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INEQUALITY AND INTERVENTION

Volume 4

The Left Behind in Migration

National Institute of Advanced Studies
Bengaluru, India

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The process of migration

Narendar Pani

As the experience of migrant workers during the Covid crisis brought to the fore, migration is among the more volatile responses to regional inequalities. The volatility is sometimes caused by the circumstances in which processes of migration occur, including unexpected calamities like the pandemic. Yet external factors are far from being the only, or even the most significant, source of volatility in migration. The entire process is characterised by individuals and households responding to uncertain circumstances. While the process can be smooth, and rewarding when it follows the patterns that are expected, those involved can face considerable volatility when unexpected events occur. And the uncertainty over what can actually occur makes itself felt at multiple points in the process of migration. Uncertainties arise from the perception of regional differences that prompt migration. Destinations can be less comfortable than they appear to be at a distance. The conditions at home can appear more adverse than they turn out to be in comparison with what awaits the migrant at the destination. Even when the expectations are accurate there are uncertainties at various points before and during the act of migration. There are the uncertainties over raising migration capital, finding and tracking opportunities, administrative and legal barriers that need to be crossed, and much else. These imponderables become even more so when they are also continuously changing.

The conventional response to the mass of uncertainty around the experience of migration is to find ways to dispel it. For individual migrants, and all who enable their actions of migration, it is imperative that they focus only on what is certain. Without focusing entirely on the aspects they feel they can be certain about, they would not have the confidence to migrate. They ignore what they are uncertain about, sometimes believing that the uncertainties are best left in the hands of faith. Analysts of migration do not face the same compulsions of those experiencing the process, but they too have not completely abandoned the tendency to focus on certainty. Even as empirical studies point to the vast diversity in the experiences of migration across places and over time, there is a tendency to model specific aspects of the process of migration. Arthur Lewis's pioneering work on the economic logic of workers moving from regions with a subsistence economy to ones with higher productivity, remains useful in understanding an aspect of migration in some parts of the world.[1] Yet this picture is far from complete even in areas where there is a tendency for workers to move from a stagnating agriculture to a relatively more productive non-agricultural sector. As short-term migration in India has demonstrated, even when workers need to work at places quite

1 Lewis, "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour."

distant from their villages, they may still avoid permanent migration with their families to the location of their work.

The decades since Arthur Lewis's work have seen the emergence of more complex models and conceptualizations that recognise the complexity of the process. These conceptualizations focus on a variety of dimensions of migration. There is considerable attention paid to the geographical direction of that change in residence,[2] the occupational and other economic considerations that prompted the shift,[3] the movement necessitated by conflict,[4] the shifts in population residence due to climate change,[5] the change in residence due to marriage,[6] and whatever other motivations there may be to change the place residence. Underlying this diversity is a common feature: the studies tend to focus primarily on the actions of the migrants or of members of their families. The act of migration is, more often than not, seen as an event that needs to be explained in all its detail.

Rich as these studies are the view of migration as a completed event is not the best suited to explore at least three aspects of migration within India. First, migration in large parts of the country has a touch of temporariness to it. Workers join networks in villages who take up assignments in major cities. Even as they migrate to the cities for work assignments, they retain a base in their villages, often leaving their families in their rural homes. While viewing migration as an event would capture the details of each of the times a worker changes residence to carry out an assignment, it is not the best framework to understand the periods between assignments or even the relationship between assignments. Second, the processes that encourage workers to seek opportunities outside the village can vary a great deal. They can range from dominant agricultural families educating their children and encouraging them to seek urban employment to a collapsing agriculture forcing the next generation to seek opportunities outside the village. These differences can influence the patterns of migration. While the migrants from better off agrarian families can consider permanently moving to the city, those from backward regions can find the cost of living in the cities too high to bring their families with them. Indeed, there are those in the poorer villages who may not even have the migration capital needed to join a network of short-term migrants. And third, the acts of migration do not leave the places from which they originate untouched. It is not just what the remittances of migrants do these places they leave. There is also the response of the place to the permanent or temporary absence of the migrants. The absence of migrants generates a new set of everyday actions at work and at leisure. These in turn result in very different locales or what Agnew refers to as the settings in which the everyday actions take place. It also alters the sense of place creating a new unique community, landscape and moral order.[7] Migration then goes far beyond the acts of the migrants, calling for a much wider understanding of the phenomenon.

Migration, like any other occurrence, can be seen either as a completed event or as a part of a process.[8] The inadequacies of a conceptualization of migration that is seen entirely in terms of

2 Menon and Vadakepat, "Migration and Reverse Migration."

3 Valenta and Jakobsen, "Moving to the Gulf."

4 Braithwaite, Salehyan, and Savun, "Refugees, Forced Migration, and Conflict."

5 Behnassi et al., *The Climate-Conflict-Displacement Nexus from a Human Security Perspective*.

6 Eggebø, "A Real Marriage?"

7 Agnew, "Space and Place."

8 For a discussion of events and processes, see Stout, *Process, Action, and Experience*.

events related to a change of residence would be largely overcome when migration is seen as a process. A view of migration as a process would place the event of a change of residence into a larger pattern of transformation. It would recognize the variation in the processes of rural change that encourage workers to leave the village, both across regions and across families. It would be able to develop the links between the patterns of rural transformation and the nature of migration. It would examine not just the change migrants bring about in cities, but also the transformation their leaving has caused in the village. It would capture the intrapersonal inequalities in the process, as when persons believe they should leave the village because their families no longer have the status they once did. It would evaluate the interpersonal inequalities that may prompt a person to seek opportunities at a distance from the village. A person who chooses to be a taxi driver in a distant city may not be willing to be seen offering a similar service in the village. A view of migration as a process would also spot intergroup inequalities that encourage entire groups to carry out work assignments outside the village, from harvesting farms in other parts of the country to carrying out specialised tasks in the urban construction industry. A process view of migration would also have place for individualized responses to differences. There would be those who would aspire to use migration to earn the resources to challenge village hierarchies. Others may see the same differences as inequalities that need to be challenged within the village, even as yet others may be agnostic to these differences.

The multitude of possibilities would ensure that each story of migration would be unique in its own way. When seen in sufficient detail no two migrants would have faced identical situations in their acts of migration. Even when they are from the same village and the same family there would be differences in their role within the family, their capabilities, and the opportunities available to them. Reducing the variety of unique experiences into a single model would leave out elements that may appear irrelevant in one situation but are critical in another. While models may useful, even necessary, to understand specific dimensions of migration, they cannot be taken to be an approximation of the larger processes of migration. Wage differences could explain the economic aspect of some cases of migration, but they do not help us understand the role of identity in forming groups of workers that can tap these differences. Rather than seeking to approximate this complex and everchanging reality to a model, it would be more rewarding to develop a lens that helps explore the processes of migration in all their diversity and uncertainty. Such a lens would help us explain the causes and consequences of processes of migration in specific situations. It would not seek the precise predictive power that models sometimes claim but would be satisfied if views of several situations through the lens helps us make intelligent guesses about the likely course of particular processes of migration. It would, as has been famously suggested, prefer to be vaguely right rather than precisely wrong.[9]

One such lens would be a modification of the triad of transformation developed in the first volume of this report. In its general formulation transformations led to differences, and the response to these differences caused further transformation. This lens can be used to explore different elements of the processes of migration. If we stay with the conventional

9 This statement is usually attributed to John Maynard Keynes, but can be traced back to the English philosopher, Carveth Read, in Read, *Logic, Deductive and Inductive*.

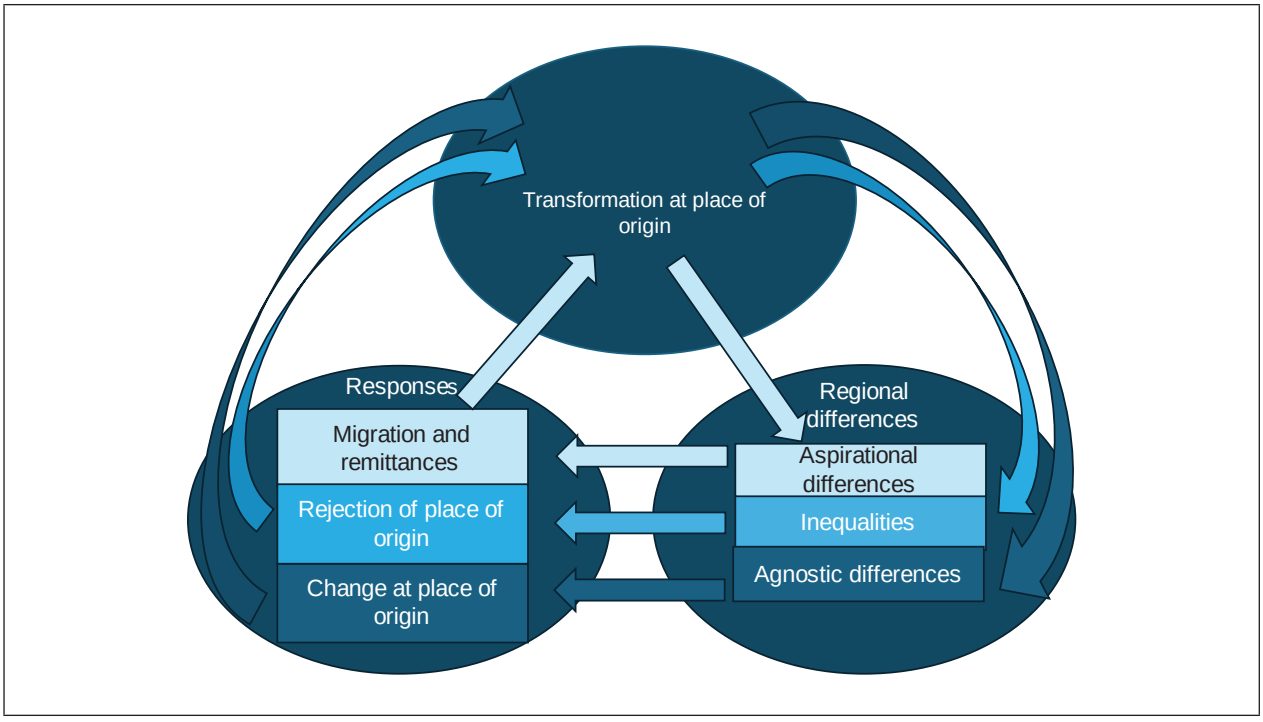
focus on migrants, a transformation in the form of a collapse of agriculture in the village would increase the differences between the village and the city. This would encourage individuals to respond by migrating to the city, which would transform the city.

It may be relevant, though, to focus on some of the other dimensions of the process of migration that could do with more attention. There is the entire set of issues that arise in terms of what migrants leave behind in the village. The term left behind can give the impression that once the migrants leave the village it is necessarily condemned to backwardness, or even that it no longer has any agency left. Such an interpretation would necessarily be misleading. Those who stay back in the village often continue to have critical roles in the process of migration. They can manage household interests, including those in agriculture, often supplying the migrants with agricultural items long after their initial acts of migration. They can also have a socioeconomic role in the village quite independent of the actions or interests of the migrants. As we shall see later in this chapter, households headed by women – including those who have not gone with the migrant members of their families – have a socioeconomic role to play in their villages. There may be a case for interventions to encourage whatever socioeconomic initiatives that emerge in the village after a spurt of migration, but such interventions cannot be conceived without first recognizing the consequences of the migration of a significant number of workers out of the village. Such interventions must address what is left behind after the processes of migration if they are to be effective. This study of inequality and interventions related to migration thus has reason to pay attention to the left behind, especially the agency of the individuals and groups who have not migrated.

When the experience of those left behind after migration is seen as a process, the lens provided by the triad of transformation takes the form presented in Figure 1. A village whose economy is substantially altered by a declining agriculture would be faced with a stark economic difference between local conditions and those that exist in distant urban centres. The perception of these differences by workers, especially younger workers, could vary. There would be those who aspire to benefit from migration to urban centres and would see the contrast between the village and the city as an aspirational difference. If they have the migration capital they would prefer to migrate and may even send remittances back to those who stay behind. These remittances would affect the economic conditions of the part of the family that stays in the village, and the aggregate of these remittances across families could transform the village economy. Other young workers, including those who do not have migration capital, may see the difference between the village and the city as an inequality. They could demand a greater share of state support for local activities, including agriculture. To the extent that they succeed in getting state support or finding new local socioeconomic opportunities they too would contribute to the transformation of the village. Those who are agnostic about the differences would choose not to act, but their inaction would also influence the final outcome as it would allow the transformation to be entirely influenced by the actions of others.

The picture if further complicated by the fact that the transformations of places that are left behind do not begin on a clean slate. The tendency to migrate is itself the result of differences caused by earlier transformations. The migrations out of rural India have been influenced by the movement out of agriculture. And those moving out of agriculture could be exposed to different

Figure 1.1: Triad of Transformation



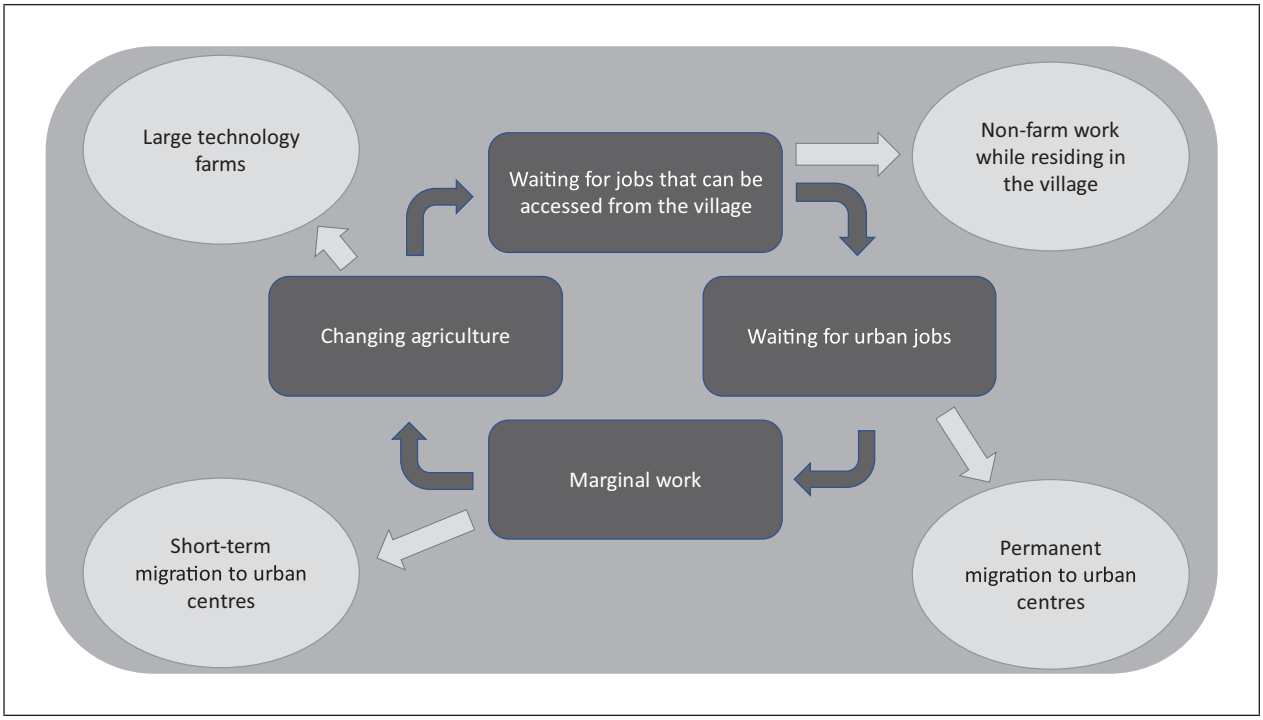
processes depending on the opportunities they have. These options have been conceptualized in an earlier work [10] as the cycle of vulnerability, depicted in Figure 1.2.

We could enter the cycle at that point in a changing agriculture where workers are forced to leave farming. The declining returns to individual farmers could be due to reduced returns to the farm or, more commonly, a decline in the size of the farm as family property is divided from one generation to the next. The smoothest transformation is when non-farm jobs are available in the vicinity of the village. The worker leaving agriculture could then commute to a nearby non-farm workplace and continue to reside at his village home. When non-farm opportunities are not available at a commuting distance from the village, the worker would have to consider migrating permanently to the places where the non-farm opportunities exist. When the non-farm opportunities arise in cities that are too expensive for the worker to move with his family, the worker would have to consider short-term migration for specific work assignments. And when opportunities for short-term migration become sparse the worker may have no option but to seek out the few areas where agriculture may happen to be doing well.

The cycle of vulnerability allows for four distinct responses to a failing agriculture. First, there is the process of moving to work within commuting distances. Typically, in such cases, the older generation continues in agriculture while next generation finds non-farm opportunities while continuing to reside in the village. This does not involve migration in the traditional sense of the term of change of residence, but to the extent that the worker spends long hours at the workplace and has little time for the happenings in the village, it

10 Pani, *Dynamics of Difference*, 2022.

Figure 1.2: Cycle of vulnerability

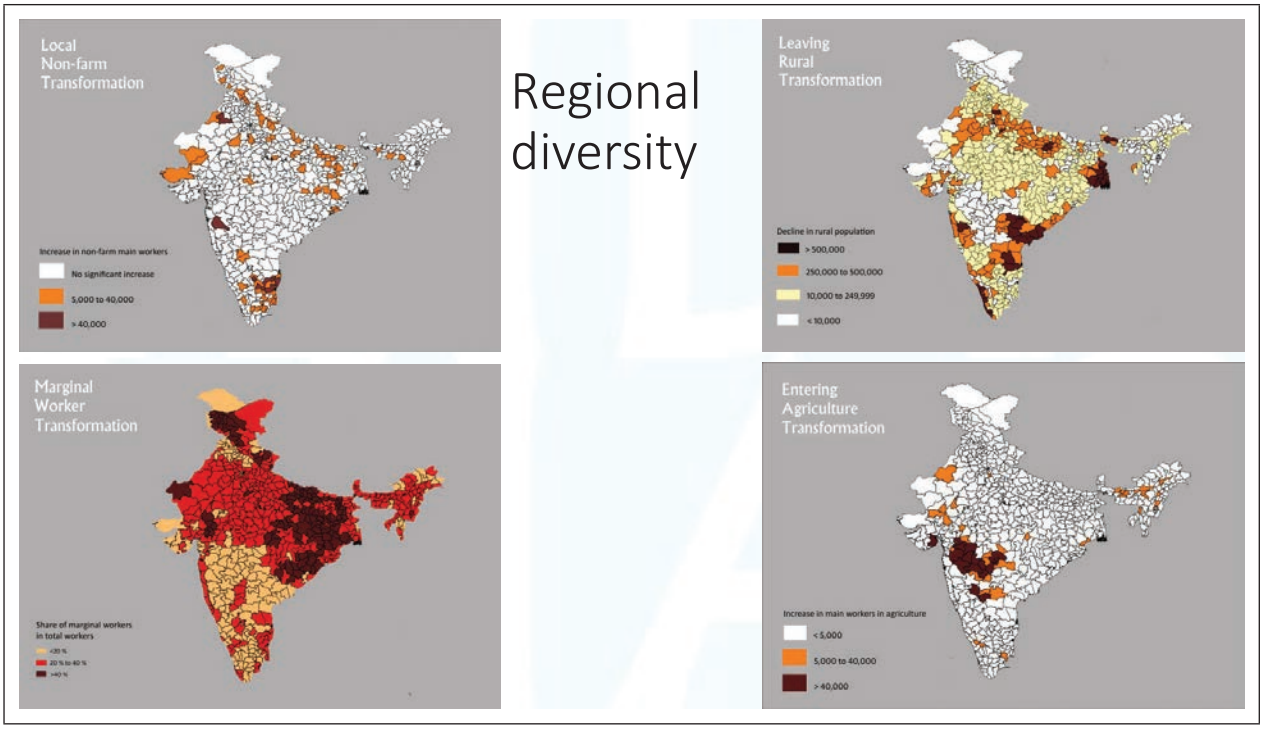


could be referred to, in a somewhat loose sense, as migration to commuting distances. Second, there is the process of permanent migration to places where non-farm opportunities arise. This typically involves movement of the entire family to an urban centre. Third, there is the process of short-term migration. This typically occurs when workers cannot find work for even six months in year, thereby meeting the Census definition of being a marginal worker. These workers seek out networks that undertake short-term assignments in urban centres, usually in the construction industry. And fourth, there is the process of returning to agriculture. This typically involves moving to areas where agriculture has recovered, say, through large horticulture farms.

In each case what the migrants leave behind is deeply influenced by the nature of migration. When there is migration to commuting distances, the migrants are typically only leaving agriculture and while retaining many other aspects of their everyday life. Their presence in the village when they are not working may well ensure they influence the occupations they have left behind. When the workers migrate permanently away from the village they may leave behind, at least in initial years, individuals and practices that protect their interests in the village. This could transform what is left behind in ways that enable it to do without the presence of the migrants. When there is short-term migration away from the village, the transformation of what is left behind includes a prominent role for the migrants, including in local politics. And when the migration is prompted by a return to agriculture the nature of transformation could include a prominent place for modern methods of farming.

This picture gains another dimension in the Indian context from the fact that each of the

Figure 1.3: Rural transformation in India



forms of transformation and their associated forms of migration tend to be concentrated in different parts of the country. As each of the transformations has been associated with individual acts of migration, it is quite possible for all four of the forms of migration to occur in the same village. It is quite conceivable that a village may have cases of those who migrate to commuting distances, those who have migrated permanently, those who carry out short-term migration, and those who have migrated into the village for agriculture. But an earlier exercise that used Census of India data to trace these patterns in the districts of the country in 2011, found that each form of transformation tended to be concentrated in different regions. The maps presenting the district wise patterns of the four transformations are seen in Figure 1.3.

The experience of these transformations is multidimensional. There is the intrapersonal experience of being left behind to find an alternative place within the same location, through changes in the settings and the sense of place. This process involves interpersonal relations and the relations between social groups. This experience comes out quite sharply in the experience of gender relations, as gender bias can be seen at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup levels.

Gender and the left behind

Among those who are affected by large scale migration without being migrants themselves are the women who remain to head households in the places of origin of migration. In some cases, these women are left behind in the village when one or more males in the family migrates. In other cases, women have to deal with larger social situations that emerge when significant

sections of the village migrate, even if there is no migration from their immediate family. They may well have to spend more time working on their land due to the migration of agricultural labour out of the village. Women would then have to bargain both within the household and outside to protect their interests in a village transformed by migration. We can also expect the variation in the forms of transformation associated with different patterns of migration to be reflected in the nature of bargaining of women in the place of origin of each of these processes. At the epicentre of this complex relationship between gender, the household and what remains after migration is a woman who is seen, by others in the household, to be the head of the household. This follows the Census of India definition of the head of a household as a person who is recognised as such by the household.[11] Her position within the household leaves her in a situation where she needs to look not just at gender interests but also the interests of her household in the midst of a transformation.

The nature of the circumstances faced by women heads of households in Indian villages is complex and could be understood in all its detail with ethnographic studies. These studies could explore the entire range of dimensions in which the lives of these women have been affected, from the personal to the economic and social. And yet there are senses in which the picture would not be complete. The differences across processes of migration are typically not available in a single village. The places of origin of each process, as the maps in Figure 1.3 tell us, exist in different parts of a large and diverse country. We would then be better served by a scientifically determined sample that captures the essence of what remains after each of the four processes of migration. Such a survey cannot expect to capture the detail of an ethnography, but what one loses on the detail is made up in terms of an effective comparison between the circumstances faced by women who head households in what remains after each of the four processes of migration.

One such survey was conducted by the Inequality and Human Development Programme at National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, in 2017. The sample was designed to cover four sets of 800 households, each chosen from a collection of villages that best reflected a form of rural transformation associated with a particular process of migration. The villages for the process of permanent migration, for instance, were chosen from districts, and then taluks (sub-districts), where this trend was most evident. The sample of 3200 households spread across 28 villages in eight states spread across different parts of the country, with responses based on informed consent from 3077 households, provided information on 13,897 persons. This survey also had data on women-headed households that provide the basis for this paper.

The analysis of this data makes it immediately evident that the circumstances faced by these women differed quite substantially across processes of migration. Based on an Index of Distance from Absolute Deprivation (hereafter IDFAD) developed in a larger study [12], it is evident that the levels of development associated with the forms of transformation associated with each process of migration vary a great deal. The transformation associated with Commuting distance migration, with the ability of its elite to make a generational transformation, is clearly the

11 Government of India, "Census of India."

12 Pani, *Dynamics of Difference*, 2022.

best off with the highest IDFAD of 31.3. Rural-to-rural migration and Permanent migrations come next. Rural-to-rural migration, with its combination of corporatised agriculture and extremely vulnerable small farmers is a distant second with an Index of Distance from Absolute Deprivation of 15.7. Permanent migration, with its elite having access to the migration capital needed to migrate permanently out of the village, leaves behind a rural situation with an Index of Distance from Absolute Deprivation of 15.1. Short-term migration is clearly the worst off, with an Index of Distance from Absolute Deprivation of 9.4. The differences extend beyond material deprivation to the nature of the family and the household. The Index of Distance from Absolute Deprivation was also a step towards building a larger index of dominance, which sought to capture the dominance of identity groups in the realms of the economy, the polity and the education component of the changing social dimension. The extent of dominance of the dominant identity group was highest in Rural-to-rural migration, with its role for large modern farms. Commuting distance migration, with its transformation from above led by the traditional elite, came next. With the elite of Permanent migration abandoning the village, the level of dominance of the dominant identity group in this form of transformation was lower. Widespread poverty reduced the dominance of the dominant identity group in Short-term migration, to a point where short-term migrants to the city could use their higher nominal urban wages to come back and challenge the older elite in the village.

The variation in the changes brought about by the transformations associated with the four processes of migration extended to the realm of gender as well. The proportion of women-headed households ranged from as high as 40.9 percent of the households in Permanent migration to a low of 6.8 percent in Rural-to-rural migration. The proportions in the other two processes were also not negligible, at 10.6 percent in Commuting distance migration and 13 percent in Short-term migration. These substantial differences in the presence of households headed by women reinforce the case for studying the transformation associated with each process of migration separately before drawing more general lessons from the varied experiences of women's interests and gender interests.

While this chapter focuses on quantitative data from the primary survey to make its argument, it must be pointed out that these quantitative assessments were confirmed through a series of qualitative surveys by a number of researchers, ranging from visits to carry out qualitative interviews to confirm unusual patterns to ethnographic studies of specific villages. One such example is from qualitative interviews carried out by this author. As we shall see in the next section women-headed households tended to discriminate less against women in their household participating in the workforce. While they were not always willing to articulate such a difference, it was apparent in their actions. In one instance, the land available to one such household was used to grow groundnuts. All the women of the household as well as other women relatives and women friends were mobilised to harvest it. The only male in the entire process was the young son of the household who had missed school so as to communicate with the men who provided water to flood the land so that the groundnut plants could be uprooted.

Table 1.1: Select features of heads of households by gender and processes of migration

	Permanent migration		Short-term migration		Commuting distance migration		Rural-to-rural migration	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Heads of households	59.1	40.9	87.0	13.0	89.4	10.6	93.3	6.8
Living conditions								
Thatched/temporary roofs	20.8	30.3	2.65	6.9	22.3	43.2	26.4	39.6
RCC roofs	41.3	37.7	16.3	12.6	43.3	35.1	12.1	12.5
Open defecation	79.0	84.2	89.6	96.6	35.3	39.2	89.3	97.9
No ration card	13.6	15.2	20.4	18.4	1.3	2.7	12.4	35.4
Source of primary loans								
Official sources	25.4	16.5	9.0	4.6	37.2	23.0	17.4	20.8
Moneylender	0.9	1.6	4.9	4.6	14.9	23.0	9.1	14.6
Neighbours, friends & relatives	6.7	7.4	9.3	11.5	5.3	6.8	5.0	12.5
NBFCs	7.1	6.8	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	28.6	4.2
No loans	48.0	61.0	75.4	79.3	39.8	44.6	39.1	47.9
Land ownership								
Landless	22.8	38.4	46.0	66.7	24.6	36.5	15.1	29.2
>0<=2	68.8	58.1	51.2	33.3	45.0	35.1	26.7	20.8
>2<=5	6.3	3.2	2.4	0.0	20.9	20.3	34.7	35.4
Proportion of heads of landowning households who are cultivators	43.1	9.8	24.6	10.5	79.6	38.3	92.4	58.8
Main activity of heads of households								
Cultivator	33.7	6.1	16.2	4.6	60.0	24.3	78.4	41.7
Agricultural labour	14.5	6.8	7.7	10.3	11.7	6.8	12.5	50.0
Other wage labour	25.5	14.2	54.1	10.3	5.0	2.7	1.5	0.0
Domestic duties	0.2	50.3	1.0	46.0	0.6	10.8	0.5	0.0
Indicators of gender discrimination within the household								
Education	68.9	59.8	58.2	71.1	70.7	67.3	60.2	25.6
Work	75.2	51.1	73.4	44.7	46.9	58.2	27.3	16.3

Source: NIAS survey 2017

Note: RCC refers to reinforced cement concrete, NBFC refers to non-banking finance company, Official sources are banks, Self Help Groups, Kisan Credit Cards, and post offices. All figures are percent of total households except in the case of cultivators among land owning households.

Permanent migration

As the process of migration that leaves behind the largest proportion of women-headed households, permanent migration out of rural areas is an obvious starting point of our analysis. At the heart of the transformation associated with this process are the uncertainties of migration, whether in the realm of non-agricultural employment opportunities or the changing living and other conditions in unknown large cities. It has been seen that the response to this uncertainty often takes the form of one member of the family – usually male – first exploring the city and getting the rest of the family after he has found place for them in the town or city. A study of garment workers in Bengaluru[13] found male workers first moving into the city alone, leaving their wives and children back in the village. Once they had an economic base in the city, they brought their wives to take care of the house even if the women also had full-time jobs. It was only after the household reached some level of stability that the children were brought from their grandparents' home in the village.

In general, there is no guarantee that this process will be completed for all families. A man may venture out into the city and find enough work to sustain himself, and yet not enough to get his wife and children to the city. This results in his wife and children staying back in the village for extended periods of time. The wife takes on the responsibility of the household in the village and, after a while, she is seen as the head of that household. This contributes to the high proportion of households in the villages of Permanent migration that were headed by women.

13 Pani and Singh, *Women at the Threshold of Globalisation*.

Woman's interests of those among them who headed households were deeply influenced by the process of the transformation out of agriculture. Since the agriculture that was being abandoned was characterised by small holdings, as many 58.1 percent of the households headed by women were small landowners, owning two acres or less, and 38.4 percent were landless. Even those who owned some land found it difficult to retain a foothold in agriculture. Only 9.8 percent of the women who headed landowning households stated cultivation to be their main activity, the lowest in any form of the transformations associated with the processes of migration.

It is not as if they had many other earning opportunities. Just 6.8 percent of the women who headed households found work as agricultural labour, and 14.2 percent of them as non-agricultural wage labour. The limited opportunities to earn a living contributed to more than half the women who headed households stating domestic duties to be their main activity. Taken together with those who said they were not working or were carrying out work in household industries for which they were not paid, as many 65.5 percent of women who headed households did not earn from their main activity. This was reflected in the economic condition of their households. Nearly a third of the women who headed households – 30.3 percent – lived under thatched or other less permanent roofs, and as many as 84.2 percent practiced open defecation.

Within the general level of deprivation there were substantial differences in their ability of borrow their way out of economic difficulty. Sixty-one percent of the women who headed households did not borrow. And among those that did borrow, 19 percent sourced their primary loans from family, relatives, neighbours and

other friends. At the same time there were other women heads of households who had access to more formal sources of credit. Among those that did borrow, 42.1 percent were able to access state institutions, whether they were through Self Help Groups, direct loans from banks, Kissan Credit Cards, or the Post Office. And another 17.3 percent of those who did borrow did so from Non-Banking Finance Companies.

The existence of some diversity in the interests of women did not preclude the existence of distinct gender differences. In contrast to the 9.8 percent of the women who headed landowning households seeing themselves as cultivators, 43.1 percent of similarly placed men declared themselves to be cultivators. The differences in the ability to cope with a declining agriculture were muted in some domains by the equalizing power of deprivation. The widespread reliance on open defecation in what is left behind in the process of migration affected both men and women. Thus, even as the women who headed households had a higher proportion practicing open defecation, it was only 5.2 percentage points higher than the proportion for the men who headed households. However, lack of sanitation affects women and girls in ways that are very differnt to their male counterparts

The gender difference increased when conditions allowed for greater variation. Even as a little less than a third of the households headed by women lived under thatched and other less expensive roofs, the proportion of their male counterparts living in similar houses was 9.5 percentage points lower. A similar pattern existed in access to loans, with the proportion of women who headed households not having a loan being 13 percentage points higher than that of their male counterparts. This difference was even greater, at 15.6 percentage points, in the realm of landless households. And it was still greater in the workplace. A third of the men who headed households were cultivators, a whole 27.6 percentage points greater than their women counterparts.

Official support was not immune to the overall gender difference. Even as marginally more than a quarter of the men who headed households had loans from official sources, less than a sixth of the similarly placed women did so. Fortunately, this difference was not transferred to the support in terms of ration cards. The generally poorer economic conditions of households headed by women did increase their eligibility for Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration cards, and the proportion of households headed by women that held these ration cards was 5.7 percentage points more than the households headed by men.

The difficult conditions of this transformation left their mark on the practical interests of women who headed households. These interests lay not just in improving their personal shares within the household but in increasing household income as well. In a transformation marked by a noticeable gender bias, the women were not entirely averse to practicing some of the gender bias so as to be better placed to improve household income. As many as 59.8 percent of the households headed by women discriminated against women in education, and 51.1 percent of them did so in terms of workforce participation. These levels of discrimination were lower than the levels of discrimination practiced in households headed by men. As many as 68.9 percent of the households headed by men revealed discrimination against women in education and an even higher 75.2 percent in workforce participation. Yet the proportion of women-headed households that discriminated against women was by no means

negligible, emphasizing the difference between the pursuit of gender interests and practical interests.

Short-term migration

The striking feature of what remained after Short-term migration was the severity of economic deprivation. The diminishing viability of farming ensured that barely 23.5 percent of the heads of landowning households – both men and women – declared themselves as cultivators, the lowest across the four processes of migration. The severely limited non-farm opportunities in the vicinity of the village contributed to a large number of workers not being able to get work for even six months in a year. The extreme poverty severely limited the migration capital available. The workers were then forced to seek short-term assignments in cities in order to maintain their households in the village. The short-term nature of the urban assignments added to the identification of men with their household in the village. Despite long periods of absence, they were considered the heads of the household. There was, however, also the reality that while a vast majority of the migrating men followed this norm of returning to the village, this was not always the case. The fact that the men did not always come back contributed to 13 percent of the households in the villages after this process of migration being headed by women.

The pressure to leave agriculture in the transformation associated with this process of migration had a marked influence on women's interests. Two-thirds of the households headed by women were landless and the 33.3 percent who owned land had less than two acres. And these women were severely constrained in the cultivation of the land they owned. Only 10.5 percent of the women who headed landowning households were able to cultivate them, ensuring only 4.6 percent of the women who headed households were cultivators. The decline in agriculture ensured they did not have many opportunities to work as agricultural labor either, with just 10.3 percent of these women declaring this work as their primary occupation. The option of getting work as non-agricultural wage labor was also extremely limited with only another 10.3 percent declaring this work as their primary occupation. The severe constraints on women who headed households finding work outside the home resulted in as many as 46 percent of them declaring domestic work as their primary activity.

The economic pressure was accentuated by the inability to rely on borrowing. Four-fifths of these women did not have any loans. For the fifth who did borrow, there was considerable dependence on family, relatives, neighbors and other friends who were the source for 55.6 percent of their primary loans. This deprivation ensured that only 12.6 percent of the women who headed households lived under a reinforced cement concrete (RCC) roof, and virtually all these women – 96.6 percent – practiced open defecation. This situation was not helped by the state largely looking the other way. In addition to the loans from official sources being limited, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) was virtually non-existent in this transformation.

Even within this overall picture of deprivation, women's interests were not homogenous. Among the borrowing women who headed households, 22.2 percent were able to tap official sources for their primary loans. The inequality was more pronounced in the access to ration cards, with 49.4 percent of the households headed

by women having BPL ration cards while 18.4 percent of these households had no card at all.

The gender difference that determines the scope for the pursuit of strategic gender interests was evident in the village that remained after this process of migration. Nearly a quarter of the men who headed landowning households – 24.6 percent – were able to cultivate that land, more than twice the level of similarly placed women. This ensured that 16.2 percent of these men claimed to be cultivators, nearly four times the proportion of cultivators among women who headed households. The difference was even sharper in the access to wage labour outside agriculture. While 54.1 percent of the men who headed households were able to state other wage labor as their primary economic activity, this proportion was far lower, at 10.3 percent, for women who had the same relationship with their household.

The overall levels of deprivation did reduce the scope for gender difference in several domains. The proportion of those without loans among men who headed households was just 3.9 percentage points less than that of the women who headed households. Moreover, the proportion of households headed by men that did not have access to ration cards was 2 percent greater than households headed by women. But men who headed households were under less pressure to practice open defecation, with the proportion of them following this practice being 7 percentage points lower than in the case of similarly placed women.

The extent of deprivation also affected the practical gender interests of women who headed households. They were aware that short-term migration to distant cities typically happened through groups that consisted entirely of young men. The earnings of the young men contributed to the overall economic condition of their households in the village. Women, for reasons ranging from personal security to other discrimination, could not find a place in such a group. It was then in the interests of the overall earning of the household to improve the chances of the men in the household, particularly the younger men, to access jobs in cities, even if they were only short-term. One factor that improved the chances of a young man gaining access to this work was some school education. The practical gender interests of the women heading households thus demanded a transfer of much of the limited resources of the household to educating prospective male wage earners. As a result, as many as 71.1 percent of the households headed by women recorded a gender bias in education in favor of the male. The intensity of the economic pressure on the household headed by women, and the resultant need to improve the overall earning of the household, ensured that this gender bias in education was far greater than the 58.2 percent in the households headed by men. The same economic pressure had a different effect in the realm of participation in the workforce. It forced all members of the household to earn what they could. This ensured that women who headed households were much less willing to keep women away from the workforce than their male counterparts. The proportion of households that discriminated against women in terms of workforce participation was thus, at 44.7 percent, much lower for women-headed households than the 73.4 percent recorded in the households headed by men. The difference in the working of the two biases stresses the differential impact of deprivation on the pursuit of practical gender interests.

Commuting distance migration

If Short-term migration was at the poorer extreme of the economic conditions in the transformations associated with the four processes, commuting distance migration was at the opposite end of the economic spectrum. A higher proportion of households in what remained after this process of migration lived under RCC roofs – 43.3 percent – than their counterparts in the three other processes of migration. Much of this relatively less strained economic condition can be attributed to the low levels of disruption of Commuting distance migration. The availability of non-agricultural work in the vicinity of the village allowed the younger generation to seek non-farm jobs while the older generation continued with their agriculture. This generational shift in the role of agriculture contributed to a situation where 74.2 percent of the heads of households were cultivators while the same proportion for all workers in this transformation was much lower at 56.3 percent. The active role of agriculture in the older generation also ensured that 75.8 percent of the heads of landowning households declared their main activity as being cultivators. This limited the scope for large scale permanent migration of men out of the village, with the women being left behind. Yet these numbers were not negligible, with a 10.6 percent of the households in this form of transformation being headed by women.

Women's interests in this process were greatly influenced by the fact that the relatively smooth intergenerational movement out of agriculture did not quite extend to the women who headed households. These women were not always able to withstand the pressure to move out of agriculture. In an overall milieu where heads of households continued their traditional pursuit of agriculture, only 38.3 percent of the women who headed landowning households saw themselves as cultivators. With 36.5 percent of the households headed by women being landless, the overall proportion of cultivators among this section of women was 24.3 percent. Moving down the economic hierarchy within agriculture was not much of an option either. Only 6.8 percent of the women who headed households found work as agricultural labour.

The opportunity to pursue women's interests outside agriculture was also quite constrained, leading to 18.9 percent of the women who headed households relying for their primary activity on whatever work was available under the MGNREGS. The lack of earning work opportunities left 33.8 percent of these women stating domestic work, work in household industries without payment, and simply 'not working' when asked about their primary economic activity. A substantial number of women who headed households sought to borrow their way out of the economic stress. While 44.6 percent of the households headed by women did not have any loans, this proportion was the lowest among what remained after the four processes of migration. The variation in women's interests came to the fore in the sourcing of primary loans. Official sources provided 41.5 percent of the primary loans of borrowing households headed by women. The same proportion of households headed by women went to moneylenders for their primary loans, leaving 12.3 percent of them to rely on family, relatives, neighbours and other friends for their primary loans.

This divide in women's interests was also seen in other aspects of their living conditions. Even as 35.1 percent of the women who headed households lived in houses with RCC roofs,

43.2 percent made do with thatched or other less permanent roofs. This unevenness should also be taken into account when interpreting the relatively better sanitation practices in what remained after this process of migration. The proportion of women who headed households that practiced open defecation was much lower than that of the transformations associated with the other processes. But the inequality within the women who headed households ensured that even as 43.2 percent of them had toilets inside their homes, 39.2 percent of them practiced open defecation, whether due to the absence of a toilet at home, traditional practice, or any other reason.

The inequality among the women who headed households in Commuting distance migration existed alongside considerable scope for strategic gender interests. The proportion of landless households among those headed by women was 11.9 percentage points more than the same proportion for households headed by men. There was an even larger difference in the cultivation of land that was owned by the households, with 60 percent of the men who headed households being cultivators compared to 24.3 percent among women who headed households. In terms of access to loans, 61.9 percent of the borrowing men who headed households had their primary loan from official sources, and 24.8 percent from moneylenders. The proportion of women heads of households who had their primary loans from official sources was 20.4 percentage points lower than their male counterparts, and their dependence on moneylenders for their primary loans was 16.7 percentage points greater. And the gender difference extended to living conditions as well. The proportion of households headed by men who lived in houses with RCC roofs was 8.2 percentage points greater than households headed by women, while the proportion who lived in houses with thatched and other less permanent roofs was as much as 20.9 percentage points lower.

The intersectionality of gender differences with other inequalities had its impact on the practical interests of women. The relatively better economic conditions in this transformation offered some households the option of discriminating against women going out to work. As a result, the gender difference within households in terms of working outside the home was quite substantial. The difficulty in reducing this difference would appear to have been greater for households headed by women, with 58.2 percent of these households revealing discrimination against women working outside the home, considerably higher than the corresponding figure of 46.9 percent for households headed by men. The sharply differing job opportunities for men and women particularly as they moved up the economic hierarchy, encouraged households to give their male members the benefit of education. And the women who headed households tried to keep in line with this discrimination. The proportion of households headed by women that practiced gender discrimination in education was, at 67.3 percent, not all that much less than the 70.7 percent recorded by households headed by men.

Rural-to-rural migration

In contrast to the other three transformations moving away from agriculture, Rural-to-rural migration presented a movement in the opposite direction. The motivation for this movement was varied. There were the few who moved into the agriculture of large modern farms and there were the many who returned to the shelter the village

home provided when urban opportunities were lacking. Without having to deal with the high costs of the city, the migration capital required to migrate to a rural location tended to be much less intimidating. This reduced the compulsions on the man to venture out alone, before taking the rest of his family with him. Consequently, there were fewer women being left behind, with just 6.8 percent of the households being headed by women, well below the level in the other transformations associated with the other three processes.

The women's interests in the destination of this process of migration were centered around their role in the movement into agriculture. As many as 91.7 percent of the women who headed households declared agriculture as their main economic activity – 41.7 percent were cultivators and 50.0 percent agricultural labor. And their secondary activities were also largely in agriculture, with 60.4 percent of the women who headed households declaring being agricultural labor or cultivator as their secondary activity.

The near-total dependence on agriculture was not particularly helpful in easing the economic conditions they had to face. Just 12.5 percent of the women who headed households lived in houses with RCC roofs – the lowest across the four processes – and 39.6 percent of their houses had either thatched or some other less permanent roofs. In terms of everyday practices too there was near-universal open defecation, with 97.9 percent of the women who headed households following this practice. It did not also help that as many as 35.4 percent of the women who headed households did not have a ration card, by far the highest across the transformations associated with all four processes. And their ability to borrow their way out of economic difficulty was limited, as reflected in the fact that 47.9 percent of the women who headed households did not have any loans. The support of official sources in getting loans was mixed. The support from official lending sources was substantial with 48.0 percent of the women heads of households who did borrow being able to tap banks and non-banking financial institutions for their primary loan, but 28 percent still had to rely on the moneylender for the primary loan and another 24 percent fell back on the family, relatives, neighbors and other friends.

Even in the face of this extreme deprivation, the scope to pursue strategic gender interests was evident in the extent of gender differences. While the movement into agriculture was widespread there was a striking gender difference in their role within agriculture. A vast majority of the men who headed households – 78.4 percent – were cultivators and only 12.5 percent of them declared their main activity to be agricultural labor. The pattern was much more even for women, with 41.7 percent of the women heads of households declaring themselves as cultivators, while 50 percent saw themselves as primarily agricultural labor.

Gender differences extended into domains where the equalizing power of deprivation was evident. While deprivation ensured that the proportion of men who headed households who practiced open defecation was already high at 89.3 percent, the same proportion for women who headed households was a further 8.6 percentage points higher. Again, the proportion of men who headed households who lived in houses with a thatched or other less permanent roof was, at 26.4 percent, not insignificant, the same proportion for women heads of households was 13.2 percentage points higher. The ability of women heads of households to avoid the local moneylender was also more limited,

with the proportion of them who went to the moneylender for their primary loan being 13.1 percentage points greater than the proportion for men. And in domains where the women heads of households did relatively well, the men who headed their households did substantially better. While the women heads of households could tap banks and non-banking financial institutions for 48 percent of their primary loans, the same proportion for men who headed households was 27.5 percentage points higher.

The pursuit of women's interests in the midst of a situation marked by both deprivation and considerable scope for the pursuit of strategic gender interests influenced the pursuit of practical interests by the women who headed households. Deprivation ensured a dire need to increase the earnings of the household, a need that did not offer scope for gender discrimination in allowing women to work outside the home. Thus, the proportion of households headed by men who discriminated against women joining the workforce was the lowest among the four processes, at 27.3 percent. This proportion was even lower, at 16.3 percent in households headed by women. Beyond trying to tap the work opportunities provided by agriculture, however, the gender bias was quite strong in households headed by men. There was a shared belief with other processes in the value of education for future job prospects, and the resources of the households headed by men were directed towards the males in the household. As many as 60.2 percent of the households headed by men discriminated against women in education. In their pursuit of practical gender interests in the transformation associated with this process of migration, women who headed households were far less inclined to simply follow the norm set by the households headed by men. The proportion that discriminated against women in education dropped sharply to 25.6 percent of the households headed by women.

Negotiating with patriarchy after migration

Women's interests, which emerge from the overall situation in which women find themselves, were deeply influenced by the process of migration. This influence began with the very existence of women headed households. The places of origin in some processes of migration had a much higher presence of households headed by women than others, with the proportion of such households in the regions left behind in Permanent migration being six times the proportion in Rural-to-rural migration. Their precise roles in these transformations were also very different: the proportion of women who headed households working in agriculture as their main activity ranged from under 13 percent in Permanent migration to nearly 92 percent in Rural-to-rural migration.

The diversity of women's interests did not remove the possibility of common gender interests in what was left behind after migration. Across all transformations, including Rural-to-rural migration, a greater proportion of the households headed by women were landless, compared to those headed by men. The gender difference extended to basic living conditions. These gender differences were at times reduced by the extent of deprivation. In these situations, the conditions faced by households headed by both men and women were so adverse that there was not much scope for gender difference. The proportion of households living under RCC roofs in Rural-to-rural migration was so low that there was virtually no difference between the households headed by women and those headed

by men. But once conditions improved, the gender difference emerged.

The women who headed households in what was left behind after various forms of migration also had to consider other elements of their reality. They were under pressure to enhance overall household income. In a work environment characterised by gender inequality this often required the household to practice a distinct gender bias. All the transformations recorded a significant proportion of households headed by women revealing discrimination against women in both participation in the workforce as well as in education. Practical interests ensured that the proportion of households revealing these biases was lower in the case of those headed by women than in those headed by men. But there were exceptions to this pattern. In Short-term migration, the especially adverse economic condition of the households headed by women appear to have prompted them to divert greater resources to educating the men in the household in the hope of improving household earnings. This contributed to a greater proportion of houses headed by women discriminating against women in education than was the case in the households headed by men. In the relatively better off villages associated with commuting distance migration, the households headed by women were more wary of sending women out to work than the households headed by men.

Towards a larger picture

The detailed attention this chapter has given to women headed households was to present the depth of the experience of being left behind in the process of migration. It brings out the critical role of agency in the transformation of what is left behind. It hardly needs to be said that women headed households are not the only ones affected by migration and are hence not the only agents in this transformation. The four processes of that we have identified in the cycle of vulnerability – commuting distance migration, permanent migration, short-term migration, and rural to rural migration – are all initiated by conditions in the places of origin. The agency that enables migration goes on to transform what is left behind. As in the case of women headed households the larger transformation can be expected to be influenced by the forms of migration. In the next section of this volume of the report Chetan Choithani takes a deeper at the experience of four villages that have been significant places of origin to each of the four processes of migration. Each of these villages was a part of the sample of villages chosen in 2017 as reflecting one of the four forms of transformation. With the help of a primary survey and qualitative field work conducted in 2022 and 2023 Choithani explores the multiple dimensions of being left behind in each of the four forms of migration.

When exploring the places of origin of each of the four forms of transformation there is the possibility of one form feeding into another. Relatively longer-term migration, which was treated in the analysis of the 2017 data as a part of permanent migration, could leave behind vacuums in the local labour market. These vacuums could be filled through short-term migration from other parts of India. In the final section of this volume of the report, Paul Thomas looks at the processes of interlinked migration that are centred around Malappuram district in Kerala.

PART 1

PROCESSES OF (IM)MOBILITIES

Chetan Choithani

2

Of left-behind places and people

Chetan Choithani

This volume of the report looks at the relationship between inequality, labour migration and development in India. It examines migration-inequality-development relationship with a focus on those who are left behind in the process of structural economic transformation and livelihood change in India. The rationale for this work stems from a dearth of understanding of how those who do not migrate, either by choice or lack of options, are affected by migration. Processes of transformation are typically understood through the active agents that bring about that change. Migration is largely explored through the actions of migrants but there are also those who affect and are affected by the migration processes even if they are not the most active participants in it. Indeed, a picture of the *process* of migration is incomplete if it leaves out those who are affected by the same conditions, but are unable, for material or other reasons, to migrate. The inequalities of migration notwithstanding, those who are unable to move often play an important role in enabling and supporting migration of others. In other words, a holistic picture of migration processes and outcomes warrants an understanding of also those who are left behind. This report attempts such a processual understanding of migration from the perspective of the non-migrants.

The broader context of this research is provided by the major socio-economic transformation currently underway in India, and its inequitable effects for different regions and socio-economic groups.[14] Over the past three decades, rapid economic growth in India has been accompanied by a structural economic change in which the importance of agriculture sector has diminished, while the urban-nonfarm economic activities have become more significant in the framework of national income. Recent patterns of economic growth have also led to geographical concentration of economic activities and employment in a few pockets which has exacerbated spatial economic inequalities. This has led to substantial increase in labour migration from less developed regions to places that provide livelihoods. At the same time, socio-economic inequalities often mean migration options are not available to all individuals and households, nor are the outcomes same for all members of the participating households. Yet, it is not adequately known whether and how migration affects those who remain behind, under what conditions the left-behind gain or lose from migration, and importantly, what role do they play in migration process. Using primary evidence from rural India, this report seeks to engage with these questions.

14 Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition"; Pani, *Dynamics of Difference: Inequality and Transformation in Rural India*.

This section of the report begins with this context-setting chapter that reviews the implications of labour migration on the left behind populations in India, and intersecting role socio-economic inequalities play in the process. In so doing, this chapter situates inequalities, marginalization and exclusion in the context of rapid economic change in India, and also provides the larger context of regionally unbalanced development in India that underpin much of labour mobility from backward regions to geographies that provide better life and livelihood options. The discussion concentrates on two interrelated aspects of inequalities that include spatial inequalities and inequalities between different socio-economic population groups, and argues that these two forms of inequalities are creating left-behind places and left-behind populations that necessitate a comprehensive understanding of their socio-political and development implications.

