

A CRITICAL STUDY ON SEASONAL MIGRATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN RURAL INDIA'S WESTERN STATES

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ABSTRACT: Migration in rural western India is examined here in connection to social transformation that takes place at home for migrants. Research into seasonal migration has focused on remittance flows and the net loss and gain of labour between regions. Many studies have examined how marginalised individuals use their own experiences, ideas, and sensitivities in the process of travelling between their home villages and destinations to challenge the historic, uneven power relations that have been there for centuries. This study is an attempt to fill that need. Using Gramscian conceptions of counter-hegemony, we argue that the seasonal labour movement in rural Maharashtra has rippled across the social life of the villages, affecting farmers, landless labourers, and the relations of production in a way that is difficult to quantify. New farmer and labourer subjectivities, challenges to the common sense of social behaviour, and migrant tactics of resistance are seen in the "war of position" waged against landowner farmers by migrant workers. There has been an emphasis on the integration of internally displaced persons in their destination countries, but the daily political battles of internal, circular migrants remain largely unexplored in their home communities. This article urges policymakers to look at migration as a sociological phenomenon in order to better understand how communities change as a result of migration.

KEYWORDS: Migration, Caste, Social change, Development, India

INTRODUCTION:

Labourers in the Global South are forced to look for work elsewhere due to the lack of job possibilities in the agriculture industry. In cities, workers' seasonal and informal employment options are common, but getting entry to the "formal" sector frequently demands considerable cultural and social capital that these workers may lack. Internal migration, or migration inside the borders of nations and territories, is the topic of this study. According to Bell and Muhidin (2009), the worldwide population of internal migrants is estimated to reach 740 million individuals. Migration from rural regions to urban areas for seasonal work is becoming increasingly common as a result of a lack of adequate and sufficient job possibilities in metropolitan areas in the Global South. According to a wide range of studies, migration has a significant impact on the livelihoods of rural communities and the dynamics of rural economies. Migration and growth have been experimentally understood to be both good and detrimental to migrants as well as their home countries [2]. There is a "virtuous loop" between economic growth and migration, in which growth promotes mobility as well as the other way round. A "vicious circle" has been found to exist between economic "underdevelopment" and labour migration, in which workers flee their economically "underdeveloped" home societies in search of work, likely to result in the exodus of highly skilled workers and further economic "underdevelopment" in the original locale. Migrants' home towns may not benefit from seasonal movement as a long-term solution, according to the critical literature on development and migration. Migrants' "unfreedom" might also be a product of the labour recruiting process, which may lead them into "debt bondage." Migrant remittances are typically spent on "conspicuous spending" in their hometowns, resulting in inflation, increasing inequities, and little economic development, therefore, resulting in a dearth of fresh chances for returning cyclical migrants to use their talents.. In addition to being a result of these interwoven agricultural shifts, rural internal migration is also a catalyst for change. The money earned in the Middle East was a key source of funding for Filipino migrant families to buy lands and farm equipment back in their hometowns. As a result of migration, people may be able to move up or down the socioeconomic ladder. In some places, it is possible that migration, rather than landholdings, may be seen as a sign of social status. In the instance of peasant movements in West Java, migrants returning from urban areas may carry liberal-democratic principles and new expectations and notions about politics and conflict with them.

Remittance flows and the net loss and gain of labour across areas have been used to examine seasonal migration. Few studies have looked at how marginalised persons use their own personal experiences, ideas, and sensitivities

