> 'I'm a bit worried when I think about the utensils at home. There are many of them. How can I maintain all of them when I am here (Trinity)! But I'm planning to give some of them to some poor people. There are others. There are some slum people near our home. They're so friendly and helpful. Poor dears! I plan to give them to those poor ones. They call me "Mummy". … The plants have grown into big trees of fruits and herbs now. They were planted by my husband. Sometimes I collect the fallen fruits on the ground and take it with me here.' (Mary)

Those older adults who have pets at home depended on others to take care of the animals and their home surroundings. Generally it is a neighbour who does this, and in return this favoured neighbour receives recompense in the form of money and kind. In this way, the older adult is keeping and strengthening his or her interpersonal relationship with the neighbourhood.

Even with the absence of human inhabitation, older adults like to create an atmosphere of home by keeping a pet there.

> 'We have our dog at home. … There is a neighbor to take care of it. We have asked them to do so. We give them some money and our ration card (a document to avail groceries such as rice, wheat, sugar and kerosene at a cheaper price through public distribution system) so that they buy rice from ration shop and give food to the dog.' (Stephen)

> 'My Yoshi (pet dog) is at home … he became very old … I appointed a person to take care of all his needs, my home and properties. He will feed my Yoshi. One more thing. I have a big sword at home. Made up of brass. It's quite old too.' (Omana)

Older adults are keeping cherished possessions in the form of photographs, paintings and artistic works as these evoke the memory of beloved and deceased family members connected to their home. Since they are very emotionally attached to these photographs and paintings, the presence of such possessions often brings back the memory of their late family members. In the case of Alice, a single retired older adult former teacher, she likes to keep her parents' and brother's photo inside her cupboard at her home. When she looks into it, she feels sorrow about her present condition of loneliness. Thus, she doesn't want to look at these photos in front of others; she only wants to keep them with her as memories of her parents and brother. Sometimes possessions can be outside the home too. For example, Kurian considers the resting place of his parents and wife, at his church near home, as a valuable possession in his later life. During his occasional visit at home he used to visit his family plot near the church. Generally, Syrian Christians in Kerala have their own family tombs near their family church.

> 'My wife was an artist. She used to do paint and some good embroidery works. Now in her absence, I feel they are very precious in rest of my life. I have brought one of her painting here (Trinity). And placed it in the wall of our room. Rest of the paintings were kept at my home safely … My wife and my parents are resting in peace there. So naturally I go there every month … Yes, they (personal belongings of deceased wife) are well preserved there (home), although it was rented to nuns.' (Kurian)
> 'I have photos of my parents and siblings. Some of them I took with me here. Some of them I kept in my almarah at home … now a days, especially after my brother death, I don't like to look into it. I feel sorrow. They all (parents and siblings) have gone. I am the only remaining (sobs).' (Alice)

Older adults' emotional attachment towards home extends to material and non-material possessions in the home. The unutilised condition of their possessions evokes sorrows among older adults. This motivates them to share these possessions with others. Rearing pets at home can be considered as a strategy to avoid the feeling of their homes being uninhabited.

Discussion

The well-being of older adults living in retirement homes and its relation to place attachment have not been sufficiently incorporated both in theorisation as well as empirical understanding in the Indian context. This chapter has examined the motivations and practices of older adults living in retirement homes in India to retain their homes as a possession.

Older adults' first preference of residence is always their home. This study shows that health issues, a need for assistance, a lack of security, migration of children, loneliness due to loss of a spouse and a wish to live independently are the major reasons for older adults to seek an alternative source of residence in the form of a retirement home. This change in place of residence can be regarded as a viable option in response to the environment (Leith, 2006). When they do so, older adults try to secure a suitable retirement home close to their own home. This reflects the proximity-seeking behaviour of place attachment (Scannell and Gifford, 2010) coupled with the choice of residences influenced by family tradition (Izuhara, 2000).