Dynamics of structural transformation in India

India is in the midst of a major socio-economic transformation. Following the liberalization reforms since the early 1990s, India has achieved rapid economic growth. These reforms have also fundamentally altered the nature of Indian economy and livelihoods. The significance of agriculture sector has diminished, and recent economic growth has been led by urban-based nonfarm sectors making use of migrant labour from rural areas. Cities and towns now account for nearly two-thirds of national income in India.[15] At the same time, this has not resulted into more permanent migration and urbanization[16], and much of the labour migration in India is of temporary, circular nature.[17] The growing importance of urban incomes in rural lives and livelihoods notwithstanding, most migrants find jobs in the informal economy characterised by high precarity.[18] The precariousness and uncertainty of urban jobs as well as a complex mix of socio-cultural reasons mean that migrants continue to remain connected with origin villages.[19] In other words, structural transformation in India has created new opportunities and precarities at once. From the perspective of this research, there are three interlinked elements of this transition: livelihood shifts out of agriculture, rise in rural-urban labour migration and inequalities and precarities in the process of livelihood transition.

First, the past three decades have witnessed massive shifts of employment out of agriculture. Agriculture still remains the mainstay for the largest share of the workforce, but the sector has been under tremendous stress to support lives and livelihoods. Between 1990 and 2019, the share of agriculture sector in national income more than halved – from 33 percent to 16 percent.[20] Although the process of structural economic

15 Planning Commission, "Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12): Mid-Term Appraisal.," 378.

16 Kundu, "Urbanisation and Urban Governance: Search for a Perspective beyond Neo-Liberalism."

17 Deshingkar and Farrington, "Circular Migration and Multilocational Livelihood Strategies in Rural India"; Tumbe, "Migration Persistence across Twentieth Century India"; Choithani, "Understanding the Linkages between Migration and Household Food Security in India."

18 Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*; Breman, "Outcast Labour in Asia: Circulation and Informalization of the Workforce at the Bottom of the Economy."

19 De Haan, "Migration and Livelihoods in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of Bihar, India."

20 Mehrotra et al., "Turnaround in India's Employment Story: Silver Lining amidst Joblessness and Informalisation?"; World Bank, "Distribution of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) across Economic Sectors from 2009 to 2019, India."

change inevitably involves sectoral composition of income shifting towards nonfarm activities, agriculture sector also witnessed policy neglect, particularly in the first decade of liberalization reforms. The annual growth rate of public investment in agriculture was 4 percent in 1980s, which declined to 1.9 percent in 1990s.[21] Compounding these challenges facing Indian agriculture is the progressive fragmentation of already small land parcels over time, owing to demographic pressures and intergenerational transfers of land. Farming in India has traditionally involved smallholding which means that agriculture sector has always faced the problem of underemployment, or disguised unemployment. But these pressures have intensified due to further diminution in average land size over the past few decades. In India, land transfers typically involve intergenerational inheritance of land from parents to children, and persistently high fertility over the past few decades has caused subdivision of fixed quantity of land within the family, resulting in even smaller average land parcels. Between 1970-71 and 2015-16, average landholding size more than halved from 2.28 hectare to 1.08 hectare (Figure 2.1). The combined effect of these processes has been that the share of people dependent on farm employment has been declining rapidly in recent years. Data from successive rounds of Indian Census show that between 1991 and 2001, over 7 million workers whose main occupation was cultivation quit farming. This trend accelerated in the following decade, with 8.6 million main cultivators leaving farm work during 2001-2011[22]. More recent estimates based on National Sample Survey and Periodic Labour Force Survey data show that between 2004 and 2017 there has been a net loss of 40 million jobs in agriculture, and for the first time in the history of independent India the share of agricultural employment has fallen to less than 50 percent.[23] The real magnitude of these livelihood shifts out of agriculture is perhaps even greater. Assuming an average household size of 5 members, 40 million jobs losses in agriculture means that 200 million people are affected in their daily lives in this transformation.[24] This transition has also produced significant distress, visible in the spate of farmers' suicides across the country.[25]

Second, this transition out of agriculture parallels substantial increase in labour migration in India. The highly seasonal nature of agriculture incomes means that India's rural past has never been sedentary, and labour migration has traditionally formed a key component of livelihoods of many rural households across India.[26] But recent years have witnessed unprecedented surge in labour mobility.[27]

It is estimated that over 100 million people remain on the move for their livelihoods, and

21 Gillespie and Kadiyala, "Exploring the Agriculture-Nutrition Disconnect in India."

22 Census of India, "Primary Census Abstract Data (Online)," 1991; Census of India, "Primary Census Abstract Data (Online)," 2001; Census of India, "Primary Census Abstract Data (Online)," 2011.

23 Himanshu, "Employment Trends in India: A Re-Examination"; Thomas, "India's Labour Market during the 2000s: Surveying the Changes"; Mehrotra et al., "Turnaround in India's Employment Story: Silver Lining amidst Joblessness and Informalisation?"; Mehrotra et al., "Explaining Employment Trends in the Indian Economy: 1993-94 to 2011-12"; Abraham, "Stagnant Employment Growth: Last Three Years May Have Been the Worst"; Van Duijne and Nijman, "India's Emergent Urban Formations.

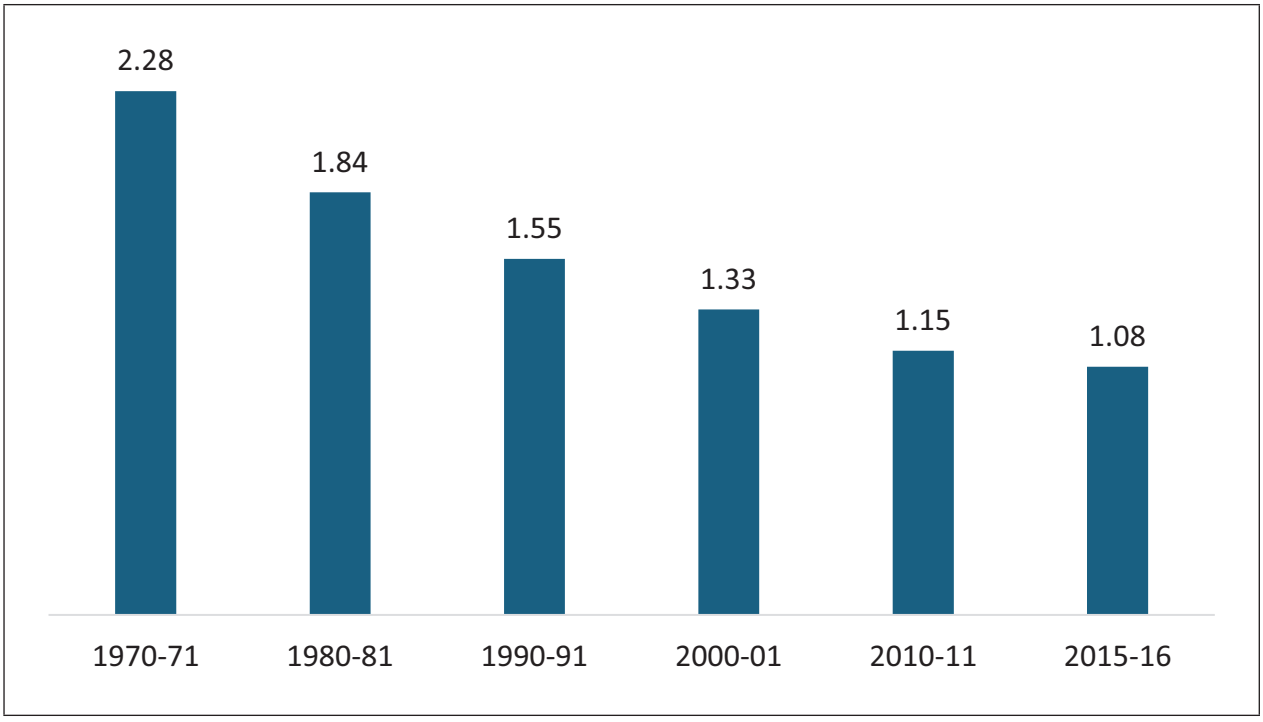
24 Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

25 Banerjee, "Regional Divergence in Farmers' Suicides."

26 De Haan, "Migration and Livelihoods in Historical Perspective: A Case Study of Bihar, India"; Tumbe, "Migration Persistence across Twentieth Century India."

27 Deshingkar and Farrington, "Circular Migration and Multilocational Livelihood Strategies in Rural India"; Choithani, "Understanding the Linkages between Migration and Household Food Security in India"; Tumbe, *India Moving: A History of Migration*; Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

Figure 2.1: Average landholdings size in India, 1970-71 to 2015-16 (in hectare)



Source: Ministry of Agriculture 2019.

that migrants constitute 20 percent of the total workforce of 500 million people.[28] Labour migration in India predominantly involves semi-permanent, seasonal and circular moves, with migrants working outside the villages but remaining firmly connected with their origin places. Much of these temporary moves are unaccounted for in the official data sources which are geared to capture more permanent forms of migration. This circular mobility is the reason why migrants are variously described as 'footloose labour'[29] and 'unsettled settlers'[30]; this non-permanent migration has also kept the overall urbanization levels low in India.[31] Although circular, recent evidence shows that migrants now spend longer duration away from their origin places[32], suggesting the rising significance of nonlocal incomes in households' lives and livelihoods. Indeed, rural India is witnessing "a delocalization of life and living".[33] Another important change concerns migration destinations. Earlier migration streams in India predominantly involved rural to rural circulation of labour. While rural-rural migration continues, rising agrarian stress and urban-centric nature of economic growth are changing the patterns of migration, with rural to urban migration rising in significance.[34] In India, urban economic growth has come to play a more central role in eliminating poverty in the post-reform period,

28 Deshingkar and Akter, "Migration and Human Development in India"; Government of India, "Economic Survey 2016-17."

29 Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*.

30 De Haan, "Unsettled Settlers: Migrant Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Calcutta."

31 Kundu, "Urbanisation and Urban Governance: Search for a Perspective beyond Neo-Liberalism."

32 Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

33 Rigg, Salamanca, and Parnwell, "Joining the Dots of Agrarian Change in Asia: A 25 Year View from Thailand," 1470.

34 National Sample Survey, "Migration in India 2007–08. NSS 64th Round, Report No. 533 (64/10.2/2)."

and returns from migration to cities and towns have increased.[35]

Third, these processes of economic transformation and livelihood change are marked by various spatial and socio-economic inequalities. These inequalities have a bearing on the course of transformation, and the transformation is, in turn, generating new inequalities.[36] The uneven geography of development in India means that there are huge regional variations in agrarian pressures and availability of alternative jobs. And these inequalities have grown starker since the economic reforms of early 1990s when balanced spatial development that formed part of early Indian development planning post-independence was thrown out of the window to pave way for market forces to determine economic geography (see below). The more remunerative, alterative nonfarm jobs have come to be concentrated in large cities, mostly in western and southern Indian states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, the states in the northern and eastern parts of the country including Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh where agrarian decline has been most pronounced in recent years have been left behind.[37] It is important to note that there are wide intrastate disparities in development, too. Indeed, within the advanced states in the west and south, incomes and jobs have concentrated in a few big cities which has produced uneven spatial dividends within these states. For example, in Karnataka, the north and south diverge enormously, with the former lagging far behind the latter on income and human development indicators. In 2017-18, nine of the 10 districts with highest per capita incomes were from the south, nine of the 10 districts with the lowest per capita incomes were in the north.[38] Karnataka's capital city of Bengaluru boasts of being the IT capital of India and is widely integrated with global economy as a key resource city[39], while Yadgir district, just a few hundred kilometres north, lacks the most basic infrastructure with nearly 90 percent of households not even having toilet facility within their housing premise.[40] In other words, India's economic transformation that is characterised by wide geographical inequalities within and between states has created left-behind places – *geographies that have experienced economic/agrarian decline but scarce alternative nonfarm employment.*

The response of the individuals and households inhabiting these left-behind geographies has been to migrate for alternative jobs. However, this process of livelihood transition remains beset with precarities and inequalities. While there is compelling evidence that shows that migration can provide an important escape route out of vulnerability and promote sustainable human development outcomes[41], these choices are not available to all. Indeed, "migration options are not, as hypothesized by individualistic theories, open to all".[42] Socio-economic inequalities

35 Deshingkar and Grimm, "Internal Migration and Development: A Global Perspective"; Datt and Ravallion, "Has India's Economic Growth Become More pro-Poor in the Wake of Economic Reforms?"

36 Pani, *Dynamics of Difference: Inequality and Transformation in Rural India.*

37 Bajar, "Regional Variation in Rural Transition in India," January 2, 2020; Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

38 Government of Karnataka, "Economic Survey of Karnataka 2017-18," 43.

39 Pani, "Resource Cities across Phases of Globalization: Evidence from Bangalore."

40 Census of India, "Household Amenities and Assets Data (Online)."

41 Deshingkar and Akter, "Migration and Human Development in India"; Deshingkar and Farrington, "Circular Migration and Multilocational Livelihood Strategies in Rural India"; UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

42 McDowell and De Haan, "Migration and Sustainable Livelihoods: A Critical Review of the Literature," 21.

often determine who migrates and benefits from migration. Migration requires financial resources, social networks and information on work destinations, and many aspirants lack these means to successfully partake in migration. Additionally, attributes such as gender and social roles pertaining to this demographic characteristic also play a key role. In other words, inequalities of various kinds can lead to different population groups being left behind in the transition process. These can include: i) *households* that are not able to migrate, ii) *women* within migrant households who face socio-cultural restrictions on their work-related mobility. In other words, structural economic change in India is creating left-behind places and populations which have huge socio-political implications. The next two sections focus on these left-behind places and people.

Uneven regional development and places left behind

At the global level, the past few years have witnessed resurfacing of uneven development as a key policy issue. Importantly, there is increasing recognition that spatially unbalanced development can leave places behind which can have significant socio-political implications. Two major events have been crucial to direct attention to geographical inequalities. These include: election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States (US) in 2016; and in the same year the referendum in the United Kingdom (UK) on European Union's (EU) membership which ultimately resulted in UK's exit from EU in early 2020, ending 47-year-long relationship. In both instances, spatial economic inequalities seem to have shaped these political outcomes, and it was the discontented voters from the geographies of despair who used ballot boxes to express their anger and frustration on being left behind. To quote Rodríguez-Pose: "In recent years the places that 'don't matter' have increasingly used the ballot box (and, in some cases, outright revolt) to rebel against the feeling of being left behind; against the feeling of lacking opportunities and future prospects."[43] In the US, Donald Trump's victory was powered by voters in rural America and industrial Midwest.[44] The incidence of poverty has historically been higher in rural than in urban America which continues to be the case today.[45] And the erstwhile industrial heartland in the Midwest that once provided high-paying manufacturing jobs has suffered from years of deindustrialisation and economic decline, population loss, and physical decay – reasons why the region came to be called the Rust Belt.[46] In the UK, wealth and gainful employment have come to be concentrated in the Southeast, notably London, whereas the north has fallen behind.[47] Analysis of the relationship between structural transformation and economic growth in 85 cities in Great Britain between 1971 and 2014 shows that "many of the fastest growing cities have been in the southern half of Britain (roughly south of a line between the Severn and Humber) and most of the slowest growing cites have been in the north."[48] While the Brexit Leave vote did not reflect the simple north-south divide and

43 Rodríguez-Pose, "The Revenge of the Places That Don't Matter (and What to Do about It)," 190.

44 Whitaker, "Rural America and a Silent Majority Powered Trump to a Win."; Monnat and Brown, "More than a Rural Revolt: Landscapes of Despair and the 2016 Presidential Election."

45 Thiede et al., "Six Charts That Illustrate the Divide between Rural and Urban America."

46 Hackworth, *Manufacturing Decline: How Racism and the Conservative Movement Crush the American Rust Belt.*

47 Rowthorn, "Combined and Uneven Development: Reflections on the North–South Divide."

48 Tyler et al., "Growing Apart? Structural Transformation and the Uneven Development of British Cities," 430.

won right across England and Wales[49], there was a geography to it which closely corresponded to the socio-economic differences across regions. The Brexit Leave vote came primarily from left-behind localities where economic and social decline caused political alienation to become entrenched. Thus:

> The public vote for Brexit was anchored predominantly, albeit not exclusively, in areas of the country that are filled with pensioners, low-skilled and less well-educated bluecollar workers and citizens who have been pushed to the margins not only by the economic transformation of the country over recent decades but also by the values that have come to dominate a more socially liberal media and political class. In this respect the vote for Brexit was delivered by the 'left behind' – social groups that are united by a general sense of insecurity, pessimism and marginalisation, who do not feel as though elites, whether in Brussels or Westminster, share their values, represent their interests and genuinely empathise with their intense angst about rapid social, economic and cultural change.[50]

In terms of how economics and politics coalesce at the community level, a study using British Election Study data shows that economic context holds significance in understanding perceived community representation and living in low-income community is associated with negative views on community participation. This, in turn, leads to grievance wherein people are particularly negative about community representation when they believe that the national economy is more successful than that of one's local community.[51] The fall of some places in rank and clout has been particularly remarkable. For instance, in the US, Detroit in Michigan which once commanded the status of "Motor Car Capital of the World"[52] now suffers from among the highest poverty, unemployment and physical decay.[53] In northern UK, the city of Liverpool, once known for its global cotton industry, is among the top 10 city councils with highest proportion of neighbourhoods facing extreme deprivation.[54] To be sure, this decline has a complex history, and is also rooted in social ills, such as racial tensions.[55] But they are also a product of policies. For instance, in the UK many of the cities that achieved higher economic performance than the national average in the past four decades (1971-2014), such as Cambridge, Reading, Southampton, "were assisted by British spatial policy to become centres of growth".[56]

Economic globalization is at the heart of these shifts. The globalization-induced economic restructuring that started in 1980s and accelerated towards the end of twentieth century

49 BBC, "EU Referendum: The Result in Maps and Charts."

50 Goodwin and Heath, "The 2016 Referendum, Brexit and the Left behind: An Aggregate-level Analysis of the Result," 331.

51 McKay, "'Left behind' People, or Places? The Role of Local Economies in Perceived Community Representation."

52 Bonello, "The City of Detroit: A Personal Perspective," 177.

53 Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit-Updated Edition*; Hackworth, *Manufacturing Decline: How Racism and the Conservative Movement Crush the American Rust Belt*.

54 Lock, "These Are the Most Impoverished Places in England: Data"; Tyler et al., "Growing Apart? Structural Transformation and the Uneven Development of British Cities" Note that economy of Liverpool is reviving, and that the majority vote there was for Remain; see BBC, "EU Referendum: The Result in Maps and Charts."

55 see, for example, Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit-Updated Edition*.

56 Tyler et al., "Growing Apart? Structural Transformation and the Uneven Development of British Cities," 432.

has had profound effects on spatial patterns of development. The shift toward a free-market economy, characterised by unobstructed trade and discouragement of state regulation, has resulted into competitive advantage for some places while marginalising other localities in the increasingly integrated global economy. Much of the manufacturing has now moved to the developing countries that provide cheap labour which has contributed to the decline of old industrial centers of the developed world. Meanwhile, the economies of the countries in the Global North have come to dominate high-value, specialised service activities, such as finance and banking, which have added to the industrial decline in these countries. Indeed, the policies that facilitated the growth of financial industry were often harmful to manufacturing and other industrial activities. Crucially, moreover, the growth of specialised services located in major cities of advanced economies which created 'global cities' also debilitated the economic base of other places within these countries.[57] The challenges of these places facing decline and neglect were further compounded by state's retreat from provisioning of social goods. The US and UK led the way in this "neoliberal turn"[58], and it is perhaps not coincidental that voices against economic globalization have been the strongest in these two countries, emanating particularly from the left-behind geographies from within these nations.

But the US and UK are not alone, and geographical inequalities between and within the countries have increased the world over. Indeed, "a number of territories across the world are being left behind, experiencing long periods of decline. Whether it is Bihar in India, the central lowlands of Thailand, parts of East Germany, Champagne-Ardenne or Lorraine in France or Michigan and Ohio in the US".[59] Over the past few decades, the economic policies have increasingly supported concentrated growth. The idea underpinning this development model is that there is a geographical logic to economic activity. Markets favour places that allow economic production at reduced costs and generate greater returns to scale, and this fosters geographical concentration of economic activity. This also leads to population densification as economic opportunities attract people to move to these places. This spatial clustering creates *agglomeration economies* that refer to "the benefits that come when firms and people locate near one another together in cities and industrial clusters".[60] These agglomeration effects also provide a key explanation for the existence of cities.[61] These densely populated places provide a conducive environment for efficient production of goods and services because they have access to a pool of skilled labour, network of complementary firms, and a critical mass of consumers of those goods and services. The co-location of complementary firms allows for sharing of physical infrastructure that reduces production costs as well as human resources that fosters innovation.[62] The conceptual roots of this thinking lie in Paul Krugman's seminal work on *Geography and Trade* that sought to explain large agglomerations as arising from increasing returns, trade costs, differences in factor prices in which geography (distance) plays a key role; and this was the beginning of what later came

57 Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*.

58 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 9.

59 Rodríguez-Pose, "The Revenge of the Places That Don't Matter (and What to Do about It)," 193.

60 Glaeser, "Introduction," 1.

61 Scott and Storper, "The Nature of Cities: The Scope and Limits of Urban Theory"; Scott, *The Constitution of the City: Economy, Society and Urbanization in the Capitalist Era.*

62 Duranton and Puga, "Micro-Foundations of Urban Agglomeration Economies"; Rosenthal and Strange, "The Determinants of Agglomeration"; Scott and Storper, "The Nature of Cities: The Scope and Limits of Urban Theory."

to be known as *New Economic Geography*.[63] Much of the agglomeration literature is focused on manufacturing, and the theoretical-empirical work on services-led agglomeration is scarce. Nonetheless, the argument increasingly appears to extend to services, particularly some key sub-sectors such as business services where the "classical sources of agglomeration economies, in particular localisation and urbanisation externalities" continue to have relevance.[64] Indeed, as Saskia Sassen's work on global cities shows, globalization and territorial dispersion of economic activity has in fact created a need for central control and command centers, and in what may seem to be a puzzle "the more globalized the economy becomes, the higher the agglomeration of central functions in a relatively few sites" that provide specialised services and innovations to support geographically dispersed economic activity.[65]

The World Bank has been a vocal supporter of this concentrated model of economic growth, arguing that it is associated with increased prosperity. This stance is reflected in *World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography* that noted that the "geographically disadvantaged people cope every day with the reality that development does not bring economic prosperity everywhere at once; markets favor some places over others. But dispersing production more broadly does not necessarily foster prosperity."[66] The report main argument is that economic growth is a geographically uneven process driven by *density* (population agglomeration, scale economies), *distance* (geographic mobility) and *division* (economic integration), and growth can be fostered by policies that facilitate agglomeration, factor mobility and economic integration within and between nations. In other words, wealth concentrates in some places more than others. "To get a part of this wealth, you have to get closer to it."[67]. The World Bank's suggestion to address spatial imbalances in development is to institute social policies, such as those related to health, education and nutrition, to promote inclusive outcomes – a stance which deviates from its earlier position of economic austerity for social sector spending it advocated through the structural adjustment programmes which produced huge discontents.[68] Moreover, institutions to deliver social protection remain weak in many countries. Not unexpectedly, this concentrated growth model has also had the effect of widening spatial disparities. This effect has been particularly severe in many developing countries where globalization has increased overall national prosperity, but the economic growth has tended to concentrate in large urban centers.

This is particularly the case in India which has witnessed widening of geographical disparities since the economic reforms of early 1990s. It is not that regional inequality surfaced as an issue only after the liberalization reforms towards the end of the twentieth century. Indeed, differences in economic performance across the various regions has been a key historical feature of India's development.[69] But Indian policymakers were cognisant of regional economic disparities and their implications for equitable growth. In the first four decades after country's independence

63 Krugman, *Geography and Trade*; Krugman, "The New Economic Geography, Now Middle-Aged"; also see Fujita and Krugman, "The New Economic Geography: Past, Present and the Future."

64 Meliciani and Savona, "The Determinants of Regional Specialisation in Business Services: Agglomeration Economies, Vertical Linkages and Innovation," 389.

65 Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 5.

66 World Bank, "World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography," xiii.

67 World Bank, xix.

68 Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*.

69 Roy, *The Economic History of India, 1857-2010*.

from the British rule in 1947, development planning thus sought to promote balanced regional development. This thinking is reflected in the India's second Five-Year Plan (1956-61) document that noted:

> In any comprehensive plan of development, it is axiomatic that the special needs of the less developed areas should receive due attention. The pattern of investment must be so devised as to lead to balanced regional development…as development proceeds and large resources become available for investment, the stress of developmental programmes should be on extending the benefit of investments to underdeveloped regions.[70]

In the centrally planned economy, influenced by the Soviet model, public sector was used as an engine of economic growth, and retained ownership of key industries. Private enterprise was regulated through licensing regime which determined the scale and location of private investment. This regulation of economic activity came at a cost. For the first three decades after the independence Indian economy grew at an average rate of 3.5 percent which came to be called the Hindu rate of growth (Kar & Sakthivel 2007, 69).[71] But balanced regional development remained an important goal, and public sector was viewed as key to achieving this objective. Besides, several other policy initiatives showed this commitment to equitable development. For example, the key objective of Freight Equalization Policy 1952 that subsidized transport costs of raw materials, such as iron ore and minerals, so that cost of industrial inputs was the same everywhere in India was to promote balanced industrial growth across different parts of the country. Despite these policy initiatives, regional inequalities remained widespread as differences in several geographical, historical, and institutional factors also determined patterns of regional development which continue to shape these differences. For instance, a study that compare the economic performance of different regions of India which were put under different colonial land revenue institutions of *zamindari* (where landlords collected revenues), *raiyatwari* (in which individual cultivators paid land revenue), and *mahalwari* (whereby village bodies were jointly responsible for the land revenue), and find that places where landlords were put in-charge to collect land revenues from the cultivators had poorer economic outcomes post-independence (reflected in agriculture performance, public investment in education and health, as well as health and educational outcomes) than those places where these intermediaries were avoided. The authors note that these differences potentially arose because the oppressive nature of landlord-based system meant that cultivators saw their interested as different from the landlords which, in turn, precluded the opportunity for collective action.[72] In other cases, even though equitable regional development was the stated policy aim, Indian government's own measures undermined this goal. For example, Green Revolution reforms were systematically inserted in northwest states of Haryana and Punjab which brought prosperity in these states, while the economically

70 Planning Commission, *Approach to the Second Five Year Plan*, 36.

71 Kar and Sakthivel, "Reforms and Regional Inequality in India," 69; The phrase 'Hindu rate of growth' was coined and popularized by Indian economist, Raj Krishna, in 1970s to refer to slow growth rate that characterized Indian economy in the three decades following the independence: Virmani, "India's Economic Growth History: Fluctuations, Trends, Break Points and Phases.

72 Banerjee and Iyer, "History, Institutions, and Economic Performance: The Legacy of Colonial Land Tenure Systems in India."

backward state of Bihar, located in the same Gangetic basin and thus suited for these agrarian reforms, was bypassed. Additionally, the Freight Equalization Policy that sought to promote industrial parity also wiped out the competitive advantage of backward states in eastern India.[73] Nonetheless, there was some attempt to reconcile the development differences between the regions until 1980.

This goal has been abandoned subsequently. The Indian constitution includes the provision of Finance Commission, appointed every five years, that is mandated with a task of fair distribution of tax receipts between the federal and several state governments, and backward states often receive special grants for their developmental needs.[74] But the Indian state no longer formally regulates the location of economic activities. Beginning in the 1980s, Indian policymakers introduced a slew of reform measures, including relaxations in industrial regulations and rationalization of the tax system, to improve economic performance of the country.[75] Economic policy change gathered momentum in early 1990s when, faced with the balance of payment crisis, Indian government initiated more systematic reforms and liberalised its economy. Strict regulatory controls on private entrepreneurial activities that characterized the *License Raj* were removed, and foreign capital was invited to invest in Indian industries and businesses. This liberalization of Indian economy has resulted in faster economic growth and enabled the country to break away from the pattern of Hindu rate of growth.[76] India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at an average annual rate of 5.6 percent in 1980s and 1990s and close to 7 percent since early 2000s (Figure 2.2), making the country one of the fastest growing economies of the world. The faster economic growth has also led to decline in overall poverty.[77] However, this new economic trajectory has also resulted in widening of regional inequalities, as noted earlier. The evidence shows that the average incomes and living standards across Indian states have tended to diverge in the period following the liberalization reforms. Economic growth is found to be positively associated with initial levels of development, and the Indian states with better human capital and physical infrastructure have been able to attract greater investment and achieve faster growth rates.[78] The deregulation of the economy has allowed private enterprise to flourish but private capital has favoured states that were ahead in development curve. The foreign capital shows signs of concentration in a few states, mostly in western and southern India. Between 2000 and 2012, six states including Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh together accounted for over 70 per cent of foreign direct investment flows.[79]

On the other hand, the backward states in the north and east of the country that include Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha have languished. These seven states account for nearly half of India's population[80] but they rank lowest

73 Singh and Stern, *The New Bihar-Rekindling Governance and Development*.

74 Government of India, "The Finance Commission (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1951"; Finance Commission, "Finance Commission of India."

75 Rodrik, "Introduction: What Do We Learn from Country Narratives?"

76 Panagariya, "India in the 1980s and the 1990s: A Triumph of Reforms."

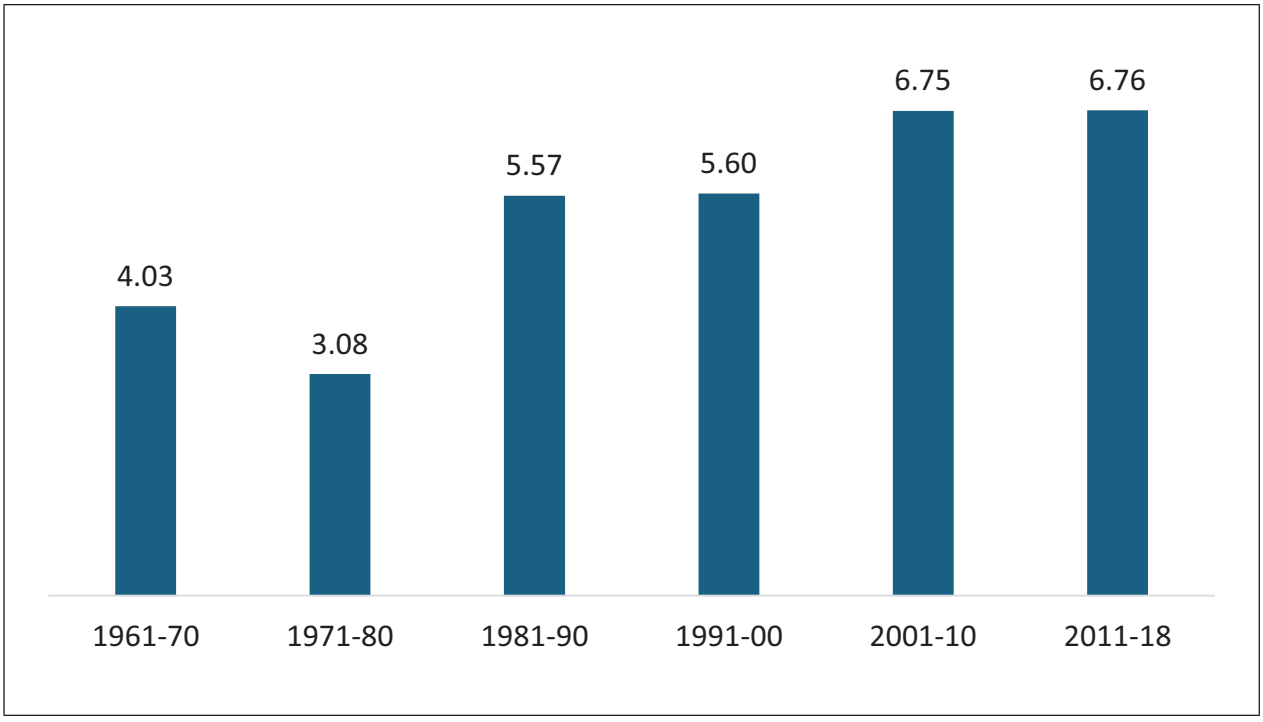
77 Deaton and Dreze, "Poverty and Inequality in India: A Re-Examination.

78 Rao, Shand, and Kalirajan, "Convergence of Incomes across Indian States: A Divergent View"; Dasgupta et al., "Growth and Interstate Disparities in India"; N. J.

79 Mukherjee, "Regional Inequality in Foreign Direct Investment Flows to India: The Problem and the Prospects," 100.

80 Census of India, "Primary Census Abstract Data (Online)," 2011.

Figure 2.2: Average annual GDP growth rate in India, 1961-2018



Source: Author's calculations using data from World Bank's World Development Indicators, 2021; GDP at constant 2010 USD prices.

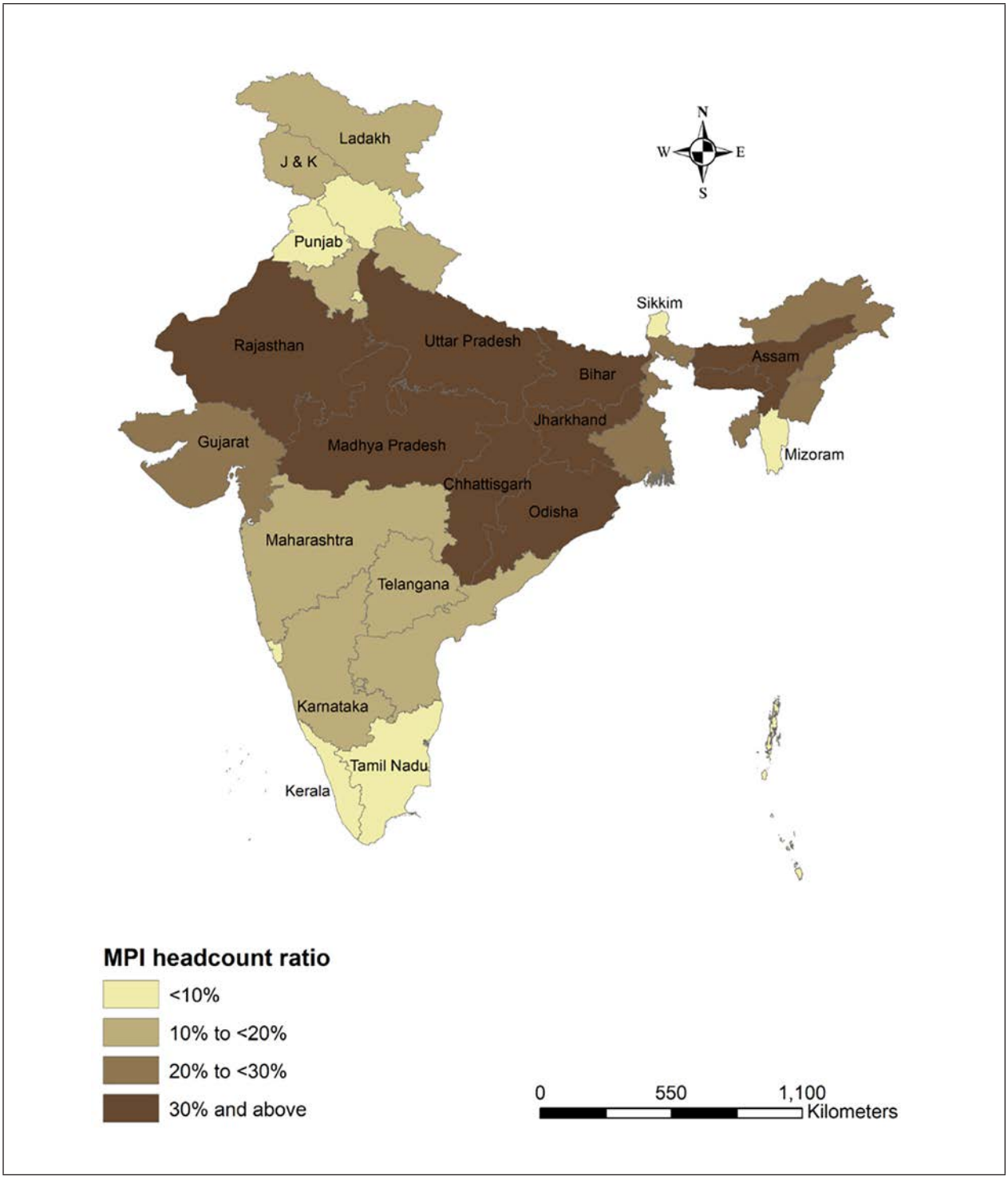
on many key social and economic indicators, reasons why they came to be called BIMARU.[81]

These states suffer from high population pressures, underdeveloped economies, and poor infrastructure. Figure 2.3 presents the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) for Indian states for 2015-16. MPI is a summary measure of wellbeing that captures acute deprivations in health, education and living standards that people face simultaneously. As is evident, poverty and deprivation remain widespread in these states, with all having 30 percent or more of their population facing multidimensional poverty. The states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh had over 40 percent of their populations in multidimensional poverty, and these four states were home to more than half (196 million) of the 364 million multidimensionally poor in India. The contrast between some states in the north and south is striking. For example, in 2015-16 only one percent of Kerala's population was MPI poor, whereas 52 percent of population in Bihar suffered from multidimensional poverty.[82]

81 BIMARU means morbid or sick in Hindi. The term was coined by Indian demographer, Ashish Bose, as an acronym for socio-demographically backward states for Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In 2000, the states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand were carved out of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, respectively, and hence were part of BIMARU states. Although Odisha was not part of Bose's original coinage, the levels of socio-economic backwardness in the state was comparable, and the acronym thus later became BIMARUO to include Odisha in this grouping: see, Bose, "North-South Divide in India's Demographic Scene."

82 Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2018: The Most Detailed Picture to Date of the World's Poorest People.*; Alkire, Kanagaratnam, and Suppa, *The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2020. OPHI MPI Methodological Note. 49.*

Figure 2.3: Population in multidimensional poverty in Indian states, 2015-16[83]



Source: Author's work based on global multidimensional poverty index data by Alkire, Kanagaratnam and Suppa (2020).

83 The data on which this MPI is based were collected in 2015-16 when Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were one state. Hence the MPI headcount ratio for the undivided Jammu and Kashmir is applied on both.

In recent years, these states have seen positive changes in living standards, but poverty and underdevelopment remain widespread still. This is also reflected in data in Table 2.1 that shows human development index (HDI) for 16 large Indian states from 1990 to 2019. There has been improvement in human development in all states over the 30-year period. At the same time, levels of human development vary widely across Indian states. Importantly, the poor states in the east and north have occupied the lowest rungs throughout this period, with Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh being consistently among the bottom four states. Indeed, some of these states have human development outcomes that are comparable to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, while average living standards in the states in the west and south, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, mirror those of upper middle-income countries.[84] Like England, there is a longstanding north-south divide in India which seems to have only sharpened in the past few years. This divide occasionally becomes a matter of regional pride, and frequently spills into political domain with rich states in the south resenting subsidizing the north. Raising the demand for a separate state flag, the former Chief Minister of southern Indian state of Karnataka recently remarked:

> Historically, the South has been subsidizing the north. Six states south of the Vindhyas contribute more taxes and get less. For example, for every one rupee of tax contributed by Uttar Pradesh that state receives Rs 1.79. For every one rupee of tax contributed by Karnataka, the state receives Rs 0.47. While I recognize the need for correcting regional imbalances, where is the reward for development?[85]

Table 2.1: Human development index for Indian states, 1990-2019

	1990	2000	2010	2019
Andhra Pradesh	0.422	0.475	0.578	0.649
Assam	0.408	0.485	0.564	0.613
Bihar	0.376	0.433	0.512	0.574
Gujarat	0.469	0.525	0.604	0.672
Haryana	0.465	0.547	0.633	0.708
Himachal Pradesh	0.478	0.587	0.666	0.725
Karnataka	0.442	0.515	0.604	0.683
Kerala	0.545	0.598	0.716	0.782
Madhya Pradesh	0.403	0.455	0.535	0.603
Maharashtra	0.493	0.556	0.644	0.697
Orissa	0.397	0.455	0.533	0.605
Punjab	0.496	0.577	0.656	0.724
Rajasthan	0.401	0.465	0.546	0.628
Tamil Nadu	0.470	0.54	0.646	0.709
Uttar Pradesh	0.393	0.459	0.532	0.594
West Bengal	0.439	0.503	0.571	0.641
India	0.429	0.494	0.579	0.646

Source: Radboud university's global data lab, 2021[86]

Crucially, moreover, the backward states in the north and east of the country have witnessed tremendous pressure on agrarian livelihoods in recent years, but their secondary and tertiary sectors have shown no signs of development. The benefits of economic reforms seem to have largely bypassed these states, and structural economic change appears to have increased marginalization. A recent study by Sumedha Bajar based on *district-wise* analysis of Indian census occupational data shows that between 2001 and 2011 many districts in the northern and eastern states witnessed increase in *marginal workers*, defined as those who worked for less than 6 months in the year preceding the census. In fact, as per 2011 census marginal workers were highly concentrated in these states. On

84 Drèze and Sen, *An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*.

85 Siddaramaiah, "Developed South Is Subsidising Populated North: CM Siddaramaiah Writes."

86 Radboud University, "Global Data Lab: Subnational Human Development Index, India."

the other hand, states in southern and western India saw decrease in work marginalization. She summarizes the regional patterns of this livelihood "transition into marginalization" as:

> In 2011, there has been a substantial increase in districts with more than 40 percent of total workers working as marginal workers and these were largely concentrated within states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, parts of Andhra Pradesh and eastern Uttar Pradesh in an almost continuous fashion. Where marginalization of work has increased in concentration in eastern parts of the country, there has been a decline in marginal workers in south India and in Maharashtra. The nature of the transition of moving away from main agriculture work and becoming a marginal worker is most visible in Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Orissa, as well as parts of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.[87]

It is important to note that there are wide spatial inequalities within the economically advanced states in the south and west India. Indeed, several districts within these states resemble those in BIMARUO group. A 2015 study that analyses regional backwardness at the level of sub-district/taluk (first such attempt so far) showed that while poverty and deprivation was highly concentrated in backward states (with a large majority of 100 most backward districts located in Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh), developed states also had pockets of deprivation within them. Thus:

> …the remarkable characteristic of regional disparities in India is the presence of backward areas even within states that have grown faster and are at relatively high income levels on average… District-level poverty estimates confirm that the poorest districts in India lie not only in undivided BIMARU states and Odisha, but also in rich states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.[88]

In the post-1990 period India's economic growth has been highly urban-centric in general; and within these more advanced states that have benefitted the most from India's economic policy change, growth has been highly concentrated in large cities. Moreover, much of the recent growth is accounted for by capital and skill intensive business and service sectors[89] which have benefitted a small section of highly educated workforce in the cities, while a large majority of country's rural populace without formal education and skills to participate in this new economy has been left behind. The growth of key service sectors, such as IT industry in Bangalore, has led to substantial rise in disposable incomes, and has created a global middle class.[90] At the same time, poorer, geographically remote regions have not been part of India's economic boom. Indeed, some social analysts have observed that the "growth process is so biased, making the country look more and more like islands of California in a sea of sub-Saharan Africa."[91] Bangalore's while-collar, IT sector jobs

87 Bajar, "Regional Variation in Rural Transition in India," January 2, 2020, 86–88.

88 Bakshi, Chawla, and Shah, "Regional Disparities in India: A Moving Frontier," 46.

89 Kotwal, Ramaswami, and Wadhwa, "Economic Liberalization and Indian Economic Growth: What's the Evidence?"

90 Upadhya, "Rewriting the Code: Software Professionals and the Reconstitution of Indian Middle Class Identity."

91 Drèze and Sen, *An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*, ix.

have remained the preserve of "urban, middle class and high or middle caste" populations[92]; and in the peripheries of the same city so widely integrated in the global economic circuits, durability of caste has prevented the traditionally disadvantaged social groups, such as Dalits, to fight historic disadvantage and sufficiently reap the benefits of digital communication technologies.[93]

While India's recent economic growth has tended to favour skill-intensive tertiary sectors, some urban nonfarm sectors intensive in unskilled labour, such as construction, have also grown in the post-reform period which has increased the overall demand for unskilled labour.[94] These jobs are highly informal and precarious. But in the context of dwindling fortunes of farm-based livelihoods, these urban informal jobs provide an important alternative to millions of people transitioning their livelihoods away from farming.[95] Although exclusionary, urban economic growth has also become a significant driver of rural poverty reduction in the period following economic reforms.[96] Agrarian stress and urban-centric growth are prompting a growing number of people from rural areas to migrate to cities and towns. Much of this labour migration involves semi-permanent, circular moves given the precarious nature of these jobs, while permanent work-related migration to cities for decent, formal sector job is predominantly undertaken by the better-off segments.[97] Patterns of temporary, circular migration also vary widely depending on the distance to labour markets. In rural places situated closer to towns that provide alternative nonfarm jobs commuting and short-distance migration are important forms of mobility, while migration pattern in villages located away from job centers involves people moving long distances for livelihoods.[98] There is compelling evidence to suggests that migration can provide an important route out of poverty and adversity, with remittances closely tied to the wellbeing of migrant households.[99] While this is the case, migration option is not open to all. Structural economic change in India remains beset with various socio-economic inequalities that constrain mobility chances for many households and individuals. These inequalities operate at different levels, they are mediated through complex economic and socio-cultural processes, and their effects vary widely across population groups. But in effect, they create left-behind populations, *defined as those individuals and/or households who lack real opportunities to benefit from migration*. The next section turns attention to these left-behind populations.

Migration, inequalities and left-behind populations

Michael Lipton's seminal work on migration-inequality nexus showed that they share a two-way, reciprocal relationship.[100] Labour migration from rural areas often represents a response to inequality as disadvantaged groups attempt to improve their relative socio-economic position.

92 Upadhya, "Employment, Exclusion and 'Merit' in the Indian IT Industry," 1863.

93 Kamath, "'Untouchable' Cellphones? Old Caste Exclusions and New Digital Divides in Peri-Urban Bangalore."

94 Datt and Ravallion, "Has India's Economic Growth Become More pro-Poor in the Wake of Economic Reforms?"

95 Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

96 Datt and Ravallion, "Has India's Economic Growth Become More pro-Poor in the Wake of Economic Reforms?"

97 Tumbe, *India Moving: A History of Migration*, 36.

98 Pani, *Dynamics of Difference: Inequality and Transformation in Rural India.*

99 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

100 Lipton, "Migration from Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The Impact on Rural Productivity and Income Distribution."

Based on evidence from a large number of village studies, his research showed that migration rates were higher from villages with high inequality. At the same time, migration also leads to increase in income inequality within the village as better-off segments get pulled to migration to take advantage of better opportunities, while the poor are pushed out to migrate which widens the inequalities between these groups. "Thus 'push' and 'pull' migration are twin children of inequality in the same sort of village; but they are also sources of new inequality."[101] However, between these *poverty-push* and *income-pull* migrants lie those individuals and households who lack opportunities to successfully partake in migration because they face several constrains on their mobility. They can include entire household who are left-behind and unable to engage in migration, as well as individual members from within the migrant household who face the burden of social roles and expectations that constrain their mobility. Based on the literature, we identify two such groups including, i) *households* who are left behind in migration because they lack the requisite financial means and social networks that successful migration requires, ii) *women* within migrant households whose gender social roles restrict their mobility. The discussion below focuses on these left-behind groups and the key issues and implications that emerge from each. The discussion here also informs the analytical approach of this report, and these two groups are the focus of empirical chapters that follow (Chapters 5 and 6).

Left-behind households

First, at the level of household, village-level studies in India show that poorest households are often least able to migrate because of their inability to bear the initial costs of migration.[102] In India, socio-economically disadvantaged social groups, particularly those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, face high barriers to mobility; when they do move, much of the migration among them is characteristically temporary, and often distress-driven.[103] Moreover, at their work destinations, they are more vulnerable to cheating, abuse and discrimination[104] which can (and often does) have the effect of discouraging migration. In other words, "it is seldom the poorest who migrate, still less migrate successfully."[105] This inequality-induced selectivity of migration means that they are households who are unable to transition to urban-nonfarm, migration-based jobs. This can have both positive and negative effects on the households left behind. There are at least two broad set of effects: i) economic wellbeing, ii) social change.

To discuss the first issue of economic wellbeing, theoretically, with increasing number of households engaging in work migration, this may lead to farm labour shortages which can improve wages for those households who do not migrate. In other in-kind farming arrangements such as sharecropping, which typically involves landed households leasing out land to landless and land-poor households in exchange for certain quantity of the produce (typically amounting to half of the total harvest), migration-induced labour shortages may improve the economic bargaining

101 Lipton, 4.

102 Connell et al., *Migration from Rural Areas. The Evidence from Village Studies*.

103 Keshri and Bhagat, "Temporary and Seasonal Migration: Regional Pattern, Characteristics and Associated Factors."

104 Breman, *Of Peasants, Migrants and Paupers: Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India*; Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*; Breman, "Outcast Labour in Asia: Circulation and Informalization of the Workforce at the Bottom of the Economy."

105 Lipton, "Migration from Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The Impact on Rural Productivity and Income Distribution," 7.

position of tenants to demand better terms of sharecropping. Indeed, analysis of nationwide NSS data reveals that in India there has been rise in 'non-cultivating peasant households' – households who are diversifying their livelihoods away from farming while holding onto land.[106] This potentially has the effect of increasing access to land among the land-poor and landless rural households from disadvantaged social groups. Evidence on migration-tenancy linkages is scarce but research points to these linkages. Research in Bangladesh shows rural-urban migration increased the incidence of land tenancy which befitted the "land-poor households [who] got additional access to land".[107] In terms of how these altered land relations relate to wellbeing of the left-behind, the access to land among the disadvantaged groups can improve their food and nutritional security and thus contributing positively to overall living standards.[108] This access to land can be particularly important in the context of high volatility in food prices.[109] On the negative side, gains accruing from remittances to migrant households can further increase income inequalities between households with and without migrants. Michael Lipton's research, cited earlier, showed that, relatively better-off segments of population responded to migration "either to obtain education or to exploit the higher urban-rural income differentials to which earlier education has given access…[which] allows the better-off to advance as a group", thus widening the economic inequalities within the same village.[110] More recent research across varied contexts corroborates this inequality-increasing tendency of migration. In Ghana, internal and international remittances were both associated with increased income inequalities in migrant-sending rural areas.[111] A recent study in China showed that while rural-urban migration boosted average rural incomes in general, it also led to increase in ethnicity-based inequality with ethnic minorities faring poorer.[112] Thus, remittances help the poor to lift themselves out of poverty but can reinforce existing economic inequalities.

Economic remittances are important to understanding the migration-inequality relationship. But migration is simultaneously a social process, and labour migrants also transmit in origin places ideas, knowledge and exposure they gain in their work destinations, often referred to as "social remittances".[113] These social remittances can provide important tools for marginalised groups to resist unequal power relations in origin communities.[114] This brings us to the second key dimension of migration-inequality relationship: that of social change. In rural India, land has traditionally remained a key axis of political power. In general, land control by the Forward Caste groups accorded them greater political power and representation in the local affairs. The disadvantaged social groups, often belonging to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe, depended on landholding communities for their livelihoods in exploitative relationships, such as that of attached labour.[115] However, labour

106 Vijay, "Structural Retrogression and Rise of 'New Landlords' in Indian Agriculture: An Empirical Exercise.

107 Afsar, "Dynamics of Poverty, Development and Population Mobility: The Bangladesh Case," 80–81.

108 Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India*.

109 Pritchard, "The Problem of Higher Food Prices for Impoverished People in the Rural Global South."

110 Lipton, "Migration from Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The Impact on Rural Productivity and Income Distribution," 4.

111 Adams Jr, Cuecuecha, and Page, "The Impact of Remittances on Poverty and Inequality in Ghana.

112 Howell, "Impacts of Migration and Remittances on Ethnic Income Inequality in Rural China.

113 Levitt, "Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion," 926.

114 Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, "Circular Migration and Rural Cosmopolitanism in India."