to challenge their home communities' historically uneven power dynamics while travelling between them and their destinations. This study is an attempt to fill that need. Geographical involvement with migration studies has a long history, and this investigation into migration as a social phenomenon is the latest chapter in that history. "An fixation with accurate measurement, statistics and sophisticated statistical procedures" has been the conventional approach in geographical interactions with migration research, which has focused on the causes of migration, the features and distribution of migrants and migratory patterns. Migration geographies experienced a "cultural shift," one in which migration has grown to be viewed as "an extraordinarily cultural occurrence" following this time period. The epistemology sensitive to culture and consciousness and the role of migrants' agency are markers of this cultural turn in migration geographies; however, the majority of research in this post-quantitative paradigm in migration geographies focuses on Europe and North America, and second, this based on culture turn in migration geographic regions has not yet engaged with internal migration within countries. Within the South Asian social geographies of internal migration, notable recent examples include research on the links between labour migration and masculinities and gendered notions of country in northern India, as well as the devaluation of migrant labour bodies employed by the Indian state for "nation-building" and infrastructure building and maintenance to support national defence. This research attempts to address a scholarly void in the field of migration geographies by examining how seasonal movement of landless rural labourers alters social interactions in the migrants' home towns. As a consequence of circumstances that promote rural workers to migrate to cities and the informality of the urban labour market, the Indian drylands are an ideal location for this type of study. Seasonally, these workers return to the villages where they were born, where they are confronted with a tangled web of class and caste relationships, in which they frequently find themselves in an inferior position. Class, caste, gender, and culture all play a role in placing subalterns in a historically oppressed position relative to the elites [1].

Since the early 1990s, agricultural sector development in India has stalled, and it now accounts for barely 16 percent of GDP. Almost 68 percent of all employees in India are employed in agriculture. A high rate of poverty among rural worker homes and belonging to "lower" castes within India's hierarchical caste system make these households among the most financially, socially, and politically excluded [9]. Landlessness in India has continued to rise over the past decade, as has the rural workforce's mix of agriculture and non-agricultural workers. As a result of all of these circumstances, rural labourers have begun to move to metropolitan regions in search of better job prospects, both from irrigated as well as dryland areas. But it is doubtful that migrant workers would find stable work in cities, considering that India's informal sector employs about 92% of the country's workforce. More than half of these seasonal workers are projected to be between 30 million and 100 million. In rural India, the average "poor" person is not a farmer but a wage employee who relies on erratic pay. They come home to a location where they have been economically and socially and politically ostracised, which is why they return. Thus, rural India is ideal for studying the link between labour migration and social transformation, or how migration develops circumstances for historically subordinated groups to redefine their relations in their native communities.

Gramscian theories of social transformation inform this study, which focuses on the mechanisms of counter-hegemony, particularly how disadvantaged people oppose historical patterns of class and caste in which they are subjugated. For centuries, land and asset ownership, claims to dignity and respect, and permission of lower caste landless labourers have all been based on agricultural society's long-standing caste- and gender-based inequalities, which have largely marginalised these groups. This study sheds light on how migrants resist enslavement in their home countries, how these shifts in the relations of production affect rural elites, and examines the limitations of the politics of the subaltern. According to this paper's fundamental issue, does seasonal movement of landless labourers have an effect on the social production relations in their home villages? If this is the case, then how? Agrarian caste and class relations are addressed in this text, but gender relations are not. We must acknowledge the role played by female geographers in bridging the gap between migration studies and critical theory in geography. When it comes to studying mobility, feminist geographers point out the importance of including scales such as the individual and household in addition to national and regional, questioning masculinist assumptions about ideological forces that drive labour migration; they also shed light on the cultural factors influencing migration patterns. Internal migration as a social phenomenon can now be studied more thoroughly thanks to these advances.