This study shows that there are various reasons for older adults to retaining home ownership while living in a retirement home. Home is a place embedded with memories and emotions (Blunt and Varley, 2004) and owning a home helps to promote autonomy, control, continuity, self-expression and personal identity (Fox O'Mahony and Overton, 2014). Additionally, a sense of homelessness can create distress in terms of lack of autonomy and self-identity (Teo and Chiu, 2016), and hence motivates older adults to retain their home ownership. Traditionally, as per cultural norms in India, home is a place as well as a property, which is intended to be transferred from one generation to the next. By doing so, an intergenerational flow of wealth is executed, and family roots and pride are maintained because the home is a place constantly linked with the cultural and emotive world (Easthope, 2004). This study shows that the concept of home is rooted in the cultural meaning system. Cultural schemas of care and obligation towards the next generation motivate older adults to retain and maintain their homes. Through this, older adults gain a sense of satisfaction in having fulfilled their familial responsibility. Older adults also take responsibility for maintaining the family property, in the absence of their siblings. Memories of their past lives and deceased family members associated with home ties older adults emotionally to their home.

Occasional visits home bring feelings of happiness among older adults. This study shows that older adults in these specific retirement homes are economically independent and have autonomy in decision making. Female older adults are keener to make occasional visits to home and engage in cleaning, gardening and farming activates, even if they suffer physical hardships. These occasional visits give an opportunity to engage in a home–making activities that they usually cannot perform in the retirement homes. These activities ensure a sense of continuity in the older adults' lives. Social ties and interdependence play an important role in maintaining the feeling of home among older adults (Coleman et al, 2016). In order to maintain home, older adults apply different strategies: renting out; seeking help from other family members or neighbours or deploying paid employees. The purpose of renting out their home is not for economic enhancement but to find a suitable person or family to maintain the home and possessions, and for the home to be inhabited. These strategies enable older adults to enter into a new interpersonal relationship or strengthen their already established interpersonal relationship in the absence of migrant children.

The shift in residence brings changes in the meaning of home from shelter to cherished possession. Possessions in the home constitute both material as well as non–material possession, for example, as pets. The presence of pets at home enables older adults to have sense that home remains inhabited. For Miller (1998), home and possessions with a sense of agency motivate older adults to cherish their possessions at home. Moreover, the act of giving up possessions is a painstaking decision, akin to sacrificing a part of one's life (Marcoux, 2001).

This chapter contributes to understanding the ageing process of older adults living in retirement homes in India, which is a relatively new context. As in many other studies (Maslow, 1955; Moore, 2000; Easthope, 2004; Manzo, 2005; Leith, 2006; Clapham, 2011) this chapter also indicates that home is an integral part of making sense of security and identity and is constantly linked with the physical, social, cultural and emotive world. Studies (Sherman and Dacher, 2005; Meijering and Lager, 2014) also proved that cherished possessions promote a sense of comfort, security and continuity. While some studies identify the home as a place of residence, this study identified home as a possession as well as a place of attachment outside the older adluts' current place of residence, which brings feelings of identity, comfort and continuity, and overall promotes the emotional well-being of older adults living in retirement homes.

In the Indian context, place attachment, role of possession and place making practices of older adults in retirement homes are least addressed. This chapter shows that how cultural belief systems, values and emotion motivate older adults to make efforts to retain and maintain their homes as possessions, even if it represents a physical hardship for them to do so. It is

done for the benefit of subsequent generations who may have migrated and as a route to maintaining identity and pride.

References

Bailey, A., Channakki, H. R. and Hutter, I. (2008) 'Place making in liminal times: a case study among Karnataka migrants in Goa', in A. Bailey (ed) *Culture, Risk and HIV/AIDS among migrant and mobile men in Goa, India*, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers, pp 171–88.

Bhattacharyya, T. and Chatterjee, S. C. (2017) 'Exploring elder care in different settings in West Bengal: a psycho-social study of private homes, hospitals, and long-term care facilities', *International Journal of Psychological and Behavioral Sciences*, 11(6): 1607–12.

Blunt, A. and Varley, A. (2004) 'Geographies of home', *Cultural Geographies*, 11: 3–6.

Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, London: Sage Publications.