115 Jodhka, "Agrarian Changes and Attached Labour: Emerging Patterns in Haryana Agriculture."

migration challenges these economic relations. A number of longitudinal studies in India have shown that access to nonfarm, non-local jobs has enabled the disadvantaged households to break free of these exploitative relations.[116] Agrarian decline and growing significance of nonfarm, migration-based jobs in households' livelihood portfolios has changed the traditional, land-centric basis of local power relations. In many cases, migration has allowed the land-poor communities from disadvantaged social groups to improve their economic fortunes and alter the power relations in rural communities. Field-based, primary research in eastern Bihar shows that migration helped the land-poor Muslims households to escape the hegemony of a local landlord, and become more significant political actors locally.[117] The circular nature of India in India means migrants continue to be involved in the politics at origin villages.[118] Research on seasonal rural-urban migrants from Golla Caste (low caste) engaged in construction industry in Andhra Pradesh shows that even though urban jobs provide income sources, labour migrants remain politically active in their home village. In fact, it is the rural sites where migrants' struggles and demands are focused rather than cities. This is because rural areas are where state's interventions are focused in the form of various development schemes (e.g. PDS), whereas the state is virtually absent in the urban arena for the migrant workers. Indeed, in cities Golla migrants accept docility, invisibility and even dominance by other social groups, but use their migration experience to negotiate a better position within the village social power relationships.[119] Similarly, research in rural Maharashtra reveals that migration incomes has led to collapse of *Saldari* system of contract labour whereby farm labourers from low caste worked for dominant landlords under conditions of serfdom and has enabled the members of disadvantaged castes to resist and escape the patronage relations.[120] These findings highlight the transformative potential of migration for the traditionally marginalised groups. Recent research also shows that migration propensities among the socio-economically deprived are catching up with better-off groups.[121] At the same time, as noted earlier, many poorest households from traditionally disadvantaged social backgrounds still find it difficult to transition to migration jobs because they lack the requisite financial and social capital; they continue to have to rely on agriculture sector for livelihoods. Indeed, the evidence shows that agriculture labour in India remains dominated by those without any education, and those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.[122] We know nothing about how these left-behind households are affected in this reconfiguration of local power relations. It is perhaps the case that the rising migration propensities among the traditionally disadvantaged groups benefit the left-behind households sharing similar marginalised backgrounds from the general alteration in unequal power relations. At the same time, it is likely that their continued dependency

116 Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*; Jodhka, "Agrarian Changes and Attached Labour: Emerging Patterns in Haryana Agriculture"; Datta et al., "Contrasts in Development in Bihar: A Tale of Two Villages"; Himanshu and Stern, "How Lives Change. Six Decades in a North Indian Village."

117 Haque, "Caste, Power, and Aspiration in Structural Dualism."

118 Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan, "Circular Migration and the Spaces of Cultural Assertion."

119 Picherit, "Migrant Labourers' Struggles Between Village and Urban Migration Sites: Labour Standards, Rural Development and Politics in South India."

120 Rai, "The Labor of Social Change: Seasonal Labor Migration and Social Change in Rural Western India."

121 Vartak, Tumbe, and Bhide, "Mass Migration from Rural India: A Restudy of Kunkeri Village in Konkan, Maharashtra, 1961–1987–2017."

122 Lanjouw and Murgai, "Poverty Decline, Agricultural Wages, and Nonfarm Employment in Rural India: 1983–2004."

on land-based livelihoods hampers their ability to instigate effective social change. This issue warrants more detailed and systematic research.

Left-behind women

Inequalities operate within the sphere of household, too, which can lead to differentials in migration propensities among the members of migrant households. Migration often represents a combined household strategy whereby rural households allocate labour across a diverse set of farm and nonfarm activities to maximize income gains and minimize risks.[123] This means that some members of the household migrate to earn incomes at distant locations, while others stay behind to look after land and agriculture at the origin. The precariousness of rural transition in India makes holding onto land even more attractive.[124] However, and this is important, household migration decisions are influenced by social arrangements, and interpersonal inequalities within the members of the household play an important role in the process. Prominent among them are gender-based inequalities in migration. In many parts of India, socio-cultural norms restrict the mobility and participation of women in distant locations, and labour mobility is almost exclusively a male-only activity. Nationwide data shows that this male migration pattern is prevalent in regions covering over 200 million people.[125] This male-only migration often triggers fundamental changes in gender power relations. From the perspective of migration-inequality relationship, here too, there are two broad set of effects that of male migration for the women left behind. These include i) improved agency and autonomy for women that can reduce gender-based inequalities, and ii) increased burden of households' productive and reproductive responsibilities that can exacerbate unequal gender relations.

First, several studies show that male migration enhances the agency and autonomy of women who are left behind, as they assume greater decision-making roles within the household while the men are away.[126] In some cases, these autonomy effects prevail even after the return of men.[127] Research also reveals that the practice of *purdah* seemed to be less common among women married to migrants than those married to non-migrants in India.[128] As noted earlier, migrants also transmit in their home communities social remittances in the form of new ideas, norms and knowledge, and rural migrants' exposure to progressive gender social norms at urban work destinations often challenges the gender orthodoxy.[129] Family context has a bearing on autonomy: Women in the nuclear family structure often gain more freedom than those in the joint/extended families where elder household members (father/mother-in-law) step in for absentee men to control household matters and

123 Stark, *The Migration of Labor*.

124 Pani, *Dynamics of Difference: Inequality and Transformation in Rural India*.

125 Tumbe, "Migration Persistence across Twentieth Century India"; Tumbe, "Missing Men, Migration and Labour Markets: Evidence from India."

126 Gulati, "Coping with Male Migration"; Gulati, *In the Absence of Their Men: The Impact of Male Migration on Women*; Hadi, "International Migration and the Change of Women's Position among the Left-behind in Rural Bangladesh"; Paris et al., "Labour Outmigration, Livelihood of Rice Farming Households and Women Left behind: A Case Study in Eastern Uttar Pradesh"; Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

127 Yabiku, Agadjanian, and Sevoyan, "Husbands' Labour Migration and Wives' Autonomy, Mozambique 2000–2006."

128 Desai and Banerji, "Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-behind Wives in India."

129 Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

maintain established patriarchal norms[130], though joint families can provide enhanced psychosocial support to women in the absence of their husband. Migration can also alter these familial structures, from joint to nuclear households and vice versa. A study in Kerala involving 132 migrants' wives showed male migration resulted in greater self-confidence among women, and that nearly half of the sample women wanted to live independently after their husbands moved because they liked the autonomy their husbands' migration brought about which would not have been available in the joint family set up.[131] The remittances sent by migrant husbands often enhance women's position within the household, and provide resources to invest in food, education and health. Leela Gulati's pioneering study on the subject matter that focused on male-migration from Kerala, India to the Middle East documented that left-behind women spent the remittances they received in child education and women and child health.[132] Similarly, another study on left-behind women in Garhwal district of Uttarakhand, India on involving a sample of 250 households with migrant husbands and 250 with non-migrant husbands found that the former had higher overall incomes and savings, and spent more on consumption, education and health.[133] Moreover, managing remittances to run the household is also found to increase women's financial literacy as they deal with formal institutions such as banks. Recent research based on India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data covering a nationwide sample of 19,737 women found that left-behind migrants' wives were significantly more likely to have a bank account those women married to non-migrants, in both nuclear and joint family structures.[134] This also broadens women's vision of managing household financial matters efficiently.[135] Women's control over household finances can not only result in equitable gender outcomes but also maximize household welfare. This is because in many societies, women often place the interests of family over their individual welfare. For rural India, it has been observed that:

> If a typical Indian rural woman was asked about her personal 'welfare', she would find the question unintelligible, and if she is able to reply, she may answer the question in terms of her reading of the welfare of her family. The idea of personal welfare may itself be unviable in such a context.[136]

Thus, the migration of men has the potential to enhance women's agency and autonomy and produce gender-equal outcomes.

At the same time, male migration can also worsen the gender-based vulnerabilities women face. The precarious of India's ongoing rural transformation means that in many cases migrants' remittances may not be adequate to support the household, and the left-behind women may find themselves with an added burden of household's productive functions. Village level case studies in India show that male migration resulted in women performing greater

130 Desai and Banerji, "Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-behind Wives in India"; Ahmed, "Women Left behind: Migration, Agency, and the Pakistani Woman."

131 Sekhar, "Male Emigration and Changes in the Family: Impact on Female Sex Roles."

132 Gulati, *In the Absence of Their Men: The Impact of Male Migration on Women*.

133 Negi, "Impact of Out-Migration of Husbands on Left behind Wives: A Study of Rural Garhwal."

134 Lei and Desai, "Male Out-Migration and the Health of Left-behind Wives in India: The Roles of Remittances, Household Responsibilities, and Autonomy."

135 Gulati, "Coping with Male Migration"; Gulati, *In the Absence of Their Men: The Impact of Male Migration on Women*.

136 Das and Nicholas's (1981) cited in Sen, "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts," 6–7.

tasks in family agriculture, including those that were traditionally carried out by men.[137] Indeed, male migration is a leading driver of feminization of agriculture in India. While women's greater involvement in productive domain is often viewed positively for improving their bargaining position[138], this can also exacerbate gender-based inequalities. Research on women in agriculture in India show that women's growing participation in agriculture is occurring in the context rising stress on farm-based livelihoods which is leading instead to feminization of farm distress.[139] Crucially, moreover, women's growing involvement in farming adds to the already heavy demands of domestic duties and care work for most rural women in India which undermines wellbeing outcomes. For instance, research in western Bihar shows that women-headed households where men were absent due to migration had poorer food security than those headed by men.[140] It is important to note that women's involvement in agriculture does not grant them land ownership rights, and land control largely remains with men.[141] The added burden of responsibility can also affect women's health negatively. Recent research in India based on nationally representative IHDS data, cited earlier, showed that absence of husbands due to migration had an overall negative impact on left-behind women's self-reported health, and that extra burden of responsibilities contributed to poor health outcomes.[142] The gendered impacts of added burden of productive functions often extend to other family members. Children are at particular risk. For the children of Gulf male migrants from Kerala, for instance, it has been observed that:

> Such children are becoming delinquents and turning to drugs. Mothers who have to take full control of the children are finding it difficult in the absence of the supporting presence of the fathers. Psychiatrists have even coined a new term: the "Gulf Syndrome".[143]

The increasing workload on migrants' wives may also alter the dynamics of family labour which oftentimes demands children having to compensate for the labour of absentee men; young girls may be adversely affected by male migration as they may have to bear additional domestic responsibilities and take care of younger siblings.[144] Aside from these impacts caused by increased work burden, the disruption of sexual life in the wake of prolonged separation of male migrants from their wives raises the likelihood of men seeking sexual relationships outside of the wedlock. The stronghold of patriarchal norms means that left-behind wives often find it difficult to exercise their agency to challenge their subjugation. In fact, migrants' wives are routinely subjected to greater surveillance by their in-laws and extended family, are expected

137 Surinder Jetley, "Impact of Male Migration on Rural Females"; Paris et al., "Labour Outmigration, Livelihood of Rice Farming Households and Women Left behind: A Case Study in Eastern Uttar Pradesh"; Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

138 Sen, "Gender and Cooperative Conflicts."

139 Pattnaik et al., "The Feminization of Agriculture or the Feminization of Agrarian Distress? Tracking the Trajectory of Women in Agriculture in India."

140 Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

141 Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia.*

142 Lei and Desai, "Male Out-Migration and the Health of Left-behind Wives in India: The Roles of Remittances, Household Responsibilities, and Autonomy."

143 Nair (1986) cited in Battistella and Conaco, "The Impact of Labour Migration on the Children Left behind: A Study of Elementary School Children in the Philippines," 226.

144 Surinder Jetley, "Impact of Male Migration on Rural Females"; Srivastava and Sasikumar, "An Overview of Migration in India, Its Impacts and Key Issues."

to adhere to expected gender social roles, and in some cases even ignore their migrant husbands' other marriages.[145]

In conclusion, while male migration can create more space for women to exercise their agency, it is not always accompanied by substantial changes in unequal gender social relations. In overall terms, the available evidence suggests that male migration often intensifies women's gender-based vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

This chapter has assessed the relationship between structural economic transformation, inequality and development in the context of India, with a focus on impact of three decades of economic change on two key dimensions of inequalities: spatial inequalities and inequalities between different socio-economic groups. The evidence presented in this article highlights that rapid economic change in India is accompanied by increased aggregate prosperity, but the benefits of fast growth are not shared equally by different regions and population groups – far from it. The gains of India's recent economic growth have been highly concentrated, occurring in a few large cities within the more advanced states, while the laggard regions have slipped further behind. Furthermore, this concentrated, urban-centric growth has also been skill-intensive which has favoured a small section of highly educated workforce in key business and service industries, such as finance and information technology, while a large majority of India's population scrambles to find decent livelihoods. These outcomes have occurred in a context where over two-third of country's population still lives in rural areas and where overall education levels remain dismal. The urban-based, nonfarm sector-led growth has heighted the significance of work-related migration. But urban jobs are precarious, nor are migration avenues available to all. In other words, India's recent economic growth has been highly exclusionary in its distribution of benefits across geographies and socio-economic classes and has created what this paper refers to as left-behind places and left-behind populations. This can have several socio-political and development implications.

First, spatial economic inequalities that leave places behind can create feelings of alienation and discontent which can affect cohesion. These sentiments are increasingly visible in the responses of left-behind geographies to their marginalization and exclusion (Rodríguez-Pose 2018). The Brexit referendum in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in the US provide examples of how left behind places are contesting their exclusion. In India, spatial inequalities have long been a source of conflict. This divide has often created political tensions, with laggard states demanding special consideration in resource allocation for them to deal with underdevelopment while advanced states resenting not being rewarded for development. Furthermore, within-state inequalities in development are also a key source of demands for separate statehoods. The bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014 in two states illustrates this. Second, left-behind places also provide a breeding ground for social unrest. Indeed, in India Naxalite movement is most active in places that are believed to have been ignored in the development process. While early development planning in India recognised the importance of regionally balanced development, the attempts to address the spatial imbalances were largely unsuccessful. The advent of

145 Ahmed, "Women Left behind: Migration, Agency, and the Pakistani Woman."

economic reforms since the early 1990s has created greater space for private sector to realize its entrepreneurial energies which is associated with improved economic performance overall. At the same time, private capital has tended to be highly concentrated which has widened the spatial divide in India. The early optimism that regional inequalities will narrow over time as economy advances seems to fade, and poorer regions are not catching up; if anything they are falling further behind. And despite the rhetoric of inclusive development, social policies to address development deficits in the laggard regions have not adequately followed. For its level of development, public expenditure on social protection in India is among the lowest in the world, and the institution to deliver social protection remain weak.[146]

It is in this context of spatially uneven development that the past few decades have led to substantial rise in labour migration from less developed to places that provide livelihoods (Choithani et al. 2021).[147] Indeed, the "immanent forces underlying migration are structural...and these structural features are embedded in the nature of development" across different parts of India.[148] However, socio-economic inequalities curtail the mobility chances of households and individuals. The discussion above has focused on two population groups being left behind including i) households who are unable to migrate due to weak socio-economic capital, ii) women who are left behind because socio-cultural norms restrict their participation in work-related migration. The discussion also points to the ramifications pertaining to each of these left behind groups.

First, the inability of households from socio-economic marginalised backgrounds to transition to migration-based livelihoods can undermine their economic wellbeing and social status. While increasing involvement of households in labour migration can increase access to land among those who are left behind with positive impacts on their food and nutrition, the declining fortunes of farm-based livelihoods can also undermine the gains from increased land access. The continued dependency on land and agriculture also means that they remain mired in conditions of dependency and patronage.

Second, for women who are left-behind after their husbands' migration, the evidence shows that male migration intensifies the gender-based vulnerabilities of left-behind women. While absence of men results in women assuming greater decision-making roles within the household which increases their autonomy, it also results in women shouldering added burden of responsibilities of households' productive and reproductive functions without any substantial alteration in unequal gender relations. cases where remittances are not adequate, women often have to fend for the households aside from their care work which has overall negative impacts on left behind women's health and wellbeing.[149]

Using primary field-based evidence, the report discusses the ways in which migration affects the non-migrant households and women who remain behind, and the role these two groups play in

146 Drèze and Sen, *An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*; Pritchard et al., *Feeding India: Livelihoods, Entitlements and Capabilities*; Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India.*

147 Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

148 Srivastava et al., "Internal Migration in India and the Impact of Uneven Regional Development and Demographic Transition across States: A Study for Evidence Based Policy Recommendations," 2.

149 Lei and Desai, "Male Out-Migration and the Health of Left-behind Wives in India: The Roles of Remittances, Household Responsibilities, and Autonomy."

the migration process. The field-based evidence encourages an understanding of migration as a relational process that involve complex exchanges between those who move and those who stay, and despite the constraints the non-movers face they often play an important role in migration process. The next chapter attempts to lay out a conceptual framework on these relational dynamics to understand migration as a process from the perspective of those who stay, and also places the issue of immobility in the wider global context.

3

Conceptualizing immobility through the lens of inequality

Chetan Choithani

A common narrative on human migration that has come to dominate academic, policy and popular discussions from the last decade of twentieth century is that we now live in a world characterized by extensive mobility. This perspective of increasing mobility is manifested in an ever-growing body of academic research on migration. In their pioneering work on global population movements, Stephen Castles & Mark J. Miller, while nuancing the rhetoric of accelerating mobility, characterized the present era as *the age of migration* arguing that population movements are becoming central to understanding the socio-economic transformation of the contemporary world.[150] In a similar vein, another influential book *Worlds in Motion* saw migration as the "emblematic social, political, and economic issue of the twenty first century" requiring new theoretical approaches.[151] Other scholars have suggested that "modern society is a society on the move".[152] That we live in "a world on the move"[153] led Mimi Sheller & John Urry to observe that the discipline of social science which hitherto "largely ignored or trivialised the importance of the systematic movements of people" has lately witnessed a "mobility turn".[154] This view of widespread and increased population mobility is similarly echoed in the global policy discourse that posits migration as one of the defining issues of the twenty-first century. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) of United Nations, which is a leading global body working on migration, notes that the current level of population mobility is greater than ever before in recent history and migration continues to increase strongly.[155] According to the World Bank, ours is "a world where migration is increasingly necessary for countries at all levels of income".[156] The popular media accounts of migration likewise present a similar view of growing population mobility. To cite two recent examples, the National Geographic and The Economist view current

150 Castles and Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*; also see De Haas, Castles, and Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World.*

151 Massey et al., *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*, ix.

152 Lash, Urry, and Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space*, 252.

153 Zolberg, "Managing a World on the Move," 222.

154 Sheller and Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," 208.

155 IOM, "Migration in the World (Online)."

156 World Bank, "World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees and Societies," 32.

era as defined by "mass migration".[157]

The contemporary world is certainly highly mobile, and this mobility is underpinned by major developmental shifts associated with capitalist expansion such as advances in infrastructure and transport technologies that allow a greater flow of people to move between places with ease. The descriptions of growing mobility, however, have also tended to present a lopsided narrative of movement, focusing on the motivations, challenges, and achievements of those who leave their homes in search of better opportunities. The burgeoning migration literature celebrates mobility, and migrants are increasingly seen as enterprising agents who enrich both source and destination communities.[158] While the stories of migrants are undoubtedly important, immobility and accounts of those who are left behind are conspicuously absent from the discussion on migration. This omission is particularly striking given the fact that non-migrants far outnumber those who move. Available estimates show that there are over a billion migrants in the world[159] which means that nearly six billion people remain rooted in their origins. In other words, for every migrant, there are six people who do not or cannot migrate due to various reasons. Those who are unable to migrate are often marginalized households and individuals whose stories and struggles are often obscured by the dominant narrative of growing mobility.

Some researchers have challenged this view of increased mobility and argued that migration choices are not available to a large majority. In a seminal paper, Jørgen Carling, based on his primary research on emigration from the island country of Cape Verde, persuasively argued that migration should be seen as a two-step process that "first involves a *wish* to migrate, and second, the *realisation* of this wish"[160], and that wish to migrate does not always result into actual migration – far from it. This led him to propose an aspiration-ability model to understand migration which placed "the possibility of involuntary immobility at the centre of the migration process."[161] While this agenda-setting intervention draws attention to the parallel world of failed migration aspirations, it tells us little about the processual and relational dynamics of how mobility of some is often linked to immobility of others[162], and how those who are unable to move are affected by migration.

Scholarship on the rural Global South suggests that although lives and livelihoods are now increasingly shaped by migration, those who do not move support migration in important ways.[163] The immobile could include households and communities who lack the capability to migrate, and as well as individual members within the migrant households whose social positions constrain their mobility aspirations. Thus, while the immobile face mobility barriers and are not active participants in the mobility process, they often shape migration outcomes no less than migrants themselves. However, rarely are the left-behind focus of research and policy discussions on migration. A relational perspective that

157 National Geographic, "Paul Salopek Chronicles the Mass Migrations That Define Our Age."; The Economist (online), "A New Wave of Mass Migration Has Begun. What Does It Mean for Rich-World Economies?"

158 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

159 IOM, "World Migration Report 2022."

160 Carling, "Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences," 5; italics in original.

161 Carling, 6.

162 Schewel, "Understanding Immobility: Moving beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies."

163 Shah and Lerche, "Migration and the Invisible Economies of Care: Production, Social Reproduction and Seasonal Migrant Labour in India"; Phongsiri et al., "Mind the Gap! Revisiting the Migration Optimism/Pessimism Debate."

simultaneously looks at the those who do not move encourages a more rounded understanding of migration as a process, alerts us to inequalities embedded in the migration process and can also help us understand how the left behind negotiate with these inequalities.

Against this background, this chapter seeks to conceptualize immobility through the lens of inequality. It advances a processual and relational understanding of migration and argues that the left-behind should be seen as a part of broader migration process. With a focus on two left-behind groups that include i) *left-behind households* who are unable to migrate due to lack of migration capital, and ii) *left-behind women* within migrant households whose position within patriarchal power structure curtail their mobility prospects, this chapter develops a conceptual framework that shows inequality-immobility dynamics. To this end, it draws on three separate but related bodies of work on capabilities and freedoms, livelihoods and social reproduction. The conceptual apparatus serves to highlight the usefulness of viewing migration as a social process that involves actors and produces effects beyond just the migrants.

The next section discusses the possible reasons for the neglect of the non-migrants which also highlights how focusing on those who stay put can deepen the understanding of migration as a process.

Possible reasons for the neglect of the immobile

The growing salience of migration has widely expanded the scope of academic research in the field over the past few decades. Although operating largely within the disciplinary boundaries of social sciences, migration studies has emerged as an important interdisciplinary area of academic enquiry.[164] Indeed, "no longer on the margins of the social sciences…migration has come of age as an academic field".[165] This broadening of interest is accompanied by new fields of research enquiry in which issues of migrants' cultures, identities, subjectivities, belonging, and acculturation have emerged as important topics.[166] These developments are also marked by a methodological shift to understanding migration – from quantitative surveys to qualitative methods.[167] These epistemic and methodological shifts characterize the "new mobility paradigm" which, in many ways, also underpins the ongoing transformation of social sciences.[168] These are certainly important and welcome additions to the field. In widening the canvass of migration research, however, it is the migrants who are the center of attention; and those who stay but are often intimately part of the migration process are sidelined. There are at least three plausible and interrelated reasons for this bias.

First, recent discussions on migration have prioritized international migration over within-country moves due to growing political salience of cross-border movements. This heightened political importance of international migration is driven, in large part, by growing concerns around stateless and refugee populations from

164 Levy, Pisarevskaya, and Scholten, "Between Fragmentation and Institutionalisation: The Rise of Migration Studies as a Research Field."

165 King, "Migration Comes of Age," 2370.

166 Gilmartin, "Migration, Identity and Belonging"; King, "On Migration, Geography, and Epistemic Communities."

167 Yalaz and Zapata-Barrero, "Mapping the Qualitative Migration Research in Europe: An Exploratory Analysis"; Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, "Qualitative Methods in Migration Research."

168 Sheller and Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," 208.

low-income countries moving to more developed parts of the world, particularly the Mediterranean-Europe corridor, and the implications this migration carries for the national order, security and sovereignty of countries in the rich North.[169] Although less than one-tenth (26.4 million) of 281 million international migrants are refugees and most of them do not live in high-income countries[170], this issue has been framed in many advanced countries as "migration crisis".[171] This crisis context also prompted the adoption in 2018 by 164 countries of *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* within the UN multilateral framework to put in place a global migration governance regime – a euphemism used by several developed countries to control migration.[172] Not surprisingly, the discourse on crisis-fuelled migration has tended to pivot around those who move, focusing on questions of migrants' inclusion, integration, and acculturation (or lack thereof) in destinations.[173] Missing from this discourse however is the fact that not only refugees account for a small fraction of international population movements, but also that international migrants account for a miniscule 3.6 percent of world's population.[174] Crucially, moreover, contrary to the popular perception, the increase in international migration over time has been rather modest.[175] Indeed, the relatively high barriers on international migration favoring well endowed, educated and skilled populations means that a large majority of people from low-income countries do not move across borders but domestically within their countries.[176] While statistics on within-country population moves are severely wanting because much of this migration is non-permanent and occurs outside the official contexts, *conservative* estimates put the number of internal migrants at 763 million which is more than 2.5 times that of 281 international migrants.[177] Even these numbers suggest that the non-migrants comprise a majority nonetheless, but they are fogged in the dominant migrants-centered conversations. Enormous inequalities characterise migration landscape and a significant bulk of people do not have the opportunity to move within their home countries, let alone to other nations, even when faced with dire circumstances.

Second, and relatedly, even outside the crisis context, there has lately been a tendency in migration studies to treat migrants as independent beings without any connections with the origin communities. One example of this is the discourse on *feminization of migration* where women are increasingly seen as independent breadwinners.[178] The foreword to one of the early important reports on the subject that sought to make female migrants more visible in migration statistics and discourse noted that "more women today are migrating independently to meet their own economic demands."[179] However, in many

169 Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak, *The Mediatization and the Politicization of the "Refugee Crisis" in Europe.*

170 IOM, "World Migration Report 2022," 21, 45–46.

171 OECD, "Is This Humanitarian Migration Crisis Different?," 1.

172 Pécoud and Thiollet, "Introduction: The Institutions of Global Migration Governance."

173 King, "On Migration, Geography, and Epistemic Communities"; World Bank, "World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees and Societies."

174 IOM, "World Migration Report 2022," 21.

175 De Haas, Castles, and Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World.*

176 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

177 UN-DESA, "Cross-National Comparisons of Internal Migration: An Update on Global Patterns and Trends"; UN-DESA, "International Migration 2020: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/452)"; IOM, "World Migration Report 2022."

178 Fleury, "Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review"; United Nations, "Gender, Remittances, Development: Feminization of Migration"; United Nations, "Women Migrant Workers' Contributions to Development."

179 UNFPA-IOM, "Female Migrants: Bridging the Gaps throughout the Life Cycle.," iii.

parts of the developing world where mobility has traditionally formed a key feature of lives and livelihoods, migration is seldom a sole undertaking – far from it. Migration usually occurs in the context of the family whereby decisions to migrate are jointly taken: some members move to other locations for better opportunities, while others stay behind to look after existing resources at origin. This geographic dispersal of members often allows households to maximize gains and minimize risks.[180] Not only does the act of staying of non-migrants facilitate the migration of their kin, but research shows that migrants are also often proactively aided in their journeys by their stay-put family members.[181] On their part, migrants maintain strong social bonds with their home communities through periodic visits to natal homes and remitting incomes to their families.[182] Seen this way, migrants and non-migrants are spatially separated but relationally connected, and the latter are often as central as the former in the migration process. It is important to note that while non-migrants do sometimes have a choice to negotiate their stay, this can also reflect lack of freedom of mobility because of their position in societal power structures. And while female labour migration is on the rise, in many countries of the Global South, work migration typically involves single men while the women stay behind due to cultural restrictions on their mobility. At the same time, male migration also requires women to fulfil the socio-economic roles of absentee men which can provide avenues for greater female mobility and empowerment.[183] This issue of migration and gender relations will be discussed in detail subsequently, but the important point to emphasise here is that migrants and non-migrants are relationally connected through the different roles they perform in different spaces in the migration process.

Finally, another important reason for the neglect of the immobile includes the heightened prominence of developmentalist view of migration in the past few years. Although it is now widely recognized that migration-development nexus is highly complex and that the developmental outcomes of migration are context-dependent[184], this perspective places migrants firmly at the center as development-enhancing agents who contribute enormously to both source and destination economies. Origin economies benefit through migrants' remittances, including knowledge transfers, which can reduce poverty and improve living standards in source regions. In 2022, international remittances to low- and middle-income countries were estimated at a whopping US$647 billion – an amount three times higher than the official development assistance received by developing countries.[185] Domestic remittances are no less significant. For India alone, for instance, internal remittance transfers amounted to US$10 billion.[186] Migrants' remittances are increasingly viewed as resulting in "significant human developmental gains" for origin communities.[187] The migration-development discourse has likewise emphasized that migrants also add to destination economies through their taxes and contributions to social systems. Migrants fill up labour gaps, bring skills and often supply entrepreneurial energy to enrich destinations, and when supported by

180 Stark, *The Migration of Labor*.

181 Gulati, "Coping with Male Migration."

182 Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

183 Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

184 De Haas, "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective."

185 World Bank, "Remittances Remain Resilient but Are Slowing," 1–2.

186 Tumbe, "Remittances in India: Facts and Issues."

187 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development," 67.

right policies migrants can "match" the needs of recipient economies.[188] This win-win narrative is reflected in the inclusion of migration in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda which recognizes migrants' positive contributions to source and destination places and encourages migration as a strategy to reduce inequalities within and between different countries.[189] Although a policy stance that advocates reduced migration barriers is welcome, this discourse has also had the effect of seeing development primarily through the prism of movers, leading to further invisibilization of the non-migrants. In addition to bearing the initial costs of migration, the non-migrants continue to support their migrant kins in important ways, and remittances do not only flow from migrants to their families but both ways. In many parts of Africa, for instance, rural households transfer significant flow of resources, including food remittances, to their urban members which helps the migrants to stay afloat in uncertain economic environment.[190] But the developmental contributions of non-migrants are rarely recognized in the one-sided migration-development discourse.

Theorizing immobility through capabilities, livelihoods and social reproduction frameworks

The preceding discussion makes it amply clear that a holistic understanding of migration necessitates recognizing the non-migrants as constitutive elements of migration. At the same time, the task of bringing migrants and non-migrants into a unitary framework is riddled with numerous difficulties. There is not a ready theoretical model that can be easily deployed for this conceptual undertaking. Dominant migration theories tend to see migration as an individualistic response to better opportunities.[191] Even when non-migrants are considered they are seen tokenistically as recipients of migrants' remittances.[192] Empirical research on subject compounds this challenge as most studies look at migration in terms of its causes and effects either at the origin or at destination, often involving comparisons between migrants and non-migrant communities on various dimensions of development and wellbeing. While not intentional, this comparison has had the unfortunate effect of pitting the stayers against the movers, and not seeing them as different parts of the whole. Moreover, there has not been a sincere attempt to understand migration from the perspective of the left behind. Filling this intellectual gap requires rethinking migration afresh in ways that factor in the narratives of those who are left behind. This perspective allows viewing migration not as a lone enterprise in response to economic incentives but as rather as a larger social *process* in which non-migrants are *relationally* embedded in important ways. Viewing migration through the eyes of those who stay behind can also help us understand the inequalities in the process of migration which allow some people to move, while leaving others behind. A person's ability to move freely as s/he pleases is an important dimension of freedom, but socio-economic inequalities often impinge on people's capabilities to migrate.[193] An example of these inequalities, as noted in Chapter 1, is how patriarchal gender

188 World Bank, "World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees and Societies," 4.

189 United Nations, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development."

190 Tawodzera, "Vulnerability and Resilience in Crisis: Urban Household Food Insecurity in Harare, Zimbabwe"; Onyango, Crush, and Owuor, "Food Remittances, Migration and Rural-Urban Linkages in Kenya."

191 Todaro, "A Model of Labor Migration and Urban Unemployment in Less Developed Countries."

192 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

193 Sen, *Development as Freedom*.

relations constrain women's work-related mobility and restrict them to domestic sphere for social reproduction roles, while the men migrate to assume their breadwinner roles.[194] Not only gender inequalities trample women's mobility but also can subject them to new vulnerabilities in the absence of men. The conceptualization of migration advanced here brings to the fore these migration inequalities and attempts to highlight the relational dynamics of migration as a process – one which is not just a response to inequalities but also generate new inequalities. To this end, the theoretical framework draws on insights from literature on *capabilities, livelihoods* and *social reproduction theory*.

Immobility as unfreedom: capability approach to migration inequalities

The capability approach provides a useful starting point to develop a theoretical framework to understand migration opportunities and inequalities. Pioneered by Amartya Sen in a series of writings, the capability approach provides a general guiding framework to welfare and development.[195] The approach distinguishes between the *means* (economic growth and prosperity) and *ends* (welfare of people) of development and raises important moral and philosophical questions about freedom and justice. Challenging the utilitarian and resource-based approaches to human welfare (reflected, for example, through discourse on GDP growth), it argues that what matters primarily is that people have the freedom to achieve their wellbeing and "lead the kind of lives they value", and that people's welfare should be understood in terms of the capabilities they have to achieve their life goals and aspirations.[196] Placing people at the center, it contends that development must ultimately be viewed "as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" because this perspective of "expanding substantive freedoms directs attention to the ends that make development important, rather than merely to some of the means that, inter alia, play a prominent part in the process."[197] The notion of freedom in the capabilities approach calls for a processual understanding of socio-political arrangements that have a bearing on people's capabilities and life chances. Sen argues:

> …that the view of freedom that is being taken here involves both the "processes" that allow freedom of actions and decisions, and the actual "opportunities" that people have, given their personal and social circumstances. Unfreedom can arise either through inadequate processes (such as the violation of voting privileges or other political or civil rights) or through inadequate opportunities that some people have for achieving what they minimally would like to achieve (including the absence of such elementary opportunities as the capability to escape premature mortality or preventable morbidity or involuntary starvation).[198]

The capabilities approach asks: what are people able to do and be? What real opportunities are

194 Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

195 Sen, "The Living Standard"; Sen, "Well-Being, Agency and Freedom"; Sen, *Commodities and Capabilities*; Sen, "Markets and Freedoms: Achievements and Limitations of the Market Mechanism in Promoting Individual Freedoms"; Sen, *Development as Freedom*; Sen, *The Idea of Justice*.

196 Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 18.

197 Sen, 3.

198 Sen, 17.

available to them? How do these opportunities translate into their wellbeing? The assessment of these questions, as per this paradigm, rests on the ways in which a person's functionings relate to their capabilities. Put simply, functionings represent what people value doing or being such as being healthy and well-nourished, receiving education, travelling widely and so on. Capabilities are the freedoms or opportunities that allow these functionings to be realised.[199] In other words, functionings and capabilities respectively denote "well-being achievements and well-being freedoms."[200] The exact capabilities vary from person to person, and their realization is contingent on factors at one's disposal including personal attributes (physical health, metabolism) resources and assets (land, financial situation) and social circumstances (community networks, position within societal structure).[201] Capabilities approach asserts that this perspective of freedom has both *intrinsic* as well as *instrumental* dimensions as not only it is the case that progress is ultimately about what capabilities people have to achieve their wellbeing, but the progress is also contingent on people's free agency.[202]

While this general framework proposed does not *directly* deal with migration, the notion of freedom, or lack of it, provides an important conceptual foundation to think of mobility-immobility dialectic. Viewed through this lens, freedom of movement reflects people's capability to decide where they wish to work and live, and conversely, inability to move can connote "unfreedom"[203]. Indeed, this mobility freedom is a part of Martha Nussbaum's work who has collaborated with Sen and advanced the capabilities approach.[204] While Sen deliberately avoids enumerating the basic capabilities set that is needed for people to lead their lives meaningfully, Nussbaum proposes "a specific list of the Central Human Capabilities" that ought to be protected for minimum social justice, and the ability to "move freely from place to place" is part of this list comprising 10 capabilities.[205] Her approach specifying basic capabilities as political entitlements is meant to provide a more practical guide for policy action to promote human dignity and social justice.[206]

The freedom-centric capability approach to wellbeing provides the conceptual foundation to Human Development paradigm promoted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its annual flagship Human Development Reports since 1990. In these reports, human development is defined as a process of "enlarging people's choices".[207] The ability to move voluntarily to pursue life aspirations is an integral part of freedom that can also aid people to achieve wellbeing outcomes. The Human Development Report 2009 dwells on and advances this view of mobility as freedom:

> For many people in developing countries moving away from their home town or village can be the best – sometimes the only – option open to improve their life chances. Human

199 Robeyns, "The Capability Approach: A Theoretical Survey"; Pritchard et al., *Feeding India: Livelihoods, Entitlements and Capabilities*.

200 Robeyns and Byskov, "The Capability Approach."

201 Pritchard et al., *Feeding India: Livelihoods, Entitlements and Capabilities*, 6.

202 Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 4.

203 Sen, 4.

204 Nussbaum, "Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice"; Nussbaum, "Human Dignity and Political Entitlements"; Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*.

205 Nussbaum, "Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice," 40–42.

206 Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*.

207 UNDP, "Human Development Report," 1.

> mobility can be hugely effective in raising a person's income, health and education prospects. But its value is more than that: being able to decide where to live is a key element of human freedom.[208]

Highlighting the significance of freedom-based perspective to mobility, the 2009 report continues:

> Using the expansion of human freedoms and capabilities as a lens has significant implications for how we think about human movement. This is because, even before we start asking whether the freedom to move has significant effects on incomes, education or health, for example, we recognize that movement is one of the basic actions that individuals can choose to take in order to realize their life plans. In other words, the ability to move is a dimension of freedom that is part of development—with intrinsic as well as potential instrumental value.[209]

The capability approach to migration is also explicated recently by Hein de Haas who advances the *aspirations-capabilities* framework that sees "migration as a *function of people's capabilities and aspirations to migrate within given sets of perceived geographical opportunity structures"* and situates migration within the larger processes of social transformation.[210]

This perspective of migration as freedom is useful to understand inequality-migration relationship. It suggests that those who lack the capability to migrate suffer from unfreedom. Indeed, migration landscape is characterised by various inequalities for potential participants to realize their life goals which also provides the underlying motivation for Human Development Report 2009, quoted above, that advocates removing barriers to migration.[211] Contrary to the dominant view of unbridled mobility, migration opportunities are not available to all. Those who aspire to migrate are not always successful. In a seminal contribution based on primary fieldwork in Cape Verde, Jørgen Carling highlighted this through his two-step *ability-aspiration* migration model that showed that migration should be understood through a combination of two factors that involve i) the aspiration to migrate, and ii) the ability to migrate, and that people's mobility aspirations do not always actualize because they lack the ability to do so. He put forth the notion of "involuntary immobility" to emphasise the "massive extent of unfulliled dreams about migration" due to various barriers and inequalities that come in the way.[212] Kerilyn Schewel has extended this work on immobility and argued that we need to pay attention to not just the structural barriers that restrict migration of potential aspirants but also to the agency of non-migrants to be voluntarily immobile.[213] It is also important to note that voluntary immobility or wish to stay often coalesce with social norms, and the freedom to stay may not always be absolute. The literature on household livelihood

208 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development," 1.

209 UNDP, 14–15.

210 De Haas, "A Theory of Migration: The Aspirations-Capabilities Framework," 3 italics in original; also see De Haas, "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective."

211 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

212 Carling, "Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences," 5–6; also see, Carling and Schewel, "Revisiting Aspiration and Ability in International Migration."

213 Schewel, "Understanding Immobility: Moving beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies."

strategies is replete with examples of how social norms expect some members to stay while others move out. For example, research in rural India shows how women who face restrictions on their mobility due to rigid cultural norms often express desire to stay back and derive their sense of self-worth from managing the origin households in the absence of men.[214] Similalrly, using Maxine Molyneux insights on diversity of women's interests that include *strategic gender interests* pursued for wider goal of gender equality and *practical gender interests* formulated by women to respond to immediate demands of their family[215], Narendar Pani shows how women in rural India often prioritize practical interests to ensure their families' viability and maintenance. In the context of male breadwinner norms, this involves allocating household financial resources in ways that prioritises sons' education over daughters as this serves households' immediate economic interests over goals of women empowerment.[216] Nonetheless, the works of Jørgen Carling and Kerilyn Schewel, cited above, bring to the fore the parallel world of immobility, and also provide useful guidance to bring migrants and non-migrants into a single framework. At the same time, this work needs tempering by a perspective that sees the mutual connections between those who move and those who stay, and how those left behind affect and are affected by migration. The livelihoods approach to migration provides such a framework for a relational understanding between migrants and non-migrants to which we now turn.

Livelihood approach to (im) mobility

While capability approach enables us to nuance the macro-economic discourse around growth and output, the conceptual apparatus of "livelihoods framework", broadly defined, allows us to understand the micro-realities of people's lives and livelihoods. Livelihoods thinking emerged in the field of development in early 1990s as an alternative to the dominant growth-centered approach to understand and address issues of rural poverty and underdevelopment in developing countries. It was formally laid out by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway in an IDS discussion paper in 1991. According to their definition:

> A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.[217]

In a marked departure from the earlier economic-centric approaches that revolved around "production thinking", "employment thinking" and "poverty-line thinking", the approach sought to place the notions of "capability", "equity", and "sustainability" as the core principles of development policy and practice.[218] The approach stressed the need for grounded research approaches to understand the

214 Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India"; Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India.*

215 Molyneux, "Mobilisation without Emancipation? Women's Interests, State and Revolution in Nicaragua."

216 Pani, "Women and Their Interests in Rural India."

217 Chambers and Conway, "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century," 6.

218 Chambers and Conway, 2–4.

dense social, cultural and institutional contexts within which peoples' lives and livelihoods were situated. The framework views livelihood strategies as a response to changing external conditions (e.g., jobs opportunities, employment conditions, changing wage structures) as well as the resources at one's disposal, that together shape livelihood possibilities and wellbeing. More specifically, the approach rests on a four-fold analytical strategy that includes: i) charting the socio-economic context and policy setting, ii) assessing the resource endowments of people or assets (land, social networks, political power etc.) that shape their livelihood space, iii) analyzing how assets translate in the different livelihood strategies (e.g. farming, nonfarm, migration); and finally, iv) evaluating the impact of the livelihood strategies on the well-being.[219]

Of particular relevance to this research is this approach recognizes that rural livelihoods include a diverse set of choices and activities that households undertake to meet their life goals and aspirations.[220] For analytical purposes, the framework groups rural livelihoods activities into three broad categories that include: i) agriculture and allied activities ii) rural nonfarm diversification, iii) migration. Thus:

> … either you gain more of your livelihood from agriculture (including livestock rearing, aquaculture, forestry etc.) through processes of intensification (more output per unit area through capital investment or increases in labour inputs) or extensification (more land under cultivation), or you diversify to a range of off-farm income earning activities, or you move away and seek a livelihood, either temporarily or permanently, elsewhere. Or, more commonly, you pursue a combination of strategies together or in sequence.[221]

It is often the case that rural households combine the elements of different livelihood options to wither shocks and maximize gains. Crucially, however, the livelihood strategies households engage in are contingent on the resources at their disposal and their positions within the society which, in livelihood parlance, are referred to as livelihood capitals such as land, financial resources, social network.[222] Viewed this way, the decision to migrate or stay put is influenced by household's socio-economic position. Those who are unable to migrate despite the need to do so often lack the resources and social networks to pursue non-local livelihoods. For example, households without land and access to decent employment options locally may feel the greater pressure to engage in migration-based livelihoods but resources constraints (lack of capital to bear the initial costs of migration) and/or information gaps (inadequate knowledge on destinations where suitable work is available) may preclude their mobility and leave them behind. In other words, inequalities in livelihood opportunities can prevent households to engage in migration to improve their life chances. This mobility unfreedom can affect welfare outcomes as there is now growing evidence that gains from migration far outweigh its costs and that migration positively affects household's wellbeing.[223]

219 Pritchard et al., *Feeding India: Livelihoods, Entitlements and Capabilities*; Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India.*

220 DFID, "DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets."

221 Scoones, "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis," 11.

222 DFID, "DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets."

223 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

It is important to note that those left behind are not always passive actors and often devise means and ways to stay afloat. Crucially, selective migration involving better-endowed households can change the dynamics of the origin economies which can create space for non-migrants to play a greater role locally. For instance, Michael Lipton showed rural outmigration in developing countries tend to involve young able-bodied men which deprives rural economies of productive labour. This potentially demands older adults or women to take on productive tasks in rural economies.[224] Similalrly, migration by those with land can create opportunities for landless households to engage in land and agriculture more proactively. How the households left behind in migration negotiate these inequalities and what role do they play in migration are examined in the empirical chapters of this report.

This inter-household assessment of migration opportunities through the livelihood lens provides a useful approach to understand mobility-immobility dynamics. At the same time, it is useful to reiterate that migration inequalities operate within the sphere of the household, too, and migration opportunities are not evenly distributed within the household. This is an important point to make in the wake of direction of much research on migration as a household strategy based on New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM). The NELM approach sees migration as a joint household strategy in which some members of the households move out to pursue nonfarm jobs in distant labour markets while the others stay engaged in rural economy. This dispersal of household members across spatial and livelihood vectors (rural/urban, farm/nonfarm) provides a way in which rural households attain diversified livelihood portfolios that enables them to minimize income shocks and maximize insurance. While the shift in focus from individual to household in analyzing migration that NELM advocates is welcome and has indeed provided useful novel insights on household economic strategies, it also assumes that household's allocation of its migratory labour rests on the principle of income maximization that also considers household members' preferences.[225] This view overlooks the social, cultural and institutional factors that also shape household migration decisions on who migrates and who stays behind. A relevant example here is that in many developing countries patriarchal norms prevent women to engage in paid work in distant labour markets and work-migration predominantly involves men.[226] These constraints notwithstanding, women make important contributions to migration through their reproductive labour which is rarely acknowledged. This conceptualization of women's immobility through social reproduction framework is part of this work and is undertaken in the next section.

At this stage, it is important to note that the livelihood approach provides a useful theoretical guide to understand migration as a process in at least two ways. First, it helps us situate households' livelihood responses within the shifting policy context, thereby allowing us to contextualize mobility/immobility dynamics within the wider context of India's rural transformation (Chapter 2). Second, it enables us to capture social differentiation through the concept of assets, resources, social position. This can shed light on how financial resources, social networks and gender norms influence mobility, or lack thereof.

224 Lipton, "Migration from Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The Impact on Rural Productivity and Income Distribution."

225 Stark, *The Migration of Labor*.

226 Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India*.

Understanding women's immobility through social reproduction framework

The concept of socially reproductive labour provides a useful starting point to theorise the invisible contributions of women to migration process. The idea originates from the Marxist-feminist critique of capitalist economic system which posits that capitalism hinges on women's reproductive labour to extract economic gains without adequately recognizing, let alone compensating, women for this labour, and places reproduction vis-à-vis production to understand women's subjugation. Socially reproductive labour comprises women's unpaid and unaccounted for labour that enables continued survival and reproduction of waged labour involving domestic work such as cooking and cleaning to maintain current workers (and non-workers) and childbirth and care to reproduce new class of workers. While this feminist critique of women's indispensable yet overlooked contributions to production process has a long history, it has been revived through a body of work that has come to be known as social reproduction theory (SRT).[227]

The SRT is situated within the Marxist framework in that it views labour as being essential to society's survival and reproduction. At the same time, it also broadens the idea of labour as comprising not just the productive labour of workers at the factory floor that fuels economic production in the capitalist society but also the reproductive labour in the familial sphere that sustains and replenishes the workers. Indeed, the fundamental premise of SRT is that in Marx's theory of surplus, women's reproductive labour that sustains the productive labour is un(der) acknowledged. SRT advocates "see the home and housework as the foundations of the factory system, rather than its 'other'".[228] SRT theorists contend that the "production of goods and services and the production of life are part of one integrated process"[229], and that productive labour to make commodities and reproductive labour to produce and maintain people form "part of the systemic totality of capitalism".[230]

Marxist theory in its original formulation had linked production and reproduction to understand social organization. Positing that labour's renewal was essential to capitalist production in the first volume of Capital, Karl Marx noted:

> Whatever the form of the process of production in a society, it must be a continuous process, must continue to go periodically through the same phases. A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction.[231]

However, Marx's argument here was how the wages labour class received for their individual consumption were essentially to sustain the labour power for the capitalist system to reproduce itself. Building on Marx's insights, Friedrich Engels went further and alluded to

227 Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression.*

228 Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 17.

229 Luxton, "Feminist Political Economy in Canada and the Politics of Social Reproduction," 36.

230 Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, 15.

231 Marx, *Capital (with an Introduction by Mark G. Spencer)*, 1 and 2:396.

the role of family and kinship in the production process. Indeed, he prefaces the first edition of his now classic *origins of the family, private property, and the state* linking domestic sphere with the economic realm:

> According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of the immediate essentials of life. This, again, is of a twofold character. On the one side, the production of the means of existence, of articles of food and clothing, dwellings, and of the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organization under which the people of a particular historical epoch and a particular country live is determined by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labor on the one hand and of the family on the other.[232]

However, the question of women's reproductive labour was not developed fully by either Marx or Engels. Marx's identified human labour as a commodity which created the surplus value but is rather silent on the question of what goes in generating and sustaining the labour. In other words, what Marxist original theory of surplus missed was this: "If workers' labor produces all the wealth in society, who then produces the worker?"[233] Subsequent Marxist-inspired accounts on the woman question did dwell on the subject, but they largely subordinated women's labour to class interests and located women's oppression within the capitalist class relations.

This perspective was challenged by feminist scholars who saw familial sphere as the site of women oppression because it defined sex-based division of labour whereby women were assigned domestic work, including caring duties, which is "not usually considered 'real work' as it is outside of trade and market place".[234] And while the sex-based division of labour was seen as not unconnected with the larger economic system that accorded women's their lower position vis-à-vis men, it placed women's oppression more centrally within patriarchal power relations. Thus: "women's work in the family really is for men – though it clearly reproduces capitalism as well."[235] More importantly, this encouraged an analytical dualism in which capitalism and patriarchy were seen as separate underlying systems of women's oppression.

This dual-system approach was challenged by Lise Vogel in her pioneering book *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory* which also provided the first systematic account of social reproduction theory.[236] This work brought together capitalism and patriarchy in a single framework. While recognizing the usefulness of feminist analysis, she suggested to move beyond domestic sphere and argued that patriarchy "does not suffice to explain the complex linkages among women's oppression, family-experience, and social reproduction" and asserted the relevance of Marxist insights

232 Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State(Reissue Edition)*, 1–2.

233 Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*, 1.

234 Benston, "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation," 3.

235 Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," 5.

236 Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory*.

on labour reproduction.[237] According to her, class and sex struggles form part of the same whole. Building on Marx's insights on labour surplus, she argued instead that under capitalism women act as both workers who contribute to surplus production through their labour, as well as sources that renew and replenish the labour power through reproduction including not just biological reproduction of workers but also care and emotions to sustain life. In so doing, this work highlighted how women's reproductive labour was essential to "deep structural processes through which the capitalist mode of production reproduces itself".[238] In a nutshell, Vogel's single-system approach highlighted that women's reproductive functions within the family were structurally linked with the production process which explained women's subjugation.[239] More recent work in SRT goes beyond familial sphere and acknowledges the important role of public services such as access to water, housing, public transport, health and nutrition and education in replenishing and reproducing the labour.[240]

How does the idea of socially reproductive labour relate to migration, and how does it help us locate women in the migration process? Until recently, Marxist-feminist work on social reproduction largely sidelined the issue of migration. The historical method embedded in Marxist theory typically focuses on the *permanent* migration of peasantry from the countryside to the towns as industrial production leads to concentration of development and amenities in cities which forces rural workers to relocate to urban centers rupturing their connections with land and agriculture. This labour eventually becomes a part of the urban socio-political order. Women migrants are also seen as a part of the working class. The neoclassical economics variant of this shift is presented through the concept of structural economic transformation which sees shifts of workers from rural-agriculture to urban-industrial mode of life and work as inevitable part of development which reconfigures land and agriculture and leads to greater urbanization levels.[241] These accounts, however, present one trajectory of economic change and do not align with livelihood transitions in the Global South.

In many developing countries, economic change has not produced this neat shift of workers from the countryside to the cities. Indeed, the workers straddle the rural and urban worlds, and circular migration remains the defining characteristic of this transition.[242] Dwindling farm-based livelihoods increasingly force rural dwellers to seek nonfarm jobs in cities. But the precarity of urban informal jobs that most rural-urban migrants are engaged in prevents them from carving out city-based futures. Work migration involves some members, usually men, moving to cities while the women stay behind.[243] It is in this *in-betweenness* that the question of social reproduction becomes important but is inadequately explored vis-à-vis migration.

French anthropologist Claude Meillassoux's work in African context provided early insights on how the "temporary and rotating labour migration, which preserves and exploits the

237 Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women: Toward a Unitary Theory. New Introduction by Susan Ferguson and David McNally*, x.