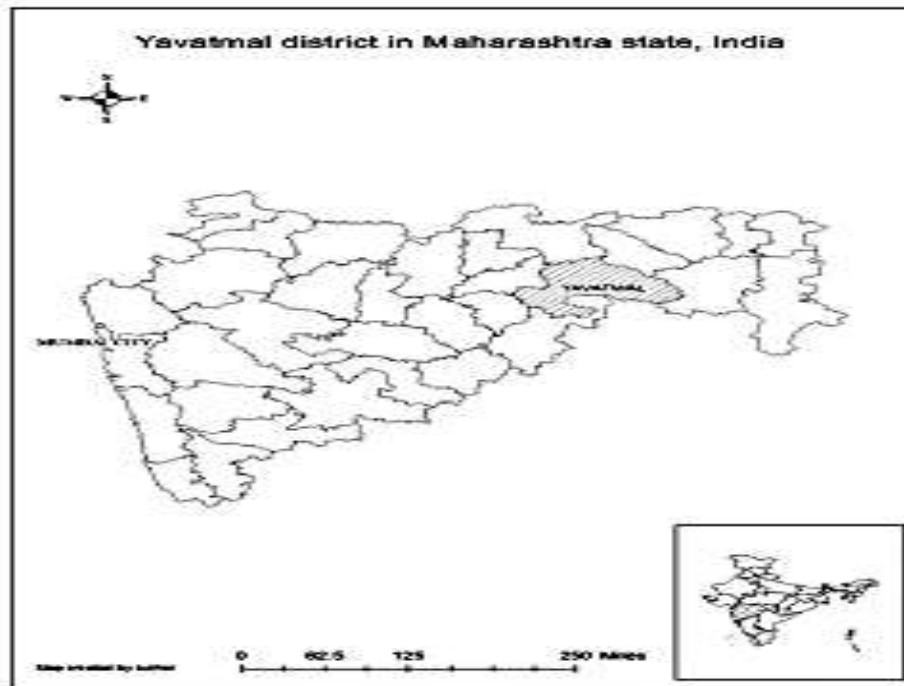


Fig. 1. Fieldwork locations in Maharashtra, a rural state in western India.

INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MIGRATION OF WORKERS:

Maharashtra, where rural people have suffered from long-term agricultural misery. On average, each household in Maharashtra owns about 1.4 hectares of land, which is less than half of the state's population of 61.5 million. According to the findings, the Yavatmal district in Maharashtra, where this research was conducted, has a population of 740,000 "agricultural labourers" and 334,000 "cultivators," respectively. Agricultural workers, often known as farm labourers, are people who work for farmers to develop their land. Farming's lack of job prospects is a driving force behind the migration of the impoverished from rural areas to cities.

The Amravati division is home to around 10% of the state's population, and 75% of that population is employed in agriculture or as a cultivator. Despite this, the Amravati division contributes only 13.6% of the state's primary economic sector, which is low given the region's high proportion of people employed in this sector; additionally, agricultural incomes in eastern Maharashtra have grown at a compound annual growth rate of 0.3% between 1999 and 2012. Farm revenues have remained stagnant for at least the past decade and one half. As a result, one of the consequences of the rural labour market's inability to absorb employees regionally is labour migration. Migration is a major part of social life [3]. Over the course of a year, 12.5 million individuals in rural India commute between urban and rural regions. About three-quarters of migrants from Maharashtra leave the state to work in low-paying seasonal or temporary employment, which are common in the area. Furthermore, 63% of the state's migrants go from one rural area to another. In order to understand how labour migration affects social connections in sending communities, it is critical to investigate the conditions under which migration leads to social change.

Agricultural labourers made up the majority of the villagers, while landowners constituted the minority; caste served as a proxy for land ownership in all of the villages studied for this study. In the rural Yavatmal area, we researched this work from 2014 through the fall of 2015. Our surveyors conducted village surveys to compile lists of owners and landless labourers according to their caste. The landless workers were divided into caste-based groupings and then randomly selected from from those categories. In the summer and fall of 2015, we conducted a qualitative research study in three of the five communities we studied. Two considerations influenced the selection of the district and the settlements. Agro-ecological elements listed in this section may be found in Yavatmal, which is located in eastern Maharashtra. Second, because no long-term research of rural social transformation exists to my knowledge, we picked this location because of the absence of empirical research on labour migration. Research for this research included interviews, observation, and group discussions in five communities. Interviews with landless labourers, farmers who hire them, and middlemen who arrange intramural workers' migration to sugarcane plantations to harvest cane were undertaken. All farmers who use labourers, as well as middlemen, were selected for the interviews. To guarantee that all lower castes in the region were represented, agricultural labourers were stratified on caste and then randomly sampled, given the enormous numbers of agricultural labourers compared to farmers and middlemen [8].