Clapham, D. (2011) 'The embodied use of the material home: an affordance approach', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 28(4): 360–76.

Coleman, T., Kearns, R. A. and Wiles, J. (2016) 'Older adults' experiences of home maintenance issues and opportunities to maintain ageing in place', *Housing Studies*, 31(8): 964–83.

Coleman, T. and Wiles, J. (2020) 'Being with objects of meaning: cherished possessions and opportunities to maintain aging in place', *Gerontologist*, 60(1): 41–9.

Coolen, H. (2008) 'The meaning of dwelling features: conceptual and methodological issues', thesis, Delft University Press, Delft University of Technology.

Cooney, A. (2012) ' "Finding home": a grounded theory on how older people "find home" in long-term care settings', *International Journal of Older People Nursing*, 7(3): 188–99.

Cristoforetti, A., Gennai, F. and Rodeschini, G. (2011) 'Home sweet home: the emotional construction of places', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25(3): 225–32.

d'Andrade, R. (1992) 'Schemas and motivations', in R. G. d'Andrade and C. Strauss (eds) *Human Motives and Cultural Models*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 23–44.

de Haas, B. and Hutter, I. (2019) 'Teachers' conflicting cultural schemas of teaching comprehensive school–based sexuality education in Kampala, Uganda',. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 21(2): 233–47.

Easthope, H. (2004) 'A place called home', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 21(3): 128–38.

Fox O'Mahony, L. and Overton, L. (2014) 'Asset-based welfare, equity release and the meaning of the owned home', *Housing Studies*, 30(3): 392–412.

Glaser, B. (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in Methodology of Grounded Theory*, Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, New York: Academic Press.

Gupta, A., Mohan, U., Tiwari, S. C., Singh, S. K. and Singh, V. K. (2014) 'Quality of life of elderly people and assessment of facilities available in old age homes of Lucknow', *India*, 5(1): 21–4.

Hansen, E. B. and Gottschalk, G. (2006) 'What makes older people consider moving house and what makes them move?', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 23(1): 34–54.

HelpAge India (2009) *Directory of Old Age Homes in India*, New Delhi: Policy Research and Development Department, Help Age India.

Hennink, M., Inge, H. and Ajay, B. (2011) 'In-depth interviews', in *Qualitative Research Methods*, London: Sage Publications, pp 108–32.

Heywood, F. (2005) 'Adaptation: altering the house to restore the home', *Housing Studies*, 20(4): 531–47.

Izuhara, M. (2000) 'Changing family tradition: housing choices and constraints for older people in Japan', *Housing Studies*, 15(1): 89–110.

Johnson, S., Madan, S., Vo, J. and Pottkett, A. (2018) 'A qualitative analysis of the emergence of long term care (old age home) sector for seniors care in India: urgent call for quality and care standards', *Ageing International*, 43(3): 356–65.

Kalavar, J. M. and Jamuna, D. (2011) 'Aging of Indian women in India: the experience of older women in formal care homes'. *Journal of Women and Aging*, 23(3): 203–15.

Lager, D., van Hoven, D. and Huigen, P. (2016) 'Rhythms, ageing and neighbourhoods', *Environment and Planning A*, 48(8): 1565–80.

Leith, K. H. (2006) '"Home is where the heart is … or is it?". A phenomenological exploration of the meaning of home for older women in congregate housing', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 20(4): 317–33.

Liebig, P. (2003) 'Old-age homes and services: Old and new approaches to aged care', *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*, 15(2–3): 159–78.

Manzo, L. C. (2005) 'For better or worse: exploring multiple dimensions of place meaning'. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25(1): 67–86.

Marcoux, J.-S. (2001) 'The "Casser Maison" ritual: constructing the self by emptying the home', *Journal of Material Culture*, 6: 213–35.

Maslow, A. H. (1955) *Motivation and Personality*, New York: Harper & Brothers.

Mayer, A. (2017) 'Old age – home? Middle-class senior citizens and new elderscapes in urban India', PhD thesis, Heidelberg University.