238 Ferguson and McNally, "Capital, Labour-Power, and Gender-Relations: Introduction to the Historical Materialism Edition of Marxism and the Oppression of Women," XVIII.

239 Also see, Federici, *Wages against Housework*; Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle.*

240 Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression.*

241 Timmer, *A World without Agriculture: The Structural Transformation in Historical Perspective.*

242 Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*; Potts, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa.*

243 Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

domestic agricultural economy" passed on social security costs on rural communities at the origin.[244] This often involves placing demands on women's (productive) and reproductive labour. The SRT literature has not paid much attention to circular migration, and what it does to family organization, social norms and gender relations despite the fact that it remains a predominant form of mobility in many countries of the Global South. Recent theoretical reflections on SRT have tended to place social reproduction in the context of economic globalization and financialized capitalism and how it is linked to the *crisis of care*.[245] Related to this, the focus of much of the SRT-inspired empirical migration research is the global care chains that commodify care work of women migrants, as noted earlier. It is as though "the 'domestic' spaces and relations and the unpaid economy (that produces labour) have no analytical significance and space"[246] and the women who do not migrate but support migration through their labour are forgotten.

Using insights from the social reproduction theory, this report seeks to locate women's unpaid labour in the migration process. This issue has particular significance in the Indian context. As noted in Chapter 1, over the past three decades, rapid economic growth in India has changed the character of country's economy in which urban provides the growth anchor. This has promoted millions of rural dwellers to transition their dependency away from farm-based livelihoods to urban-nonfarm livelihoods. Migration typically involves men moving out to urban incomes, while the women stay behind to look after family and rural assets. Growing stress on farming due to range of reasons also means that men now spend most of the year away from the villages.[247] This transition places greater demands on women productive and reproductive labour but is inadequately understood. Recent work on India has begun to explore how temporary urban migration relies on the invisible labour of family and kin over generations at the rural origins[248], how it transforms the nature of households and their strategies and practices[249], and how women's intimate labour remains central to the process.[250] Using primary field-based evidence from India, this work builds on this emerging body of work and tries to see the role women play in supporting migration of their men.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to conceptualize the issue of immobility through the prism of inequality and has argued that migration needs to be understood as a relational process that involves not just the migrants but also the non-migrants. Beginning with the discussion that places immobility in the wider global context, the chapter has argued that dominant academic, policy, and media narratives of extensive mobility ignore the non-migrants who constitute the majority of the world's population. Migration options are not available to everyone and inequalities in resources, assets and networks preclude mobility avenues of potential aspirants. But these migration inequalities have received

244 Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*, 110.

245 For example, see Fraser, "Crisis of Care? On the Social-Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism."

246 Razavi, "Engendering the Political Economy of Agrarian Change," 221.

247 Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

248 Shah and Lerche, "Migration and the Invisible Economies of Care: Production, Social Reproduction and Seasonal Migrant Labour in India."

249 Gidwani and Ramamurthy, "Agrarian Questions of Labor in Urban India: Middle Migrants, Translocal Householding and the Intersectional Politics of Social Reproduction."

250 Jain and Jayaram, "The Intimate Subsidies of Left-behind Women of Migrant Households in Western India."

inadequate attention in the dominant migration discourse which has tended invariably more on individual migrants. In turn, this has prevented a comprehensive understanding of migration as a process. A close examination of this discourse shows that the migrant-centric gaze emanates from three prominent biases prevalent in dominant migration research and policy agendas that include: i) prioritizing of international mobility over internal moves due to concerns of irregular migration from low-income to high-income countries, ii) tendency to view migrants as individual agents unconnected from their origin communities, and iii) heightened significance of developmental perspective of migration that portrays migrants as carriers of progress. The chapter has attempted to nuance this migrant-centric gaze by calling attention to the parallel world of immobility and unrealized migration aspirations of many who wish to move but are unable to do so.[251] The chapter also develops a conceptual framework to understand migration-inequality dynamics and makes the case for understanding migration from the perspective of those left behind. With a focus on two left-behind groups that include i) households left behind due to lack of migration capital, and ii) women left-behind within migrant households due to gender social norms, this conceptual framework builds on notions of *capabilities*, *livelihoods*, and *social reproduction*. While capabilities approach allows us to conceptualize immobility as unfreedom, the livelihood framework helps to situate the responses of left behind households to navigate inequalities and vulnerabilities as well as the relational exchanges between migrants and non-migrants. The social reproduction theory enables an appreciation of the gendered labour of women in migration that goes unacknowledged and of which there is very little understanding. These inter-household and intra-household relations between migrants and non-migrants are explored through primary, field-based evidence in chapters 4 and 5, respectively. Before the empirical findings are presented, the next chapter discusses the research methods and approach.

251 Carling, "Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences."

4

Data and methods

Chetan Choithani

The dominant view of migration as an event that involves individual actors has barred a systematic understanding of migration as a process, and the role inequalities play in shaping households' migration decisions and outcomes. Even though the literature on rural livelihoods in developing countries shows that migration represents not an individualistic response but a family strategy and that rural households' migration motivations are not bereft of considerations of the non-migrant labour in order to maintain family and assets at the origin[252], there is scarcity of knowledge on the role played by those who stay in the migration process. The common narrative of hypermobility that characterises migration discourse has reinforced the migrant-centric gaze at the expense of neglecting the non-migrants. When the non-migrants do figure in discussions on migration, more often than not, they are portrayed as the passive recipients of migrants' remittances (UNDP 2009).[253] The fact that it is the non-migrants who constitute a large majority of the world's population, and that their immobility is often linked to the mobility of those who move, necessitates understanding migration from the perspective of those who stay. In the two analytical chapters that follow, an attempt is made to tease out the interdependencies between the migrants and non-migrants using primary evidence from rural India. This includes: i) examining the role non-migrants play in the rural origin economies centered around land and agriculture, ii) understanding householding practices that rely on non-migrant women's reproductive labour.

These issues assume greater significance in the context of India. As noted before, India's rapid economic growth since early 1990s is accompanied by a shift in the nature of country's economy in which rural-agriculture sector plays a reduced role while urban-based industries and services occupy a prominent place. Migration represents rural households' response to these macroeconomic changes. It is important to emphasise that the trajectory of macroeconomic change has not been uniform across India, nor has it prompted a linear, permanent shift of workers from rural areas to towns and cities everywhere. Indeed, migration patterns vary widely across the country including rural-rural migration in places that provide improved farming opportunities even though the agriculture sector is in decline in aggregate terms.[254] The account of migration as a process needs to also appreciate this diversity in rural transformation forms because not only

252 Stark, *The Migration of Labor*; Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India.*

253 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

254 Pani, *Dynamics of Difference: Inequality and Transformation in Rural India.*

it can determine migration patterns but can also have a bearing on the migration opportunities for different actors as well as the role non-migrants play in the migration process. For a study based on primary fieldwork, this diversity of rural transformation has implications for data and methodology.

Against this background, this chapter provides an overview of the methods and materials used to study inequality-migration relationship and the role non-migrant actors play in migration process. The study draws on primary fieldwork including household with 1137 rural households as well as interviews with a smaller subsample of these surveyed households in four strategically selected village sites in four different Indian states. This was complemented with observations during fieldwork and informal conversations with locals. The selection of study sites was done in a way that allowed capturing the diversity of rural transformation and migration patterns. The following discussion elaborates the methodology of this study.

Locating the study within the forms of rural transformation in India

This research on inequality, migration and development in India forms a part of larger research agenda of the Inequality and Human Development Programme on inequality and rural transformation in India. This project is now running in its second phase which includes the present study on inequality, migration and development relationship in India with a focus on those get left behind in migration. The earlier phase of the project focused on two major issues pertaining to India's rural transformation that included: i) farmers' suicides, and ii) availability of and demand for nonfarm jobs, in order to generate insights on dynamics of inequality in rural India amidst the structural transformation of country's economy following the liberalization reforms since early 1990s. The broad research strategy included looking at the macro data on livelihood change from India's population censuses conducted in 2001 and 2011, supplemented by village-level primary fieldwork including surveys with a representative sample of households across different parts of the country (and detailed ethnography of a few selected villages). The idea of this two-pronged strategy was to both capture the larger picture of the magnitude of economic and livelihood change as well as gain deeper insights from the ground on how this change unravels to affect different sections of the society in order to generate a more nuanced and granular picture of inequality-transformation relationship.

The Indian census data analysis considered in detail the changes in occupation of rural workers between 2001 and 2011. The census classifies the workers in two broad categories of *main workers* and *marginal workers*, based on the duration of their employment in the year preceding the enumeration. The "main workers" are defined as those who worked for a period of 180 days or more in the past year, while the "marginal workers" form the residual category of workers whose total duration of work in the preceding year was less than 180 days. These workers are further classified by the type of their livelihood profile, such as cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industry workers and so on.[255] This data pertaining to main and marginal workers, particularly those employed in agriculture either as cultivators or farm labourers was analyzed for

255 Census of India, "Concepts and Definitions, Census 2011 (Online Metadata)."

all 640 districts of India to generate a regional picture of rural transformation in India.[256]

This district-wise census data analysis showed that there was a great diversity in rural transformation across different parts of India, and structural economic change has not resulted in a linear shift of workers from rural-farm to urban-nonfarm occupations everywhere. This is an important point to emphasize and carries great theoretical and practical significance because it defies the standard development model. The development experiences of most countries in the world suggests that structural transformation leads to former agrarian workers moving to cities to carve out urban lives which in turn results in greater urbanization over time. This has been observed in the historical experience of countries in Western Europe, North America, and East Asia, notably China in recent times.[257] Indian experience, however, defies this dominant development trajectory. In India, decline in share of agriculture in GDP, while increasing the significance of nonfarm incomes in rural lives and livelihoods, has not resulted into commensurate decline in the share of rural population. Cities and towns now account for nearly 70 percent of India's national income.[258] At the same time, nearly 70 percent of country's population still live in rural areas. The dwindling fortunes of farm-based livelihoods notwithstanding, households' responses to structural transformation vary widely across different regions depending on a range of factors such as local livelihood contexts, household's background circumstances including cultural norms and so on. For some households, land and farming still figure predominantly within their livelihood portfolios. Others tap nonfarm jobs in towns close to their villages. Where farming does not ensure family's viability and local nonfarm jobs are not available in the vicinity, the household response involves moving out to distant urban centers either temporarily or permanently. Based on district analysis of census data, the earlier research identified four broad types of transformation that vary across different regions.

The first transformation type is "local nonfarm-led transformation". This involves districts where former rural workers moved to nonfarm employment without changing their rural residence. In other words, these included districts where there was shift in broad occupation profile of rural "main workers" from farming to nonfarm jobs in-situ. Between 2001 and 2011 census, there were 78 such Indian districts where at least 5000 rural workers left agriculture in pursuit of nonfarm jobs for six months or more in the past year. This nonfarm livelihood diversification occurred locally in that the erstwhile rural workers either accessed the non-agricultural jobs within their villages or to nearby towns. In terms of migration, a key feature of this transformation is commuting which is a form of mobility. While the districts where this in-situ nonfarm transformation is observed are spread widely across India, this is most prevalent in the state of Tamil Nadu where there is dispersed industrialization, as well as in

256 Between 2001 and 2011, a total of 47 new districts were created in India: in 2001 census there were 593 districts which increased to 640 districts in the next decadal census. The analysis included the latest figure reported in 2011 census. To enable comparison for the purpose of the analysis, the data for the new districts in 2001 was generated from the disaggregated data at the sub-district level in 2011. See Bajar, "Processes of Transformation," 27–28.

257 Timmer, *A World without Agriculture: The Structural Transformation in Historical Perspective*; Nijman, "Urbanization and Economic Development: Comparing the Trajectories of China and the United States."

258 Planning Commission, "Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12): Mid-Term Appraisal."

parts of northern Rajasthan and around Pune in Maharashtra.

The second is "marginal worker transformation" which includes a high proportion of workers unable to find jobs for six months or more a year locally. This marginalization can be gauged by simply looking at the proportion of marginal workers to total workers. Between 2001 and 2011, many districts of India witnessed an increase in marginal workers relative to the total workforce. These marginal workers geographies were concentrated in northern half of India, particularly in country's east. In particular, the districts where increase in work marginalization was extremely high in the intercensal period (over 40% of all workers being classified as marginal workers) were concentrated in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, parts of Andhra Pradesh and eastern Uttar Pradesh in almost spatially contiguous manner. The dominant migration in this transformation typically involves long-distance, inter-state movement, albeit of temporary, circular nature, by male adults while the household stays put. These marginal workers remain rooted in their villages but depend on work elsewhere – the reason why they are classified as marginal workers as they are enumerated in their villages. The eastern and northern states have a long and complex history of development deficits which have acted as push for people to migrate for a part of the year. The earlier migration streams involved rural-rural movement involving, for example, farm labourers from eastern Indian state of Bihar to migrate to agriculturally prosperous north-western states of Haryana and Punjab. While rural-rural migration continues, rural-urban migration is becoming more significant form of mobility as incomes and employment concentrated in urban areas. Migration from these geographies is also increasingly moving southward to large cities such as Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kochi.[259] On the other hand, there was a decline in work marginalization in southern and western India, the latter notably including Maharashtra, which is only consistent with evidence on regional pattern of India's recent economic growth that has favoured states in the south and west, as was noted in Chapter 2.

The third is "leaving rural transformation" whereby workers leave rural areas more permanently, though they likely remain connected with family/community at the origin. This is the kind of transformation that aligns with the structural transformation model that the process of economic growth involves workers moving from low-productivity jobs in agriculture in rural areas to high-productivity activities in industries and services in cities and towns.[260] This rural-urban transition can be captured by looking at the change in rural populations if they followed the natural population growth trajectory. Applying this natural growth rate, we found that in 536 of the 640 districts of India, rural population included at least 10,000 fewer people in 2011 than it should have been if the population a decade earlier had grown at natural growth rate observed in 2001. Put simply, this suggests that there were large pockets in the country where 10,000 or more people abandoned their rural origins and agriculture jobs permanently (given that there is a gap of a decade), potentially in pursuit of carving out urban lives and livelihoods. The districts where this transition is most pronounced are largely located in (undivided) Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and West Bengal. It is important to note that

259 Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India*; Van Duijne, Nijman, and Choithani, "Injected Urbanism? Exploring India's Urbanizing Periphery."

260 Timmer, *A World without Agriculture: The Structural Transformation in Historical Perspective*.

this transformation also at times involves non-permanent migration typical of marginal worker geographies even though intense pressure on agriculture meant that migration now occurred for longer duration.[261] For example, parts of West Bengal also constitute marginal worker geographies.

And finally, there is also "Entering agriculture transformation". This includes rural workers who had left farming return to agriculture in their villages or migrate to other rural areas to tap better opportunities in agriculture. Between 2001 and 2011, there were 48 districts which saw an *increase* of at least 5000 main workers in agriculture. Given the general push out of agriculture due to growing stress on farming, the number of such districts with increase in farm workers is not insignificant. Once again, there is a regional story to this pattern and this transformation type is most prevalent in parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka - both states with the presence of large-scale corporate and contract farming (refer to maps in Chapter 1).

This novel conceptualization of different forms of place-based rural transformations explicated through the detailed analysis of nationwide population census data elucidated the varied trajectories of change across geographies. But what were the dynamics of each transformation, and how they weighed on inequality needed supplementing the secondary census data with primary fieldwork. With that objective, the second stage of this research strategy in the first phase of the project involved conducting village-level surveys with a representative sample of households. Using multi-level stratified random sampling, 800 households were chosen from within each transformation type yielding a total sample of 3200 households spread across 28 villages across India. Out of this total sample, 3077 households were surveyed with their informed consent covering nearly 13900 individuals. These surveys were conducted in 2017 – six years after the last census in 2011 which also served to provide more updated information on occupational change (see Pani 2022 for a detailed methodological account).

Primary fieldwork for the current study

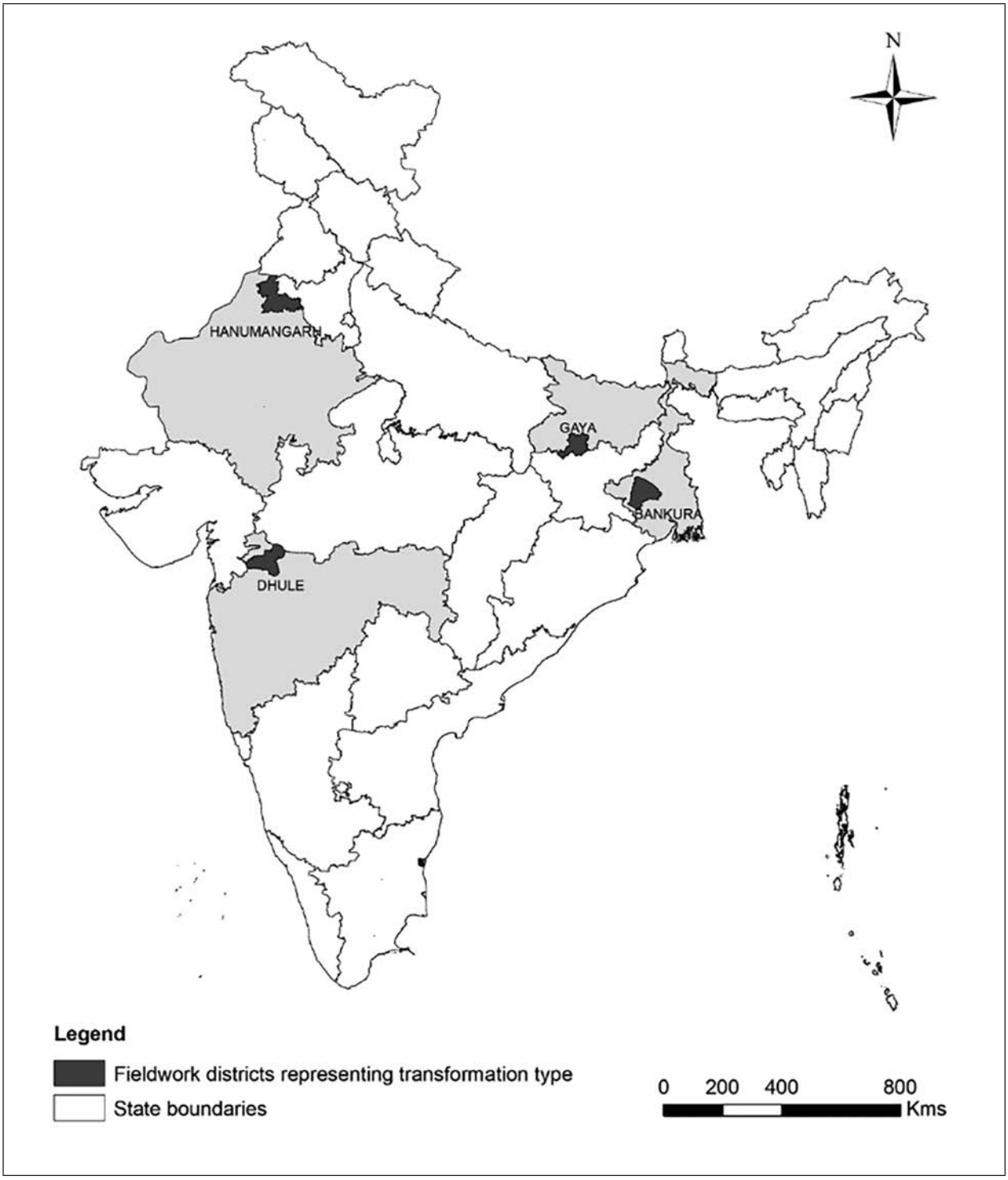
Given the potential bearing of forms of rural transformation on migration-inequality relationship, the present study followed the methodological approach of the first phase of the research project. But since the earlier enquiry did not explicitly focus on migration, and much less on understanding migration from the perspective of those who stay, it was deemed appropriate to conduct a fresh round of fieldwork. To this end, the current research selected four villages spread across four different Indian states - with each study site representing a transformation type. These four village sites were in Bankura district of West Bengal representing *leaving rural transformation*, Dhule district, Maharashtra for *entering agriculture transformation*, Gaya, Bihar for *marginal worker transformation* and Hanumangarh district, Rajasthan for *local nonfarm transformation* (Figure 4.1).[262]

One difference in the methodology between previous round and present study is that while the former is a sample survey of households, this present study surveyed all households in four selected sites. A survey of all households including migrant and non-migrant households was deemed relevant to generate a relational

261 Also see, Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

262 Village names are not revealed to maintain anonymity.

Figure 4.1: Study field sites representing transformation forms



Source: Own work based on boundaries provided by the Survey of India

Table 4.1: Some basic survey statistics

	Bankura	Dhule	Gaya	Hanumangarh	Total
Number of households in the village	200	485	234	242	**1161**
Household surveys completed	197	474	230	236	**1137**
Number of individuals covered**	710	2219	1026	1054	**5009**
Surveyed households with migrants (% age of migrant households)	50 (25.4%)	92 (19.4%)	146 (63.5%)	35 (14.8%)	**323 (28.4%)**
Total number of migrants	59	206	176	95	**533**

**Without migrant members

Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

understanding of migration process, and thereby to capture the dynamics of migration-inequality nexus more fully. The four village sites had a total of 1161 households, out of which 1137 households were surveyed covering over 5000 individuals. This included 323 migrant households with a total of 533 migrants. Table 4.1 presents these survey statistics with a site-wise breakup of households and individual members covered in the study. These surveys were conducted during May-July 2022.

The patterns of migration aligned broadly with the four transformation forms, as mentioned earlier. Migration from villages in Bankura, West Bengal and Gaya, Bihar was mainly to the large Indian cities. Kolkata was the main destination for migrants from Bankura given the proximity and shared culture, and 50 of the 59 migrants (whose whereabouts could be ascertained) lived in Kolkata. While migrants spent a good part of the year away from the village, qualitative fieldwork revealed that this migration was largely non-permanent. Migrants from Gaya moved to far-off urban destinations in other states such as Delhi (28 migrants), Chennai (27 migrants) and Mumbai (18 migrants); this migration was also largely temporary though migration occurred for longer duration given the general lack of employment in Bihar. The greatest share of migrants from the village in Dhule worked in other villages for agriculture work, consistent with opportunities available in farming. Finally, nearly 45 percent of migrants from Hanumagarh commuted to small towns in and around the village as well as the district headquarters to tap local nonfarm employment (Table 4.2)

Table 4.2: Percentage of migrants by their destination type (n=505)#

	City	Small town	Village
Bankura (n=59)	96.6	1.7	1.7
Dhule (n=188)	31.4	31.9	35.6
Gaya (n=173)	100.0	0.0	0.0
Hanumangarh (n=85)	49.4	44.7	5.9

Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

#This information could be obtained for 505 of 533 migrants. Also, this includes all migrants including some who migrated with their family for non-work reasons.

The survey data provided useful insights and raised important questions on migration-inequality relationship. Therefore, following the analysis of this quantitative data from the surveys, the village sites were visited in January-February 2023 for observational data and in-depth interviews with a smaller subset of households. In all four sites, we did extensive village walks and had informal conversations with village inhabitants to get a sense of the spatial and social

contours of the field sites. Additionally, a total number of 45 semi-structured interviews were conducted with households and key informants at these four sites.

While these study villages had some commonalities, they were also very different from each other in terms of demographics, development, culture, livelihoods and so on. The following discussions attempts to construct profiles of individual study villages for a better contextualization of field research findings presented in chapters 4 and 5.

Bankura, West Bengal

The study village in Bankura district representing *leaving rural transformation* is located in the southern part of the district (Figure 4.2). It is about 7 kilometers south of Khatra block/sub-district of which it is a part. As per 2011 census, there were 174 households with a total population of 762 persons (398 males and 364 females).[263] A little over a decade later, our survey in 2022 enumerated 200 households with 710 people. The decrease in the village population is perhaps reflective of permanent migration of some village inhabitants which this transformation type represents, though permanent migration is not the most dominant form of labour mobility (see below). All households in the village are Hindus who are divided into multiple caste groups including Brahmin, Dhopa, Dom, Vumij, Kudmi (Mahto), Kulu and Napit. Mahtos are numerically dominant and are officially classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

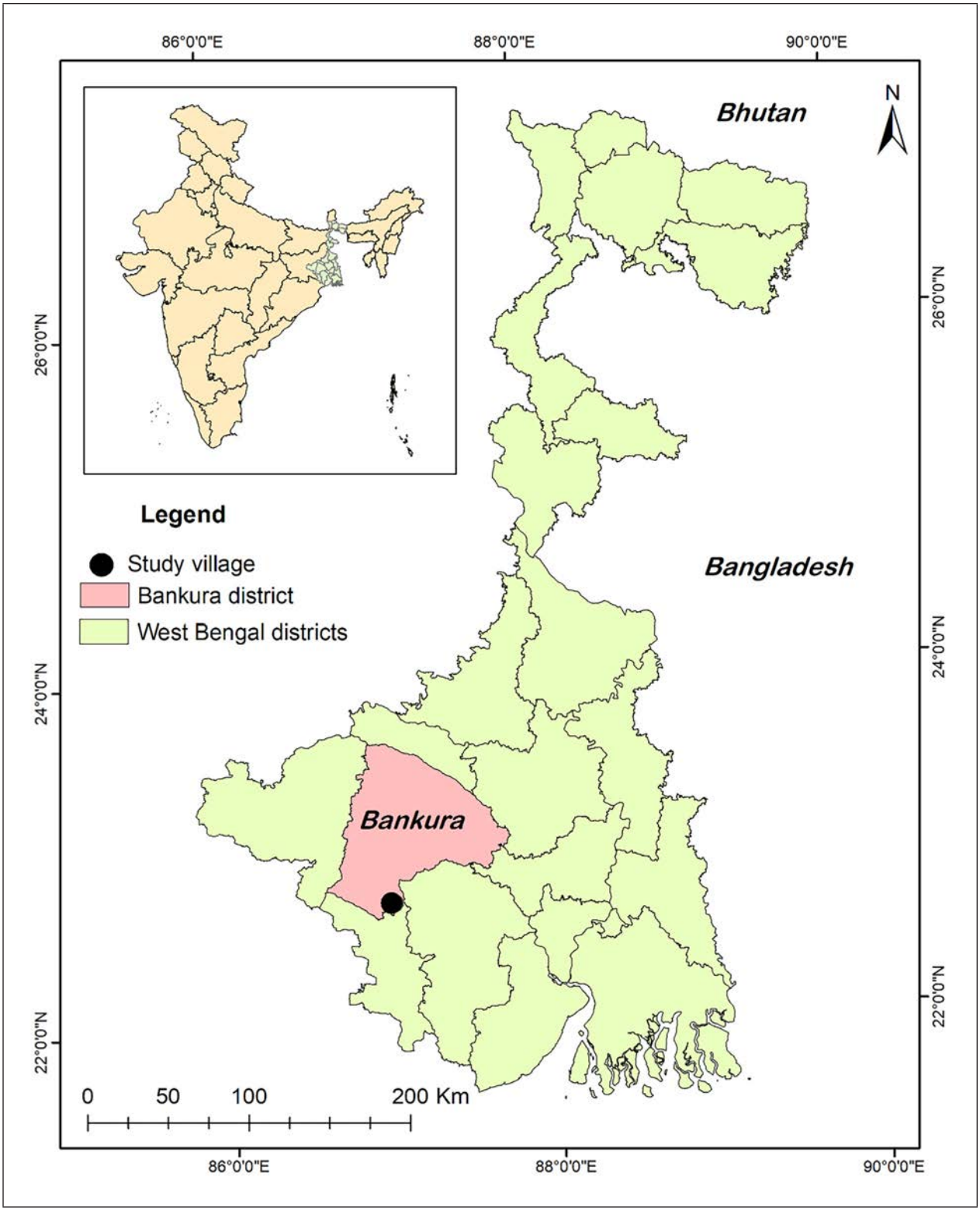
The village is marked by notable underdevelopment and most residents possess limited assets and resources. Of the 196 households in the village, only one-third have *pucca* houses with reinforced cement concrete (RCC) roofing and the remaining ones live either in *semi-pucca* (48 percent) houses with tile/sheet roofing or *kutcha* houses with thatched roof (17 percent). Over half of the households do not have sanitation facilities within the housing premises and practice open defecation. Less than one percent of households use LPG gas solely for cooking, while 65 percent use LPG and firewood combined. Government initiative to promote modern cooking fuels to improve health outcomes means that most households have LPG connections but not the financial wherewithal to use gas for cooking. Most households do not even have water taps within the premises and 92 percent use public taps to source water.

Land is a key livelihood asset, and over 75 percent of 196 surveyed households own land. But landholdings are small, with a large majority of landed households owning less than an acre. Farming is largely rainfed, and most farm families grow only one rice crop during *kharif* season and leave the land fallow. The village is not too far from the *Kangsabati* river dam which supports irrigation in the region through canals. But the study village is not fully connected with canal infrastructure and not all farms get water for irrigation. Agriculture serves an important food security function, and most households use farm produce for their own consumption.

Given this, nonfarm livelihoods provide crucial alternative income source. The Khatra town provides employment to some young men, and there are three brick kilns near the village (one within the village boundary) that employ some other. But local labour supply far exceeds the demand, and much of the nonfarm livelihood

263 Census of India, "Primary Census Abstract Data (Online)," 2011.

Figure 4.2: Study village in Bankura, West Bengal



Source: Own work

diversification involves migration to distant places. Migration is predominantly undertaken by young men, while the women stay behind. Migration is not permanent but involves circular moves. Kolkata is the most preferred migration destination and most men do not venture beyond because they want to live close to family, though they spend a large part of the year away from the village for income needs. In Kolkata, most migrant men work in garment factories, locally known as *ganji* factories. This network is very well established so much so that a carpenter from the village who went to Kolkata to find carpentry work ended up in Ganji factory because he did not know anyone in his industry but had fellow villagers in garment sector who set him up with work. There are two small *ganji* factories near the village that provide employment to some men from the village. But because of the greater labour supply than demand, most men migrate for work.

In the absence of men, women work in family farms. Many women also work as farm labourers in and around the village. And while women do not face any restrictions on paid work, their participation in income-earning activities locally is largely confined to farming.

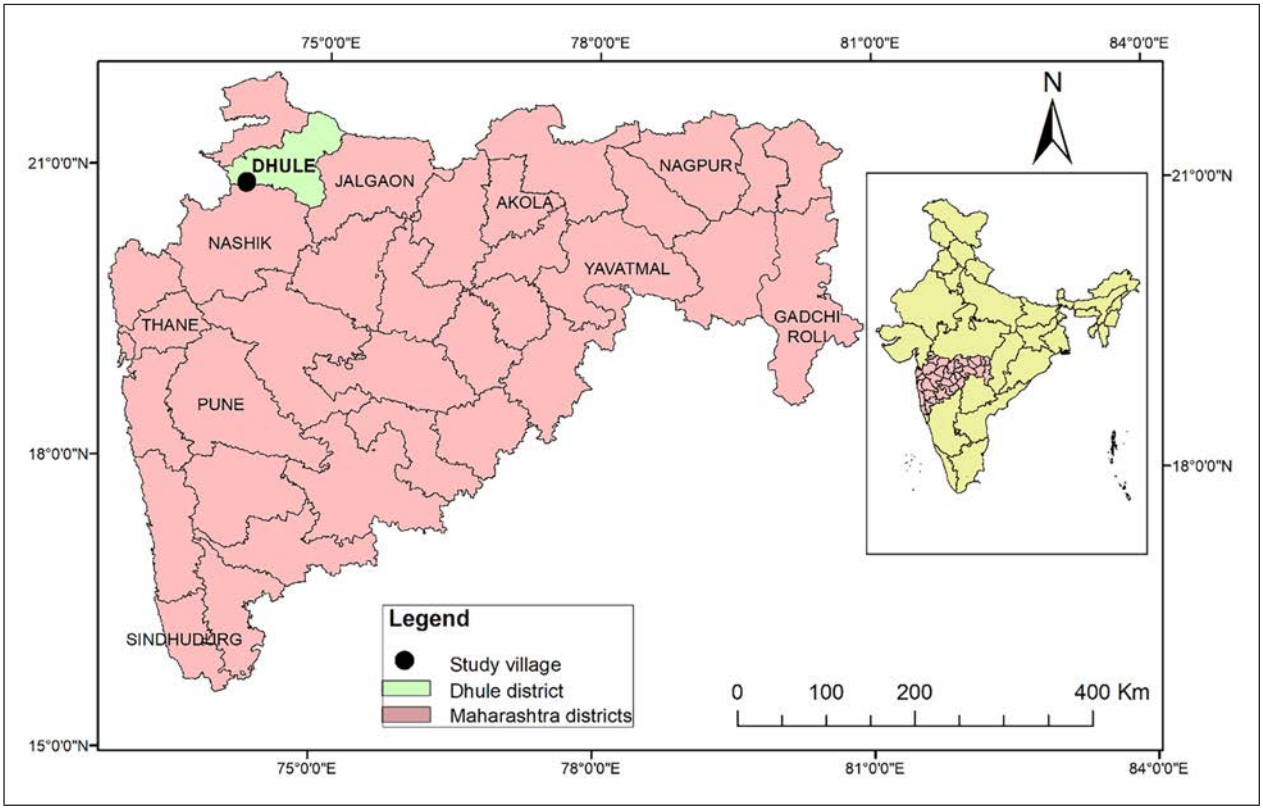
A garment unit, called *Ganji* factory in local parlance, adjacent to village site in Bankura, West Bengal. Men from surrounding villages, including the study site, work in the factory for the monthly salary of INR 8,000 to 10,000 a month. There are a few such *Ganji* factories in the area. Each unit employs between 8-12 workers. But labour supply far exceeds the employment generated by these factories which pushes many men from the study site to migrate to Kolkata where the work availability is more regular, and wages are also higher.

Dhule, Maharashtra

The village site in Dhule, Maharashtra representing *entering agriculture transformation* is located in Sakri block (Figure 4.3). Geographically, the village is spread across an area of around 10 square kilometers, and according to the local population it is divided into six parts or *padas*. As per 2011 census, the village had 457 households with a total population of 2205 people almost equally distributed between males (1118) and females (1087).[264] Our 2022 survey enumerated a total of 485 households with about 2219 people which is roughly the same population as in 2011.[265] This perhaps indicates a change in household form in this period with large joint/extended families splitting to form nuclear units. There are two main communities that live in the village – Konkani and Bhil. Both these communities are indigenous tribes or Adivasi and are officially classified as Scheduled Tribes. Konakni tribe is numerically dominant with over 95 percent of households belonging to Konkani community.

The village is economically very backward, and people own very little assets in general. And while the Scheduled Tribe households in the village receive considerable support from the government in the form of housing, food subsidy, education support for children etc,,

Figure 4.3: Study village in Dhule, Maharashtra



Source: Own work

264 Census of India.

265 Some households in the village did not participate in the survey, and the total number of individuals reported here is based on surveyed households.

Konkani men with local trumpet played during Dongra Dev festival in village site in Dhule, Maharashtra.

their overall living conditions leave much to be desired. Most families live in semi-pucca houses (supported through government's housing scheme), and lack access to modern sanitation and cooking facilities. Open defecation is widespread, and most households use firewood as the main cooking fuel. Many households have LPG connections but lack the financial capacity to always use gas for cooking. A large majority of the household also have Antyodaya (poorest of the poor) ration cards that entitles them for subsidized foodgrains.

Local livelihoods are heavily reliant on agriculture, with a large majority of households engaged in farming. The main local crops grown include bajra (pearl millet), *makka* (corn) and onion, with onion being the most cultivated crop in the region. Most Konkani households own land, with half of the landed households having land size of two acres or more. In comparison, only a handful of Bhil families have any land and most of them work as farm labourers. These differences in landholding also explain the relatively better position of Konkani community vis-à-vis Bhil tribe. And while farming is a way of life for the local communities, the inadequate and uncertain gains from own farming means that most households also work as farm labourers. The Konkani households usually engage as agriculture workers locally at a commute distance. On the other hand, the Bhils migrate to work for 6-7 months a year to work on sugarcane farms in bordering state of Gujarat in places such as Bardoli in Surat district. Both men and women among Bhils and Konkanis work as farm labourers and as such women face no restrictions on paid work in agriculture. In fact, in the study village, women's presence in farming was ubiquitous.

Lastly, a few Konkani households had members in government jobs such as schoolteachers and those households with such members with regular incomes were visibly better-off vis-à-vis the rest of the village.

Gaya, Bihar

The study village in Gaya district of Bihar representing *marginal worker transformation* is administratively a part of Imamganj block of the district and is located in the southwest Gaya (Figure 4.4). This village is on the border of Jharkhand, and is divided into three parts of *tolas*. As per 2011 census, the village had 183 households with a total population of 1096 (558 males and 538 females).[266] Our fieldwork conducted over a decade after the census in 2022 found that the number of households in the village had increased to 234 with a total population of 1026 individuals. As is the case in Dhule, the addition in the number of households without any increase in total population likely reflects in the changes in household organization with large, joint families splitting out to become nuclear entities. But the reason for the decrease in total population is perhaps indicative of permanent migration of some individuals and/or administrative changes in village boundary.[267] In terms of the social composition of the village, nearly 90 percent of the households are Hindus and the rest include Muslim families. The main caste groups include Bharti, Pasvan, Rajak, Rikiyasa and Yadav among the Hindus and Ansari among the Muslims. The village is dominated by two social groups of Bharti and Pasvan – both officially categorised as Scheduled Castes – who together constitute over 70 percent of the households in the village.

The village suffers from high levels of underdevelopment, and its inhabitants have limited means and assets. The incidence of poverty and deprivation is high, and

266 Census of India, "Primary Census Abstract Data (Online)," 2011.

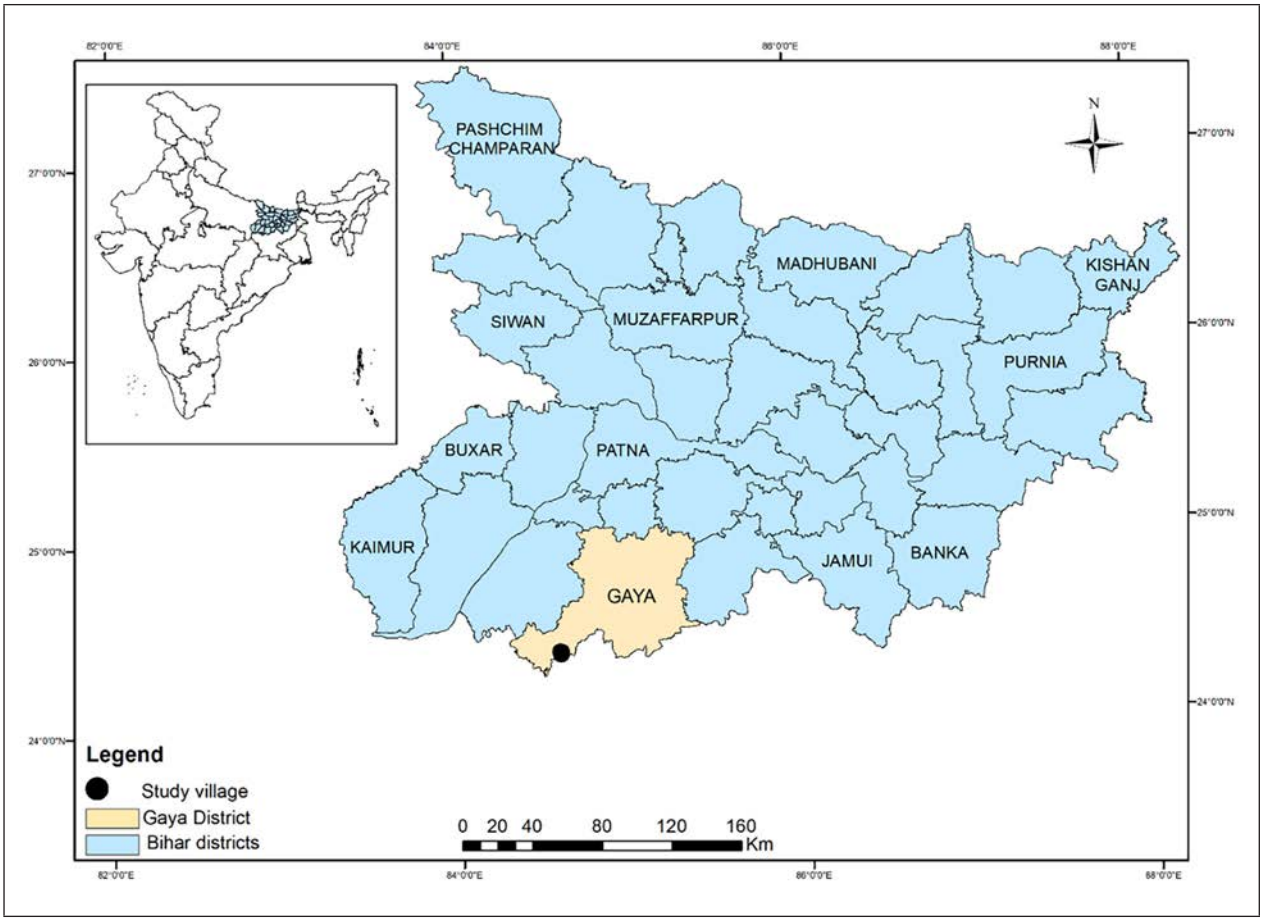
267 Note that four households in the village did not participate in the survey, and the total number of individuals reported here is based on 230 surveyed households. But this would not explain all the difference in the population figures. While migration from the village predominantly involves temporary moves, it is likely that some individuals migrated permanently between 2011 and 2022. Another likely explanation is that village boundaries that are used for census enumeration often change. Perhaps there were a change in the administrative boundary of our study village between 2011 and 2022 which might have also caused this difference.

Cow dung being dried on the wall of the house premise in the village site in Gaya, Bihar. Cow dung is an important source of fuelwood for rural households, and it is also reflective of the general socio-economic situation of the people in the region.

most households, particularly the socially disadvantaged Bhartis who account for nearly 50 percent of families in the village, have hand-to-mouth existence. Nearly one-third of the households live in *Kutcha* (mud/thatch roof) without access to basic amenities: barely a handful of families have tap water connection and sanitation in the house, and firewood is the dominant cooking fuel. Nearly 50 percent of the families do not even have ceiling fans. Food insecurity is common, and most poor households depend on government's subsidised food rations through the Public Distribution System (PDS). But PDS functioning is affected by corruption and pilferage and ration distribution is not always regular. Fieldwork revealed that most families got less foodgrains than their entitlements (4 kilograms of foodgrain per person as against their entitlements of 5kg); also many households reported receiving poor quality grains.

About 50 percent of the village households (114 households) are landless, and a large majority of those with land have landsize of less than an acre. The land in and around the village is owned by upper castes communities such as Rajputs (who live in nearby villages). This land poverty means most households combine farming (produce food for own consumption) with nonfarm incomes. But local nonfarm options are few and far

Figure 4.4: Study village in Gaya, Bihar



Source: Own work

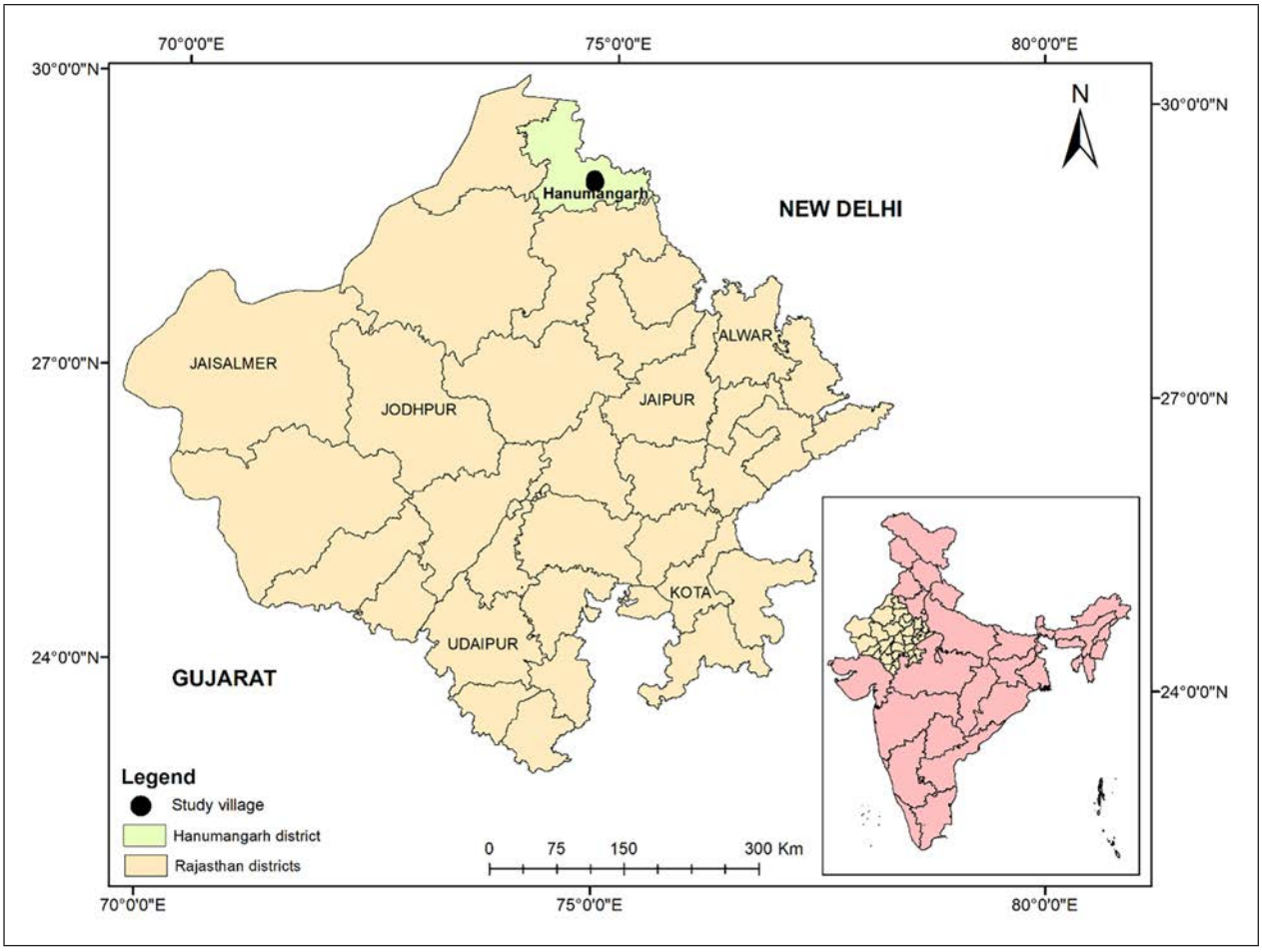
between, and nonfarm livelihoods usually involve migration to distant urban centers. Migration occurs within the context of the household: it is predominantly undertaken by young men, while the women, children and elders stay behind. Over 60 percent of all households depend on migration incomes: most households with young men have at least one male member working outside, and some families have even two or three men working outside the village. Migration involves temporary, circular moves, though most men now spend a large part of year away from the village. In the absence of men, women look after the small family farms in addition to taking on added family responsibilities of domestic work and care.

Hanumangarh, Rajasthan

The *local nonfarm transformation* study site includes a village in Hanumangarh district in northern Rajasthan which is semi-arid region. The study village is located in the south-central part of Hanumangarh (Figure 4.5); it is in Nohar sub-district which also includes a town of the same name. Data from 2011 population census show that there were 223 households residing in the village with a total population of 1191 persons – 643 males and 548 females.[268] Our survey in 2022 recorded 242 families with a total population of 1054 people. The decline in population perhaps

268 Census of India, "Primary Census Abstract Data (Online)," 2011.

Figure 4.5: Study village in Hanumangarh



Source: Own work

indicates permanent migration of some people from the village, and we did hear stories of migration of young people for education and employment in other districts in Rajasthan.[269] The village is inhabited by three religious groups that include Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who respectively constitute 88 percent, 11 percent and 1 percent of the households. The dominant Hindu community is divided in several caste groups including Brahmin, Rajput, Jat, Kumhar, Valmiki, Goswamy, Nai, Sunar, Prajapat. Jat are numerically dominant constituting over one-third of all households.

This village appeared to be more advanced than all other villages in the study. It is located close to Nohar town where there is a lot of nonfarm economic activity, mostly retail businesses of various sorts. This village appeared to be more advanced than all other villages in the study. Nearly 65 percent of households own at least one two-wheeler and 10 percent of families also own cars. Housing structures largely comprised of *pucca* houses with RCC or tile roofing with running tap water and functional sanitation facilities within the premises. Most families in the

269 Also note that eight of the 242 households in the village did not participate in the survey, and the total number of individuals reported here is based on surveyed households.

village (78 percent of households) have land and depend on farming. The average land size is quite large: among 189 households with land, over half of them (101 households) owned 5 acres or more, and 20 percent of these households had landsize of more than 10 acres.

The main crops grown include *guar* (cluster bean), *bajra* (pearl millet), *moong* (green gram) and *moth* (mat bean) during kharif season (monsoon crop), and mustard and chickpea in rabi season (winter crop). We heard stories of how surge in demand for *guar* crop used in fracking in 2011-12 led to significant surge in its prices and that it was sold for Rs. 30,000 per quintal. This changed the fortunes of the farm households in the village allowing them to buy more land, build better houses, invest in children's education, and also to provide capital for nonfarm businesses. But the village has dryland agriculture (*birani jameen*) and lacks irrigation facilities which brings a lot of uncertainty to farming. The village farmland is connected with water canal for irrigation, but the water rarely reaches the village as it is located at the tail end of the canal. A common complaint we heard was that farmers close to the canal in Badra town, located about 45 kilometers to the east of the village, steal the water. Lack of water means that rabi crop is a gamble. In fact, at the time of visit, the Rabi crop of chickpea and mustard had got destroyed because of sub-zero temperature (*fasal ko pada lag gaya*). Because of lack of water, most farming families grow only one crop. Usually, they use half of the land to grow *rabi* crop one season and leave the land fallow until it gets some water, and they use the other half for *kharif*. They do this to spread the risk: in case one crop fails, they can still grow the other crop. But agriculture remains a key economic activity and also is an important source of income for most households.

Agricultural capital has also fueled the nonfarm economy of Nohar town which increasingly provides an alternative income stream for a majority of village families. Depending on the economic and social capital of the households, some families own retail businesses and others engage in paid nonfarm jobs on casual (e.g. as construction labourer) and salaried basis (e.g. as salespersons in retail shops) in Nohar. The large landholdings and access to nonfarm jobs helps households to avoid livelihood vulnerability and also explain their assets and living standards (e.g. two-wheelers, cars, pucca houses).

Fieldwork challenges

Although the fieldwork for this study was conducted smoothly, a couple of issues did arise during the course of field research.

First, the general strategy we followed was to inform the local authorities at the level of *Gram Panchayat* and/or Block Development Office who then informed the villagers about the surveys. While this process gave us credibility and helped us build rapport with local communities, we did face issues with surveys in the study village in Hanumangarh, Rajasthan where villagers were skeptical about the study. This was resolved by meeting the District Collector of Hanumangarh who, after verifying our credentials, provided us with a letter of support and requested the local authorities to facilitate our fieldwork.

Second, in high male outmigration study villages in Gaya, Bihar and Bankura, West Bengal, many households were headed by women. Some of these women were initially skeptical about talking to the fieldwork teams that included men. We involved the local community leaders to

build rapport with the women respondents and were able to conduct the surveys and interviews with them. We were cognisant of these issues and designed the fieldwork considering them. The survey questionnaire contained common questions on household's demographic composition and socio-economic life, and the specific questions for women with migrant husbands were related to their gender roles within the family in the absence of men which were not sensitive to not elicit response. But it is useful to acknowledge these positionality issues and their potential bearing on study results.