MIGRATION OF SEASONAL WORKERS AND CULTURAL SHIFTS:

There has been a long history of political and intellectual interest in seasonal labour migrants' involvement in bringing about social change in labour home areas. According to Lenin (1964), mobility helps migrants "acquire new desires and new ideals" for the places they come from. According to the authors, workers who migrate "awaken among the backward peasants' consciousness, a feeling of human dignity, and faith in their own power," according to the authors. As a result of working in cities, migrants get fresh views and learn new skills, such as how to speak a new language. Brick kilns in peri-urban regions in eastern India attracted young people from rural areas since they were not subjected to the same social supervision and monitoring level as their homes. A brief "freedom of movement" in the form of migration into kilns was thus achieved. Embracing a new sense of self, women in Bengal, India, demolish the traditional connotations connected with gendered labour. As a result of labour migration, women in other parts of India have been able to pursue higher-paying jobs. Examine rural social interactions, especially those between landowners and landless labourers, to better comprehend migration as a social phenomenon. Writings by Antonio Gramsci on the politics of class struggles in early twentieth century Italy are used as a starting point for this dissertation. Using Gramsci's work as a theoretical framework, rural labour migration and rural social development may be better understood.

On the basis of Lenin's ideas on "hegemony" and building power via leadership rather than force, Gramsci defines "hegemony" as the process of establishing power. Hegemony can be further clarified in three ways. At the outset, hegemony must be actively built and actively maintained as a dynamic social process. A crisis may precipitate the end of hegemony. In a second sense, the term "hegemony" refers to the ability to exert control over a wide range of domains—not simply economics and politics. Thirdly, in a period of hegemony, a historic bloc that contains a small portion of the dominating economic class and, in a subservient capacity, the dominant class's conquered subordinates [6].

There must be an ongoing battle to maintain and secure hegemony in the face of other forms of social power that can challenge it. Real and enduring features of practise" show "continual opposition and constraints to hegemony," counter-hegemony or alternate hegemony. It is via the "war of position," which is waged over many different fronts of conflict or at the locations of social and political unrest, that the fight against the dominance of the dominant group is waged, among other methods. The focus here is on the "enemy's" background and fundamental cultural infrastructure, i.e., institutions and organisations of the civilised society and even the structure of the society. Cultural politics and civil society institutions like the family and schools might be examples of hostility. In this war between hegemony and counter-hegemony, "common sense" is one of the battlegrounds. Most people's common sense and everyday awareness are fragmented and conflicting. History has shaped what is commonly referred to as "common sense." Counter-hegemony must battle with the seeming rigidity of the mental terrain of rational thinking in order to bring forth fresh ideas about the world. Neoliberal water conservation solutions are now common in Rajasthan state because of the state's policy instruments and water education programmes. Our approach to counter-hegemony in this work is Gramscian, and it goes beyond Leninist conceptions of counter-hegemony as a political movement striving to gain state power.

MIGRATION OF LABOUR AND RURAL SOCIAL RELATIONS:

Existing tensions in farmer-migrant labour relations have been intensified in three ways by seasonal labour migration: the collapse of the Saldari labour contractual employment system, new performances of social interactions in the village, and finally, the splintering of labourers into new categories.