Mazumdar, S. and Mazumdar, S. (2005) 'Home in the context of religion for elderly Hindus in India', in G. Rowels and H. Chaudhury (eds) *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, New York: Springer, pp 81–110.

Meijering, L. and Lager, D. (2014) 'Home-making of older Antillean migrants in the Netherlands', *Ageing and Society*, 34(5): 859–75.

Miller, D. (1998) *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, London: UCL Press.

Moore, J. (2000) 'Placing home in context', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 20(3): 207–17.

Müller, H. (2019) 'Then we'll take it along even though we wouldn't take it along'– on the role of spaces and things in transitions into multigenerational cohousing. Presentation at the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics European Region (IAGG-ER) Congress: 23–25 May, Gothenburg.

Nair, S. and Kumar, S. (2017) 'Ageing in Kerala: some key issues'. *Indian Journal of Gerontology*, 31(2): 209–38.

Pathania, A., Haldar, P., Kant, S., Gupta, S. K., Pandav, C. S. and Bachani, D. (2019) 'Prevalence of anaemia among elderly persons residing in old age homes in national capital territory, Delhi, India', *Indian Journal of Public Health*, 63(4): 288–96.

Pazhoothundathil, N. and Bailey, A. (2020) 'Cherished possessions, home-making practices and aging in care homes in Kerala, India', *Emotion, Space and Society*, 36: 1–9.

Registrar General of India. (2011) 'Census Report', New Delhi.

Rutagumirwa, S. K. (2018) 'Aging and gender in Tanzania: uncovering the cultural schemas, nexus of identities and the Aging Body, PhD thesis, University of Groningen.

Samuel, R., McLachlan, C. S., Mahadevan, U. and Isaac, V. (2016) 'Cognitive impairment and reduced quality of life among old-age groups in southern urban India: home-based community residents, free and paid old-age home residents', *QJM: An International Journal of Medicine*, 109(10): 653–9.

Scannell, L. and Gifford, R. (2010) 'Defining place attachment: a tripartite organizing framework', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30: 1–10.

Scannell, L. and Gifford, R. (2014) 'Compairing the theories of interpersonal and place attachment', in L. Manzo and P. Devine-Wright (eds) *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*, New York: Routledge, pp 23–36.

Seo, Y. K. and Mazumdar, S. (2011) 'Feeling at home: Korean Americans in senior public housing', *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25: 233–42.

Sherman, E. and Dacher, J. (2005) 'Cherished objects and the home: their meaning and roles in late life', in G. D. Rowles and H. Chaudhury (eds) *Home and Identity in Late Life: International Perspectives*, New York: Springer, pp 63–79.

Smith, J. S. and White, B. N. (2004) 'Detached from their home land: the Latter -Day Saints of Chihuahu, Mexico', *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 21: 57–76.

Social Justice Department. (2019) 'Old age homes in Kerala', http://sjd.kerala.gov.in/DOCUMENTS/Downloadables/OTHERS/30681.pdf

Stevens, D., Camic, P. M. and Solway, R. (2019) 'Maintaining the self: meanings of material objects after a residential transition later in life', *Educational Gerontology*, 45(3): 214–26.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A. and Quinn, N. (1997) *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Subaiya, L. and Dhananjay, W. (2011) 'Demographics of Population Ageing in India: Trends and Differentials', BKPAI Working Paper No. 1, New Delhi.

Teo, P. L. and Chiu, M. Y.-L. (2016) 'An ecological study of families in transitional housing −"housed but not homed"', *Housing Studies*, 31(5): 560–77.

Ugargol, A. P. and Bailey, A. (2020) 'Reciprocity between older adults and their care-givers in emigrant households of Kerala, India', *Ageing and Society*, 41(8): 1699–725.

UNFPA (2011) 'Report on Status of Elderly in Selected States of India', New Delhi.

United Nations (2019) 'World Population Prospects 2019', New York.

Vaisey, S. (2009) 'Motivation and justification: a dual-process model of culture in action', *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(6): 1675–715.

van den Hoonaard, D. K. (2009) 'Experiences of living alone: widows' and widowers' perspectives', *Housing Studies*, 24(6): 737–53.