5

Role of non-migrants in land and agriculture at the origin

Chetan Choithani

In rural Global South, lives and livelihoods are in a state of transition. In the past few years, structural economic change and growing stress on agrarian livelihoods have prompted an increasing number of rural households to move their dependency from farm-based livelihoods to nonfarm, migratory jobs.[270] These patterns of rural livelihood trajectories have inspired much academic research and policy debates on their implications for rural poverty and development as well as future of smallholder agriculture.[271] While the research and policy discussions generally acknowledge the wide heterogeneity of rural economies and patterns of farm-nonfarm transitions[272], two meta-narratives have tended to dominate these discussions. The first is the issue of deagrarianisation. Growing pressures on farm-dependent livelihoods coupled with aspirational shifts to build nonfarm futures are viewed as leading to deagrarianisation of the countryside in the rural South. Crucially, the narrative around deagrarianisation assumes that there is an irreversible shift among rural households from farm to nonfarm, migratory employment and incomes.[273] The second, and in a way, follow-up narrative relates to how migration relates to wellbeing of rural households. Mobility now plays a growing role in rural livelihoods in the developing world, and there is now compelling evidence that remittances increase the wellbeing of rural households at the origin.[274] This has led to change in official policy thinking on migration. Unlike earlier when migration in developing countries was seen as problematic that ought to be contained, migration is now viewed as a positive process to foster inclusive development. The World Bank sees migration as one of the pathways out of rural poverty[275], and migration-induced development also figures high on the

270 Bryceson, "The Scramble in Africa: Reorienting Rural Livelihoods"; Rigg, "Land, Farming, Livelihoods, and Poverty: Rethinking the Links in the Rural South"; Pritchard et al., *Feeding India: Livelihoods, Entitlements and Capabilities*; Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

271 World Bank, "World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development"; Hebinck, "De-/Re-Agrarianisation: Global Perspectives."

272 Akram-Lodhi, "(Re) Imagining Agrarian Relations? The World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development"; Hebinck, "De-/Re-Agrarianisation: Global Perspectives"; Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

273 Bryceson and Jamal, *Farewell to Farms: De-Agrarianisation and Employment in Africa*.

274 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development"; Cohen, "Migration, Remittances, and Household Strategies."

275 World Bank, "World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development."

agenda of other leading multilateral agencies.[276] This change in the official policy stance is endorsed by the Sustainable Development Goals that include and promote migration and mobility as part of the post-2015 development agenda, acknowledging the role migration can play in enhancing development and wellbeing.[277]

Although these macro-narratives help us understand the broad contours of livelihood change in the rural South, they also encourage a perspective of development that sees a linear, permanent shift from rural-farm to urban-nonfarm as inevitable part of development everywhere. The processes of rural economic change in developing countries, however, are far more variegated, nuanced and dynamic than what the deagrarianisation and structural transformation theses assume.[278] Structural economic change has certainly increased the importance of mobility in rural livelihoods and remittances increasingly determine households' wellbeing outcomes.[279] At the same time, rural lives and livelihoods are not completely unconnected with land and agriculture. Informality and uncertainty that characterise alternative urban jobs have precluded realistic opportunities for a large majority of rural households to change their livelihoods completely and carve out permanent urban lives.[280] Squeezed between agrarian decline and weak urban prospects, rural households' respond to these pressures through "livelihood adaptation" that involves diversifying away into new livelihoods as well as modifying the old ones to escape vulnerability and improve their living standards.[281] Migration can be seen as situated within the livelihood adaptation process that enables households to respond to uncertainty amidst economic change.

In many developing countries, migration characteristically takes the form of circular labour mobility which usually involves young men move out to pursue nonfarm jobs, while the rest of the family stays put in the village to look after the land and other assets at the origin. This allows rural households to allocate their labour more efficiently across activities and locations to achieve optimal livelihood security.[282] The old land-based activities continue to be a part of households' livelihoods, even as nonfarm diversification shifts the relative weight of household income in favour of migrants' remittances. At the same time, this livelihood adaptation alters terms of rural households' engagement with land and agriculture. It often necessitates the involvement of non-migrant members of the household, usually older adults and women, in agriculture. In migrant households where this labour is not available, the left-behind non-migrant households often step in through new land arrangement such as leasing or sharecropping. This enables migrant households to maintain land and agriculture at

276 DFID, *Moving out of Poverty: Making Migration Work Better for Poor People*; UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development"; IOM, "IOM Position Paper for 2013 United Nations General Assembly High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development."

277 United Nations, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"; IOM, "Inclusion of Migration in UN Sustainable Development Goals, a Milestone."

278 Yaro, "Is Deagrarianisation Real? A Study of Livelihood Activities in Rural Northern Ghana"; Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India*.

279 Rigg, "Land, Farming, Livelihoods, and Poverty: Rethinking the Links in the Rural South"; Rigg, Nguyen, and Luong, "The Texture of Livelihoods: Migration and Making a Living in Hanoi"; Choithani, van Duijne, and Nijman, "Changing Livelihoods at India's Rural–Urban Transition."

280 Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*; Potts, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa*.

281 Yaro, "Is Deagrarianisation Real? A Study of Livelihood Activities in Rural Northern Ghana," 126.

282 Stark, *The Migration of Labor*; Bigsten, "The Circular Migration of Smallholders in Kenya."

the origin, while providing access to land to the asset-poor non-migrant households.

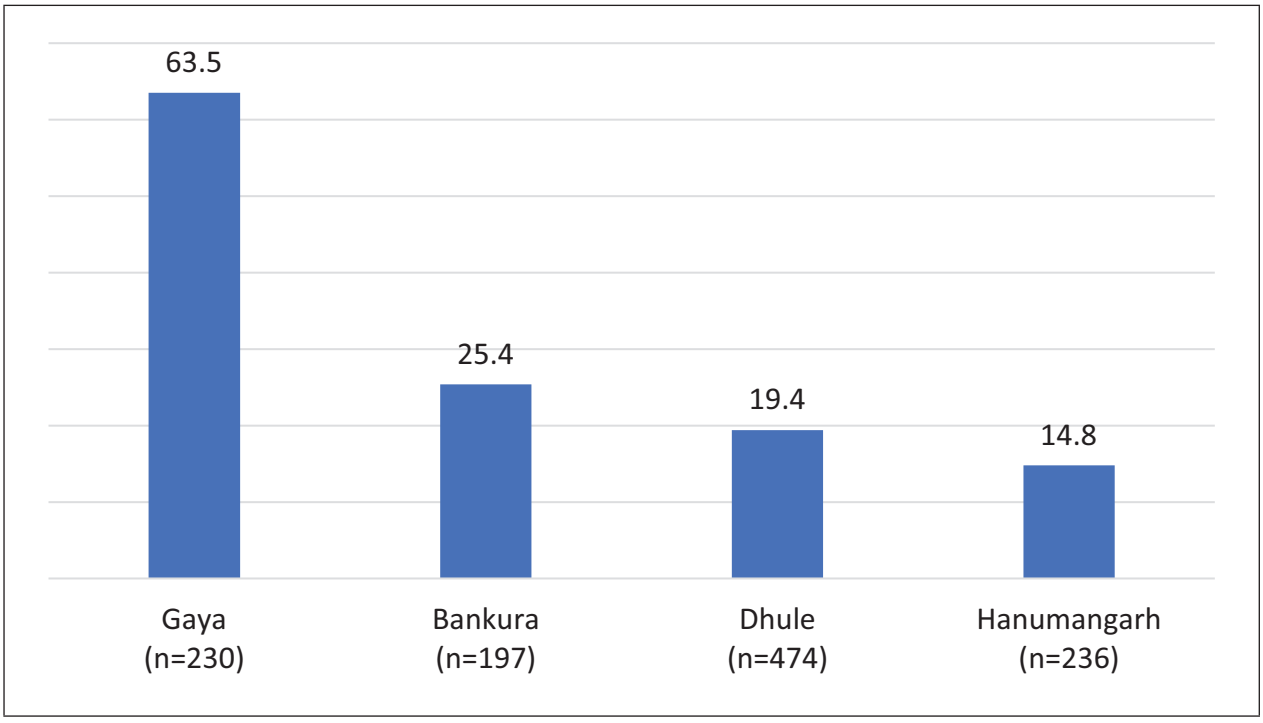
Using primary evidence from four village sites in India, the aim of this chapter is to tease out these nuances of the livelihood adaptation and highlight the exchanges between migrants and non-migrants in the process using the lens of inequality. The key argument here is that non-migrants play an important role in the process of migration which remains un(der) acknowledged.

The context(s) of migration

Nearly 30 percent of all surveyed households engaged in migration, though variations in agrarian pressure across contexts determined migration propensities. The village study site in Gaya, Bihar representing marginal worker transformation had the highest proportion of household engaged in migration (63.5%), followed by Bankura in West Bengal where over a quarter of all households reported having members who worked away. The study sites in Dhule, Maharashtra and Hanumangarh, Rajasthan had relatively lower migration prevalence - less than 20% and 15% migrant households, respectively (Figure 5.1; also see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4).

These migration propensities were connected intimately with the agrarian contexts. Bihar and West Bengal have high population densities. While cities are known to be dense population settlements, the density in *rural* Bihar and West Bengal – 1005 and 744 persons per square kilometers respectively – are also very high. In comparison, rural population densities in Maharashtra and Rajasthan were far lower, falling even below the national average (Table 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Percentage of migrant households across study sites



Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

Table 5.1: Population density by place of residence, 2011

	Rural	Urban
Rajasthan	153	2,570
Maharashtra	206	5,588
West Bengal	744	5,676
Bihar	1,005	5,058
India	**279**	**3,685**

Source: Census of India 2011

High population densities resulted into correspondingly high land-man ratios in Bihar and West Bengal. In turn, this meant that the capacity of land to fulfil the livelihood needs of all the inhabitants was inadequate. This is also reflected in the primary survey data on landholding patterns. In general, Bihar and West Bengal had a higher proportion of landless households compared to those in Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Moreover, in both states average land sizes were exceptionally small and a miniscule proportion of households had land size of two acres or more whereas this was over 40 percent in Maharashtra and as high as 72 percent in Rajasthan (Table 5.2). Land provided a key asset for households in Maharashtra and Rajasthan study sites, even in cases when households' livelihoods did not quite rely on land. For example, while households in Hanumangarh, Rajasthan held significant landholdings (average land size of 5.6 acres), many derived greater income gains from nonfarm pursuits (e.g. shops) in the Nohar town nearby. The only place where land and agriculture were absolutely central to lives and livelihoods was the site in Dhule, Maharashtra which was a predominantly tribal village and where agriculture was a way of life for the community, though qualitative fieldwork revealed that most youth aspired for nonfarm jobs, particularly government jobs. As one respondent put it: "*Skheti mein kuch nahi hai. Skheti bus pet ke liye hai. Isme jitna dala utna mila.*" ("There is nothing in agriculture. It only provides food. Also, what you get out of farming is what you put in it, nothing more"). A few families with members in government jobs in the village in Dhule site stood out in terms of a higher standard of living than those reliant solely on agriculture, which only reinforced the aspirations among the young to build futures away from farming.

On the other hand, high incidence of land poverty in Bihar and West Bengal acted as a significant push for households to diversify their livelihoods away from farming to nonfarm sources. This occupational diversification usually involved migration to either large urban centers within the state, or outside the state. For

Table 5.2: Agricultural land ownership among surveyed household (percentage of households)

	Bankura	Dhule	Gaya	Hanumangarh
Landless households	24.5	13.9	48.7	21.9
Landed households	75.5	86.1	51.3	78.1
Landed households by land size				
Less than 1 acre	52.5	3.4	42.7	0.4
1 to 2 acres	16.5	39.7	7.7	6.2
More than 2 acres	6.5	43.0	0.9	71.5
Average land size (in acre)	0.8	2.3	0.3	5.6
Total number of households (n)	**197**	**474**	**230**	**236**

Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

example, migrants from a village site in Bankura, West Bengal moved to Kolkata to work in a garment manufacturing as well as to cities such as Benguluru and Chennai in southern India for construction work; and much of the migration from Bihar site was to other states given the general lack of employment opportunities in the state. Most rural migrants from both states engaged in urban informal jobs where average wages were low and job security absent. Although precarious, these jobs did provide a buffer in the wake of agrarian decline.

Role of non-migrants in land and agriculture

The growing significance of urban nonfarm jobs across all sites notwithstanding, households' attachments to land remained strong and farming still formed part of livelihood portfolios. But maintaining land in the absence of young, productive male workers altered household's labour dynamics in which non-migrant older adults stepped in for young absentee men. In families where the labour of older adults was not

A farmer from the dominant Mahto caste watering his watermelon crop in the village site in Bankura. He fetched the water from a waterbody near the village on his bicycle. The village is not too far from the Mukutmanipur Dam built on Kangsabati river to provide irrigation facilities to farmers in Bankura and other adjoining districts. But not all villages are connected with Kangsabati irrigation system and most farmland in the village is not irrigated.

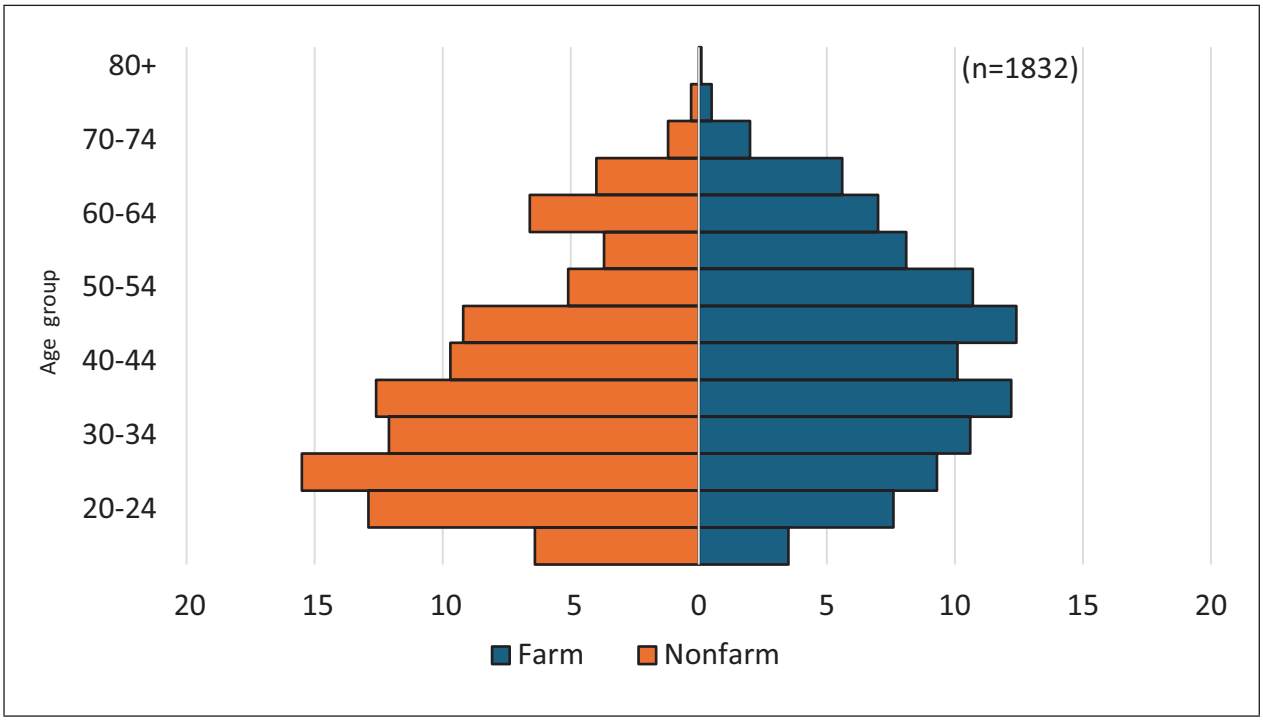
available, new land-based arrangements emerged in which non-migrant households assumed a greater role in local agriculture through land leasing and sharecropping farming. The discussion below discusses these two aspects of change in which non-migrants play an important role in local land-based economies and, in effect, in migration.

Changing dynamics of farm labour within the migrant household

Agrarian decline pushed rural households to engage in migration-based livelihoods. Furthermore, aspirational changes among the youth meant that a large majority of them did not see their futures connected with land or farming. At the same time, this did not result in households abandoning farming altogether. Informal urban jobs that precluded permanent shift from rural farm to urban nonfarm way of life and work as well as cultural connections with rural origins ensured land and agriculture remained part of lives and livelihoods. But there were important changes concerning farming. Within the household, it was increasingly the older family members who tended to the family fields. This allowed young members of the households to engage in nonfarm jobs. Survey data on 1832 workers aged 15+ years by their main occupational activity shows that 46.4% of farm workers were aged 45 years and above vis-à-vis only 30.1% of workers in the same age-group doing nonfarm jobs. On the other hand, 69.2% of workers engaged in various nonfarm occupations were younger than 45 years (Figure 5.2).

This age-pyramid with a greater share of young adults pursuing *nonfarm* jobs is consistent across all study sites. At the same time, the age-

Figure 5.2: Age pyramid of workers aged 15 years and above by main work activity



Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

Table 5.3: Age-distribution of workers by main activity across study sites

	Farm		Nonfarm	
	15-44 years	45+ years	15-44 years	45+ years
Bankura (n=204)	46.5	53.5	82.1	17.9
Dhule (n=1078)	59.0	41.0	68.2	31.8
Gaya (n=223)	50.0	50.0	72.3	27.7
Hanumangarh (n=327)	32.7	67.3	68.9	31.1

Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

composition of farm workers in Maharashtra and Bihar deviates from this pattern. In Maharashtra, a greater share of young workers (15-44 years) engaged in farming which, as noted earlier, is explained by the significance of agriculture as a way of life among the tribal communities, and this persistent significance of agriculture is also consistent with the *entering agriculture transformation* form which this field site represents. In addition to own-account farming, large farms in and around Dhule provided agriculture employment all year around (the study village in Dhule bordered Nashik district which is known for large-scale onion and grape farming). In Bihar, farm work involves an equal share of young (15-44 years) and older adults (45+ years) which is explained by increasing participation of young women in agriculture as men migrate for nonfarm jobs (Table 5.3). These gender dynamics are discussed in the second major section of the findings. At this stage, it is important to note that irrespective of age dynamics associated with farm work, what was clear was that involvement of non-migrants in family agriculture created space for others to engage in nonfarm, migratory jobs.

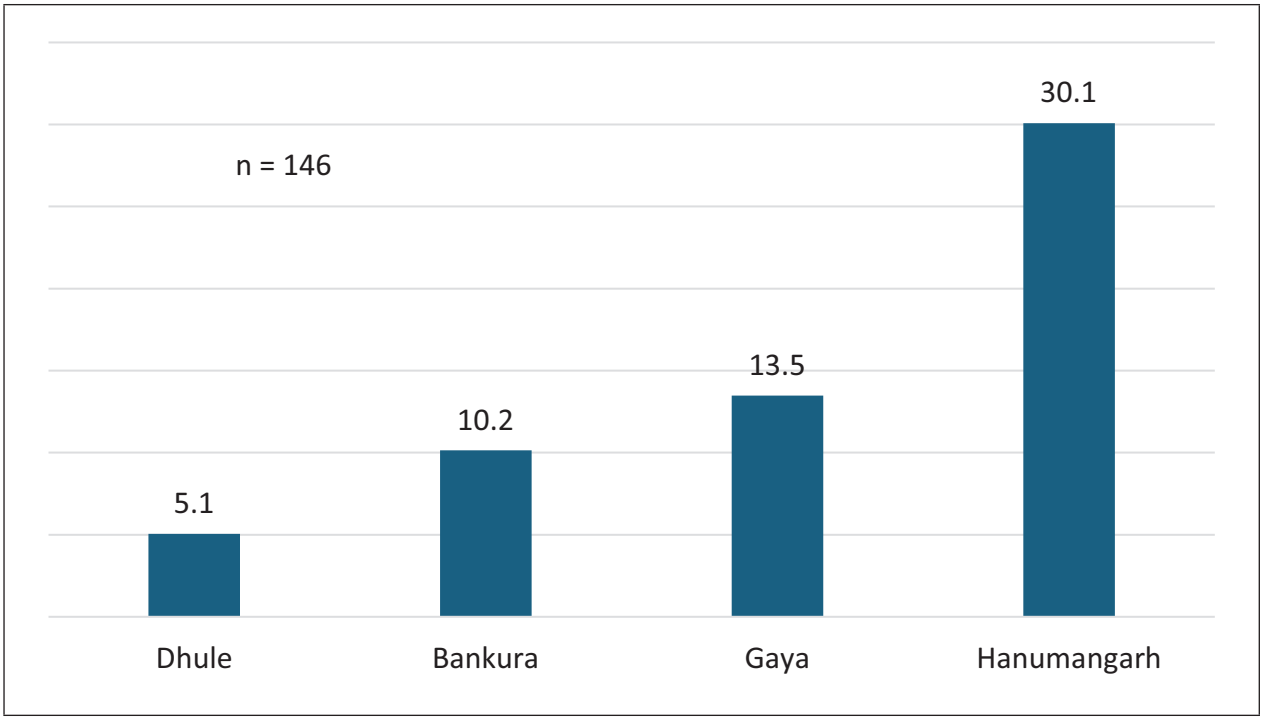
Non-migrant households in the emerging agrarian relations

In families where this labour is not available, the land was leased out to other people in the village. Given the informal nature of much of land leasing arrangements in rural India because of the official restrictions, and even outright ban in some Indian states, on land leasing, the households who leased-out land rarely reported it in formal surveys due to the fear of official action, with only 12 surveyed households (1.1 percent of total sample) reporting leasing land out. But detailed, in-depth interviews did reveal that many engaged in land leasing to other families, often belonging to the same caste, to pursue better nonfarm jobs. On the other hand, those who leased in land tended to report this better as they had nothing to lose, and, in fact, wanted their cultivation rights recognised. In total, 13 percent of 1137 surveyed households (146 households) reported leasing-in land across all four sites. [283]

Figure 5.3 presents the percentage of households who leased in land by study site. The prevalence of land leasing was the highest in Hanumangarh, Rajasthan where over 30 percent of surveyed households had leased in land. Farming was an important livelihood activity for local community in the village in Hanumangarh and relatively large landholdings only enhanced the income-generating potential of farming. At

283 This mismatch between land leasing in and leasing out is also partly explained by the fact that some households from study villages leased in land from other families in adjacent villages (note that village boundaries in rural India are rather arbitrary and often overlap and these land transactions between people from different, nearby villages are quite common).

Figure 5.3: Percentage of household who leased in land



Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

the same time, not all households with land directly engaged in agriculture. Many households preferred to pursue nonfarm livelihood more proactively in Nohar town. These households leased out land to other families in the village. Some large farmers who were actively involved in farming also leased out land to others as they were not able to cultivate all their land.

In Bankura and Gaya, generally small landholdings meant that a greater number of households who had land chose to tend to their land which is reflected in lower leasing prevalence compared to Hanumangarh. Family farming was often combined with migration incomes to optimize livelihood security. High incidence of male migration did create labour shortages for family farming, but small landholdings meant that other household members such as women took on agriculture tasks (see Chapter 5). But in these two sites too, better-off households with access to regular nonfarm income and with male migrants working away from the village with no productive members (e.g. aged/ailing parents) leased out their land. These land transactions usually involved small landholdings and those migrant households who leased out had their bases in the village.

The village in Dhule had the lowest proportion of households who leased in land because most families owned land (86% surveyed household had land), and the cultural connections the local tribal community shared with land and agriculture meant that most engaged in direct farming (also see Chapter 3). Also, the income gains from commercial onion farming that most households engaged exceeded the land rent which prevented leasing in Dhule. As one 38-year-old respondent from Bhil community whose family owned five acres of irrigated land (one of the very few Bhil households with land) told us:

> There is not much irrigated land available for leasing. You see the rent for one acre of land is about INR 50,000 a year. You add another INR 5000 for inputs. One can grow two onion crops a year. And one good crop, particularly the one harvested after the rains during January-April, can alone fetch the income of INR 1,20,000. So, people do not prefer to lease out.

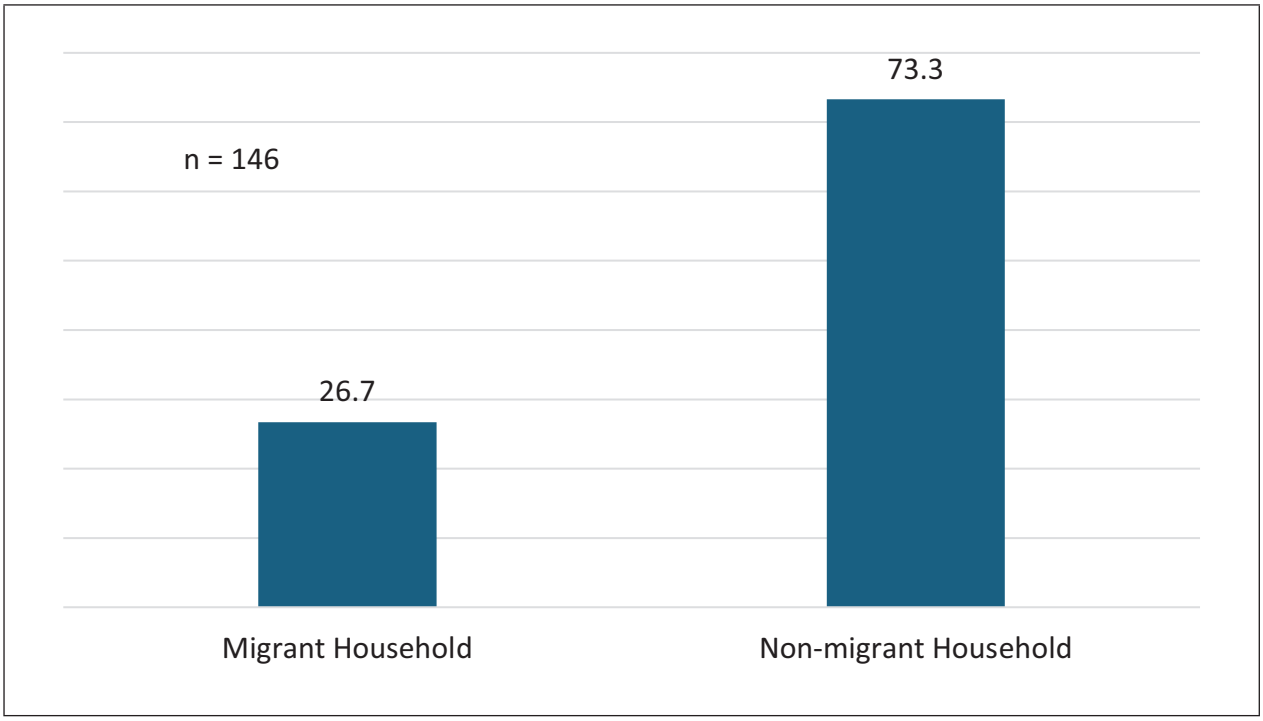
He continued:

> The land available for leasing is where there is no water, and the land quality is also not great. The rent too is low: one can get five acres for between INR 10,000 and 20,000 a year. But then there is so much uncertainty with that land that people do not want to lease in. Here, families do not have cash reserves or savings that they can gamble.

These differences in leasing prevalence across study sites notwithstanding, it is important to note that the majority of those (nearly three-fourth) who leased in land were non-migrant households (Figure 5.4). These households were left behind in migration because their asset position prevented their mobility. Detailed interviews with some non-migrant households revealed that they had attempted to place members in cities for work, but these migrants eventually returned as they were unable to find steady work and income.

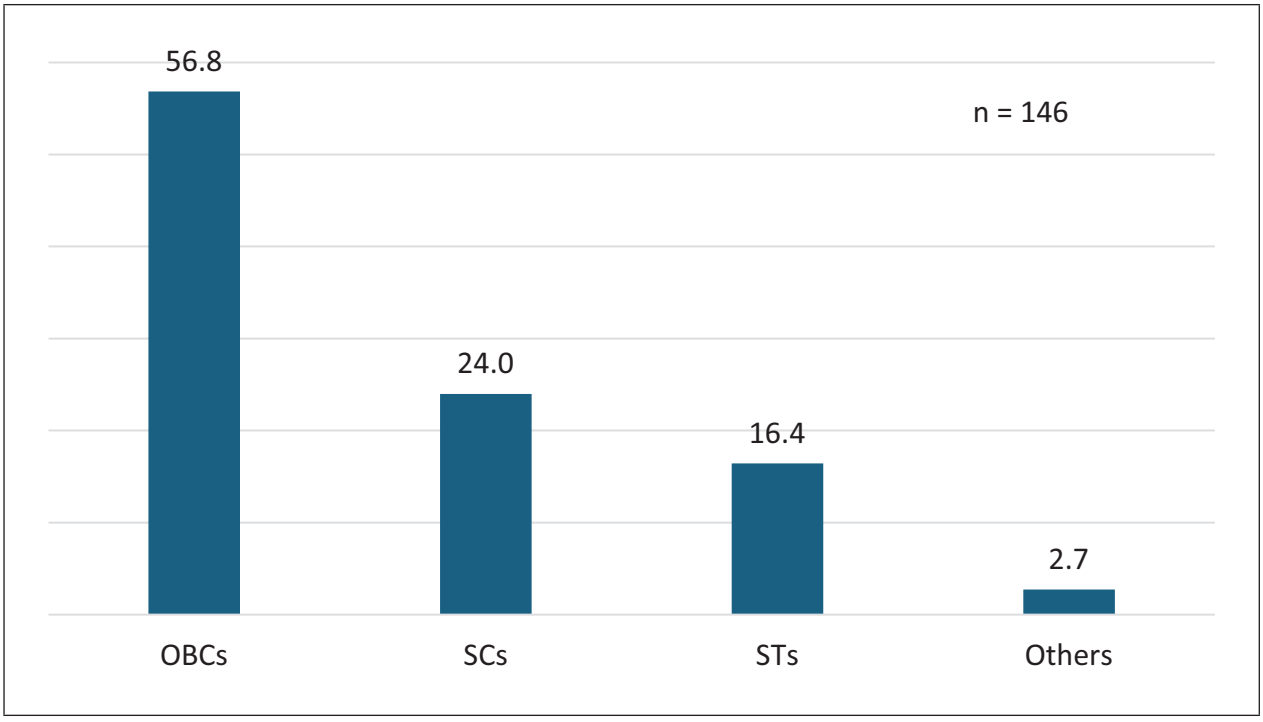
Moreover, the households who leased-in land were also predominantly from disadvantaged social groups of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) who lacked the capital and resources

Figure 5.4: Migration status of households who leased in land (percentage of household)



Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

Figure 5.5: Caste of households who leased in land (percentage of household)



Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

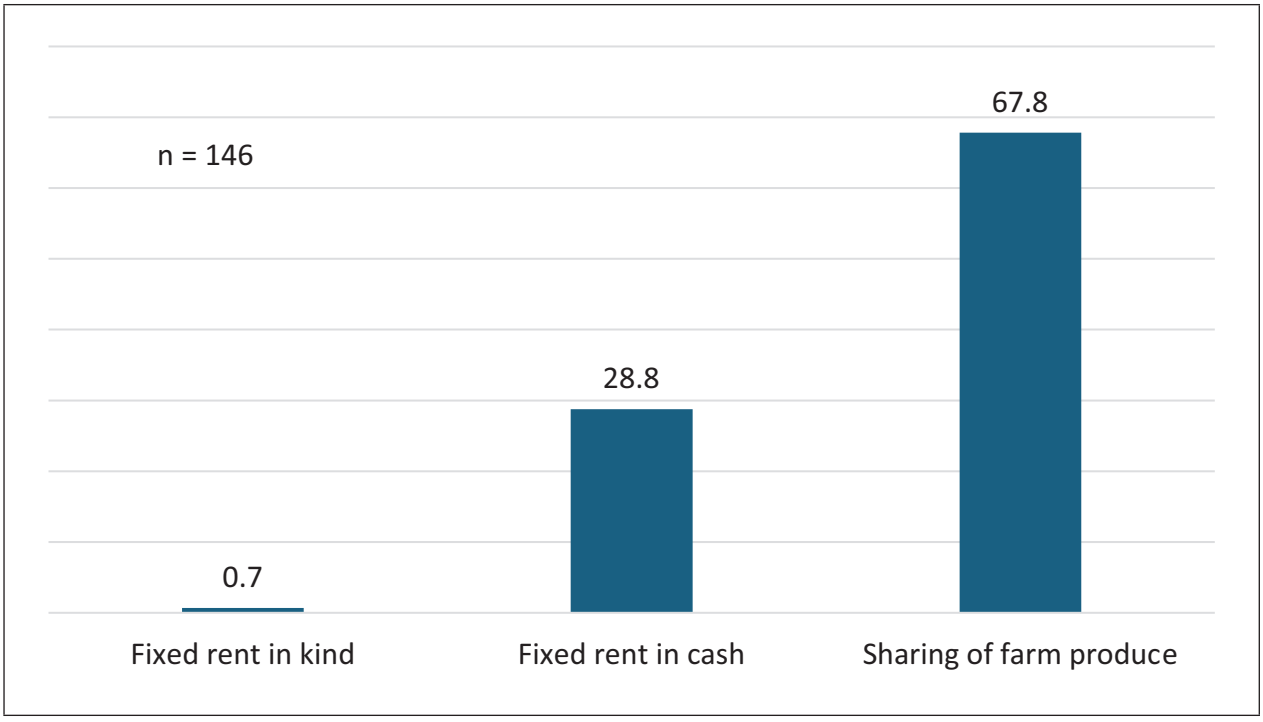
to engage in migration (Figure 5.5).[284] These emerging land relations involving poor, non-migrant households to become more important actors in local land-based economy through leasing often enabled migrant households to pursue nonfarm jobs in distant locations.[285] Importantly, migration also created the space for these land and asset poor households to gain access to scarce land resources which, our fieldwork revealed, served an important food security function for poor non-migrant households. Over 30 percent of households who leased in land were landless, and another 16.2 percent had landholdings of less than an acre. In these cases, access to land provided a crucial asset; migration also reduced pressure on land-based livelihoods as there were fewer people who were dependent on it, particularly in contexts of high land-man ratios in field sites in Bankura and Gaya.

The terms of land leasing were diverse but primarily involved fixed cash rent for land and sharecropping farming (Figure 5.6). The fixed cash rent for cultivation rights was predominant in the study site in Hanumangarh which accounted for much of the cash rent form of leasing (36 of 43 households who reported paying cash as form of rent were from Hanumangarh). Again, there were differences in the cash amount

284 This might also reflect the broad caste composition of the surveyed households which includes a greater proportion of SCs/STs and OBCs. At the same time, it is also the case that the forward caste households are withdrawing from direct farming everywhere, and in many parts of India those who lease in land are increasingly the households from disadvantaged social groups. See Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India.*

285 Poor reporting on land leasing out transactions due to official curbs does not permit profiling households who leased out land by their migration status. But qualitative fieldwork indicates that some migrant households without labour and other means leased out land to ensure their land is maintained and they could come back to it when things go south in the urban locales.

Figure 5.6: Percentage of households leasing in land by leasing terms



Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

Note: The leasing terms could not be ascertained for four of the 146 households (2.7 percent) so the total may not add to 100 percent here.

depending on the nature of land and farming. In Hanumangarh where there is dryland farming, the typical yearly rent for one beegha of land was INR 4000. In contrast, in Dhule where there was large scale onion farming, yearly cash rent was between INR 10,000 and 50,000 depending on the type of land and number of crops it allowed in a year.

But sharecropping was the most preferred leasing arrangement overall. The sharecropping farming involved land lessee bearing all the costs of cultivation and the produce was shared equally between the cultivator and landowner households. Not only these arrangements ensured that the land resources of the absentee households were taken care of but they also continued to serve the food security function for the landowning communities even when they did not directly engage in cultivation.

For tenants, land leasing and sharecropping farming as a result of migration allowed asset-poor non-migrant households access to land which provided a crucial livelihood asset and source of food security, as noted earlier. Some landless households were also able to improve their economic position over time, and there were instances of families who previously had no land and worked on leased land as sharecroppers buying land over time with the farm incomes (and informal loans). In some cases where lessor landlords were not living in the village, the sharecropper farming families reported lesser production than actual so that they could keep more of the produce. Landowners seemed aware of this but ignored this as they wanted their land taken care of in their absence. However, on the whole, terms of land leasing/sharecropping favoured the owners than the tenants. Most households who engaged in sharecropping did

Agricultural land belonging to households from the village site in Hanumangarh, Rajasthan. The region is known for dryland agriculture. Although this northern Rajasthan district has extensive canal irrigation infrastructure and the village is connected with *Sidhmukh* canal, the water rarely reaches the village because it falls on the tail end of the canal and we were told big farmers close to the mouth of canal divert much of the water for their fields. Most households in the study village grow one crop per season on half the land they own and leave the other half fallow to use it another season to allow the soil to recover and retain moisture.

so to meet their own consumption requirements; it was also their way to reduce economic uncertainty in the midst of transformation. As Nandan Ravidas (first name changed), a 42-year-old man from Scheduled Caste family in Gaya, Bihar whose household leased in land for sharecropping, put it: "If you look at farming, it does not even pay for daily wages. People do it to meet their food needs and for respect." The landowners had the upper hand in these arrangements, and they used it to deepen their engagement with nonfarm economy without losing land. To quote the Nandan Ravidas again:

> *Hum logo ka mehnet, hum logo ji poonji aur hum log wahi ke wahi. Jo aage badta hai woh jaamin maalik hai* (It is us, the tenants, who invest money and labour to cultivate the land. But what do we get – nothing. We remain where we are, and the landlord makes all the gains.)

In rainfed farming which was the predominant form of agriculture across all study sites, crop failures were commons and even frequent.[286] This meant that sharecropping insulated landowners from these shocks, while allowing them to benefit from nonfarm, migration incomes. Also, while farm families received compensation from the government in the event of crop failure due to drought and other vagaries, this money was provided to the landowners as they owned the land on paper even though the poor tenants bore the cultivation costs.

286 The canal irrigation in Hanumangarh and Bankura sites did not always reach the study villages.

From the perspective of the larger question under discussion in this chapter, the data presented here underlines that migration should be understood as a process which alters a range of arrangements in local village dynamics, which in this case includes land and agrarian relations. And importantly, those who do not move support migration in important ways by looking after land and agriculture resources to which migrants can return when faced with income decline in urban areas. The precarious nature of urban jobs meant that the safety valve role of land in the origin acted as an insurance. And while it was not clear whether urban migrants received food remittances from their non-migrant counterparts in villages to navigate income shocks in cities, these arrangements did ensure fallback option in times of crises. As for the non-migrant households, migration enabled them to assume greater roles in land and agriculture through leasing and sharecropping arrangements. Although these changes did allow them access to land with potentially positive food security impacts, this did not change their material conditions. In fact, with growing stress on land-based livelihoods, these arrangements only exacerbated their vulnerabilities in the midst of transformation in rural India.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to view migration as part of livelihood adaptation strategy of rural households amidst structural economic change and agrarian decline, and has highlighted the role non-migrants play in enabling migration. A key argument advanced in this chapter is that migration involves and affects not just those who move but also those who remain behind. While inequalities in migration opportunities leave people behind, the left-behind support migration in important ways through their participation in rural agrarian economies by the means of land leasing and sharecropping arrangements. Those who move do not sever their connections with their rural origins because informal urban jobs prevent them for carving out permanent urban lives. Faced with uncertainty stemming from rural decline and urban precarity, migrant households' livelihood response to structural transformation manifests in circular labour mobility usually involving young men of the family migrating out temporarily to pursue urban nonfarm vocations, while the household remain rooted in the village to maintain the base and protect land (and other assets). But circular migration modifies the terms of migrant households' engagement with land and agriculture. Given migration involves male members in productive ages, it usually requires stay-put older adults of the family to assume responsibility of land and farming to fill in for the young absentee men. In households where the labour of older adults is not available for direct farming, land is maintained through leasing. Those leasing in land are predominantly non-migrant households from socially disadvantaged communities without the capabilities and assets to migrate. These land leasing arrangements are important for understanding migration-inequality relationship.

Leasing out land enabled migrant households to engage with urban nonfarm jobs while maintaining their asset base in the rural origin. Given the uncertainty of informal jobs in cities, land serves as a social safety net, a fallback option that migrants can return to in the event of urban failure. Land and agriculture also allow migrants to combine rural-farm and urban-nonfarm livelihood to navigate precarity at both ends. Qualitative fieldwork revealed that sharecropping farming had an important food security function for the migrant households. And while study

Locked houses of Bhil families in the study site in Dhule, Maharashtra. The Bhils migrate to Gujarat for around half a year to work in sugarcane farms and the pattern of migration includes family migration including children who miss out on education. Local agriculture economy in Dhule offers enough farm employment but this migration stream is well developed. The community has built relationship with employers in Gujarat and the system of loan advances and lump sum payment towards the end of the work also drive migration.

did not examine food transfers from migrant rural households to their members in cities, migrant households continued engagement with agriculture also potentially weighed positively on migrants' nutritional wellbeing through food remittances. As for the poor non-migrant household leasing in land for farming, access to land also had important positive food security role which enabled them to mitigate the adversity associated with rural decline. At the same time, the left-behind households' engagement in land-based livelihood is occurring at a time when agriculture sector is in under distress which seems to exacerbate inequalities between migrant and non-migrant households.

The larger significance of these findings is they challenge the rather simplistic narratives inherent in deagrariansation and migration-development discourses that tend to view development as a linear process involving permanent shift from rural-agriculture to urban-industrial mode of life and work. India's structural transformation does not neatly fit into this model and there is a wide heterogeneity in rural economic change across contexts (Pani 2022). Importantly, rural livelihood change in India has not resulted in permanent shift of rural workers to cities, and the evidence presented in this chapter shows that rural and urban are intimately connected. An alternative perspective of livelihood

adaptation allows for a better understanding of these connections (Yaro 2006). The notion of livelihood adaptation has particular significance for migration-inequality relationships as it allows understanding the exchanges between those who move and those who are left-behind and how migration involves, and even relies on, the non-migrants. The chapter has discussed how non-migrants enable and support migration through their roles in local land and agriculture. There is also an important gender dimension to this story which is the subject matter of the next chapter.

6

Understanding migration through socially reproductive labour of women left behind

Chetan Choithani

In an article tracing the genealogy of feminism-inspired migration research published at the end of twentieth century, sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, while noting many promising scholarly strides in the area since 1970s, concluded: "Women as research subjects, and gender as an analytical category, continue to be marginalized within mainstream migration research". Calling for a greater need to incorporate a gender perspective in migration research, she argued that if this trend continues, and it probably will, "the real loser will be migration scholarship".[287] In a reappraisal more than a decade later though she maintained that migration scholarship suffered from "continuing androcentric blindness" to gender issues, her review carried a more optimistic tone (and verdict) and suggested "that the gender and migration research momentum is advancing in many directions".[288] Thus, although migration scholarship still lacks the fuller integration of gender and remains "a glass half full"[289], feminist interventions in the field have led to enhanced focus on gender issues in migration research in recent years. Scholarly research has increasingly recognized that migration is a "gendered process"[290], and that gender constitutes an integral element of migration.

In taking gender out of its marginality in migration studies, recent migration-gender scholarship has however tended to focus invariably more on women migrants. Although scholars recognize the broad-based nature of gender as "a system of power relations that permeates every aspect of the migration experience"[291], in much of the migration research "gender often remains connoted with women and women with gender".[292] This focus on women migrants seeks to correct, and justifiably so, the male-centric gaze that has dominated migration studies. This gendering of migration studies also has the larger objective of highlighting the neglected economic contributions of women migrants, and unlike earlier when women migrants were seen as dependent followers in line with dominant gender ideology that placed men in

287 Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Feminism and Migration," 19.

288 Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Gender and Migration Scholarship: An Overview from a 21st Century Perspective," 219, 227.

289 Donato et al., "A Glass Half Full? Gender in Migration Studies," 3.

290 Bastia and Piper, "Gendered Migration in the Global South: An Intersectional Perspective on Inequality," 393.

291 Nawyn, "Gender and Migration: Integrating Feminist Theory into Migration Studies," 760.

292 Fresnoza-Flot, "Gender Gaps in Migration Studies: Recent Developments and Prospects," 120.

breadwinner roles, women migrants have come to be recognized as principal earners.[293]

This discourse on women migrants as independent earners is not unconnected with the larger shifts in the political economy. Economic globalization, financial deregulation, and the weakening of the welfare state since the last decade of twentieth century have increased social inequalities and work informalization in many parts of the world. These processes have necessitated a greater need for women to enter the workforce to support their families. Families can no longer rely solely on men for economic support and financial compulsions have forced women to assume breadwinner roles by migrating on their own.[294] The increasing precarity has also called for a new social contract with a more proactive state to deliver social goods.[295] Efforts to seek a new consensus on the nature of political economy has resulted in a "social turn" in development which places, among other things, gender equality at the center of development agenda.[296] This agenda promotes women's participation in paid work as a key to achieving women empowerment and foster inclusive development outcomes.[297] Female migration is situated within this wider gender equality agenda that seeks to make women migrants and their contributions more visible, manifested in the powerful discourse on *feminization of migration*.[298]

Although feminist critique has dubbed this gender mainstreaming project "a tempered version of neoliberalism that carries a feminist face"[299] (Prügl 2016, 3) and highlighted that migration represents a "private solution to a public problem"[300] which does not always improve women's lives, much of gender-inspired migration research has tended to focus on women migrants. The proliferating body of research on 'global care chains' involving female migration from poor to rich countries provides an illustration of the focus of migration-gender research (Hoshchild 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003).[301] And while this work on global care industry shows that far from being emancipatory, women migration for care work reinforces dominant gender ideologies and places greater demands on women's reproductive and emotional labour that are inadequately compensated[302], this has also had the effect of

293 Fleury, "Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review"; United Nations, "Gender, Remittances, Development: Feminization of Migration"; United Nations, "Women Migrant Workers' Contributions to Development."

294 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*.

295 Stiglitz, "Is There a Post-Washington Consensus Consensus?"

296 Boeri, "Challenging the Gendered Entrepreneurial Subject: Gender, Development, and the Informal Economy in India," 158.

297 World Bank, "World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development.

298 UNFPA-IOM, "Female Migrants: Bridging the Gaps throughout the Life Cycle."; Petrozziello, "Gender on the Move Working on the Migration-Development Nexus from a Gender Perspective"; Fleury, "Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review"; United Nations, "Women Migrant Workers' Contributions to Development."

299 Prügl, "Neoliberalism with a Feminist Face: Crafting a New Hegemony at the World Bank," 3.

300 Hochschild, "Love and Gold," 18.

301 Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value"; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*; Some examples of this migration include women from Sri Lanka migrating to the Middle East to work as housemaids: see, Hewage, Kumara, and Rigg, "Connecting and Disconnecting People and Places: Migrants, Migration, and the Household in Sri Lanka"; Filipino women moving to the United States to work as nannies: see Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*; and closer home, nurses from Kerala working in North America, as well as domestically to different parts of India: see: Walton-Roberts, "Contextualizing the Global Nursing Care Chain: International Migration and the Status of Nursing in Kerala, India."

302 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*.

placing women migrants at the center of feminist migration research agenda.

Neglected in this gender-inspired migration research agenda remain the women who contribute to and are affected by migration without being migrants themselves. These include women whose husbands migrate while they remain behind. In many parts of the developing world where migration forms a key component of households' livelihoods, socio-cultural norms often place restrictions on women's mobility. Notwithstanding the recent rise in female migration for economic reasons[303], in many developing countries the predominance of male breadwinner norms often curtail women mobility and migration remains largely the preserve of men.[304] While not active participants themselves, women contribute enormously to migration through their productive and reproductive labour. Indeed, male migration requires women to be the household heads and take on the responsibilities of households' productive functions while continuing to perform reproductive roles. Temporary labour migration that remains the predominant form of mobility in many Global South countries places demands on women's labour to maintain family's assets and resources. Women's labour often enables men to engage in migration. However, feminist research has paid surprisingly little attention to women left behind in migration. Using primary evidence, this chapter attempts to highlight women's invisible contributions in migration and argues that women's socially reproductive labour is integral to migration processes but remain hidden in the migrant-centric discourse.

Women's invisible contributions to migration process

A key finding that emerged from field research pertains to the part women members within the migrant households played in the migration process, and the impact of migration on women – issues that remain rather neglected in migration discussions. As noted earlier, in large parts of India, work-related migration usually involves men while the women face socio-cultural restrictions on their mobility (Tumbe 2015; Choithani 2020).[305]

This pattern of migration was quite ubiquitous across the study sites where male migration was the predominant form of mobility. In fact, in three of the four sites in West Bengal, Bihar and Rajasthan, all migrant households had male migrants; and in a few cases where women migrated this was undertaken their men. There was not a single migrant household in all three sites where women migrated independently, and a majority of women stayed put in the village. The only exception to this pattern was Maharashtra where, while a majority of the household (75%) had at least one male migrant, nearly 70% of the households also had female migrant members. Moreover, a quarter of migrant households in Maharashtra had *only* female migrants suggesting women enjoyed greater mobility (Table 2). This is explained by the nature of the local community and occupations they engaged in. The village in Dhule, Maharashtra was a predominantly tribal village that had two social groups of Konkani and Bhil. The cultural norms among these tribal communities were more egalitarian and women participated in paid work in equal measure as

303 Fleury, "Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review."

304 Choithani, *Migration, Food Security and Development: Insights from Rural India*.

305 Tumbe, "Missing Men, Migration and Labour Markets: Evidence from India"; Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

Table 6.1: Gender basis of migration (percentage of household)

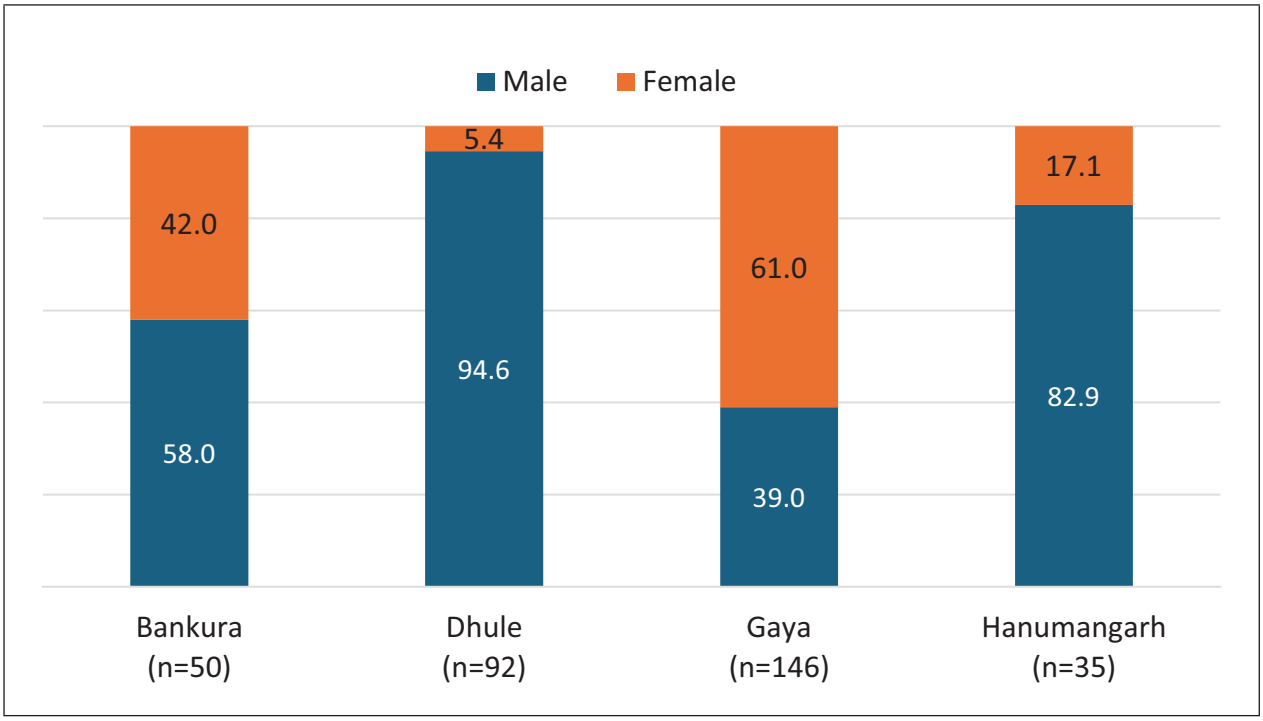
	Bankura	Dhule	Gaya	Hanumangarh
Households with male migrants	100.0	75.0	100.0	100.0
Households with **only** male migrants	96.0	31.5	98.6	62.9
Households with female migrants	4.0	68.5	1.4	37.1
Households with **only** female migrants	0.0	25.0	0.0	0.0
Households with both male and female migrants	4.0	43.5	1.4	37.1
Total number of migrant HHs (n)	**50**	**92**	**146**	**35**

Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

men. Konkani women worked on their own land as well as in agriculture work in nearby areas, including in the adjoining Nashik district whereas the largely landless Bhil community migrated to Gujarat for work in sugarcane farms which involved entire family, including young children, spending half year or more away from villages. Women's greater work participation in Dhule was also borne out of economic necessity to support the family.