The breakdown of the Saldari system, a year-long labour contractual arrangement in Maharashtra, has significantly impacted labour arrangements in the villages. Saldars, also known as contractual workers, were employed by big landowners under circumstances of serfdom. An annual labour contracts system developed during colonial times in which Saldar families worked for the same farmers for decades. Saldars have increased their negotiating power in light of poor agricultural revenues and the introduction of better-paying labour opportunities outside the village due to migration, bringing an end to this rural contractual arrangement. Traditionally, saldars would contact farmers a month before a Hindu festival to ask for work. Advance payments from farmers might be used to pay for big social occasions in working homes, such as weddings, in the case of employment. Farmers can no longer recruit Saldars as they could in the past for a variety of reasons. First, farmers cannot pay the Saldars the projected yearly salary of INR 70,000 to 100,000 due to periodic droughts. Another factor driving up labour costs is the introduction of new crops like wheat and sugarcane, which demand more workers each year. To avoid long-term employment with farmers, Saldars prefer to migrate out for shorter periods

of time. The increasing seasonal movement of Saldars and changes in their working circumstances in their home villages are linked, according to a young labourer who chose to work as a Saldar like his father before him.

The newfound freedom that younger Saldars feel while dealing with farmers is becoming increasingly apparent. To them, such tasks as cleaning cowsheds or travelling through the fields at night in complete darkness to run water pumps on the farmers' orders are degrading, and they refuse to undertake them. Since Saldars now have the authority to deal for greater wages, farmers must make sure that their employees are content. A scarcity of Saldars has led to aged wealthy landowners hiring sharecroppers who pay half the input expenses and take half the earnings [5]. Younger farmers are now connected to Saldars because of the collapse of the Saldari system, which has had a long-lasting influence on productivity and social ties. These traditional agricultural production relations are at the heart of Gramscian notions of counter-hegemony through commonsense challenge, which we shall explore in further in the next section. A "labour contract" between farmers and Saldars, which should bind the Saldars to provide labour for the farmers, is casual and thus legally unenforceable; Saldars are frequently accused of syphoning off advance money paid to them by the farmers as part of the agreements and migrating elsewhere to find work. This desire to lead a middle-class lifestyle is a common goal among young farmworkers, just like the desire of farmers' own children to lead a more urban lifestyle. These goals don't line up with the reality of living in a rural Saldar. Because of the lump-sum upfront fee they get under their Saldari system, some workers choose to continue working as Saldars to care for their children and young spouses.

Saldar-farmer negotiations: Instead of signing yearly contracts obligating Saldars to deliver their labour to farming families for many hours each day and giving them practically little time for social reproduction, Saldars serve as daily wage workers for the farmers. When Saldars return to their villages at the conclusion of the migratory cycle, they work for the farmers. Saldars now have the freedom to return to their homes multiple times a day, take breaks as they choose, and demand and achieve greater wages and more flexible work hours as a result of this new labour arrangement. Farmers no longer have to worry about Saldars breaking their traditional annual contracts with them. No other farmers would hire Saldars who had broken their contracts in the past.

TWO CATEGORISATIONS OF LABOR:

To understand how seasonal migration in rural Maharashtra affects the labouring classes, it is necessary to account for both the material changes in migrant labour households and the building of new subjectivities and based on culture metaphors by migrants and farmers to distinguish migrants and nonmigrants. Because of migration, a group of landless workers has been divided into several subgroups, leading to the emergence of new types of people [4]. A common perception among farmers is that non-migrant agricultural workers are diligent individuals who have experience working in the fields. Non-migrant workers form into groups and work for farmers on a piece rate¹ during harvest season when the demand for labour is high. Laborers earn a daily salary in other seasons. A lot of farmers aren't enthusiastic about this method. It is common among farmers that their workers no longer perform 12-hour shifts and prefer to be hired in groups for piece-rate work instead of being paid a daily salary.

Non-migrant workers are recruited by certain farmers, who then hire them to work in their fields year after year. Farmers can rely on a steady supply of labour thanks to this arrangement that guarantees regular employment for a group of workers. The "incorruptible" non-migrants, on the other hand, are not. When non-migrants find out that cities have high-paying opportunities, they are more likely to move. Farmers blame immigrants for passing on this information to non-migrants. Farmers point out that this creates a labour shortage in their area. Earnings and spending have the following effects: The earnings of non-migrants in their home villages are lower than the incomes of migrant workers in cities and other rural employment locations. In contrast to non-migrants and intrarural workers, rural residents spend money on travel, costly clothing, alcohol, and cigarettes, which farmers view as luxuries for the labourers. People who are able to work in the city for a longer period of time credit their urban careers for some of the improvements they have seen in the communities where they originally came from.