Male-dominated pattern of migration changed the gender-power dynamics of migrant households with women assuming charge as the household heads in the absence of migrant men. The survey data show that 37.5 percent of 323 migrant households were headed by women, whereas the corresponding share of women-headed households among non-migrant households was only 5.2 percent. In high male-only migration study sites in West Bengal and

Figure 6.1: Gender of household head among migrant households



Source: IHDP Primary Survey, 2022

Bihar, 42 percent and 61 percent of migrant households respectively were headed by women (Figure 6.1).

These alterations in household gender power dynamics improved women's autonomy and mobility, and their presence was ubiquitous in all aspects of village life. At the same time, this also led to women assuming greater responsibilities of household's reproductive and productive functions. Indeed, it was the women who sustained migration through their care and labour, and it is not farfetched to say that migration of men would not be possible without the support of women. At the same time, this also reinforced existing gender-based vulnerabilities and created new ones for the women who stayed behind.

The household composition of many migrant households included only women and children, and the absence of male members seems to have become a norm. The wives of male migrants rued the prolonged separation with their husbands due to migration but had internalized it as a way of life. For example, in Bankura, in our interview with Rupali Mahto (first name changed) aged 25 years whose husband worked in Kolkata even before their marriage told us that she had been married for seven years and she had never lived with her husband for a whole year, nor had she ever visited Kolkata. Her husband visited home once in 2-3 months for a week, while she stayed in the village and looked after her two children (daughter aged 6 years and a 3-year-old son) and mother-in-law along with the family land of 2 beegha and some livestock (her mother-in-law helped Rupali with land and livestock). When asked if she felt that she and her husband should live together, she responded:

> Yes, my heart wants it, my heart is always there with my husband. But I also have children and we need money to bring them up, for their education and other needs.

Another women respondent from Gaya, Bihar told us:

> *Jivan saath bitana aasambhav hai kyonki naukri-chakri yaha hain nahi. Aur waha who itna kamate nahi ki hum chale jaye* (It is impossible for my husband and I to live together. There is no work here so he has to go out. But there, he does not earn enough for me to live with him).

The absence of men meant that women were increasingly visible in all aspects of village life. Indeed, detailed survey data show on workers aged 15-64 years show that among migrant households, women workers far outnumbered men except in the village in Dhule where male and female workers were roughly equal; in fact, in the high outmigration village sites in Bankura and Gaya, women workers were over twice than that of their male counterparts. These women performed increased roles in household productive and reproductive spheres.

On the production site, analysis of survey data on occupation by gender (Tables 2, 3, 4, 5) show that in almost all sites there number of women workers exceeded that of men as a result of male-dominated migration, and these women performed increased role in household's productive functions. In particular, household agriculture responsibility fell on women. And while the migrant men timed their home visits to help in household agriculture in the origin, farming was increasingly the preserve of women, and they now performed all tasks in farming – from sowing to harvesting. Importantly, family farming now also involves young women who

Women sowing the onion crop in Dhule, Maharashtra. Agriculture is the main livelihood activity in the region, and women participate in farming in equal measure as men. Some activities just as sowing the onion crop predominantly involves women.

were otherwise expected to follow seclusion norms. For example, Mala Devi (name changed), a 25-year-old woman from Yadav community whose husband was a migrant told us:

> In our community, young women do not usually do farming. We are not supposed to even step out of the house at this age. But there is no male member in my family. So I work on the land mostly. My husband helps me when he is around. But he is here for a few days each time he comes home. This land requires a bit of work. But my husband also works very hard in *bidesh* (city). And it is our land. If I do not look after it, it will grow grass and be ruined.

But women's contributions in agriculture as primary producers in our farms were rarely acknowledged, and across all study sites fewer women than men were reported to be "cultivators". Importantly, it was often women who described their husbands in-charge of family agriculture work even when the latter

were away in cities. Women did this because they considered work on family farms as an extension of their domestic duties. Fieldwork also revealed that informality of urban jobs and uncertainty that comes with it meant that husbands were not *always* able to send remittances. This meant that women also worked as farm labourers on others' land to fend for their households. Indeed, women's presence on fields was quite ubiquitous, and there was a certain degree of feminization of farming. Of course, there were site-specific nuances to these dynamics. In Dhule, Maharashtra, for instance, with significant tribal population and where there are large farms, women work in agriculture was not always a result of male migration. Rather, it was a part of local livelihoods: tribal women worked on family land as well as on others' field for wages. But migration generally required women to take on enhanced roles in household productive functions. Many women also worked as unpaid labourers on family-run enterprises (such as Kirana shops, household industries etc.), MGNREGA workers and other manual labourers.

Table 6.2: Workers by occupation and gender among migrant households in Bankura, West Bengal

Occupation	Main activity		Secondary activity	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cultivator	64.5	0.0	0.0	18.4
Agricultural labour	6.5	0.0	34.8	20.4
MGNREGA	0.0	0.0	26.1	22.4
Construction worker	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0
Other manual labour	0.0	0.0	17.4	20.4
Unpaid family worker in HH enterprise	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Domestic duties (including collecting firewood, cattlefeed etc)	3.2	93.1	0.0	0.0
Total workers aged 15-64 years	**31**	**72**	**23**	**49**

Table 6.3: Workers by occupation and gender among migrant households in Dhule, Maharashtra

Occupation	Main activity		Secondary activity	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cultivator	46.7	3.1	3.9	0.0
Agricultural labour	23.7	20.2	47.6	23.0
MGNREGA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Construction worker	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other manual labour	1.5	0.0	16.5	0.9
Unpaid family worker in HH enterprise	10.4	20.9	24.3	53.1
Domestic duties (including collecting firewood, cattlefeed etc)	0.7	45.7	0.0	22.1
Total workers aged 15-64 years	**135**	**129**	**103**	**113**

Table 6.4: Workers by occupation and gender among migrant households in Gaya, Bihar

Occupation	Primary		Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cultivator	23.1	6.7	20.4	6.8
Agricultural labour	2.2	3.6	40.8	46.2
MGNREGA	0.0	0.0	2.0	1.7
Construction worker	24.2	7.6	12.2	7.7
Other manual labour	6.6	1.3	6.1	0.0
Unpaid family worker in HH enterprise	2.2	0.4	2.0	9.4
Domestic duties (including collecting firewood, cattlefeed etc)	4.4	66.4	8.2	25.6
Total workers aged 15-64 years	**91**	**223**	**49**	**117**

Table 6.5: Workers by occupation and gender among migrant households in Hanumangarh, Rajasthan

Occupation	Primary		Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cultivator	48.8	3.5	77.8	75.0
Agricultural labour	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
MGNREGA	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Construction worker	4.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other manual labour	7.3	0.0	11.1	0.0
Unpaid family worker in HH enterprise	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Domestic duties (including collecting firewood, cattlefeed etc)	4.9	80.7	0.0	6.3
Total workers aged 15-64 years	**41**	**57**	**9**	**16**

Source: all data, IHDP Primary Survey, 2022.

Note that these tables present data on key occupational categories and exclude the occupations with very low-frequencies such as hawker, moneylender etc. So the total percentage may not add up to 100 percent.

But women's contributions in agriculture as primary producers in our farms were rarely acknowledged, and across all study sites fewer women than men were reported to be "cultivators". Importantly, it was often women who described their husbands in-charge of family agriculture work even when the latter were away in cities. Women did this because they considered work on family farms as an extension of their domestic duties. Fieldwork also revealed that informality of urban jobs and uncertainty that comes with it meant that husbands were not *always* able to send remittances. This meant that women also worked as farm labourers on others' land to fend for their households. Indeed, women's presence on fields was quite ubiquitous, and there was a certain degree of feminization of farming. Of course, there were site-specific nuances to these dynamics. In Dhule, Maharashtra, for instance, with significant tribal population and where there are large farms, women work in agriculture was

not always a result of male migration. Rather, it was a part of local livelihoods: tribal women worked on family land as well as on others' field for wages. But migration generally required women to take on enhanced roles in household productive functions. Many women also worked as unpaid labourers on family-run enterprises (such as Kirana shops, household industries etc.), MGNREGA workers and other manual labourers.

This often created more gender-based vulnerabilities for women. First, despite their increased roles in agriculture, women who stayed behind seemed to suffer from high food insecurity. This was not always because they did not have access to enough food, nor were they victims of cultural expectations prevalent in many parts of India that dictate women eat after the adult men of the family and often what is left over as men were not there for a large part of the year. Moreover, women's greater engagement in work outside the four walls of the house improved their position within the household, enabling them to stake greater claims on the family's resources. But food insecurity among women occurred because their increased work burden created *time poverty* which meant that they often skipped meals or did not eat at the right time. To quote a woman respondent with a migrant husband:

> Money is always a problem in this house. Look at our place – do we look well-off? But he [husband] sends me money which keeps us going, and we have some land here that I till. I wish we had more money but I am grateful that we do not have to worry about the basics. We have enough to eat, and we have a roof on our head. But life is not easy without him being here. Kids, house, field, groceries – sometimes I have just too much to juggle that I do not have time to eat. But that is fine. My husband's job is also difficult. I suspect and worry that he does not eat well either.

Second, male migration also necessitated women's greater engagement with the society, market, and the state. This enhanced women's mobility and created space for their empowerment. For example, Kanta Devi (name changed), a 26-year-old woman from Manjhi caste from the village in Gaya whose husband worked and lived in Gaya district and came home once in two months for two-seven days, told us:

> In the village society, women are generally not allowed to roam freely. We are supposed to be within the four walls of the house. You get some freedom when you grow older...It is the men who take care of the 'outside' (bahar ka kaam) while we look after the 'inside' (ghar ka kaam). But what to do when my man is not here? I do both ghar aur bahar – cooking, cleaning, kids, market shopping, Panchayat meetings. Frankly, it is nice to have this freedom. I learn so much. Though I wish my husband was around and I could do all this with him.

At the same time, many women reported facing difficulties in performing these 'outside' roles. In particular, women's greater engagement with the state for obtaining social protection benefits such as subsidised food rations under the Public Distribution System (PDS), scholarship and pensions for the dependent children and elderly and so on came with its own challenges. To be sure, women's engagement with state institutions

as a result of male migration created space for their political empowerment.[306] But the patriarchal contexts within which they operated created new gender-specific vulnerabilities. The state-run institutions such as Block Development Office, Gram Panchayat or PDS ration shops were largely run by men who often denied women household heads of their rightful claims on government benefits in the absence of male members. Fieldwork in Bihar and West Bengal revealed that it was not uncommon for women to not get PDS rations for a few months of the year whereas this was not the case for male-headed non-migrant households. More importantly, it also added to their work burden. In the words of Kausahlya Devi (name changed), a 25-year-old woman from Ravidas community (Scheduled Caste) from village site in Gaya who obtained a bachelor's degree and who struggled to get her family on PDS rolls because they did not have a ration card:

> *Sab babu sahab mard hai. Aurat ko badawa dena, unko aachi siksha dena sab theek hai. Lekin yeh sab hone ke baad bi daftar mein toh aurat nahi baithti? Ek-aad jo baithti hai unki koi chalti nahi. Aur babu sahab ham aurat logo ko kuch nahi samajta hai. Ration card jaise chote se kaam ke liye teen-char chakkar lagwata hai humko. Aurat ghar sambhale ki yehi kaam kare.*
> (All the government officials are men. All this talk of women empowerment, women education is fine. But where are women in government offices? A few who make it have no say. And the men there do not understand us. Even for small things like ration card we have to go a few times. Do we look after our house and family or keep doing this?)

On the reproduction front, women provided their care and emotional labour for the dependent children and elderly which often came at the expense of their own health and wellbeing. While men rarely engaged in caring duties even when they were present, women's greater engagement in productive sphere made care work more daunting. And while they did not outrightly complained, and in fact, derived their sense of self-worth from caring duties often due to internalization of patriarchal roles, the enhanced burden of social reproduction due to male migration left them depleted. Kausahlya Devi, quoted above, told me:

> *Ghar-sansar toh aurat ko hi dekhna hota hai. Yehi toh hamara dharam hai. Mere do bacche hai ek 3 saal ki ladki or aur ek 2 saal ka ladka. Maa ko toh khushi hoti hai baccho ko palna, unko kaabil banana. Main padke kuch jyada nahi kar payi lekin unko kaabil banungi. Wo yaha hote toh aur aacha hota. Kabhi-kabhi akele bahut thak jaati hu sab karke. Aur who hote toh thoda haath batate. Aur kuch nahi toh mujhe sahara dete, mera dukh-dard sunte.*
> (Housework is a woman's responsibility. It is our dharma. I have two kids – a 3-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son. As a mother, I feel very happy to raise them, to make them capable to do well in life. I could not make much use of my studies, but I want them to do well. It would have been great if my husband was also around. Sometimes, I feel very tired doing all this alone. If he was here, he would have helped. If nothing, I he would have been there to listen to me, to understand my pain.)

306 also see Kumar, "Left behind or Left Ahead? Implications of Male Migration on Female Political Engagement."

This issue of "depletion through social reproduction"[307] remains largely neglected in research and policy discourse on male migration. While the feminist scholarship has highlighted the invisible contributions of women's socially reproductive labour to support economic growth, the effects of "intimate subsidies"[308] that women provide to sustain male migration on women's own wellbeing are not adequately understood. Although the present study did not measure these outcomes, some insights are provided by a recent study based on India Human Development Survey data covering a nationwide sample of 19,737 women with migrant husbands. The study showed that absence of husbands due to migration had an overall negative impact on left-behind women's self-reported health, and that extra burden of responsibilities contributed to poor health outcomes.[309]

Conclusion

This chapter looks at labour migration through the lens of social reproduction. With a focus on the gender, this study highlights the invisible contributions women non-migrants make in enabling and sustaining male migration. The argument pursued here is that the circular male migration that is the predominant form of work mobility in India, and indeed in many developing countries[310], requires migrant families to a have a permanent base in the origin to maintain family and assets such as land, and these tasks of preserving the base and nurturing the family involve women's invisible labour. There is very little understanding, let alone recognition, of the role women non-migrants play in the migration process. Using field-based evidence from rural India, this chapter attempts to situate women's socially reproductive labour more centrally in the labour migration discourse. In so doing, the chapter also recasts migration as a process that involves questions of production, reproduction, and care on the part of those who do not partake in mobility. The findings show that this circular migration regime that hinges on socially reproductive labour produces gender-based vulnerabilities for women left behind.

First, circular male migration and the resultant physical separation of women from their husbands, often for prolonged duration, seems to take a toll on women's wellbeing. While women seem to have internalized this arrangement of a household split between urban and rural, production and reproduction, cash income and care, this separation also causes among them feelings of loneliness and desolation. Second, the absence of men also places additional demands on women's labour to take on households' productive responsibilities pertaining to land and agriculture; women belonging to landless households work on others' land to support their families. This reorganization of family labour helps to counter the livelihood precarity associated with urban informal jobs of male migrants, and also allows the migrant men the option to return to their villages when they cannot find work in cities, or are no longer able to.[311] At the same time, this also creates time poverty for women, and exacerbates their

307 Rai, Hoskyns, and Thomas, "Depletion: The Cost of Social Reproduction," 88.

308 Jain and Jayaram, "The Intimate Subsidies of Left-behind Women of Migrant Households in Western India," 14.

309 Lei and Desai, "Male Out-Migration and the Health of Left-behind Wives in India: The Roles of Remittances, Household Responsibilities, and Autonomy."

310 Breman, "Outcast Labour in Asia: Circulation and Informalization of the Workforce at the Bottom of the Economy"; Potts, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa;* Tumbe, *India Moving: A History of Migration.*

311 Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy; Breman,* "Outcast Labour in Asia: Circulation and Informalization of the Workforce at the Bottom of the Economy."

Women picking the rice post-harvest in the village site in Bankura, West Bengal . The absence of men due to migration results in women taking on household's agriculture responsibilities.

gender-specific vulnerability to poor nutrition and health outcomes. Third, and relatedly, women's increased engagement in productive function does not free them of their domestic work and care duties; in fact, male absence only solidifies patriarchal gender ideologies and places burden of reproduction and care squarely on women leaving them depleted.[312] Finally, while male migration also enhances women's engagement with society, market and the state and provides avenue for their social and political empowerment, these positive outcomes are

312 Rai, Hoskyns, and Thomas, "Depletion: The Cost of Social Reproduction."

often curtailed by patriarchal settings that limit their claims on resources and rights, causing more exhaustion than empowerment.

These findings from remote parts of India have larger significance in the wake of direction of much of the recent migration-gender research. As noted in the beginning, much of the recent gender-inspired migration research has tended to focus on women migrants highlighting their numbers, contributions, and the challenges they face. A critical body of work in this area, inspired by SRT, on global care chains shows how female migration is linked to their traditional gender roles, and the vulnerabilities women migrants face in providing their crucial reproductive, emotional and sexual labour at their new work destinations.[313] However, this line of analysis misses the intimate labour of women non-migrants which underpins so much of the labour migration.[314] The feminisation of migration notwithstanding, in many parts of the world women's face cultural restrictions on their work mobility. But despite these inequalities of migration, women left behind contribute enormously to sustain the migration flows. But the migrant-centric gaze obscures these contributions. The political economy discourse on migration that sees weakened state support to the working poor as a cause of precarious life and livelihood circumstances of migrant workers[315] need to simultaneously pay attention to the vulnerable life worlds of women who are left behind in migration.

313 Ehrenreich and Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy.*

314 Jain and Jayaram, "The Intimate Subsidies of Left-behind Women of Migrant Households in Western India."

315 Breman, Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy; Breman, "Outcast Labour in Asia: Circulation and Informalization of the Workforce at the Bottom of the Economy."

7

Towards intervention

Chetan Choithani

Academic and policy imperatives for focusing on the left behind

This report attempts to understand migration from the perspective of those who stay behind. It challenges the migrant-centric gaze that dominates academic, policy and popular discussions on human mobility, and shows that this analytical focus on those who migrate has obscured the stories of those who do not. Drawing on primary evidence from four strategically selected field sites in rural India, the paper presents evidence on important roles non-migrants play in enabling and sustaining migration even when they do not directly partake in mobility due to the constraints they face. The findings show that temporary, male-dominated migration that is a characteristic feature of labour mobility in large parts of rural India, and indeed, in much of rural Global South, requires migrants to have a permanent village base to maintain assets and family, and non-migrants contribute enormously to these tasks. Migration altered the land and agrarian relations in which older adults took on farming allowing younger members of the households to seek better jobs; in other cases where this family labour was not available, landless and landpoor non-migrants households tended migrant households' land through sharecropping arrangements which also provided an important source of food security to these disadvantaged households. Second, within the migrant households, women played enhanced roles in productive and reproductive spheres thereby making up for the male labour lost to migration. These findings warrant a need for viewing migration as a process involving relational exchanges between migrants and non-migrants. The integral role non-migrants play in migration process also provides a strong imperative for their inclusion on migration agenda. These issues have wider significance, and the inclusion of the stayers has the potential to substantially enrich the academic and policy contributions of migration studies.

The academic merit for focusing on the non-migrant lies in its potential to strengthen the theoretical base of migration studies by reviving the classic migration questions of *who migrates* and by extension, *who does not and why not*? These fundamental concerns have been at the core of migration studies, and in many ways, have defined the field since the first systematic attempt over a century ago.[316] These questions have shed useful light on conditions, intentions and motivation underlying migration decisions. They have also

316 Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," 1885; Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," 1889.

provided valuable insights into issues of migrant selectivity and background characteristics of migrants as well as those who do not move[317], which, in turn, have emphasised the highly unequal nature of the migration process. For example, in general women outnumber men in migration because patriarchal norms dictate that they change their residence after marriage to live with their husbands. By the same token, dominant social conventions that place men in breadwinner roles and restrict women's work participation mean that in many parts of the world labour migration is predominantly a male pursuit.[318] And although economic motives that include "the desire inherent in most men to 'better' themselves in material respects"[319] underpins much of the work-related migration, migrants are seldom the poorest of the poor because they lack the resources to partake in migration.[320] Furthermore, while relative deprivation often provides a prompt for people to change residence, migration also fuels and widens inequalities.[321] These insights underscore a relational and processual understanding of migration in which the immobile are tied and affected in the migration process but are forgotten in much of the recent migrant-centered research. This lens can broaden the canvass and allow us to consider migration more holistically – one in which non-migrant are constitutive elements, and even agents, in the wider process. This approach that simultaneously pays attention to the non-migrants can provide the theoretical fodder to invigorate migration studies which, despite a flurry of research activity over the past few decades, remains an "under-theorised field of social inquiry".[322]. This perspective can also help us navigate two critical but unresolved questions raised by Jørgen Carling over two decades ago: "First, at the micro level, how do we account for the migration of some and the non-migration of others in a single framework? Second, at the macro level, why is there not much more migration in the world today?"[323] In all, the inclusion of the immobile can significantly enhance the theoretical foundation and conceptual toolkit of migration studies.

There is also a policy imperative for the recognition of the left behind. This is not only because the number of non-migrants far exceeds the migrants, but also because of their functional role of the former in the migration process and a range of questions that role raises. The policy relevance of migration is now well established, and it is manifested in the declarations about the unprecedented levels of mobility in the world. Furthermore, unlike earlier when policymakers viewed migration as a problem that ought to be contained, the past few years have seen a reversal of this stance notwithstanding the political rhetoric in some quarters of greater migration controls. Indeed, migration is now increasingly seen as a positive process, and leading global policymaking institutions have lent their institutional backing to encourage migration as a means to promote equitable and sustainable development.[324] But, as noted earlier, this official policy position equates development

317 Lee, "A Theory of Migration."

318 Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

319 Ravenstein, "The Laws of Migration," 1889, 286.

320 Connell et al., Migration from Rural Areas. The Evidence from Village Studies.

321 Lipton, "Migration from Rural Areas of Poor Countries: The Impact on Rural Productivity and Income Distribution."

322 De Haas, "A Theory of Migration: The Aspirations-Capabilities Framework," 1.

323 Carling, "Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences," 8.

324 DFID, *Moving out of Poverty: Making Migration Work Better for Poor People;* World Bank, "World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography"; UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development"; IOM, "IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development."

narrowly with the economic contributions of migrants and, therefore, calls for supporting migrants at various stages of the migration. This view does not see migration as a relational and social process of which non-migrants are an integral part, except as the recipient of migrants' remittances.[325] It omits the "invisible economies of care"[326] of non-migrants that support migration in important ways, and the different set of questions this support poses. Thus: "In focusing on the immobile, the lens of analysis shifts across three registers: from production to reproduction; from those who work to those who support such work; and from economics to care."[327] It is in recognizing this socially reproductive labour underpinning migration that the scope of migration policy interventions can be enhanced. Thus, those who move can move because others stay back. This is particularly important in the context of circular, short-term migration which is a predominant form of mobility in many parts of the Global South.[328] This migration requires maintaining interests at the origin and relies on the labour of non-migrants.[329] But this can also leave the left-behind populations vulnerable and depleted. Since migration generally occurs from underdeveloped to advanced regions[330], the left behind often have to endure economic backwardness at the origin with limited access to opportunities to enhance their wellbeing. As the findings presented above show that single-male migration which leads to the phenomenon of women heading their households results in reduced access of these women-headed families to government-run subsidised food ration programme because gender norms curtail women's rightful claims to welfare entitlements.[331] Recognizing these vulnerabilities can result into more inclusive and equitable policies and interventions that not only address the needs of migrants but also uplift the immobile.

Specific interventions

In terms of specific interventions, the findings suggest that there are three measures worth consideration.

First, there is a need to understand that migration often reconfigures households' engagement with land and agriculture. Given migration usually involves able-bodied young persons, this shifts the family responsibility to left-behind older individuals within the household. Indeed, a large number of farmers across study sites were older adults. While this raises a number of issues, one particular aspect that requires particular attention is the health needs of older adults. This is particularly important, given the virtual absence of mechanization of agriculture in the study areas. Farming demands hard manual labour under difficult conditions. The older adults already are vulnerable to age-related health issues and, if unattended, farm work can exacerbate their health concerns. A key area of intervention therefore is providing health support to older farmers which not just enables them to contribute to household livelihoods

325 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

326 Shah and Lerche, "Migration and the Invisible Economies of Care: Production, Social Reproduction and Seasonal Migrant Labour in India," 720.

327 Phongsiri et al., "Mind the Gap! Revisiting the Migration Optimism/Pessimism Debate," 10.

328 Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy;* Potts, *Circular Migration in Zimbabwe and Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa;* Tumbe, *India Moving: A History of Migration.*

329 Shah and Lerche, "Migration and the Invisible Economies of Care: Production, Social Reproduction and Seasonal Migrant Labour in India."

330 UNDP, "Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development."

331 also see Choithani, "Gendered Livelihoods: Migrating Men, Left-behind Women and Household Food Security in India."

amidst the transformation but also improves their wellbeing.

Second, and relatedly, in families where this labour is not available, migrant households lease out land to pursue nonfarm urban jobs either locally or in distant labour markets. While this land leasing enables the migrant households to protect their land and maintain their rural base to which they can return to when cities turn hostile to them as was witnessed during Covid-19 pandemic, they rarely report these land transactions because of official curbs on land leasing. Importantly, those leasing in land are more forthright in reporting these farming arrangements. The findings suggest that those leasing in land are predominantly non-migrant households from socio-economically disadvantaged caste groups. This indicates that migration-induced changes in land relations can also provide access to land to those who are left behind. In other words, it is not just the lessor migrant households who are able to preserve their land through leasing out but also the lessee non-migrant families who gain access to scarce land resources though leasing land in. That said, this can also make the left-behind, non-migrant households more vulnerable as their access to land through leasing arrangements coincides with growing pressures on farm-dependent livelihoods which often acts as a push for the migrant households to diversify away from direct farming. Given that state-supported compensation in the event of crop failures due to weather shocks is based on land titles which the lessee non-migrant households do not own, they are left out from these institutional safety nets despite bearing the costs of farm inputs and putting their labour. This can exacerbate the vulnerability of these already disadvantaged communities and add to existing inequalities. It is, therefore, important to ensure that these emerging land relations do not result in such adverse outcomes for the left-behind household. Better still, there is a need to think how this agrarian regime based on leasing can help the poor households tide through the process of rural transformation and improve their lot in the long run (for example, through adequately realising the food security function of land for the landless and land-poor households which can free up resources for children's education). To this end, an intervention should begin with the recognition that official curbs on leasing are often counterproductive and that informal land leasing persists. A more pertinent issue is how to leverage these arrangements to benefit both the land lessees and lessors. It is important to note that recognizing the vulnerabilities of the marginalised non-migrant lessee households should be balanced by not undermining the land titles of lessor migrant households (who too trudge through precarities of rural transformation) for these arrangements to work.[332] Perhaps a useful approach in terms of intervention is to put in place an institutional arrangement in the form of a land leasing cooperative that mediates between these two groups: it enables landed households to lease out without fear of losing their titles, and facilitates landless and land-poor households to lease in land for their livelihoods and protects them from income shocks.

Third, the migration-inequality nexus has an important gender dimension to it. As the findings show, migrants across study sites were predominantly men while the women faced socio-cultural restrictions on their mobility. Women's immobility is also linked to the precarious circular migration regime that requires migrant

332 Indeed, the fear of losing land among the landed household prevents them from reporting leasing out land which hampers policy measures.

households to preserve a permanent base in the origin to maintain family and land – tasks that have fallen on the shoulders the women left behind. Indeed, men can migrate only because women stay back to take on enhanced responsibilities of household productive and reproductive functions, but these contributions of women left-behind are obscured in the migrant-centric gaze that characterizes much academic, policy and popular discussion on migration. There is a need to acknowledge the role women play in migration process. This recognition is important because it can also help identify suitable interventions to reduce the gender-based vulnerabilities of the women left behind. One major issue that emerged was that women's enhanced roles in family agriculture and care work in the absence of their men left them depleted. This calls for institutional support that can help women cope with their added burden of responsibilities. One possible intervention is galvanizing village-level *Aaganwadi* centers for childcare that can take some burden off the women left behind. Currently, the *Aaganwadi* centers provide nutritional assistance and pre-school education to children aged 3-6 years usually from disadvantaged communities, and these children spend a few hours a day at these centers for nutritional and educational services. However, the *Aaganwadi* centers enroll children on the basis of their nutritional status and only those children suffering from undernutrition and poor growth outcomes get support through these centers. While this is an important initiative to combat child undernutrition, the *Aaganwadi* infrastructure can be strengthened to provide childcare support to women left behind struggling with added burden of productive and reproductive responsibilities. This can also provide women some leisure time that can reduce the emotional toll caused by the prolonged absence of migrant husbands.

PART 2

INTERLINKED CIRCUITS OF MIGRATION

Paul Thomas

8

Migration led migration in Kerala

Paul Thomas

In 1964, a fifteen-year-old Haneefa travelled from the Malabar coast to the Persian Gulf (now United Arab Emirates) in a sailboat, in a desperate attempt to escape the extreme poverty his family faced. He was uncertain about his safe arrival in a boat too flimsy for the long journey on the high seas. He had no travel documents, no plans of what he would do once he reached his destination, where he would work, what skill sets were needed, and he didn't even know the local language – Arabic. The only thing he knew about the Gulf was that there were job opportunities.

In 2014, seventeen-year-old Humayun came to Ernakulam, Kerala from Murshidabad in West Bengal. He travelled with his 21-year-old cousin, who had already spent two years in Kerala, hoping to work in a hotel. For Humayun, who dropped out of school after 8th grade, travelling to Kerala gave him hope. His village offered very few prospects for a better livelihood.

Muhsin, a 26-year-old mechanical engineering graduate, migrated to the UK in 2022 as a dependent of his wife Nazrin. After he got to know that student visas to the UK allowed family to migrate with the student, Muhsin encouraged his wife, soon after marriage, to enrol for coaching to clear the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Nazrin secured admission to a Masters's course in Biotechnology in the UK, making it possible forboth of them to migrate. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed their migration plans, but Brexit and the pandemic created a labour shortage in the UK, especially for care workers. The UK government responded by relaxing its immigration policies for care workers. from this sector. Many young Keralites like Muhsin and Nazrin used this window to migrate to the UK.

The three migration stories, at first glance, look independent and disconnected from each other. The temporal spacing between each migration is one reason for viewing each migration separately. Another reason to treat these three cases as separate is because migration is typically seen as an event. As an event, migration has a beginning at the place of origin and an end at the destination. Gulf migration is seen as an event beginning in Kerala and ending at the Gulf, internal migration is an event where people come to Kerala from less-developed villages in the northern and eastern states of India, and migration to the United Kingdom begins in Kerala and ends in the West.

Migration, however, involves much more than just the act of migration. Viewing Gulf migration as no more than an event leaves out of consideration several important aspects of the process. When seen as an event, Gulf

migration from Kerala is primarily a story of labour responding to a lack of employment opportunities in the state, and migrating to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to seize new-found employment opportunities there. But around that act of migration were stories of support that provided the migration capital – economic, social, and cultural – that enabled the migration. There were also stories of what happened to the economy that was left behind, with many its younger workers no longer locally available for work. After the event of migration, there was the effect of the migrant on the economy of his place of origin through the flow of remittances, both social and economic, and the instrumentality of these remittances in triggering further processes in the place of origin as well as at the destination. The event of migration is just a point in the larger process. While the event may have received a great deal of attention, it would not have been possible without the larger process; a process that continues well after the event of migration.

One of the implications of migration as a process, rather than just an event, is that the exercise does not end with the act of migration. Each individual event of migration generates responses that initiate other processes. What the migrants leave behind attracts other processes, just as their remittances later set off yet other processes. The effects of one process can be the beginning of another. The initial act of migration can result in remittances, and the use of remittances for investment initiates new processes in the place of origin of the migrant. In this chain of interlinked processes, it is possible that one process of migration can end by setting off another process of migration. This process of migration leading to migration raises several questions that can be missed if acts of migration are seen as independent, largely unconnected, events. Does an event of migration create conditions that initiate other migrations? What is the effect on a place that is the origin of one migration and the destination of another? Do migrants across these very different events share behavioural patterns? If they do, what is its effect on social identity? And what do these interconnected processes of migration do to the idea of home?

This book is an effort to address these questions by taking a closer look at a place that is the origin of more than one set of events of migration, even as it is the destination of another set.

From events to processes

When migration is seen as an event, larger migration patterns are explained by aggregating conditions individual migrants face. Arthur Lewis famously demonstrated how surplus labour from subsistence sectors moves to capitalist sectors due to higher productivity and wages in the latter sectors[333]. In traditional sectors like agriculture, labour is abundant and capital is scarce, while the capitalist sectors have an inverse situation where labour is scarce and capital is abundant. This difference in the availability of labour in both sectors results in the wage difference between the sectors, hence, labour moves from the traditional sector to the capitalist sector. Migration is then largely driven by the differences between the two sectors. This model has been the basis for economic development related explanations of migration. Harris and Todaro, for instance, looked to expected wage differentials rather than actual differences in wages to explain migration.[334]

333 Lewis, "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour."

334 Harris and Todaro, "Migration, Unemployment and Development."

The explanation of migration as a part of economic development soon found a need to look beyond single events of migration. Fei and Ranis took Lewis's argument beyond a single migration event to recognize different phases in the relationship between the agricultural and the industrial sectors.[335] They begin with an argument similar to that of the Lewis model in that labour moves from a low productivity agricultural sector to a higher productivity industrial economy. As labour moves away from agriculture there is a lower supply of food which leads to higher prices and a decrease in the real wages in industry. As a result, the rate at which industry can grow depends on the surplus food the agricultural sector can provide. Both Lewis and Fei-Ranis models explain migration as a result of geographic differences in the demand and supply of the labour force within a country.

There is an element of time implicit in the Fei-Ranis model when it indicates a movement from one phase to another. This is abstract time and could be used in diverse societies. There have been scholars who are interested not so much in abstract time but in historical time. For them migration needs to be studied in its historical context. Migration becomes a part of historical processes involving changes in socio-economic and political processes.[336]

Among the factors that change through history is the relationship between the state and migration. Adamson and Tsourapas argue that the developmental migration state aims to use emigration policy for exporting labour and decreasing domestic socio-economic pressures.[337] James Hollifield's conceptualisation of the 'migration state' has guided debates on how different nations respond to migration[338]. An 'emigration state' is the origin state that supplies a large number of migrants through formal dedicated channels and well-framed migration policies. States which promote emigration for economic motives by bringing remittances are called 'labour brokerage states'[339].

As the study of migration has moved well beyond its economic boundaries, there has been a greater recognition of the cultural dimension. The 'culture of migration' is beginning to gain greater attention with the term referring to the set of beliefs, values, practices, and behaviours within a society that are shaped by migration experiences[340]. These experiences include the migration experience of the migrants themselves as well as the non-migrants too. These experiences can lead to increasing the incidence of migration in a particular society where migration becomes a part of their history, everyday lives and also future ambitions. Thus, as Sjaastad has argued "migration cannot be viewed in isolation; complementary investments in the human agent are probably as important or more important than the migration process itself."[341] Before migration, one must invest in learning new skills for work at the destination, arrange capital for mobility, and prepare for the destination's socio-cultural and psychological settings.

The need to view migration as a larger broad-based historical process is reflected in Doulgas

335 Ranis and Fei, "A Theory of Economic Development."

336 Massey, "Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration"; Morawska, "The Sociology and Historiography of Immigration"; McNeill, "Human Migration in Historical Perspective."

337 Adamson and Tsourapas, "The Migration State in the Global South."

338 Hollifield, "The Emerging Migration State."

339 Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export.*

340 Cohen and Sirkeci, *Cultures of Migration.*

341 Sjaastad, "The Costs and Returns of Human Migration."

Massey's cumulative causation of migration, which looks at migration from a longitudinal perspective and calls for multiple levels of analysis within it. The "interconnections among individual behaviours, household strategies, community structures, and national political economies indicates that inter-level and temporal dependencies are inherent to the migration process and give it a strong momentum"[342]. The cumulative causation theory argues that migration alters the social structure of a sending region, which creates conditions for subsequent migration from the region. These conditions are created by the expansion of migration capital, networks, and institutions through positive feedback from the first migration process.

The process of migration having multiple interlinked dimensions has led to some recognition of the possibility of interlinkages between different processes of migration. Another strand of work looks at migration as a process of interlinkages between different migrations. Research on interlinkages of migration has highlighted the complex and multi-local nature of migration processes.[343] This complexity is particularly evident in Asia, where internal and international migration are interconnected and can lead to each other.[344]. The triggers, constraints, and resources shaping both types of migration are similar, suggesting an opportunity for greater theoretical integration.[345] The global human migration network has become more interconnected over time, with migrant destination choices influenced by historical, cultural, and economic factors.[346].

There have been some attempts made by migration scholars to examine the linkages between international and internal migration systems. Some studies have tried to blur the distinctions between international and internal migrations in a scenario where both can happen simultaneously from a place. Ronald Skeldon, using examples from Southeast Asia gives two scenarios where the international and internal migration can be linked[347]. For the first scenario he explains the case where internal migration can lead to internal international migration. In this scenario, internal migration to urban centres (large city capitals where information and infrastructure for international migration is available) becomes a prerequisite for international migration to occur. In this case the migrants who engage in internal and international migration are the same. A migrant first moves to an urban centre within the country and then gains access to migration information and migration capital before he embarks for his international migration. The second scenario of interlinked migration is where international migration leads to internal migration. Skeldon gives the example of Kerala in India, Mirapur in Pakistan and Sylhet in Bangladesh which had large number of international migrations leading to labour shortage in the local economy, which further led to internal migration to fill in the labour vacuum. The second scenario is different from the first case not just in terms of the relationships between internal and international migration being reversed but, in this case, the individuals involved in the internal and international migration are also different.

342 Massey, "Social Structure, Household Strategies, and the Cumulative Causation of Migration."

343 Thieme, "Where to Return To?"

344 Skeldon, "Interlinkages between Internal and International Migration and Development in the Asian Region," 2006.

345 Bernard and Perales, "Linking Internal and International Migration in 13 European Countries.".

346 Davis et al., "Global Spatio-Temporal Patterns in Human Migration."

347 Skeldon, "Interlinkages between Internal and International Migration and Development in the Asian Region," 2006.

Skeldon's perceptive work on interlinked migration emphasises the distinction between international and internal migration. By viewing interlinked migration as one that links two quite different processes of migration, Skeldon has, implicitly if not entirely explicitly, brought to the fore the issue of autonomy and interaction between the processes of migration. The autonomy in the Skeldon formulation is largely the result of the processes of international and internal migration having very different points of origin and destinations. Autonomy could also occur when the process of migration recreates itself. Such regenerative processes could occur in both international and internal migration. This would lead to another distinction between processes of migration: the difference between what can be termed labour circuits and open migration.

Labour circuits of migration

In her work on Global cities, Sassen examines how cities are integrated into global circuits through technology, MNCs, investment and trade, global capital market and transnational labour flows[348]. A circuit being a route or movement that starts and ends at the same point, capital circuits are complex flows of financial capital within and between global cities. These circuits involve the movement of money, investments and financial instruments connecting different centres across the globe. The characteristics of a capital circuit are that it returns to its origin, and hence, is circular. The second characteristic of a capital circuit is that it does not have spillovers. For example, the capital that comes to the information and communication technology sector in Bengaluru in India from California in the US through investments will go back to their bases in California with multiplied returns. The investments made in Bengaluru by the big tech companies will be largely confined to the Information Technology sector in the city. The capital is used for building information technology campuses, roads that connect these Information technology parks to the airport, and other such infrastructure that is related to the sector. There is, typically, no spillover to other sectors.

Just as capital is hypermobile within a circuit, labour can also form circuits. A labour circuit is a kind of labour migration starting from an origin, staying and working at the destination for a period of time, and eventually returning to the point of origin. The duration of stay at the destination can vary based on each circuit. There can be circuits where labour is employed at the destination for extended periods of years, whereas there can also be labour circuits where labour is brought in for specific short-term assignments. In a labour circuit, the destinations can sometimes change after each subsequent visit home; these are just different directions and routes through which labour moves before it eventually comes back to its origin. Labour circuits enable the process of connecting distant geographies through the hypermobility of labour.

A labour circuit has three characteristics that make it different from a labour migration. The first characteristic of a labour circuit is its circulatory nature. An analogy to an electric circuit can be helpful in understanding the concept of a labour circuit. In an electric circuit, current flows from one point and ends at the same point. Similarly, for a labour circuit, the movement of labour starts and ends at the same point. The second characteristic of a labour circuit is that there is no leakage or spillover of labour from the designated route or purpose for which the labour

348 Sassen, "Locating Cities on Global Circuits."

moves. Leakage or spillover in the context of a labour circuit means that migrants function within their own compartmentalized sectors, and their everyday lives are also segregated from the local people at their destinations. The migrant workers do not deviate from the path of the circuit that they are part of. The migrant workers are segregated based on their home, work, and leisure. In an electric circuit, leakage of current can lead to a short circuit. Similarly, in a labour circuit, if there is any leakage of labour from the circuit, it will affect the efficiency of the labour circuit, by altering the existing economic and socio-political arrangements at the destination. The third characteristic of the labour circuit is the command and control through which the labour circuit functions. Institutions, actors, networks, and capital enable workers to move through the labour circuit both at the origin and destination.

It is essential to distinguish between three types of labour circuit. The first type is circular labour circuit which is the repetitive movement of migrants from home to their destination at fixed intervals. Agricultural workers in rural areas migrate to urban centres when there are no opportunities in the farming sector but return to their farms when it is time for harvesting or sowing. A labour circuit is different from a circular migration in the sense that once the labour returns to its origin, it doesn't migrate further. In other words, it is a life cycle movement of labour where the migrant who has completed his labour circuit has reached his origin for a permanent settlement. Within the labour circuit, a migrant might make multiple trips to their origins for various reasons, but it is his final return to his home that completes a labour circuit. Since a migrant who is part of a labour circuit knows they have to retire at their origins, their aspirations will always be attached to the origin. The second type of labour circuit is short-term and assignment based where labour does not form a fixed pattern of movement between origin and destination like the circular labour circuit, where the destination can keep changing. The third kind of labour circuit is the one where the labour stays at the destination for longer periods of time and the employment is generally more formal and long-term contract based.

In contrast to labour circuits, what is termed here as open migration is migration where a migrant does not face many restrictions on the choice of destination, duration of stay, and residential status. Open migrations are permanent, where the migrants do not return to their places of origin. Open migration can differ based on the reason or motivation for migrating. Labour migration can be open migration when the worker decides to stay back in the destination and naturalise their citizenship to the host country or take the permanent residency option. These options are contingent upon the immigration policies and citizenship laws of the host and origin countries. If the host and destination countries provide scope for dual citizenship, then a migrant might choose to keep his interests in both his origin and destination country. If there is no scope for dual citizenship, one must decide where to settle permanently. This kind of open migration is based on the voluntary decisions of the migrant.

There can also be open migration when people are forced to move or when the migrants make decisions involuntarily. War and political refugees move from out of the distressed locations to new destinations permanently. In recent years, climate-induced migration has also significantly contributed to involuntary open migration, where people leave areas where climate change has made it impossible to live in new

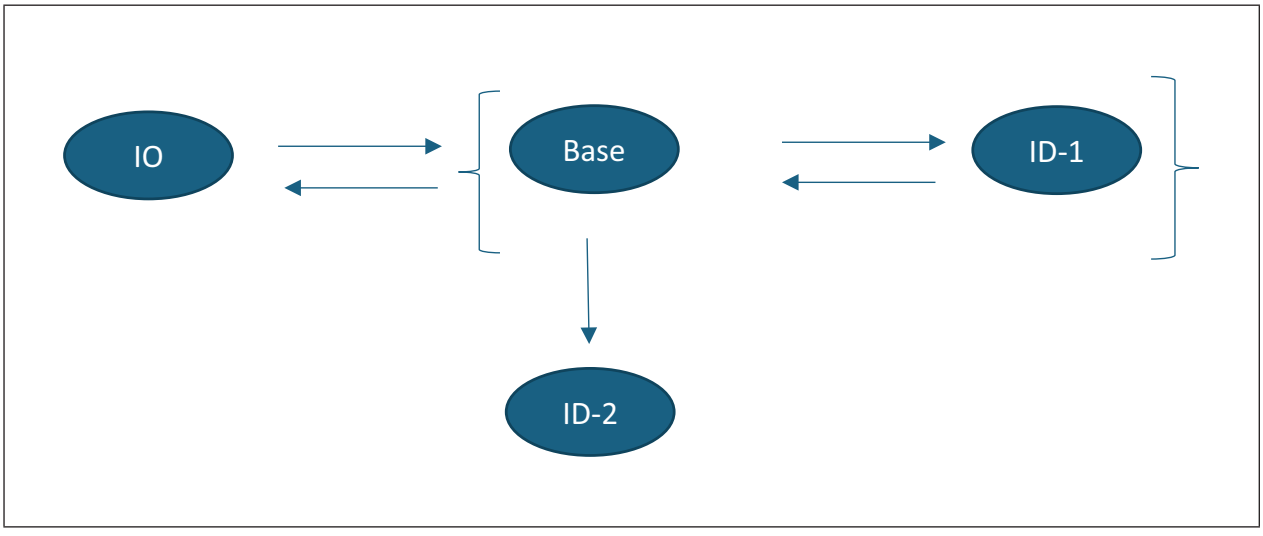
destinations. Whether voluntary or involuntary, in open migration, the prospects and aspirations of the migrants are attached to the destination rather than the origin. In the case of climate and war refugee migration, the origins have become uninhabitable for the migrants, so there is no question about thinking about a return to the origins.

Figure 8.1 gives a schematic functioning of an interlinked migration. First, there is a migration from the base to an international destination (ID-1) primarily due to a lack of local employment options in the base and the higher wages and ample employment opportunities at the destination. The nature of this migration is long-term employment based and they return to their bases once their work contracts are over at the destinations. This movement of labour from the base to ID-1 created a labour vacuum in the base, which is filled by the labour from internal origin (IO). This migration is also similar to the international migration from the base in the sense that there is a temporality element in both migrations. The internal migration is primarily short-term migration where the migrants eventually return to their origin. Over the years, as a result of the social and economic transformations brought in by the first migration from the base to ID-1, there is a new migration trajectory from the base to ID-2. This migration is different from both the other migration in the sense, that this has more permanency nature to it. The migrants do not return to their origins in this migration process.

The first migration from the base to ID-1 forms a labour circuit. The labour migrates from the base to ID-1 and returns back to the base. Similarly, the migration from IO to base is also a labour circuit. A labour circuit can also be a channel for capital flows through remittances. Both economic and social capital also move along with the labour within a circuit. The migration from base to ID-2 is not a labour circuit because the labour does not come back to the origin. It is, hence, an open migration.

Kerala had a chequered history of migration before the advent of the large-scale Gulf migration starting in the 1960s. There was internal migration from the state to other urban centres in India. The southern region of Kerala, which was part of the princely state of Travancore,

Figure 8.1: Labour circuits and open migration in interlinked migration



witnessed educated Christians and upper-caste Hindus migrating to urban centres in Bombay, Delhi and Madras in search of employment in professional and high-skilled jobs. Within the state, there was large-scale migration of Syrian Christians from southern and central Kerala to northern Kerala, starting from the early decades of the 20th century and continuing till the 1980s, known as the Malabar Migration. Kerala also attracted internal migrants from the nearby states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka primarily for employment in tea plantations, which started in the 1890s and peaked in the 1990s[349]. These three kinds of migration rarely find a place in larger discussions on Kerala's migration and development. This is because compared to the Gulf migration, the number of migrants involved in these migrations were very few. They were also concentrated in specific geographies and limited to certain sectors. Also, the impact these migrants had on the Kerala economy and society is not as significant compared to the Gulf migration regime. These migrations also began before the formation of a unified Kerala., All these reasons contributed to why migrations could not find space in the larger migration story in Kerala.

After the formation of Kerala state in 1956, the initiatives taken by the Communist government in the form of land reforms and interventions in health and education provided the migration capital required for the people to help them tap into the opportunities that arose in the Gulf post-oil boom from the 1960s onwards. The state policy interventions emphasized human capital development of Kerala rather than economic growth, and provided long-term gains for its population and helped in the transformation of Kerala as an emigration state.[350] Health sector interventions resulted in a fitter and healthier populace, and made them suitable for physically demanding jobs during the initial phases of Gulf migration. By accumulating human capital in the form of primary education, it enhanced the capabilities and aspirations of the people to migrate. The mass education policy, which increased literacy in the state, helped people navigate the complexities involved in transnational migration. The migration to GCC countries which involved procurement of passport, visa, transnational mobility would have been extremely difficult for an illiterate person with no formal years of schooling in the 1960s. The benefit of basic literacy can be seen even at the level where a person is able to read a newspaper advertisement on labour recruitment or have a general awareness of the opportunities in the Gulf. The proficiency to read and write was thus an enabling factor in the beginning of the migration process. The ability to write made it possible for the migrants to write letters and build networks in their villages, which later helped in bringing more migrants from the family or village.

Kerala's Gulf migration can also be seen as a movement of surplus labour from a traditional agrarian economy to a modern industrial economy. The movement of labour between the two sectors can be within the country, or it can also be across different countries. The transfer of labour from the traditional sector to the capitalist sector is facilitated by migration. If a country has a capitalist sector large enough to absorb the surplus labour within the country, then the movement of labour is facilitated by internal migration. If the country does not have

349 Tharian et al., "Penetration of Capital into a Traditional Economy."

350 Kurien, "The Kerala Model"; Pani and Jafar, "Mass Education-Led Growth and Non-Agrarian Villages"; Parayil, "The 'Kerala Model' of Development."

a capitalist sector to absorb the surplus labour, then the labour moves outside the country through transnational migration. In the case of Kerala, the state did not have a strong capitalist sector to absorb the surplus labour, which was freed from a traditional *jenmi* land relation after the land reform. This surplus labour migrated transnationally to Middle Eastern countries, which were rapidly industrialising after the discovery of oil reserves. The growing capitalist sectors in these countries demanded a large number of labourers, which was met by international migration from the surplus labour of traditional sectors from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The Indian economy was one of the major economies affected by what Benanav calls "global unemployment" resulting from insufficient labour demand compared to the labour supply[351].

The Gulf migration did not allow for a scope of citizenship; the migrants were 'guest workers' in the Arab countries[352]. These migrations were temporary in the sense that the migrants had to eventually return to Kerala, but long-term employment and extended duration of stay in the Gulf gave this migration a sense of permanencyas well. The labour migration to the Gulf created a labour vacuum in the local economy of Kerala. The labour vacuum was not created just because of the out-migration of local workers from Kerala, but also because the aspirations of people to migrate made them reluctant to enter the local labour market. This labour vacuum was filled by internal migrants coming into Kerala from other states of India. Kerala is witnessing large-scale in-migration of internal migrants, and urbanisation in Kerala is built on migrant labour[353]. Just as the Gulf attracted labour from Kerala, today, Kerala attracts labour from other migrant-sending states in India. The mechanism and drivers of migration of internal migration to Kerala can be partially explained by the theories that were discussed above with respect to the discussions on Gulf migration. The surplus labour premise of the Lewis model and the Fei-Ranis model holds true in the case of internal migration. There is a large number of surplus labourers who are not able to find employment opportunities in the agriculture sectors in many eastern and northern states of India. Internal migration provides a channel for these migrants to find employment opportunities. This internal migration need not always mean a shift in labour from agriculture to the capitalist industrial sector. The migrant labour could very well be employed in the agriculture sector at the destination. There are many migrant workers who are employed in the agricultural sector in the state of Kerala. They are employed in paddy cultivation, plantation work, dairy farming, etc. For instance, it is interesting to note that paddy seeding work, which was traditionally work assigned to women, is now done by migrant male workers in Kerala. Another feature of the internal migration in Kerala that deviates from the norms of the classical development theory is that the service sector becomes an important sector that absorbs the rural migrant labour force. According to the theory, labour is employed in capitalist industrial sectors, but this does not explain the case of Kerala. A large number of internal migrants in Kerala are employed in hotels, trade, and transport. There is also a major chunk of the migrant workers who are employed in the construction sector. It is, in

351 Benanav, "A Global History of Unemployment: Surplus Populations in the World Economy, 1949-2010"; Freeman, "Doubling the Global Workforce."

352 Oommen, "Gulf Migration, Social Remittances and Religion: The Changing Dynamics of Kerala Christians."

353 Skeldon, "Interlinkages between Internal and International Migration and Development in the Asian Region," 2006; Parida and Raman, "A Study on In-Migration, Informal Employment and Urbanization in Kerala"; Peter and Narendran, "Gods Own Workforce CMID."

fact, the largest sector in which migrant workers are employed in Kerala. The construction boom in the state is driven by residential construction rather than commercial construction. Since the construction of houses for residential purposes is considered a consumption good, the internal migrants are employed in sectors that contribute to the consumption economy of the state rather than the production economy. The Todaro-Harris model of rural-urban migration also partially explains this internal migration to Kerala. The expected wage differentials between Kerala and a migrant-sending state are wide because, in terms of actual wages, Kerala fares the highest in the country. According to the Reserve Bank of India's statistics on Indian States, the average daily wage rate in Kerala is 852 rupees as compared to 340 rupees in West Bengal. However, the Todaro-Harris model talks about rural-urban migration, whereas in the case of Kerala many migrants are employed in the rural villages of Kerala. The internal migration to Kerala can be to rural or urban destinations and hence requires further refinement in the model to capture the phenomenon of rural-rural migration[354].

The decline in agriculture productivity, which loosens the ties with land and forces people to look for employment outside agriculture, is the structural transformation that India has been experiencing since the 1990s[355]. Based on the options and actions that people who move out of agriculture take, internal migration plays an important role in navigating and negotiating through this process of rural transformation. The first transformation type, 'Local nonfarm-led transformation', involves people staying in their villages but engaging in non-farm occupations in nearby towns or cities by daily commuting. Tamil Nadu, because of its dispersed industrialization, provides the case of this form of transformation. The second type, 'Marginal worker transformation', is when a high proportion of workers are not able to find employment in the local villages for more than six months a year and migrate long-distance. These inter-state migrations are often male-dominated and involve one or more members of the household. States like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and parts of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, which are developmentally backward, are part of this transformation. The third type of transformation is 'Leaving rural transformation', where workers leave their rural homes for a longer period of time (more permanent in nature) and migrate for livelihood opportunities. The migrants often sustain their ties with their households and extended families at the origin, and we see this kind of transformation in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telengana and West Bengal. The final type of transformation, "Entering agriculture transformation,' is where the rural workers migrate to rural farmlands to engage in agricultural activities. This type of transformation can be seen in parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka, where with the coming of corporate farming, the demand for agriculture labour is met by rural-rural migration of workers.

In all four forms of transformation, mobility and migration act as a crucial process that facilitates the flow of labour from one region to another or one sector to another sector. Kerala is part of the 'Leaving rural transformation', which is evident from the declining agriculture sector and the fast pace of urbanisation in the state. The

354 One could argue that the rural-urban continuum in Kerala is the reason for this complication to some degree where the nature of rural and urban economy has many overlaps and the processes of migration has similarities for both rural and urban areas and the differences are primarily a matter of scale in which these processes unfold.

355 Bajar, "Regional Variation in Rural Transition in India," January 2, 2020; Pani, *Dynamics of Difference,* 2021.

nature of migration that is associated with such a transformation will be more permanent in nature. This is evident from the international migration from Kerala. Regardless of the eventual return of Gulf migrants to Kerala after their employment contracts end, the long stays of migrants in the destination give a characteristic of permanence to the migration. States like West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which send internal migrants to Kerala, are part of the 'Marginal worker transformation' where short-term circular or assignment-based migration is prominent. A large number of internal migrants return to their homes during specific agricultural seasons when their labour is required at home. This circular labour migration involves rural workers coming to cities for work but remaining rooted in their villages and continuing farming activities there when required . Moreover, remittances the workers send to villages fuel remote incipient urbanization in villages, manifesting in massive construction activity and the ensuing change in the built-up environment[356]. Rural farm workers who are pushed out of agriculture in the villages of Northern and Eastern states of India find the higher wages that Kerala offers to be lucrative enough to undertake long-distance internal migration to Kerala. The role of networks is crucial in facilitating this migration[357]. Information about jobs, location, accommodation, and skills required for the jobs are all passed on from the origins to the destinations through networks. Social networks through familial ties, caste and friends are the conduits through which information for migration is passed on. These networks also play the role of social protection by providing housing and food for the new migrants when they arrive at their destinations[358]. These networks, which facilitate internal migration, can sometimes even cross-national boundaries and can take a transnational form, too. For example, many villages in West Bengal and Assam share their borders with Bangladesh, which are often porous, and the movement of people happens both formally and informally. In the historical context, before Partition of India, these villages were unified and had their geographies shared between what is today India and Bangladesh. Later these villages got bifurcated and many families were separated. Even though the border made a division between two countries- India and Bangladesh, the interactions and mobility between the villages on the eastern border of the country continued. People from both countries crossed the borders for work as well as familial reasons. Familial connections rooted historically before the partition still run strong to the extent that these networks often help people across the border find employment in the other country. The migrant worker who has years of experience working in Kerala can share information on job opportunities with his relative in Bangladesh and bring him along to Kerala on his next visit.

The third story of Muhsin, who migrated to the UK on a spouse visa, provides a snapshot of the new migration that has been increasing in Kerala in the past decade. The demographic transition in the Global North has raised new questions, challenges and controversies on migration as a means to meet labour demands and has captured the attention of social scientists, politicians, activists and various transnational organisations[359]. In the United Kingdom, the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit

356 Choithani, *Migration,* Food Security and Development; van Duijne, Nijman, and Choithani, "Injected Urbanism?"; Srivastava, "Growing Precarity, Circular Migration, and the Lockdown in India."

357 Reja and Das, "Labour Migration Within India."

358 Pandey, Mishra, and Singh, "Social Networks as Providers of Social Protection to Urban Migrants in Delhi."

359 Boswell, "Migration in Europe"; Harper, "Economic and Social Implications of Aging Societies"; Willekens, "Demographic Transitions in Europe and the World."

created a labour shortage for care workers. The UK government relaxed immigration policies for international students and allowed them to work as part-time employees. Canada removed the cap on the 20-hour-per-week work policy and allowed students to take up more than one job to meet the labour shortage in the country. The labour shortage associated with the demographic transition from population ageing and shrinking working-age population is met by replacement migration from countries in the Global South[360]. "Replacement migration refers to the international migration that would be needed to offset declines in the size of population, the declines in the population of working age, as well as to offset the overall ageing of a population"[361]. The 'care economy' is a bourgeoning sector in developing countries and this is one of the main areas in which migrant workers are employed. Earlier, the care workers were primarily nurses and other health professional, but with the growing demand for healthcare workers in old age homes and other care institutions, the labour demand was being met by part-time workers who were not certified medical professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic further increased the load on the medical system in many developed countries, getting more part-time student workers and other migrants to work in the care industry under unsafe conditions. The Indian High Commission in London noted that cases of modern slavery and inhumane working conditions are prevalent in many informal care institutions[362].

With globalisation, developing countries are susceptible to immigration policies designed in the Global North, making it easier for developed countries to tap into the labour force (reserve army of labour) of developing countries. From a geopolitical lens, these policies are sometimes explicitly designed to target specific countries. India has become one of the major migrant-sending states to the Global North. Within Europe, the United Kingdom was one of the major destinations for Indian migrants. However, today, Germany, Italy, France, Portugal and even small island countries like Malta and other Eastern European countries are increasingly chosen as destinations by Indian migrants. In 2016, the European Commission and the Government of India collaborated to establish the Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMM) to promote secure, legal, and organised migration while addressing issues associated with irregular migration within the EU-India migration corridor. In absolute numbers, Europe registered more than a six-fold increase in Indian immigrants, from 88,968 in 1990 to 525,891 in 2019[363]. The labour shortage is not limited to the urban centres, and Indians are working today in European farmlands[364].

Moving away from the traditional forms of labour recruitment, student migration is a new avenue facilitating migration flows from the Global South to developed countries. As per recent data, there are more than 6,00,000 international students in Canada, of which 2,40,000 are from India. Within India, Kerala is one of the leading senders of international student migrants. International students provide cheap labour as part-time workers and bring capital flows to these countries as part of tuition fees. As a result, many study- abroad agencies,

360 Ruhs and Anderson, *Who Needs Migrant Workers?;* Keely, "Replacement Migration"; UN Population Division, "Replacement Migration."

361 UN Population Division, "Replacement Migration."

362 Press Trust of India, "50 Indian Students May Be Victims Of Modern Slavery In UK."

363 Bhat and Inamdar, "Indian Diaspora in Europe and Its Interest Representation in Immigration Policies – the UK as a Case Study."

364 Azzeruoli, "The (Sacred) Cow Business."

labour recruiting agents and foreign language coaching institutes, especially German training institutes, have bourgeoned in India in recent years. International student migration has its effects on both origins and the destination. Johanna Waters explores the impact of student mobility on social reproduction in sending and receiving geographies[365]. By taking foreign education as a route to permanent residency and citizenship, youth in developing countries see it as a means to secure social status. On the other hand, universities in the Global North searching for new revenue streams to offset their government's decision to reduce funding to the education sector, find this a way to generate income and meet the labour shortage, thereby facilitating local social reproduction. The existence of a fairly stable and persistent demand for low-skilled labour in the Global North, at least in the medium term, ensures that migration from India to these countries will increase in the coming years.

While the Gulf migration was primarily a labour migration, today, education is the means of migration. Kerala is now bourgeoning with IELTS coaching centres and study abroad agencies. The present wave of migration to Canada and other Western countries is primarily motivated by the aim of naturalising and, hence, is permanent. This new wave of student migration has serious implications for an already ageing state with a shortage of youth labour. Youth who migrate to countries in the global north are looking for permanent residency and citizenship in these countries, which will disrupt the remittance flow to Kerala. Since education in foreign universities is the means to migrate, instead of remittances, there is a reverse flow of capital from Kerala to these countries through tuition fees. These new forms of migration have resulted in the creation of migration industries that facilitate the flow of migration. Migration industries are non-state interventions in migration that shape mobility patterns[366]. Migration infrastructure is "the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility"[367]. In India, emigration and its associated infrastructure, including recruitment and placement agencies, legal regulations, policies, and bilateral agreements, are omnipresent compared to many other regions across the globe. This migration infrastructure is designed to promote the - often temporary - mobility of labour. By adopting the migration infrastructure approach, one can comprehend migration policies and their corresponding legal regulations as components integrated into the overall infrastructure.

Migration as a process

We discussed three different kinds of migration above: first, the migration from Kerala to the Gulf and second, the migration of internal migrants to Kerala and the third is the migration to the West. The Gulf migration and the West migration are both transnational migrations fuelled from the lack of local opportunities in Kerala.

Kerala has long followed a migration-development regime where it has always acted as a global supplier of labour to different nations based on demand. The state has been supplying labour to the Gulf since the 1960s. From 2010s, Kerala has again become a labour supplier to the Global North, which makes it an interesting case

365 Waters, "Emergent Geographies of International Education and Social Exclusion."

366 Cranston, Schapendonk, and Spaan, "New Directions in Exploring the Migration Industries."

367 Xiang and Lindquist, "Migration Infrastructure."

to explore from the lens of an emigration state perspective. The Gulf migration was a result of high unemployment in the 1960s, whereas today, the international migration to the West is primarily due to the highly educated being unemployed in the state. The Gulf migration was fuelled by labour shortage arising from industrial expansion and growth but in the case of the West migration, it is fuelled by demographic transition and labour shortage in these countries. In the first and third case, Kerala is the origin of migration and in the second case Kerala is the destination. How can one find the connections between each of these migrations and see the larger picture? There are theories which help us understand each of these migrations in isolation but doing so will not capture the linkages between these transformations and migrations.

The impact of migration on Kerala's social transformation warrant an interrogation through the lens of social reproduction. The migration story of Kerala can be understood through the interlinkages of social reproduction at different origins and destinations through labour migration. There are multiple interpretations of social reproduction in academic discourse, ranging from the broad regeneration of labour-power by Marx and the reproduction of the social order by Bourdieu to the reproductive labour of women in feminist literature. Social reproduction in the context of migration studies deals primarily with the reproduction of labour power to perpetuate the existing stratifications in the labour market, thus reproducing social inequalities[368]. Social reproduction theories often end at the point of the private sphere of reproduction within the household and domestic spheres. De Haas (2007) notes that migration is often used as a survival and social reproduction strategy by families in migration communities. The global flow of labour reproduces the class structure and social inequality in the global society[369]. First, the migration to the Gulf from Kerala provided the necessary labour for the GCC countries to industrialise and flourish post-oil boom. This also created a new class of migrant labour at the lower tier of the occupation structure to maintain the existing class inequalities in the Gulf countries. The internal migration to Kerala is also doing precisely what the Kerala migration did to the Gulf in the 1960s. The migrant workers in Kerala are forming a new class of migrant labour in the state.They are employed in only specific sectors at the lower end of the occupation hierarchy.

Migration processes are crucial for demographic reproduction both at the origin and destination[370]. The internal migration to Kerala also does the function of demographic reproduction. Kerala is undergoing a demographic transition, where the youth labour force is declining, and the population is ageing. The internal migrant labour fills in the gaps left by the demographic transition in the state. By filling in the labour vacuum in the construction and informal sectors in the state, internal migration facilitates the new wave of student migration to Western countries. Countries in the Global North use temporary foreign worker programs and part-time student work to meet their labour demands[371]. From a reproduction perspective, the migrations in and out of Kerala facilitate reproduction at a global and local level where different groups, classes, and strata, which are distant at origin and destination, are articulated and reproduced.

368 Mezzadri, "On the Value of Social Reproduction"; Naidu, "Circuits of Social Reproduction"; Shah and Lerche, "Migration and the Invisible Economies of Care."

369 Sassen, *Sociology of Globalization.*

370 Canales and Cerón, *Migration, Reproduction and Society.*

371 Strauss and McGrath, "Temporary Migration, Precarious Employment and Unfree Labour Relations."

Among the mobility-enhancing technologies that migrants use in their migration process, mobile phones play the most crucial role. From getting information regarding work to transferring remittances to entertainment, mobile phones are an integral part of being a migrant worker. In fact, it is difficult to spot a migrant in Kerala without his mobile phone in hand. The mobile phone also acts as a status symbol among migrant workers. Owning an iPhone is a common aspiration among young migrants. Mobile phones also act as surveillance tools for migrants to monitor what is happening at their village homes and keep track of the daily events in their villages.

Migration thus structures social inequalities and reproduces them at a transnational level. Social reproduction through migrant labour raises a number of issues concerning labour precariousness and informality, thus becoming a global labour issue[372].

The case of interlinked migration where international migration leads to internal migration becomes novel in migration studies for two reasons. First, the same place becomes both an origin and a destination of migration- an origin for international migration and destination for internal migration. Second, migration itself becomes a reason for further migration. Traditionally, migration is seen as the movement of people from one place to another for reasons related to either origin or destination or even both. There can be pull factors at the destination, like higher wages, better employment opportunities, standard of living, etc., which incentivize individuals to move to the destination. Similarly, there can be push factors at the origin, like low wages, lack of employment opportunities, unfavourable climatic conditions, or political crises, which push people to move to new places with better prospects. All the reasons for migration are exogenous to the process of migration. But in the case of interlinked

372 Mezzadri, "The Social Reproduction of Pandemic Surplus Populations and Global Development Narratives on Inequality and Informal Labour."

migration, migration itself becomes a reason for migration and migration becomes a self-sustaining process.

Circuits and Open Migration in Interlinked Migration in Kerala

In the interlinked migration in Kerala, the interlinkages are between two labour circuits and one open migration. The two labour circuits are the international labour circuit to the Gulf from Malappuram and the second is the internal labour circuit from states in Eastern India. These labour migrations are labour circuits because they return to their origins and complete a circuit. In the lifecycle of a labour circuit, they have made multiple trips home and stayed back for extended periods. Still, in the end, there is a permanent return of labour to where it started its movement; hence, their aspirations are tied to their origins. The open migration in the interlinked migration is the migration to Western countries. The new wave of migration to Western countries like Canada, the UK, Germany and Australia, primarily by students, is motivated by the aspirations to settle in these countries permanently and attain citizenship. The aspirations of the migrating youth are based on the destination countries rather than their origins. If we see interlinked migrations as processes involving a series of interactions, then these diverse processes leave an impact on a place. Massey's concept of place as a product of historical and social processes is useful in understanding how migration trajectories transform a place[373]. Armstrong further underscores the complexity of these trajectories, emphasizing the need for a multi-faceted understanding of migration and place[374].

To understand how migration becomes a reason for migration and how negotiations of interlinked migration happen through home, work and identity it is important to understand the effects of interlinked migrations in multiple spaces. The process of interlinked migration involves negotiations unfolding in multiple spaces. There are many discussions on the concept of space and how they are used in ranging from the physical to social sciences. Without getting into debates on the ontological and topological questions related to space, in this work six categories of spaces are used for analysis[375]. First is the absolute space, which is fixed and can exist itself independently of matter. It is the primary space of individuation. In migration, the absolute space becomes the location or the physical geography which either becomes origin or destination or both in the process of migration. The second space is relative space, which can be understood based on the relative existence of a space with respect to another space. Third is the relational space, based on the relationships of a space with another space. Lefebvre, drawing on Cassirer, further classified space as experienced, conceptualised and lived space. The experienced or organic space, as Cassirer would call it, is the space of our sensory perceptions. It includes sight, smell, sound, taste and touch. The conceptualised space is how our brain, based on sensory perceptions, cognitively conceives and represents space. The lived space is the everyday space of sensations, imaginations, emotions, and meanings that are incorporated into our everyday lives and practices.

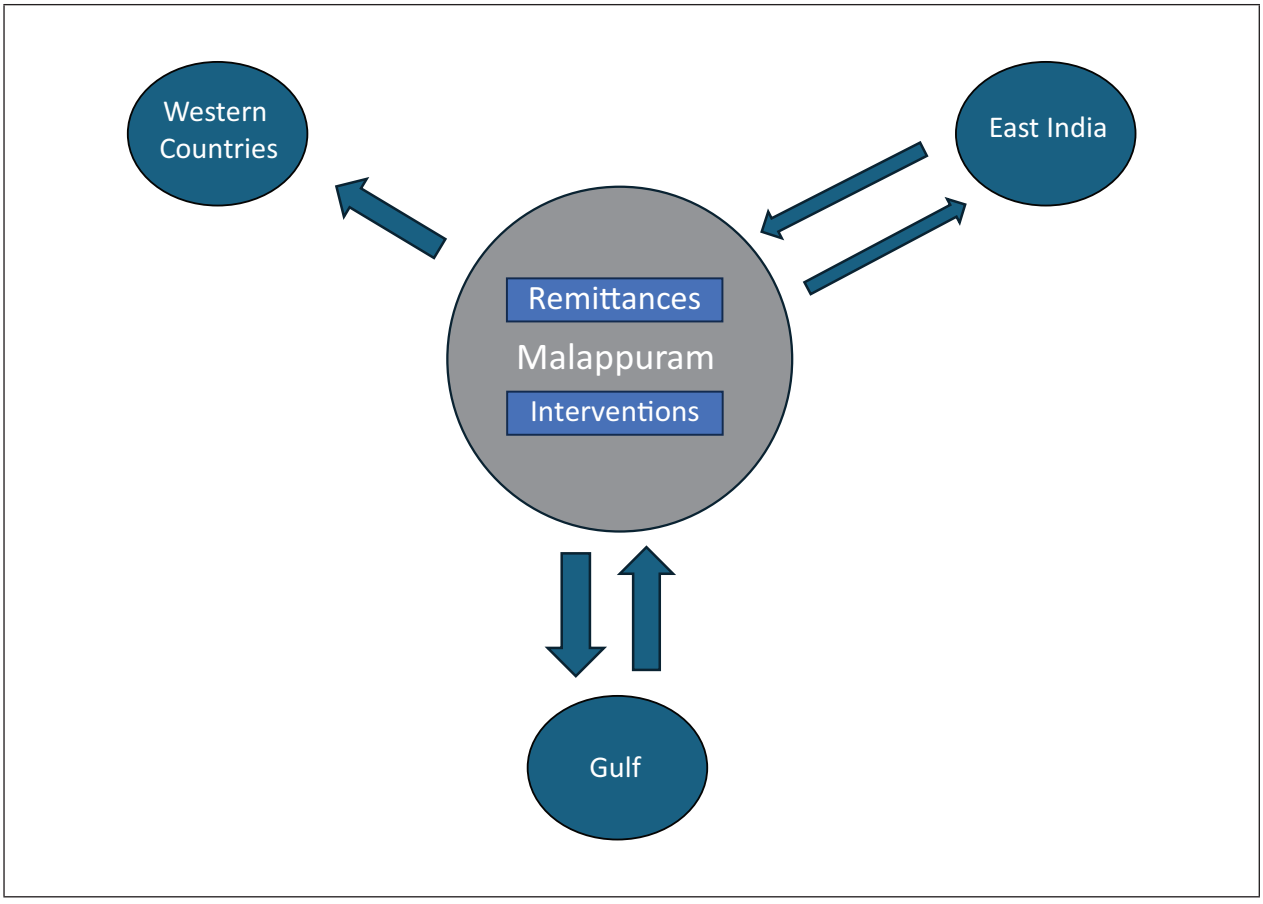
The traditional way of looking at migration from an origin or destination alone would not suffice in understanding the complete story of interlinked

373 Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender.*

374 Armstrong, "Making the Unfamiliar Familiar."

375 Pani, "Inequalities and Intervention: A conceptual framework", 2024

Figure 8.2: Interlinked Migration in Kerala



migrations in Kerala. It is not a singular process where it starts at one point (origin) and ends at another (destination). The interlinked migration is like a chain reaction where one process leads to another and then to the next. The state interventions in health and education improved the migration capital, which facilitated the Gulf migration from the 1970s, and the remittances from it led to the construction boom and a labour vacuum in specific sectors, which resulted in internal migration from different states in the north and eastern states of India. Further, the investments in higher educational institutions and expenditure on children's education have created a new stock of young migrants who are now moving to Western countries looking for permanent residency opportunities through student migration routes. It is impossible to capture the whole picture of these multiple migrations where distant geographies are interconnected through the movement of people, remittances, and ideas to be captured using a classic origin-destination conceptualisation of migration.

If we see interlinked migrations as processes that involve a series of interactions, then these diverse processes leave an impact on a place. To understand the nature and dynamics of interlinked migrations, it would be best to study the transformation of a place most affected by this process. Malappuram as a place is best suited to understand interlinked migration because various migration processes have impacted the place. Figure 8.2 shows the different geographies and how they are interlinked through different

migrations. We have three different migrations. First is the international Gulf migration from Malappuram, then internal migration to Malappuram and finally, international migration to the Western countries. In all three migrations, Malappuram is involved either as a place of origin or destination. It is the origin of both international migration to the Gulf and West and a destination for internal migration.

To study the linkages and processes of interlinked migration in Kerala, I conducted studies in two field sites – one rural and one urban. The need for having a rural and urban site for the study is essentially to capture the scale and range of the process of interlinked migration as society transforms from rural to urban. A rural field where there was a traditional international migration to the gulf and in -migration by the internal migrants. The second field was the nearest urban centre, which had been transformed by the remittances from the Gulf and could capture the higher end of the interlinked migration process. Since the objective of the study is to capture the dynamics and interlinkages between international and internal migrants, the field site needed to have both international and internal migrant households. Two criteria were followed in the process of selecting the field. First, the site should have a high number of households with international migrants, and second criterion is that the site should also have a significant number of internal migrant households.

Malappuram district

Based on the Kerala Migration Surveys (KMS), Malappuram district was identified as having the highest incidence of international migration in Kerala. The Kerala Migration Survey conducted by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) Trivandrum offers a rich source of secondary data on international and internal migration from Kerala since the mid-1990s. Starting from 1998, seven rounds of the survey have been completed in the last 20 years. As per the Kerala Migration Survey 2018, Malappuram district has the highest number of migrants (406054) in Kerala. Around 20 per cent of migrants in Kerala are from Malappuram district. From 2001 to 2011, Malappuram had the highest urban population growth at about 35 per cent per annum and urban households at 48 per cent per annum. Malappuram district has the fourth largest inflow of migrant workers in the state (Parida & Raman, 2021). Within Malappuram district, Tirur taluk had the highest number (107752) of Gulf migrants, with 52 migrants per 100 households. It also has 6.2% of total migrant labourers (1.9 lakh) of internal migrants in the Malappuram district. The rural site for the study was selected from Tirur taluk of Malappuram district.

Cheriyangadi Village: Rural Site

According to the 2011 census, Tirur taluk has one Municipality, 12 Census Towns and 16 villages. A pilot field visit was conducted to select a village from the 16 villages in Tirur taluk[376]. Based on the discussions with the Tirur Tehsildar, Cheriyangadi and another Gram Panchayat were shortlisted. Post discussions with the Panchayat Presidents, officials and villagers of both Panchayats, Cheriyangadi village was found to have the highest incidence of Gulf households and a significant number of internal migrant households in the village. Cheriyangadi village also had an older history of Gulf migration in the region, making it further suitable for the study site. Within the Cheriyangadi Panchayat, which has 19 wards, Ward 12 was selected for the field

376 The names of the study sites are changed in the report for anonymity.

study. The ward had around 500 households, and more than half of these households have at least one member in the gulf. The village also hosted about 500 migrant labourers working in and around the village.

Valiyangadi Municipality, Urban Site

Even though Malappuram district has an urban agglomeration around the city of Malappuram, Valiyangadi acts as a first-order settlement in Malappuram. Since Valiyangadi is one of the most urbanised towns in Malappuram with its super speciality hospitals and being a commercial hub, the second field site to capture the dynamics of interlinked migration was selected from Valiyangadi municipality. There were 34 wards in Valiyangadi Municipality, out of which we chose Ward 5, which was in the centre of the town and had a large number of international and internal migrant households.

Methods

The study followed a mixed-method approach, with household surveys being the primary method. The sampling method for the survey was sequential, where every second household in both sites was surveyed. In Cheriyangadi, 265 households were covered, of which 207 were local households and 59 were internal migrants. In Valiyangadi, 251 households were surveyed, out of which 165 were local households and 86 were internal migrant households. Qualitative data was collected through open-ended interviews, case studies and participant observation, providing details and context to the survey data.

9

State Interventions in Malappuram

Paul Thomas

In the years before land reforms and Kerala's engagement with international migration, Malabar was not only less developed compared to the two other princely states of Kerala – Cochin and Travancore – but also marked by extreme inequality. Though a district in the Madras Presidency during the colonial era, it had very little exposure to colonial education or other infrastructure. Its economy was based primarily on feudal agriculture, with its *jenmi* system. Southern Malabar, which later became Malappuram[377], was home to several prominent Brahmin settlements near the Nila River. The fertile delta provided favourable conditions for the growth and prosperity of agricultural communities despite the uneven distribution of benefits due to the *jenmi* system.

The *jenmi* system was a complex and exploitative three-tier land relationship practised in Malabar since early medieval times. Namboodiri Brahmins were the *jenmis,* the first tier, with absolute land ownership in South Malabar.[378] In rare cases, Nairs and Muslims were also *jenmis* in the region. The second tier, *kanakkaran,* were from less well-off Namboodiri and Nair families. They leased land on a *kanam* tenure from the *jenmis*. In some parts, wealthy Muslim families also leased land from the *jenmis*. The *kanakkaran* sublet the land to the third tier, *verumpattakkaran,* who were Nairs and Muslims. These cultivators employed Thiyyas, Cherumas, Kalanadikals, Parayas, Pulayas and Muslims as agricultural workers.

During Tippu's Mysorean invasion of Malabar in the second half of the eighteenth century, land relations in Malabar were modernised. The land was measured for the first time, and the *kannakkarans* and v*erumpattakarans*, the intermediaries, were removed from the arrangement. However, in the nineteenth century, the British brought back the old *jenmi* system under colonial courts and legalised the land grant to the *jenmis*. The colonial regime also legitimised the right of the *jenmi* to evict the tenant and enhance the collection of rent. In most cases, the Namboodiri Brahmins were the *jenmis* with *ryotwari pattas* who leased the land to tenants.

During the colonial era, land relations became more exploitative. The peasant class revolted against the pressure of the *jenmi* system and the exploitation of colonial rule in a series of peasant uprisings in South Malabar from 1836 to 1921, known as the Malabar Rebellion or Mappila Rebellion. The British aggravated the plight

377 Before the formation of Kerala state, Malappuram district was a part of the South Malabar district. Malappuram was established in 1969. It was created from the Ernad and Tirur taluks of Kozhikode district and the Valiyangadi and Ponnani taluks of Palakkad district.

378 In North Malabar the *jenmis* were majorly Nairs.

of an exploited peasant class by giving more power to the *jenmis*. The Muslim population, who comprised a significant portion of the landless labourers, faced exploitation from both the *jenmi* system and colonial rule. The frequent famines in Malabar and the British government's apparent lack of concern in preventing them - diverting food resources for wartime activities- fuelled resentment towards British rule. Since the *jenmis* were Namboodiris and the peasantry were mainly Muslims in Malabar, the conflicts were also given a communal colour.

Despite the exploitative agricultural relations, there were two reasons why a significant proportion of the population in this region derived their livelihood from agricultural activities. First, trading did not provide sufficient employment opportunities. Malabar has been the locus of strong trade relations since medieval times, and was renowned for being the most welcoming trading hub on the Indian Ocean maritime trade route. The region had a well-known reputation for its timber and spice trade with the West. Traders and merchants were attracted to its coast, but this also led to colonial invasions. The main items exported from Malabar were Coconut, Arecanut, Tapioca, Betel leaves, Cashew, Pepper, Coir and Fish. , However, there were not enough opportunities to provide a means of livelihood to the entire region's population. As a result, a significant proportion of the population of Malappuram derived their livelihood from agricultural activities. The Census of India 1971 recorded 64 per cent of the district declaring their primary occupation as agriculture. Further colonial exploitation weakened trade relations, and by the 1960s, there were fewer employment opportunities outside of agriculture in Malabar. According to the 1971 Census, only 8.71 per cent of workers could find employment in trade and commerce.

Second, the educational backwardness made it difficult to access opportunities outside of agriculture and commerce. Malabar did not benefit from the English education institutions set up by Christian missionaries in the Cochin and Travancore regions of Kerala. The madrasas emphasised education primarily in Arabic. The British attributed the backwardness of the area and the peasant uprisings to this lack of education in the region. Therefore, from 1920, the British focused on building educational institutions and providing quality education in Malabar. However, the religious orthodoxy in Malabar made the Muslims reject colonial modernity and proscribe modern English education. English was termed the devil's language. As a result, several years later, when Malappuram was formed in 1969, it was one of Kerala's most educationally backward districts. The literacy rate of Malappuram in 1961 was just 34 per cent.

The developmental backwardness in the southern Malabar region led to the demand for new district in the 1960s. The Muslim League, which dominated the electoral politics of the region, was at the forefront of the movement. The Communist Parties and Indian National Congress had their presence concentrated in a few constituencies. In 1960, when the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) contested for the first time in the Kerala Legislative Assembly Elections, it won seven out of nine seats in the constituencies of Malappuram district. The Muslim League allied with the Indian National Congress and the Praja Socialist Party to form the government. In the 1965 elections, the IUML won six out of eleven seats, but the election was considered abortive since no single party could form a ministry commanding the majority. In the 1967 elections, the Muslim League secured victory in nine of the eleven contested seats. This time, the Muslim League was part of the

United Front, or the Seven Party Alliance, led by the Communist Party of India Marxist (CPI-M). The Muslim League gained a ministry in the Kerala Government for the first time. M.P.M. Ahammed Kurikkal became the Minister for Local Self Governments, and C.H. Mohammed Koya took charge of the Education Ministry. Both Ministers played crucial roles in the development of Malappuram. M.P.M. Ahammed Kurikkal was at the forefront of the struggles for the new district, and C.H. Mohammed Koya is noted for his work to improve the educational conditions of backward classes of Malabar.

Cheriyangadi in the 1960s

Cheriyangadi is a revenue village and a Gram Panchayat in the Tirur taluk of Malappuram district. The Cheriyangadi Gram Panchayat, one of the oldest Panchayats in the Malabar region, was formed in 1940 as part of the British Malabar District Board. During the medieval period, Cheriyangadi was part of Vettathunadu, also known as the Kingdom of Tanur. The *Vettathunadu* was a coastal city-kingdom on the Malabar Coast ruled by the *Vettathu Raja*, a vassal of the Zamorin of Calicut. The reign of *Vettathu Raja* family ended with the death of the last Raja in 1793 (Logan, 2010). Cheriyangadi has witnessed Tipu's Mysorean conquest of Malabar, the Mappila uprisings and the Indian independence movement. Around 20,000 people from Cheriyangadi participated in the Khilafat movement.

A particularly unequal form of the *jenmi* system operated in Cheriyangadi; in a rare case, a Muslim was the *jenmi*. A single Muslim family-*Mandayippuram Tharavadu*, which came to be known as the *Moopen* family, owned all the land in the village. *Moopen,* which means chieftain, was the title given to the elite wealthy families in Malabar. The family was aristocratic and politically influential. It played a pivotal role in the Independence movement in Malabar. In the 1970s, a member of the *Moopen* family earned a gold medal in MBBS and an MD from Government Medical College, Kozhikode. The socioeconomic and political dominance of the family enabled them to continue a system where landless labourers worked in their fields in exchange for food grains. Agriculture was the primary source of livelihood in Cheriyangadi. The census of 1971 shows that 63.27 per cent of workers in Cheriyangadi were employed in agriculture and related activities. Most of the agricultural labourers were landless labourers. The exploitative conditions of agricultural labour forced workers to seek opportunities outside the sector. In the 1970s, Cheriyangadi offered few non-agricultural employment options, and their conditions were not much better. The Census of 1971 shows the workers-to-population ratio of Cheriyangadi to be 21.68 per cent, which shows a lack of employment opportunities in the area in the 1960s. One of the few options was its betel leaves market, which exported leaves to West and East Pakistan and other neighbouring countries. However, it did not generate employment opportunities due to limited local production.

Even the opportunities it offered did not pay enough. Haneefa was only ten in the 1960s when he started working as a head loader for a daily wage of one rupee in the weekly Melengadi market in Cheriyangadi. At this very young age, he was responsible for contributing to his family's income. The eldest of his nine siblings was physically challenged and could not do manual work. His father earned an equally meagre wage, and as the second son, the responsibility of contributing to family income fell on Haneefa very early in his life. He still

remembers his daily wage of one rupee being the primary income source of his family. His story was not an exception. Several of his young friends worked as stone cutters and helpers in construction work.

Most children either missed school entirely or dropped out and entered the labour force. Education was mainly limited to madrasas. The first elementary school in Cheriyangadi was established in 1920 by the British and was upgraded to a high school in 1958 by the Kerala government. The school acted as an early educational hub for Cheriyangadi and nearby villages. With education, employment in schools was an option available outside agriculture at that time, which could provide a better quality of life. The literacy rate of Cheriyangadi was 49.35 per cent in 1971. In the 1960s, the school employed a few educated individuals in the village as teachers. A few families were able to tap into the opportunities that education opened up and escape the uncertainities of the agricultural sector. The Anapaddikal family, known as the AP family, climbed up the ladder of social hierarchy with education. Abubaker was a schoolteacher at the Cheriyangadi School in the 1960s, and his family was able to escape the agrarian distress through education. His children were well-educated and could tap into employment opportunities in the Gulf, which further improved the socioeconomic condition of the family in the next generation. The family also had a strong allegiance towards the Muslim League, which had absolute dominance in the village and enjoyed political influence. . However, this was not the case for all the families who had access to education.

Till the 1970s, change had been slow in Cheriyangadi. Conditions were the same and it was one of the worst-affected villages during the 1943 Malabar famine. The elders there still recollect the horrors of the famine and epidemics like cholera and smallpox that resulted in high mortality rates. In 1943, 28,432 died in Malabar due to cholera. Cheriyangadi was among the worst off in Malabar, and Malabar, in turn, was low in the development hierarchy of Kerala. Even areas that had benefited from British rule, like Valiyangadi, were not very advanced.

Valiyangadi in the 1960s

Valiyangadi was the capital of the Valluvanad Swaroopam dynasty. It was a commercial and cultural hub of the region. The region came under the rule of the Kingdom of Mysore during the last decades of the eighteenth century. The city was part of the Valluvand taluk in the erstwhile Malabar district during British rule and served as the headquarters of Valluvand taluk. Valiyangadi was one of the leading centres of the Mappila revolt of 1921. Today, Valiyangadi is a municipal town and headquarters of Valiyangadi taluk, a block and a revenue division by the same name. Valiyangadi had a strong presence of Namboodiris and other upper-caste Hindus. Being close to the Bharatapuzha River, the region had early settlements of Namboodiri Brahmins. Poonthanam Namboodiri, a famous Bhakti poet, was born in this region. The first Chief Minister of Kerala, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, was also from the area. In the 1960s, the Namboodiri Brahmins and wealthy Nairs were the elites of Valiyangadi. The Namboodiri Brahmins were also the *jenmis* in Valiyangadi. The land relations here were similar to the rest of Malabar. Agriculture accounted for 16.67 percent of the workforce in Valiyangadi in Census 1971. The low proportion of agriculture workforce to total workers compared to the rest of Malappuram shows that the urban growth of Valiyangadi had begun to unfold in the 1970s.

As one of British Malabar's major administrative centres, Valiyangadi reaped the benefits of education, health, and infrastructure development. In 1825, the British East India Company set up the first high school, court, and taluk office of Malabar in Valiyangadi. The high school later became the Valiyangadi Government Higher Secondary School. This early establishment of schools gave Valiyangadi an advantage in educational outcomes compared to the rest of Malabar. According to Census 1971, Valiyangadi had the highest literacy rate (66.12 percent) in Malappuram, higher than the state average (60.42 percent). By 1971, Valiyangadi town had one higher secondary school, one middle school, four primary schools, one nursery and one madrasa. The effects of Valiyangadi's strong footing in school education did not transfer to higher education, similar to the rest of Malappuram. In the 1960s, there were no colleges in Valiyangadi. The only higher educational institutes were two shorthand and typewriting institutes.

In addition to education, Valiyangadi saw improvements in railway connectivity during the colonial period. The railway station in Angadipuram, less than three kilometres from Valiyangadi, has been functional since 1921. It was primarily used for transporting timber from the Nilambur teak plantations. Eventually, the locals began using it to transport goods and commute nearby. A well-connected transport system, including roadways and railways, connected Valiyangadi with nearby small towns and villages, ensuring the growth of Valiyangadi as the trade and commerce hub in Malabar. Its location on the Coimbatore-Calicut road gave it an additional geographical advantage.

Valiyangadi benefitted from the economies of agglomeration. The coming up of schools, courts, and government offices accelerated the modernisation processes in Valiyangadi. It also attracted educated migrants such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, and other government employees. Thus, a new group of educated and professional individuals, including locals and migrants, emerged. Valiyangadi was on the cusp of a rural-urban transformation in the 1960s when two cinema theatres and three public libraries opened in the area. By 1971, Valiyangadi became a town. The functional category of Valiyangadi town in 1971 was service-cum-commercial-cum-primary activity. 36.26 percent of the workers in Valiyangadi were engaged in the service sector, followed by 21.54 percent in trade and commerce. In the 1960s, there were also eight banks in Valiyangadi, facilitating the financial capital for marketing and business. The primary commodities exported from Valiyangadi were Tapioca, Coconut, and Pepper.

The prevailing socio-political and economic conditions of Valiyangadi in the 1960s provided a fertile ground for the communist movement to flourish in the region. Young, educated, radical youth from the upper-caste Hindu community were at the forefront of the campaign as well as other caste Hindus, and Muslims. The spread of modernity through education transformed the educated young generation of upper-caste Hindus and elite Muslims. They challenged the orthodoxies of their religions. The extreme inequalities in the agrarian economy and the exploitation of labourers in the local market set the stage for Communist mobilisation. Muslims and other lower caste Hindus, the primary victims of oppressive *jenmi* and colonial regimes, were attracted to the communist movements. The Communist movement played a role in providing the rejuvenation of the failed peasant uprisings and formations of trade and workers' unions in Valiyangadi. Eventually, Communist

parties had their stronghold in the Valiyangadi constituency. EMS Namboodiripad, a well-known leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI (M), was born in Valiyangadi and was one of the several educated radical youths. In his early years, he was an active member of Yoga Kshema Sabha. This Brahmin reformist organisation challenged Brahminical orthodoxy and advocated for the betterment of women and the adoption of modern English education. Namboodiripad became involved in the Communist movement and played a significant role in the Communist mobilisation in the area. He eventually became the first chief minister of Kerala. The Communist Party of India (CPI) was the dominant communist party in Valiyangadi till 1965, and later, the Communist Party of India Marxist (CPI(M)), became the major Communist party in the region. Thoughelectorally, they could not win a seat in the constituency, the Muslim League and Indian National Congress (INC) were politically active players in Valiyangadi.I

The challenge of migration

The absence of job opportunities in Malappuram resulted in the beginnings of a desire to migrate, despite the conditions not being conducive to migration. The early migrants' experiences all had a touch of desperation to them. As one of them recalled, "You didn't need a passport or visa to travel by *launch* and to the gulf. The only thing you needed was courage and willpower."

In 1964, Haneefa was just 15 years old when he first travelled to the Gulf from Beypore, an ancient port town in Kozhikode, Kerala. It took 25 days of sailing on a *launch* to reach the destination. The large crude wooden boat usually used to transport logs and other similar cargo was on an illegal trip to the Gulf. Owned and operated by Calicut Gujaratis who traded with the Gulf, the *launch* trafficked people as well. Haneefa was one of more than 200 passengers packed on the crowded open deck. The *launch* had an engine, but when the winds were good, they raised a mast and switched off the engine. Haneefa had found his way to the *launch* through an agent, who charged him Rs 500.

A few days before the launch was set to sail, Haneefa was asked to go to a lodge near Tin Kozhikode. He stayed there for five days, and on the fifth morning, the agent said they had to go to Vadakara. Haneefa and 12 other men were taken there in a Chevrolet car. He did not know any of his fellow travellers. They stopped near the beachside road and walked on to the beach to join others who would travel in the same *launch*. They then took small boats to reach the *launch* which was anchored a short distance away.

Young Haneefa was anxious about his journey but knew he had no other option, with jobs at Cheriyangadi paying him just a rupee a day. The journey was smooth and pleasant to begin with, but he soon began to feel seasick. For sustenance, the travellers were given onions once a day, and provided with rice cooked in seawater, and drinking water every other day. Haneefa had heard that onions were good for a dry throat and helped satiate thirst. The absence of adequate food and water, sea sickness, and the stressful journey took their toll. Several men died on the *launch* in the first two weeks. Haneefa helped cover the bodies with cloth, tie them on a wooden plank attached to heavy stones, and threw them into the water after rudimentary prayers. Haneefa recalled that most of his fellow migrants were Muslims, as they used to do Namaz together in the *launch*.

Twenty-five days after they began their journey, Haneefa spotted the Khor Fakkan mountains of the UAE 20 km away. The boat stayed moored in the deep sea until it got dark, and the migrants were told to disembark only at night so as to escape police patrolling. The *Nakhuda* (captain in Persian) gave strict instructions to the migrants to remain hidden while approaching land. Suddenly, Haneefa heard gunshots. The *launch* took a U-turn, sailing towards a different shore. The following day, the *launch* was surrounded by Dubai Navy and Customs officials. The officers tied the *launch* to one of their speed boats and took it to Sharjah Harbour. The officials there provided the migrants with food and water as most of them were starving and ill.

They were then taken to a military camp and were in the camp for almost ten days where they were given food, water, and clothing. The Indian embassy did not helpthem as they didn't have passports. The local officials divided the migrants into three groups and planned to send them all back to India, and to leave them somewhere near coastal Gujarat as they had no passports. The officials sent the first group back to India on the same *launch* on which they came. The second of the three boats, which carried the next set of migrants, did not make the journey back, and sank. Many migrants died and the King of Dubai granted visas, and freed everyone who survived the accident. Haneefa was among those on the third boat, who reached the Gujarat. As they approached the shore, they were asked to jump and swim to the coast stealthily without being noticed by the coast guard. They travelled through unknown terrains to finally reach Ahmedabad, where they were told to split up and travel separately. Haneefa met a Malayali in Ahmedabad who was from Calicut and, with his help, found a job in a hotel. He wrote a letter home explaining what had happened. It had been more than two months since Haneefa started his journey from Beypore, and his family had presumed he was dead.After receiving his letter, his father sent him Rs 100. Using this and his savings , Haneefa took a train back to Kerala.

Interventions

The changes that followed with respect to the interventions from the state government to improve the socio-economic conditions made things easier for the next generation in Malappuram. Kerala's socioeconomic and political conditions in its formative years were highly unequal, and conditions in Malappuram were dire. Multiple dimensions and matrices of differences existed in Kerala across regions, religion, caste, and gender. Differences in a society are inevitable. It is essential to distinguish between desirable differences and differences that are ethically unacceptable in a society. Those differences that generate aspirations and are beneficial to society are aspirational differences. In contrast, the ones considered ethically unacceptable by all rational individuals in a society are called inequalities. There can also be differences that are neither desirable nor undesirable, which are agnostic differences.

Using this anatomy of difference framework, Kerala society in the 1960s was highly unequal, with caste discrimination, unequal land distributions, and regional inequalities. Some individuals and even families were motivated to improve their situation. There might also be cases where the differences generated indifference. The three differences function within the individual, between individuals, and between groups. The differences that an individual experience over the course of their life is called intrapersonal differences. The differences between individuals

are interpersonal differences, and those between groups are called group differences.

The nature of difference also influences the responses to each difference. The reactions to aspirational differences, inequality and agnostic differences are different. At any given time, each society has its varied degrees of differences. These differences generate responses in multiple layers, altering the society's status quo and bringing new transformations. This new transformation results in a new set of differences, which attracts a different set of responses. Therefore, every society is on a continuum of transformation- differences- responses- new transformation. Not all responses can generate new transformations. The responses that have a significant impact on transforming an existing social system are called interventions. Interventions are "those purposive actions that are driven by some authority with the intention of generating substantial change." We have four institutions with authority in India that can generate intentional actions that generate substantial change. They are the state, the home, the workplace, and social identity. With such multiple differences operating in a society, the next question is, what were the responses to these differences in Kerala? What were the responses to intrapersonal, interpersonal and group differences? How did the state, home, workplace and social identity intervene with the existing differences in Kerala, and how did these interventions transform the state?

The State

The state's intervention can be in economic, social, and political domains. The first communist government of 1957 in the newly formed state of Kerala experimented with interventions divergent from the central government's policies. The Communist government of Kerala functioned based on the concept of a democratic socialist welfare state. This idea was based on the political philosophy which calls for a political democracy with some form of socially owned economy. In a socially owned economy, the resources are owned collectively by the society rather than individual ownership. A welfare state protects and promotes the socioeconomic well-being of its citizens, operating by the principles of equal opportunity, wealth redistribution, and collective responsibility for citizens who cannot have the minimal provisions of a good life. The interventions of the Kerala state government were divergent from the national policy of the second five-year plan. The second five-year plan focused on improving the primary sector through irrigation and energy, improving the state of technical education by setting up IITs, and focussing on rapid industrialisation. On the other hand, the major interventions of the Kerala state were land reforms, mass education policy, and improvements in the primary health facilities.

Land reforms

Kerala was one of the states that effectively implemented land reforms in post-independent India. Land being a crucial asset in the state's agrarian economy, the implementation of the Land Reforms Act was a significant policy intervention by the state to address the inequality in land distribution. The land relations in Kerala were highly unequal in the 1960s. In 1962, 31 per cent of all households in Kerala owned no land, compared to 12 per cent of all India (Moolakkattu, 2007). The land relations in Malabar were the most unequal compared to the Travancore and Cochin provinces. Both the princely states underwent stints of land reforms

during the pre-independence time, reducing the extent of land distribution inequality. In Travancore, royal reformers introduced land reforms in the nineteenth century, almost eliminating tenancy and creating a relatively large class of small landowners. Although not as effective as the Travancore Land Reform Act, the "Cochin Tenancy Bill" of 1914 moderated the ill effects of tenancy in the region. The pressure on landless labourers was the highest in Malabar, and the region witnessed a series of peasant uprisings.

When the state was formed in 1956, the wide varieties of land tenures across different groups gave rise to discontent among Malabar peasants. The Communist movement, which cashed in on the emotions of the peasantry in Malabar, won the first general elections and formed the government in 1957. The government passed the Kerala Agrarian Bill in 1959. The new government, which was formed after the dismissal of the Communist government, diluted the provisions of the bill, and passed a revised bill in 1960. The Kerala High Court nullified the new bill, and a new legislation- the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1963 came into effect in April 1964. The Act was amended in 1969 and enforced from January 1970, which abolished landlordism in Kerala. The 1969 reforms made three main provisions. The first was to transfer the ownership rights of the land to the cultivating tenants who leased them. The tenants had to pay a small nominal sum as the purchase price. They were also exempted from paying any rent to the government or the former landlords from the date of enforcement of the Act. The eviction provision was also stayed, preventing landlords from throwing tenants off the land. This meant the abolition of the *jenmi* system. Second was the abolition of tenancy in house garden lands. This scheme gave options to the homestead tenants (*kudikidappukar*) to purchase 3 cents of their homestead in a city or major municipality, 5 cents in a municipality, or 10 cents in a panchayat from their landowners. The third scheme dealt with the redistribution of surplus land. The surplus land the government forfeited by imposing land ceiling laws was to be distributed among the landless labourers and poor peasants owning or holding less than one acre of land. The ceiling was fixed as five acres for an adult unmarried person or a family with a sole surviving member, 10 acres for a family of up to five members with one additional acre with every extra member up to a maximum limit of 15 acres.

Land reforms had multiple impacts on the society and economy of Malabar. By transferring land rights to the tenants, the Act ended the centuries-old *jenmi* system in Malabar, emancipating the tenants from their socioeconomic servitude. Since land leasing became unlawful, the *jenmis* whose sustenance depended on collecting leases became extinct. Many Namboodiris, who lived in sprawling *illams* and *manas*[379] became paupers in the years following the land reforms. The breaking up of the *jenmi* system also meant the withering of the caste practices associated with it. In Malabar, where the caste relations were the most rigid, land reforms untied the lower caste peasants from the caste manacles, opening new possibilities. Transferring land ownership to tenants helped decrease the highly disproportionate land distribution among a few individuals. This resulted in a more equal distribution of land. The redistribution of land did not have a positive impact on agricultural productivity. The *jenmis*, who were upper castes, belonged to a leisure class who were not interested in increasing the productivity

379 The joint family house of Namboodiri Brahmins is called *illam* or *mana*

of the land. By giving ownership of land to the actual cultivators, there was an incentive for the latter to increase the productivity of the land since the entire yield now belonged to them. However, the positive improvement was offset by the severe fragmentation of land. The land reforms also opened the labour market in Kerala. The agricultural tenants and labourers tied to the land through the *jenmi* system could now find opportunities to move to other sectors. The labour market in Kerala grew in the post-reform period since many former serfs entered the workforce after the abolition of the *jenmi* system. Post-land reforms saw the formation of three agrarian groups in Kerala. First was a small group of wealthy farmers who were the largest tenant cultivators before the reforms, and then the second group was the small farmers who got the title of the land they had been holding for so long. The third group were the largest, and these were the agricultural labourers who were the "tillers of the soil" who just received the tiny piece of homestead land in which they lived. They still had to sell their labour in the fields for their livelihood. There was a reduction in land ownership. Hundreds of thousands of people got dwelling places of their own.

In Cheriyangadi, the government took a significant amount of land from the Moopen family. The pressure from the Muslim League and Kerala Congress forced the coalition government which existed at the time of implementation of land reform to introduce a provision for voluntary transfer and gift deeds. The motivation for such a provision came from the pressure of a few wealthy landlords from these communities who had amassed a large amount of land in their name and wanted to retain it even after the land reforms. According to this provision, many wealthy landlords gifted land to their extended families and people close to them. This ensured that they could legally surpass the intricacies of land reform while enjoying land ownership. Many landlords saw this as an opportunity to retain their power in the locality in the new power arrangements of post-land reforms. They donated land to religious institutions, public enterprises like schools, colleges and hospitals, and government offices to retain their local influence. The locals in Cheriyangadi do not consider land reforms as something that has brought substantial changes in their lives because when it comes to increases in individual land holdings, land reforms gave little land to them. When we examine the community advantages that resulted from the land reforms in Cheriyangadi, it is evident that there were significant benefits. The community experienced a positive social impact in Cheriyangadi because of the land reforms.