According to farmers, migrant males are exposed to a social work environment where pay is higher than in their home villages. According to farmers, they become "greedy" for more money and material possessions [7]. Farmers also report that returning workers are more open to challenging local social norms. Migrant males who have just returned to the United States speak in a way that is distinct from that of their peers in the city's working-class neighbourhoods. They value urban employment as "better" than rural employment. For example, farmers complain that migrant males wear shorts in the hamlet because they think it is culturally incorrect. Migrants are

accused of spending their days in the town square playing poker instead of laboring for the farmers. Migrants, on the other hand, are just fed up with labouring in their hometown and being out of work for long periods.

HOW LONG CAN THE SUBORDINATE MIGRANT HOLD OUT?

Seasonal labour movement has had repercussions on rural Maharashtra's social fabric, affecting the livelihoods of farmers, workers, and those involved in the production chain. New farmers and labourers, and in a Gramscian sense, challenges to the "common sense" of social behaviour and migrant politics of resistance may be seen in the migrants' "war of position" against landowner farmers. Historically, in rural western India, farmer subjectivity has been shaped and maintained by the higher caste they hold, land they possess, and the authority they wield to oversee and manage their workers' labour. In this way, a farmer has been an upper-class owner and an employer of workers working in his fields. The hardworking Saldars' plight has been improved significantly as a result of migration. In colonial India, these workers were treated like serfs by landowners, and they have been marginalised in independent India's peasant movements ever since. Having the capacity to stand up for yourself in the face of landowners is important. To make matters worse, farmers are now reliant on Saldars to do a wide range of tasks, from harvesting crops to tending livestock. The notion of the "owner" of Saldars' productive and reproductive work no longer intrigues the farmer subject. Using Althusser's idea of interpellation, the "farmer" i.e., the material and social signifiers that designate the "farmer" have evolved.

Migrant workers are utilising a variety of methods to exert their authority and sense of self in their home town, many of which are generating conflict in the community. To avoid having to work for farmers upon their return, migrants prefer not to do so, and if they must, they look for information from farms about what they'll be doing. To some extent, migrants find agricultural employment distasteful due to the drudgery of non-mechanised agricultural work and the continuing memory of a rural past in which labourers were exploited, abused, and discriminated against by higher caste farmers. They contest existing communal "common sense". A person's "common sense" is an unthinking and unconscious technique of making sense of the world around them. Hegemony is exerted and opposed on the grounds of common sense. Anti-hegemonic common sense is an antidote to hegemonic common sense and a new definition of it. The efforts of dominant social groups to regulate the accepted meanings of items and behaviours in the society are rendered inadequate when marginal social groups force their own interpretations on the objects and activities.

CONCLUSION:

Labour migration is studied as a social phenomenon in this research. Economic well-being is not being downplayed in any way. Rural Maharashtra's already strained social connections are being exacerbated by migration. There are three ways this is occurring. As a result of new opportunities created by migration, long-standing labour relationships that bound landless labour families to farmer families are being undone. There is also a shift in migrant politics, which may be seen in both transactions and expectations of behaviour from migrants. There is a distinct distinction between the two types of landless labourers, as recognised by the farmers and the labourers themselves, because of labour movement.

Saldars worked for the farmers in exchange for receiving food grains from their employers. Labourers in rural India had no use for this reciprocity because of the increase of food-based benefits in the 1980s. In 2015, the Yavatmal district in Maharashtra was among the two top districts in the state in terms of the number of times persons from Dalits and tribal tribes, who are frequently landless labourers in rural regions, invoked the legislative provisions that expressly protect them. Maharashtrian subordinates accept the state and do not reject their subjectification by the state in the practice of politics.

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