Land redistribution was more widespread in Valiyangadi. Valiyangadi was also a stronghold of the Communist movement, where land reforms were enacted rigorously. Many educated Namboodiris voluntarily gave away land to the government for redistribution. Some of these persons from the upper castes were at the forefront of the Communist movement in the region. E.M.S Namboodiripad was one of them. Land reforms also made many of the Namboodiri *jenmi* families in Valiyangadi paupers. A few wealthy Muslim landowning families also lost land in the land reform. According to a respondent from Valiyangadi, their family had leased land to tenants for cultivation. However, after land reforms were implemented, the tenants were given ownership of the land, which resulted in them becoming impoverished. The period of land reform also saw a shift in the form of capital that gave hegemony in the society. Land no longer became a viable form of capital to maintain or influence societal power. The *jenmis* and other upper classes who enjoyed the land capital now saw new means of capital

to establish their hegemony. Education became the new social capital to establish influence in society. Many upper-caste Hindus and wealthy Muslims who lost land during the land reforms had already benefited from higher education opportunities in Valiyangadi. They formed a new class of educated elites who could tap into the new opportunities in the s Kerala.

Interventions in Education

The state's emphasis on mass education policy was targeted to address the inequalities existing in the education sector of the state. The Education Bill, which later became the Kerala Education Act 1958, was introduced by Professor Joseph Mundesseri, who was the education minister of the first elected Communist government of Kerala. The bill made elementary education mandatory and free of cost. This led to the universalisation of primary education in the state. The policy was aimed at mass education rather than specialised higher education.

Access to education at the grassroots level was the policy's rationale. The bill also made provisions to provide mid-day meals, textbooks, and uniforms for underprivileged students, incentivising students from weaker sections of society to attend the school. Before the formation of Kerala state, the educational institutions in Travancore and Cochin princely states and Malabar district were majorly private schools run by Christian managements. Actions were taken to eradicate the malpractices in the private education sector of Kerala and to regularise and standardise the functioning, syllabi, and pay structures in schools. The Act regulated the appointments of teachers and the working conditions, and salaries were to be paid from the state treasury. The government also took over some of the private schools, and the state took responsibility for universalising elementary education.

As a result of the education policy, inequalities in access to education were reduced in the state. The first economic census of 1977 noted that 99.7 per cent of the villages in Kerala had a primary school within 2 kilometres, 98.6 per cent had a middle school within 2 kilometres, and 96.7 per cent had a high school or higher secondary school within 5 kilometres. The outcome of the policy on mass education was visible from the growth in literacy levels and enrolment rates in the state. From a 47.18 per cent literacy rate in 1951 to 93.91 per cent in 2011, the state witnessed a massive growth of 41 per cent in literacy rate in the last six decades as a result of the educational reforms that the state adopted in the 1960s (Table 1). In 1991, Kerala became the first state in India to be recognised as entirely literate. The impact of the educational reforms also had implications in the cultural and social spheres of Kerala society. It popularised newspapers, magazines, libraries, and hostels for students. The emphasis on mass education also gradually set the precursor for the demand for higher education since more and more students accessed primary education.

Table 9.1: Literacy rate of Kerala, 1951-2011

Year	Literacy rate
1951	47.18
1961	55.08
1971	69.75
1981	78.85
1991	89.81
2001	90.92
2011	93.91

Source: Census of India, 1951-2011

There was a wide regional disparity in the education sector of Kerala (Table 2) in the 1950s and Malappuram was one of the most educationally backward districts in the state. Until 1920, the education policy followed by the British in Malabar and elsewhere promoted secondary and higher education, leaving primary education in complete neglect. The policy of the British catered only to the demands of the elitist and urban sections of society.

Like the rest of the state, Malappuram district also adopted the mass education policy, and there was an increase in the number of primary schools in the district starting from the 1960s (Jafar, 2018). The growth in the number of primary schools in Malappuram was higher than in high schools. The impact of mass education through the increase in the number of primary schools created the base for Malappuram's educational development. The literacy rate of Malappuram, which was lower than the state literacy rate when the district was formed, caught up with the state in two decades (Table 3). The implementation of mass education policy helped to improve educational standards across the state evenly and reduced regional disparities in education. The state's initiatives on mass education improved the conditions of primary education. However, the situation of higher education was deplorable in Malappuram. In 1971, the district had only two Arts, Science and Commerce College and one Polytechnic.

Cheriyangadi, like many other villages in Malappuram, benefitted from the government's policy on mass education. In 1971, the village had eight primary schools, one middle school,

Table 9.2: Percentage of literacy in the age group 9 and above, 1951

Region	District	Percentage of literacy		
		Male	Female	Total
Travancore	Trivandrum	59	36	47
	Quilon	68	46	57
	Kottayam	70	52	61
Cochin	Trichur	61	40	51
Malabar	Malabar	41	21	31

Source: Educational Society of India, State Report, Kerala State, 1957-58

Table 9.3: Literacy rate of Kerala and Malappuram, 1971-2011

Year	Kerala			Malappuram		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1971	66.6	54.3	60.4	55.0	39.1	47.3
1981	75.3	65.7	70.4	65.9	55.3	60.5
1991	93.6	86.2	89.8	92.1	84.1	87.9
2001	94.2	87.7	90.9	93.3	86.3	89.6
2011	96.0	92.0	93.9	95.8	91.6	93.6

Source: Census, 1971-2011

one high school, and a madrasa. The literacy level of Cheriyangadi in 1971 was 48.23 per cent. In 2011, the literacy rate was 80.3 per cent in Cheriyangadi, which can be credited to the implementation of the state's education policy in the village. The mass education policy focused mainly on primary education and was effective in Cheriyangadi. In the next decade, three more primary schools opened in the village. The coming up of schools improved the literacy levels of the people of Cheriyangadi and helped a few individuals find employment outside the agriculture sector. A fortunate few pursued higher education in colleges in Calicut, which was 50 kilometres from Cheriyangadi.

Valiyangadi had a fairly advanced educational sector than the rest of Malappuram when the district was formed. The place enjoyed benefits from the early coming of schools. However, this did not limit the area from being a part of the larger mass education policy of the state. The educational reforms and the government's new measures to provide free primary education improved the educational outcomes of the people of Valiyangadi. In 1971, the town had one nursery, four primary schools, one middle school, one high school, and one madrasa. Developments in education lead to sociocultural and political transformation in Valiyangadi. Modern education made many educated upper-caste Hindus and Muslims challenge their communities' caste and religious orthodoxies. Many of these educated youth also joined the Communist movement in the region. In the 1970s, the town had three public libraries, indicating that education profoundly influenced the development of literary culture. As a result of the interventions in the educational sector, the literacy rate of Valiyangadi improved from 66.12 per cent in 1971 to 82.96 in 2011.

Health sector reforms

Apart from the land and educational reforms, the reforms in the health sector were also part of the Kerala model of development. Despite low economic growth, the state has achieved health outcomes at par with many developing countries. The Kerala state budget allocation for health expenditure was higher than the rest of India until the late 1970s. The yearly average health expenditure accounted for 10.45 per cent of total revenue in Kerala, higher than the 8.3 per cent of all India in 1960-65 (Nabae, 2003). The policy initiatives on improving the primary health care system, which ensured free, equal access to health facilities, showed positive results in the state's health outcomes. The infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births was 15.6 per cent in Kerala, while the National rate was 71.6 per cent in 1998 (Economic Review, 2000). Non-health sector factors like access to education, land reforms, and a robust public distribution system also contributed to the health development of Kerala.

The health sector reforms improved health conditions and ensured equitable access throughout the state, with Malappuram district also benefiting from these changes. Cheriyangadi, like many other villages in Malappuram, did not have any medical facilities till the 1970s. In the post-health reform period, there was an initiative to ensure that each village should have primary health centre facilities. As a result, in 1981, there was a hospital and a dispensary in Cheriyangadi. Valiyangadi had one Allopathy hospital, one Ayurveda hospital, and one family health centre, according to the 1971 census. There were also 72 beds in these medical institutions at that time. Valiyangadi benefitted from access to primary health earlier than the rest of Malappuram,

and by the 1990s, the town became famous for private super speciality hospitals in north Kerala.

The Home

The home is more than the individuals it consists of. The household is taken as the unit of analysis in understanding the livelihoods and migration decisions of the family. The authority of the home or family as an institution that can intervene and make changes during the land reform period is evident from the story of the Moopen family.

In Cheriyangadi, the *jenmi* family was Muslim. The Moopen family had absolute land ownership in Cheriyangadi during the pre-land reform era. When the land reforms were enacted in the 1970s, according to the land ceiling provision, the Moopen family had to give away all their excess land to the government. The family gave away their lands to construct schools, colleges, orphanages, old age homes, police stations, and village offices. They also gave land to religious bodies like Waqf boards. The land was also gifted to extended families and tenants close to the family. The land reforms in Cheriyangadi have benefitted the community and individual families. All the government offices in Cheriyangadi are built on the land the Moopen family previously owned. Small landless peasants in Cheriyangadi received small plots of homesteads. When the agrarian relations of the *jenmi* system were weakened in the post-land reform period, the Moopen family gave away their land for public institutions and invested in schools and local institutions to empower the villagers, orphanages, mosques, and donations to religious bodies. This new form of investments made the Moopen family retain their influence over the villages through new ways of philanthropy and providing local welfare in the locality.

Work

The authority of the workplace in intervening and negotiating to alter the existing social conditions can be understood if we go a little further and see the history of agrarian revolts in Malabar. The inequalities of the *jenmi* system resulted in the Moplah uprising in Malabar. When many individuals experience the same difference as ethically unacceptable, the response to the inequality would be collective. Sometimes, the collective responses to inequality can take the backing of an identity. The Mappilah uprisings and the subsequent interventions by the peasantry to improve the conditions of labourers have played a crucial role in formulating the Land Reform Act in post-independent Kerala. In 1792, when the British established their rule over Malabar, they created a policy to maximise the land revenues by creating a feudal class of agents from the upper caste Namboodiris and Nairs, who were the *jenmis*. The British reinstated the *jenmi* system, which Tippu overthrew. The tenants who enjoyed better shares and rights in the previous arrangement revolted against the new unjust system. The discontent was widespread in Malabar, leading to Moplah uprisings since 1836. An attempt was made to appease the tenants, and the "Malabar Compensation for Tenant Improvement Act" was passed in 1887 to provide compensation and improvements for the tenants. This is one of the first land reform measures in Kerala. This act and the revised Compensation Act of 1900 also did not provide adequate compensation to the tenants, which led to the formation of the Malabar Tenancy Association in 1915. The agrarian discontent, the Khilafat movement, the freedom struggle, the oppression of colonial rule, and the divide-and-rule policy culminated in a mass insurrection of peasants in 1921. The peasant movements under the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party

exerted pressure on the government to appoint the Malabar Tenancy Committee and pass the Malabar Tenancy Act in 1930, which upgraded the *kanam* tenants to the status of landlords overlooking the *verumpattam* tenants. The act was subsequently amended in 1951 and 1954 to provide tenure to all cultivating *verumpatttakars* of more than six years of standing.

Identity

The authority of identity and their intervention is central to Indian social reality. The role of identity groups is most visible and understood in the domain of politics. The formation of the Malappuram district resulted from the interventions made by the Muslim League, an identity-based political organisation backed by Mappilah Muslims. The Muslims in the Malabar region, who were unhappy with their educational and health backwardness compared to the rest of Kerala, were mobilised by the Muslim League to demand a new district. The Muslim league gave electoral support to the seven-party alliance led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and formed government in 1967. In 1969, Malappuram district was carved out of Kozhikode and Palakkad districts. The formation of the Malappuram district is a clear example to demonstrate the authority of identity and their negotiation capital to intervene and make substantial changes in the policy domain. The Muslims of Malabar, through electoral negotiations using the Muslim League party, were successful in having a Muslim-dominated district in the state of Kerala.

When the educational reforms were implemented in Kerala, the Muslims in Malabar did not welcome the English language and modern education. Education was primarily limited to the madrasas, and the emphasis was on Arabic and Urdu more than Malayalam and English. They also refused to send their children to the schools opened for Hindus. Because of the demands from the Muslim community, the state had to intervene and make specific policy measures to incorporate Muslims into mainstream education. The government opened new separate schools called Mappilah schools for Muslims. Muslim students were taught separately from Hindus to a certain level in these schools (Ali, 1990). On Fridays, Muslim students were given holidays, and some government schools were named government Muslim schools to bring Muslims into the mainstream educational fold. Muslim League played a pivotal role in the educational development of Malappuram. The educational backwardness of Muslims in the Malappuram region was one of the primary reasons for the demand for a new district by the Muslim League. C.H. Mohammed Koya, who was the Minister of Education from 1967 to 1973 and 1977 to 1979, is noted for his contributions to the progress of the education of Muslims and other backward classes of Malabar. He played a crucial role in introducing Arabic to , and attracting Muslims to schools. The educated elites within the community and various reformist organisations also played a significant role in bringing Muslims to the mainstream education system (Salim, 1998).

Lack of options

With the land reforms and improvements in education and health, there was a general increase in the welfare of the people, but neglect towards setting up industries and boosting the manufacturing sector resulted in low growth of the state. The state was not able to generate the required employment opportunities. In

Cheriyangadi, a large number of workers who moved out of agriculture now found no options in the local economy. For those employed outside agriculture, the daily wages in the 1960s were meagre and insufficient to sustain life. Despite being the centre of trade and commerce, Valiyangadi needed to improve job opportunities to keep up with its growing population. There were no industries in Valiyangadi that could employ the local workforce. By the 1970s, the news of job opportunities in the Gulf started to spread in Malabar, and people started looking to the Gulf for employment.

The improvements in human capital in Kerala, at the expense of a stagnant economy, led to an economic conundrum in the state. Where will the population be employed? The emphasis on improving the education and health conditions of the people was at the cost of industrialisation and the growth of the state's economy. From 1960 to 1990, Kerala experienced economic stagnation. The growth rate of Kerala declined from 3.7 per cent per annum in the 1960s to 2.3 per cent during the 1970s to plummet to less than one per cent during the 1980s. There were few employment opportunities in the state to absorb the local workforce. The proportion of unemployed people in the total labour force in the 1980s was 13.5 per cent (Census, 1980). The early onset of the population explosion in Kerala compared to the rest of the country also contributed to the high unemployment rates in Kerala.

Land reforms did not improve the agricultural productivity in Kerala. The new generation, which benefitted from the educational reforms in the state, did not find the declining agrarian sector appealing. In the post-land reform period, agricultural land was converted into residential plots to meet the housing demands of the growing population. The rise in wages of agricultural labour without an equivalent increase in agricultural income forced many cultivators to shift from paddy cultivation to cash crops. This movement from labour-intensive paddy cultivation to less labour-intensive cash crops also aggravated the unemployment situation in the state. The high wage rate and militancy of labour unions also worked against the interests of entrepreneurs to set up industries in the state, which otherwise could have absorbed the local workforce and generated agglomeration effects, which could further generate employment opportunities. The lower wage rates in the neighbouring states moved the industries to Tamil Nadu. With rapid educational developments, the supply of an educated workforce was not matched by equivalent demand. Several changes in Kerala, as well as in the Gulf, contributed to the emergence of an environment in Kerala, and especially Malappuram, that was much more conducive to migration.

10

Labour vacuums and interlinked migration

Paul Thomas

The sharp increase in oil prices in the early 1970s opened up new developmental initiatives in the Gulf Council (GCC) countries[380]. The increase in government revenues resulted in an increase in government expenditure—large-scale infrastructural projects like the construction of schools, hospitals, and residential and commercial buildings. There were also initiatives to improve transportation and communication technology by constructing roads, airports, and seaports[381].

The Gulf countries had sufficient capital for this spurt of infrastructural and economic developmental activities, but there was a labour shortage in the region. The small local workforce was neither adequate nor skilled to meet the labour requirements of the developmental projects. There was a sudden demand for highly skilled technical labour and both semi-skilled and unskilled labour for the projects. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain saw massive immigration of workers from the 1970s. The number of migrant workers in the GCC countries increased from around 0.69 million in 1970 to 1.39 million in 1975 to 2.7 million in 1980. Furthermore, the migrant workers' share in the total workforce in these countries rose from 50.5 per cent in 1975 to 70 per cent in 1980 [382]. The local population in the GCC countries were only interested in government jobs, and they were unwilling to do manual work or work in the private sector [383]. The highly skilled labour was primarily met from developed countries, and the semi-skilled and unskilled labour was met by labour migration from countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh [384]. The GCC countries preferred Asian workers over workers from neighbouring Arab countries for two reasons. First, the labour-abundant Asian countries provided cheap labour and were more flexible in the kind of work they did. The second reason why there was a preference for workers from Asian countries is that local authorities were worried that workers from neighbouring Arabic countries might spread radical ideas undermining political loyalties, which could pose a threat to the GCC countries and their regimes (Kapiszewski, 2001, p. 59). There was a large migration from India to fill the labour demand in the Gulf. The wave of migration started slowly in the 1970s, but the numbers started growing in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1976, the number of Indian migrants in the Gulf was 42,000. In the next five years,

380 Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are the GCC countries. They are part of a regional, intergovernmental, political and economic union.

381 Shaw, *Mobilizing Human Resources in the Arab World.*

382 Birks, Seccombe, and Sinclair, "Migrant Workers in the Arab Gulf."

383 Ali, "Labor Immigration in the Arab Gulf States."

384 United Nations, *Levels and Trends of International Migration to Selected Countries in Asia.*

the numbers peaked at 272,000 in 1981. The migration wave from India was dominated by the Kerala Migrants (Venier, 2007). In 1998, the stock of Indian emigrants in the Gulf was estimated at around 28 lakhs, out of which more than 14 lakhs were from Kerala (Prakash, 1998). In Kerala, migration to the gulf was majorly concentrated in the northern districts of Kerala, and the incidence of migration was the highest among the Muslim community (Prakash, 1978). The initial migration to the Gulf was mainly by semi-skilled or unskilled workers. The educational background of the initial migrants was mainly primary education. The lack of employment opportunities and limited options in the distressed agrarian economy made the early migrants take the risk of migrating to the Gulf. There was also a migration of skilled workers from Kerala, from the southern districts of Kerala. This was primarily from the Christian communities of Pathanamthitta and Kottayam districts, which had access to English and higher education. There was a significant migration of doctors, nurses, engineers, and teachers from these districts to the Gulf in the initial years of the development of the Gulf. However, this number was relatively smaller than the low-skilled migration from Kerala to the Gulf. The migration from Kerala to the Gulf was a lower-end semi-skilled and unskilled migration, but the migrants soon became the elites in the locality, and migration began to be considered a prestigious and superior economic activity.

Kerala's long ties with the Middle East through trade relations played a role in developing migrant circuits between Kerala and the Gulf during the post-oil boom [385]. The familiarity of Kerala in the Middle East, and conversely that of the Gulf in Kerala, gave an added advantage for the state compared to other regions in benefitting from migrating to the Gulf [386] . The state's interventions in the health and education policies, which resulted in improved literacy levels and better health conditions, improved the capabilities of the local population to enable them to tap into the opportunities arising in a transnational region through migration.

The extent of the change is reflected in Haneefa's later efforts at migration to the Gulf. Five years after his first failed trip, Haneefa got his passport and travelled to Salalah in Oman. This time around, he travelled with a visa and worked as a tailor. His salary was very meagre in the initial monthsHe later got to know that an Italian construction company was building a Holiday Inn hotel, and joined them as a helper in plumbing and electrical work. After working there for one and a half years, he returned to Kerala to renew his passport. This job was well paying, and the Italian firm ensured good working conditions. He stayed in Kerala for another year, but was forced to become a tailor again to make ends meet. He travelled to Muscat, Oman on a visiting visa and found a job as an assistant cook for the Royal Oman Police Department. He got this job via the recommendation of a distant family member in Oman. In two years, he was promoted as the main cook. The job also allowed him to visit Kerala once a year with a month's leave. He worked there for 11 years, until Oman nationalised jobs, and he lost his position to a local Omani worker. Haneefa went back to Kerala, built a house, and began a family. He was struggling financially again as his savings had been exhuasted. He had to find money for his daughters' education and marriage, so he decided to migrate again. He took a visiting

385 Malekandathil, "The Sassanids and the Maritime Trade of India During the Early Medieval Period"; Menon, *A Survey Of Kerala History*.

386 Osella and Osella, "'I Am Gulf'"; Subairath, "Calicut."

visa to Oman again, but this time, he struggled to find a job. Haneefa's wife's relatives were working in government departments in Dubai, and knowing his situation, they asked him to come to Dubai. Haneefa had connections with the native Omanis working in the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and Immigration Department of Oman through his previous position as a cook in the Royal Oman Police. He spoke to his friend Salam from the ROP who gave him a pass to travel from Oman to Dubai via road. He met his relatives there, and they got him a job as a security guard in Dubai. The company who employed him liked Haneefa because of his fluent Arabic, thanks to his years of experience in the Middle East. Dubai promised more job opportunities, as nationalisation was not implemented in the UAE.

His employers told him that they would dispatch an official visa to Kerala. Haneefa went back to Kerala via Muscat and found that his employers had indeed sent his visa there. He returned to Dubai, UAE, and worked with Emirates General Petroleum Corporation as a security officer at the accommodation of the company staff. The job entailed 10 hours of duty, with food and accommodation free. The company also sponsored annual tickets to Kerala, with one month's salary and insurance covered. After two years, he felt that there was nothing more to achieve in Dubai; his daughters were married, and he had built a house in Cheriyangadi. He decided it was time to return home and join his wife, who had been living alone in the village home.

While the educationally forward Ezhavas, Nairs and Syrian Christians from the Cochin-Travancore regions saw significant internal migration, the Muslim community dominated the international migration scene. The northern districts benefitted more than the southern districts of the state. Malappuram district is one region that benefitted the most from the Gulf boom. In 1980, there were 15 migrants per 1,000 people in Malappuram (Prakash, 1998). The region of Malabar had been connected to the Arab world through trade relations for centuries. The historical, economic, ethnic, and religious connections of Malabar with the Gulf have influenced the labour migration from Malappuram to the Gulf. With the Gulf boom, the trade circuit transformed into a labour circuit.

The probability of a Muslim being an international migrant (49 per cent) was 2.2 times the probability of people from Kerala as a whole being an international migrant (22 per cent). At the same time, the chance of internal migration of a Muslim (6.3 per cent) was only around half that of the average person from Kerala (11.5 per cent) [387]. The propensity to migrate outside the country was higher than the propensity to migrate within the country for Muslims. This is because the internal migration from Kerala was predominantly educated, skilled migrants moving within the country to tap into opportunities in the government sector and other professional jobs. The Muslims, who were educationally backward compared to the Hindus and Christians, were left behind in this process of internal migration between the 1960s and 2000s. However, the labour demand in the gulf was tailored perfectly for the Kerala Muslims since most jobs were low or semi-skilled, which did not require much formal education. The educationally backward Muslims who benefitted and could achieve a specific set of capabilities from the state's intervention in education and health formed

387 "Impact of Migration on Kerala's Economy and Society."

the significant chunk of migrants who migrated to the Gulf. Being the most populous district in the state, the opportunities in the Gulf were like a pressure valve opening through which thousands of migrants escaped poverty. There was also a stepwise migration between the 1970s and 1980s. Many young migrants first went to Bombay for work and opportunities to migrate to the Gulf. They worked in Bombay for a few months to save money to travel to the Gulf. The migration was through the sea, and many ship services operated from Bombay port to UAE. At the time of the survey, the migration incidence in Cheriyangadi was 79.61 per cent.

Valiyangadi's migration story is different from Haneefa's *launch* story in Cheriyangadi. People in Valiyangadi had connections with Saudi Arabia through Hajj and Umrah[388] visits. They found new employment prospects in Saudi Arabia and established contacts with the local Arabs whom they met when they travelled for Hajj and Umrah. The first wave of migrants from Valiyangadi to Saudi Arabia travelled on Umrah visas. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia issued Umrah visas for the specific purpose of Muslims across the world to come to Mecca to perform the Umrah ritual. The migrants from Valiyangadi travelled to Saudi Arabia on Umrah visas, but their primary motive was to find employment in the Gulf country. After arriving in Saudi Arabia, they prioritised finding employment and securing a sponsor called a *kafeel* who could provide them with the necessary permit to obtain a legitimate migrant status known as an *Iqama*[389]. The legal framework of immigration systems in GCC countries is very restrictive, with minimum rights for foreign workers. Under the *Kafala* (sponsorship) system, the entry of a foreign worker to a Gulf country is subject to having a local Arab sponsor. The sponsor can be the company or the person who hired the migrant worker. A migrant worker could not switch jobs without the sponsor's permission (Zahra, 2014). There was no free mobility in the job labour market for the migrant workers, and this restriction was deemed to keep the workers under control (Akzahrani, 2014).

These migrants worked as petty workers in the informal sector. Many found employment in hotels as cooks and servers, as well as salespersons. Until they obtain a sponsor and an Iqama, these migrants were considered illegal under Saudi laws, and if caught by authorities, they could be deported back to India. They always had to ensure that the police did not spot them. If caught, they would be sent to jails with harsh conditions before being deported. Many early migrants shared their stories, where they did not leave their rooms for months until they got their permit to work. People preferred using an Umrah visa instead of an employment visa because an Umrah visa was cheap and easier to obtain. The immigration process for getting an employment visa was complicated, and one has to be professionally qualified and have an offer letter from a company in Saudi Arabia. The people in Valiyangadi were literate but not qualified enough for professional jobs in the Gulf, and hence, securing an employment visa was difficult. Migrating to Saudi Arabia was a common trend in Valiyangadi until the 2010s. The incidence of migration in Valiyangadi from our survey was 72.12 per cent.

388 The Umrah is a non-obligatory Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, which can be done anytime of the year unlike Hajj which has specific dates based on the Islamic lunar calendar.

389 Iqama is an official ID document issued by the government of Saudi. It is tied to your sponsor who is a Saudi citizen, and acts as a residency card in the country.

Formation of Migration Capital for Gulf Migration

Human capital and its intergenerational transmission have been central in the economic thinking of international migration in terms of understanding migration decision-making, social mobility, and economic impacts on the destination and origin countries (Borjas, 1989; Chiswick, 2007; Todaro, 1969). Sociological theories in migration have relied on social capital to understand migration networks, ethnic enclaves, migrant ethnic economies, and integration of migrants (Massey et al., 1987; Waldinger, 1993; Wilson & Portes, 1980). The concept of cultural capital has opened up an approach to understanding the internationalization of higher education, high-skilled migration, social and cultural remittances, and social transformation worldwide (Brown, 2000; Igarashi & Saito 2014; Marginson 2008; Waters 2005).

The process of migration requires capital of any one or all forms. A migrant might need economic, cultural, social, or a mix of all three capitals based on his societal position. Migration capital is a combination of economic, social, and cultural capital. 'It is the entire set of benefits that an individual has access to in the migration process. This would include social connections, cultural elements, and material facilities.' (Pani & Singh, 2012). Kim (Kim, 2018) defines Migration-facilitating capital as "a variety of economic, cultural, social, and other resources that enable migrants to access multiple forms of authorized and unauthorized passages into their desired destinations."

The idea of migration capital is built on Bourdieu's three forms of capital: economic, cultural, and political. Economic capital is that which can be immediately and directly converted to money and institutionalised in the forms of property rights. Cultural capital is that which can be converted to economic capital on certain conditions. It can also be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications. Knowledge, skills, and tastes are examples of cultural capital. The third form of capital- social capital is made up of social connections that can be converted into economic capital in certain conditions. It may be institutionalized in the form of titles of nobility. Networks and relationships are part of one's social capital. Migration capital dictates the migration trajectories of a place. The routes, means, destinations, and enablers of migration in Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi depended upon the extent of migration capital people could access.

The initial migrants from Cheriyangadi were from the most impoverished families in the village and lacked migration capital of any form to enable them to migrate. They arranged migration capital, which was primarily economic, through borrowings and selling of land and gold ornaments. The lack of migration capital forced them to look for cheaper but risky means to migrate to the Gulf. Young boys gambled their lives and took the risky journey by sea to the shores of the Gulf. The first set of migrants travelled via illegal routes without passports and visas. The travel was through *launch* boats from Calicut to the Gulf. Gradually, people from Cheriyangadi got familiar with the Gulf and the means to migrate to the Gulf. The stories and experiences of Gulf migrants excited many young boys and men to migrate. People in Cheriyangadi who were from the families or extended families of first migrants, and who had connections with the first migrants, had no access to higher migration capital. The new migrant's migration capital included both economic and social capital. They could draw from the experiences

of the previous migrants, which essentially is part of the migration capital. By the mid-1970s, the migration process transformed from illegal to more legal and formal means. The survey revealed that all migrants used official channels with proper documents to migrate. The migrants then helped secure visas for their relatives and friends in the village, facilitating more migration to the Gulf from Cheriyangadi. Networks were crucial in securing visas and migrating during the initial migration phase. The survey data shows that 60 per cent of the migrants get their source of information for migrating from their family members followed by friends (19 per cent), self-finding (7 percent) and agents (7 per cent).

A migrant needed to have networks both in the Gulf and in the village. In the Gulf, a migrant needed contacts with Arab officials and locals to secure a visa as well as to return home. The visas that were used for migration to the Gulf were called free visas. Arab countries began to allow their citizens to issue free visas to domestic workers and labourers. These visas did not specify job category or details of the migrant and were subject to less scrutiny by immigration officials than employment visas. Selling these free visas to migrants was a source of income for the average Arab citizen, who had a specific quota of free visas that they could issue. The Arab citizen would then sell the free visa to the migrant through another migrant who was already there in the Gulf, and who in turn would bring more migrants there. . Once the migrant reached the Gulf, they had to pay money to the Arab Kafeel (Sponsor) and do whatever work they want to do, provided they pay him every year for the renewal of their visa. People who travelled by free visa worked in retail outlets, as office boys in companies, house helpers, house drivers, cooks, servers, military helpers, clerks, welder-carpenters, petrol bunk helpers, and other low-skilled jobs and petty businesses. All that was required was to know a migrant who could get them a visa from the Gulf. In Cheriyangadi, the migration capital for the first migrants was limited to economic capital. However, subsequent migrants could benefit from higher migration capital consisting of economic and social capital and the experiences of other migrants.

The early migrants from Valiyangadi, on the other hand, had access to a larger extent of migration capital. Apart from the economic and social capital, the migrants had access to cultural capital. The three forms of cultural capital that Bourdieu classifies are embodied, objectified, and institutionalised cultural capital. All three forms are required in the process of migration. The embodied state of cultural capital is 'in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body (Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital).'These are an individual's physical and mental attributes, which are embodied in one's body and mind. When a Malayali migrates to the gulf, their physical appearance and psyche of a Malayali would help them to find a place among the other Malayali migrants. The way one looks and thinks as a result of being born and raised in a particular culture will be embodied in them. Language, ethnicity, skin colour, accent, etc., are embodied forms of cultural capital. Objectified cultural capital is 'in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.)'(Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital). A migrant would carry his clothes, books, newspaper, food, etc., from his home to the destination, and these objects act as bridges to associate with the migrants from his village or town in the destination. One interesting example would be the Kerala *lungi*, which has a unique regional identity of Kerala. However, how Muslims and others wear a *lungi* is different

in Kerala. Both the *mundu* and lungi are usually worn towards the right so that the colorful border or *jari* is along the right leg, but Kerala Muslims wear it toward the left, and the *jari* is along the left leg. In that way, one can identify whether a person is Keralite and also Muslim from the way they wear their *mundu* or *lungi*.

Institutionalized cultural capital is those that have an institution's formal recognition. A typical example would be being a member of a political party or a diasporic association which enables one's migration and migrant life. The Kerala Muslim Culture Centre (KMCC) is a Malayali diasporic association linked with the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), a political party. It is important to note that religion is essential in the cultural capital, enabling migration in Valiyangadi. Since the migration channel is facilitated through a religious corridor, one should possess the knowledge and skills within the domain of religion to access migration opportunities. Migrants with knowledge of Arabic have an added advantage when navigating unfamiliar situations in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the high literacy rates of individuals in Valiyangadi served as part of their cultural capital, enabling them to seize new opportunities.

59 per cent of respondents from the survey responded that they got information about work in the Gulf or outside the country from a family member. After family networks, the significant information source for international migration is through friends. 18 per cent of migrants noted that they got the opportunity to migrate from information provided by their friends. Around 10 per cent of migrants depended upon agents and advertisements to find job opportunities abroad. The informal means of migration are no more present in the two places at the time of the survey. From the survey, there was only one migrant who used Umrah visa for migration.

Kinship networks of the family are a discernible asset in the migration process and part of the larger set of social capital. An extension of the definition of Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital is required to understand how family networks act as migration capital in the migration process. Bourdieu's definition of social capital refers to the connection of a family with others outside the family. In terms of migration capital, it is the connections that a family has with its extended larger family. This is important when we look at Muslim households in Malappuram that have connections with the larger extended joint families. The extent of migration capital an individual can benefit from depends extensively on one's family. Even if only one person migrates, the entire family is part of the process. The migration process will be understood incompletely if the analysis is restricted to the migrants leaving away their families and other household members. The migration capital that a migrant can draw from a nuclear family is low compared to whether the person could use resources from a joint family or an extended family. If the migrant has relatives in the place of his destination, the migration capital the person can access will be even higher.

Just like how familial networks play a decisive role in migration, the social, political, economic and cultural characteristics of a place can also be an enabler of migration. The more the place has experience of migration, the higher the propensity to migrate. The routes and destinations of the early migrants influenced the paths and destinations of the subsequent migrants. The early migrants from Cheriyangadi migrated to the UAE, a route which has been followed till date. Similarly, the subsequent

migration from Valiyangadi also followed the destination of the early migrants- to Saudi Arabia. The region's socio-economic, political, and historical background also dictates a place's migration trajectory. Migrants from educationally and economically backward Cheriyangadi migrated to UAE through informal means. Valiyangadi, a center of trade and commerce, received word of the recently discovered liquid gold in the Gulf in the late 1960s. There were affluent people in Valiyangadi who already had experience traveling to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah . The higher literacy, better socio-economic conditions, and access to religious and cultural capital in Valiyangadi enabled migrants to convert religious travel to an occupational migration.

Flow of remittances

Today in Malappuram, one can see three generations of migrants and, in some cases, all three in one family. The stories of a first-generation migrant who paved the way for subsequent migrants to follow may seem unrealistic to his grandson, who is preparing to leave for the UK for his studies. The courage, sacrifice, uncertainty, and adventure of the first migrant from Cheriyangadi who sailed from coastal Kerala to the Gulf on a *Dhow* might sound like a fictional film story today, and indeed, there have been numerous novels and films on the Kerala- Gulf migration. The new migrants acknowledge the importance of these veteran migrants, and on special occasions, there are programs held in the village where these migrants are revered. The second generation of migrants could make full use of transportation technology for migration. With the opening of Calicut International Airport in Karipur, Malappuram, in 1988, travel to the Gulf became much easier. Living conditions in the Gulf also became more comfortable by this time because of the infrastructural developments in the Gulf, and today, a large number of Kerala migrants in the Middle East have built strong diasporic networks across the Gulf.

As a consequence of the Gulf migration, the state's economy became increasingly dependent on remittances. Kerala received 824 crores as remittances in 1986, which was 22 per cent of the Net Domestic product of Kerala. Between 1980 and 1992, the planned expenditure in Kerala was only 40 per cent of remittances received from the Gulf. By the 1990s, Kerala received approximately Rs 5,500 crore as remittances from the Gulf. The remittances were invested in the education and health of children, which led to demands for higher educational institutions and a better-specialised healthcare system. The savings and social investments from the remittances also transformed the state's economy. The flow of remittances to the state increased at a point when the state was withdrawing from the social sector initiatives like education and health, which provided opportunities for the private sector to enter. The direct impact of remittances was improvements in the state's poverty levels and income distribution. Most migrants were from poor households, and their financial conditions improved through the remittances. There was an increase in the quality of living in the state owing to the remittances from international migration. The BPL population in the state declined from 53 per cent in 1978 to 32 per cent in 1988 (Planning Commission, 1993), which is also the period when the gulf migration and remittances peaked in the state. The Sachar committee report noted that in Kerala, where 24.7% of the population is Muslim, Muslims make up 30.7% of the total poor population below the poverty line. However, in the post-migration period, the decline in poverty

among Muslims was the highest (Zachariah et al., 2000). The unemployment rates also reduced post-gulf migration since a significant share of the migrants were unemployed before migration (DES, 1987; Nair, 1986). The indirect effects of remittances were increased wages, new employment opportunities, and increased land and consumer durable prices. These impacts have affected both migrant and non-migrant households. The flow of remittances and its spending in the local economy has boosted a poor and industrially backward state like Kerala.

The initial migrants did not send money home regularly. The major share of earnings was brought when they came back home, which was usually once in two or three years, and in some cases, it takes up to four years for a migrant worker to get his leave sanctioned. The average annual remittance sent by a migrant in 1987 was Rs 10,455 (DES, 1987) in Kerala. In the later decades, remittances were sent home through more formal means like banks and money exchanges. Money was also sent through friends, relatives and villagers when they returned home from the Gulf. Over time, a new informal means of remittance called- tube money became popular among the migrants as a new way to send money home. Tube money, also known as Hawala money, is an informal mode of transferring money without the actual movement of physical currency. The two reasons why Hawala became popular among the Gulf migrants of Kerala are the high expenses and low access to formal banking systems. The convenience fees charged by the formal banks and money exchanges were too high for the Gulf migrants who work for meagre incomes. In many villages in Kerala, banking facilities were not accessible to woman-headed households. In addition, Hawala was the only available mode for people who did not have access to government-issued ID cards and bank accounts to send money home. Many migrants who did not possess official papers and work permits relied on such informal methods for remittances. The family's elders handled the remittances, and the money sent home was mainly used for constructing new houses, repairing or renovating the old house, buying land or other assets, and expenses for family events like marriages, etc. In the aftermath of Gulf migration, the consumption pattern in Kerala is hallmarked by its conspicuous nature. A significant share of remittances that came to Kerala through Gulf migration was spent on consumer durables, transforming the state's economy into a consumption economy. In the 1990s, it was difficult to find a migrant household without a transistor or a radio. Those with better incomes in the Gulf bought cars to show their new social status in the village. The expenditure of migrant households was higher than that of non-migrant households. The migrant household spent more money on clothing, jewellery, food, education, entertainment, health care, etc. than the non-migrant households. The migrants did not invest their money in any productive enterprises. There was also not much enthusiasm or financial planning among the migrants to deposit or save money in the banks.

Construction Boom

Many migrants used remittances to purchase land since land reforms did not provide land to every household. There was a substantial investment of remittances in housing because houses symbolised one's success as a Gulf migrant, and people spent huge proportions of their hard-earned money on building big, beautiful houses. The construction was usually completed in stages. In the first visit, the migrant bought a plot of land; in the second visit, a portion of

construction is done; in the next visit, the next stage and so on. The Gulf migration and the subsequent flow of remittances had their impact beyond the economy. The Gulf migration played a crucial role in restructuring the family structure in Malappuram. Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi transitioned from the traditional joint family system to more nuclear families. The transition is incomplete, as seen from the old tiled houses with multiple rooms in Cheriyangadi. These households are some of the poorest households in the village where the benefits of migration could not better their household conditions. The transition from joint to nuclear family requires constructing new houses. A region that traditionally follows joint family systems would witness a construction boom when a transition from joint to nuclear family happens, and this is precisely what happened in Malappuram. The process of migration and his stay in a foreign land could have individuating effects on the person. With the remittances coming in, the migrant's first goal is to build an independent house for his family. The intensity of the construction boom multiplied with the conspicuous nature of consumption patterns in migrant households. His house becomes more than a residence for the migrant; it becomes a status symbol and a sign of his successful migration. When houses were reconstructed, the main emphasis was given to the front view of the houses by constructing concrete verandas and mosaic flooring (Prakash, 1978), making it easily distinguishable between a gulf house and a non-gulf house. Many migrants borrowed money for constructing houses, marriages, etc., and a part of their remittances was spent on paying back the loans.

The boom in the housing sector led to a massive rise in the prices of construction materials and an increase in the wages of construction workers. The wages of masons and carpenters had increased by 100 percent, and the wages of ordinary casual labourers increased by 80 percent in the same period (Prakash, 1978). Spillover effects also generated new opportunities in tertiary sectors like transport, communication, education, banking, health services, and commerce, and the overall wage rates in the state rose. The price of locally manufactured bricks increased by 60 percent, and the price of river sand increased by 66 percent within a span of 4 years between 1974 and 1978. The price of land also shot up during the period. Till the 1970s, there was not much demand for land in rural Kerala, but with the remittances coming in, land prices of rural Kerala shot up, giving huge financial benefits to landowners who sold their land post-gulf boom. The increase in land prices and consumer goods, which reduced purchasing power, adversely affected the lowest tier of the most vulnerable sections of the society, who benefited neither from the land reforms nor the Gulf boom.

Labour Vacuum and Internal Migration

Gulf migration resulted in a shortage of workers in specific sectors and increased demand for workers in certain sectors. The construction sector was one such booming sector in Kerala, and there was an acute shortage of construction workers in the state since the end of the 1970s. There are three main reasons for the shortage of workers in the construction sector. First, the major chunk of the migrants to the Gulf were low-skilled workers. Many construction-related workers, including skilled workers like carpenters, masons, etc., migrated to the Gulf. This reduced the supply of construction workers in the local economy. Second, a significant proportion of remittances were used to construct and renovate

new houses, buildings, boundary walls, etc., which led to a sudden increase in the demand for construction workers. Third, the youth were no longer interested in manual labour due to their educational qualifications and the social values attributed to such jobs. As a consequence of this shortage of construction workers, there was an increase in the wages of construction and other manual workers. Some studies show a correlation between migration and construction workers' wages (Prakash, 1998). This led to the migration of workers from Tamil Nadu to fill in the shortage of construction and allied sectors in Kerala (Surabhi, Kumar, 2007).

Another serious problem the state's economy faced was the absorption of returning migrants. Most returning migrants were not ready to enter the domestic labour force because of the relative difference in pay scale. Also, once a Gulf migrant, they were no longer ready to work as manual labourers because of the new social status that the migrant had achieved over his stay in the Gulf. This is primarily with regard to the social status attached to certain occupations. Living conditions in the Gulf were physically demanding, and once they return, they were not healthy or fit enough to take up physically demanding jobs. Because of their new social status, poor health s and reluctance to take up physically demanding jobs, most returning migrants aspired to be entrepreneurs or engage in some form of self-employment.

Migration restructures the local workforce such that local people are not interested in working in certain sectors. The first wave of migration to the Gulf created a labour vacuum in the village for certain occupations. This was because of the shortage of the working-age male population in the village and the local population's unwillingness to take up low-skilled jobs in areas such as construction. The reluctance of local population was mainly because the young population comprised an educated workforce that was overqualified for construction work. The demand for construction workers and the vacuum in the local labour market attracted workers from elsewhere in the country. The sectors facing a shortage of labour force were mainly dominated by men. The construction sector required more male labourers than females, which was met by male migrant workers. New forces of urban consumption and investment demanded rural transient migrants for construction projects (Kumar & Fernández, 2016). The increase in the consumption power of migrants demanded new housing and commercial ventures and attracted capital to the construction sector. This created a massive demand for labourers in the construction sector, which was met by migration from rural parts of the country, where people were pushed out of agriculture due to falling productivity in the agriculture sector.

The labour vacuum, construction boom, and high wages made Kerala a preferred destination for migrant workers in India. The estimated number of internal migrants in Kerala in 2018 was about 31 lakhs (Parida & Raman, 2021). The primary sector that employed migrant labour is construction (17.5 lakhs), followed by manufacturing (6.3 lakhs), agriculture and allied activities (3 lakhs), service sectors like hotel and restaurant (1.7 lakhs), wholesale and retail trade (1 lakh), and other elementary services (1.6 lakhs). The major migrant-sending states to Kerala are West Bengal, Assam, Odisha and Bihar. The flow of internal migrants has fragmented the labour market in Kerala between local and migrant workers. Malappuram district has 6.2 per cent (1.9 lakhs) of the total migrant workers in Kerala, and the share of migrant workers to

The construction sector is the primary sector where most migrant workers find employment. The construction style and procedures in Kerala differ from those in West Bengal, where most migrants come from. Migrants start working as helpers and slowly learn the vocation before becoming a main worker. The starting salary of a helper ranges between ₹700 to ₹800 per day and for a main worker it is between ₹1000 to ₹1100. In order to move up from a main worker to a contractor, one needs to have long years of experience working in the Kerala sector and be proficient in the local language to negotiate with the locals. This picture is taken from the construction site of Government Lower Primary School (GLPS) Cheriyangadi , where the school is undergoing renovation. The school has many children of migrant workers who are enrolled there. Unlike the residential buildings the migrants construct, where they have no chance of living, the school they are constructing provides an opportunity for their children's education.

the total number of workers in Malappuram is 17.2 per cent.

Based on our survey in Cheriyangadi, the major sectors of employment for people living in Cheriyangadi are trade (23 per cent), construction (21 per cent), skilled work (20 per cent) and entrepreneurship (11 per cent). To understand the extent of segmentation between local workers and migrant workers, we decomposed the sectors with more than 3 per cent of workers between locals and migrants (Table 10.1). There is a clear distinction between the sectors where locals and migrants are employed. At the lower tier, the construction sector is completely reserved for migrant workers. On the other hand, we see entrepreneurship, trade and transport totally dominated by local workers. Sectors like other wage work and skilled work are witnessing a seepage of migrant workers entering into them.

Table 10.1: Sector-wise distribution of migrants and local workers in Cheriyangadi

Sector	Local Per cent	Migrant Per cent	Total
Construction	2.27	97.73	100.00
Entrepreneurship	100.00	0.00	100.00
Other wage labour	57.14	42.86	100.00
Skilled worker	75.61	24.39	100.00
Trade	100.00	0.00	100.00
Transport	100.00	0.00	100.00

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

In the more urban centre of Valiyangadi, construction (18 per cent), trade (17 per cent), hotels and food supply (16 per cent), entrepreneurship (12 per cent) and skilled work (10 per cent) are the major employment sectors.

Breaking up the sector wise employment of locals and migrants shows that the local workers dominate the academic, entrepreneurship, transport, skilled work, and trade sectors (Table 10.2). The migrant workers are concentrated in the construction and hotel and food supply sector. There is also a seepage of migrant workers to the sectors like trade, skilled work and transport which earlier employed only local workers.

Table 10.2: Sector-wise distribution of migrants and local workers in Valiyangadi

Sector	Local Per cent	Migrant Per cent	Total
Academic	100.00	0.00	100.00
Construction	2.38	97.62	100.00
Entrepreneurship	100.00	0.00	100.00
Hotels and food supply	5.41	94.59	100.00
Skilled worker	91.67	8.33	100.00
Trade	84.21	15.79	100.00
Transport	94.74	5.26	100.00

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

Academic and entrepreneurship sectors are dominated by the local population. Sectors like trade, skilled work and transport which were also dominated by local workers are seeing a trickle in of migrant workers.

The labour vacuum created by the mismatch of demand and supply of local workers pulls migrants from elsewhere and outside the state. The agricultural distress resulting from low productivity from the farming sector creates a glut of workforce looking for better livelihood opportunities. Many of these workers have migrated to Kerala and are employed in the booming construction and hotel industries. Whether it is masonry, plastering, or *parotta* making, most of them do not have any prior experience or skills in these areas, and learn it through experience.

Further breakdown of the destination of migrant workers based on occupation sectors shows that there is no clear specialization in the migrant's occupation based on their place of origin (Table 10.3 and 10.4). Hence, the migration is not a specialized network-driven process but a vacuum-generated one. A migrant, irrespective of his origin, can tap into the opportunity arising from the labour vacuum. Migrants are also able to switch from one sector to another based on their learning and adaptability skills. This enables them to move from one occupation to another based on the demand for labour. In some sense, the nature of migration and the migrant labour force is highly dynamic in nature.

Networks play a large role in the initial stage of migration. Information about a job opportunity and a point of contact in Kerala is gathered through networks in the process of migration. Migrants also use their networks to find initial housing until they find accommodation for themselves.

Picture by Arjun Swaminathan

Restaurants and hotels are engagement sites between international migrants and internal migrants taking complementary roles in running the economic enterprise. The international migrants are the ones who have returned from the Gulf and are now investing their savings in setting up hotel businesses, which is a growing sector in the Kerala economy. The internal migrants are hired as cooks and suppliers in these hotels. There are migrants who are specifically demanded for each service within the hotel industry. Assamese, Bengalis, and Odia migrants work as cooks, while Nepalis and migrants from the northeast of India migrants are in demand for working as suppliers. Most migrant workers learn how to prepare Kerala dishes, working as apprentices in hotels and picking up the trade on the go.

Table 10.3: State wise distribution of migrant workers in construction sector

Construction	Per cent of Migrants
Assam	12.64
Bihar	19.54
Tamil Nadu	4.60
West Bengal	63.22
Total	**100.00**

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

Table 10.4: State wise distribution of migrant workers in Hotel and food supply sector

Hotels and food supply	Per cent of Migrants
Assam	65.12
Nepal	13.95
Odisha	20.93
Total	**100.00**

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

It was found from the household survey conducted in Cheriyangadi village of Malappuram district in Kerala that the majority of the internal migrant labourers working in the village are coming from Murshidabad district in West Bengal. Existing studies on the labour migration to Kerala from the state of West Bengal also revealed the significance of the corridor existing between Murshidabad and Perumbavoor- the Muslim-majority, satellite town of Kochi in Ernakulam district. Basu (2019) notes that there are four migration corridors from Murshidabad to Kerala, Malappuram being one of them. Murshidabad is one of the most backward districts in West Bengal in terms of human development. Sultanpur and Jalengi are two villages in Domkal Taluk of Murshidabad, which is connected to Malappuram district in Kerala through migration.

Both Sultanpur and Jalangi are agrarian villages. Sultanpur is predominantly a Muslim village, and Hindus are the majority in Jalangi. The agrarian distress due to falling agricultural productivity, aggravated by changing climatic conditions, pushed people out of agriculture. People who traditionally depended on agriculture- paddy, jute, and other vegetables- started moving to the nearby cities and Kolkata to find better jobs. The move out of agriculture was not easy for everyone in the village. The local elites in the village were the only ones who could find jobs in the service sector in and around the village. The absence of major industries, lack of local employment opportunities, and rapid population growth have forced people to look for opportunities outside the village. Most of the people in the middle and lower economic strata of the village migrated to the cities to secure the marginal employment opportunities available there. Though nobody in the village knows who migrated first from the village, they said that the first trend of migration started in the early 2000s towards Kolkata and other cities in West Bengal. The migration to Kerala began around 2005. The people who already experienced short-distance migration to cities found no difficulties in extending their travel to Kerala. Jalangi is a border village in West Bengal. The river Padma separates Jalangi from Bangladesh. The border between India and Bangladesh in Jalangi village is very fluid. The villagers said they could legally and illegally cross the border as they wished. Most people in the village migrated from Bangladesh years ago, settled here, and have relatives in Bangladesh. Their relatives often cross the border for agricultural work in their lands in Jalangi. Some also migrate to Kerala with their relatives when the agriculture season is off. A conversation with the BSF soldier posted in Jalangi confirmed that many Bangladeshi people cross the border and travel to Kerala to find work.

In the past decade, dramatic changes have occurred in the villages of Murshidabad because of migration to Kerala (Sk, 2023). Financial remittance from Kerala has improved the lives of the villagers. Migrant households can be easily identified from the concrete houses- some even have unique Kerala-style architecture. Many returned migrants who have retired from the migration process have set up small shops in the village. Some have invested their savings in buying auto rickshaws and totos (electric rickshaws) in the village. The government provides subsidies for buying totos, which many returned migrants use to find new employment which is not physically demanding.

A good proportion of remittances are spent on children's education. Like the traditional wealthy people in the village, the migrant families from the marginal sects of both Hindus and Muslims also show interest in sending their kids to better

Picture by Arjun Swaminathan

In Valiyangadi, migrant workers get into their contractor's mini tempo to work at the construction site. Every day, migrant workers assemble at designated areas between 7 AM and 8 AM in the city, waiting for the contractors to hire them for work. The everyday economic life of construction workers is embedded in precariousness, and informality forms the core of their work regime. There is no guarantee that all the migrants will find work on a given day, and many return home without finding work. Since there is no guarantee that they will return to the same site the next day, migrants carry their tools back to their homes every day. Some workers have fixed contractors for whom they work regularly, but no formal contracts protect these migrants from issues like wage theft.

schools. The health supervisor, who works in the village sub-centre of the public health centre, told me, that earlier, most of the people in the village were thin, only people in the rich families had healthy bodies, and the villagers were often engaged in disputes. Now, the situation has changed a lot. Those who return from Kerala are healthier. It is easy to identify them in the village as they wear better clothes. Their status has improved a lot. The response of the 13-year-old girl, Mahafuja Kathoon, was candid when asked about the differences she observed among the members of her family who returned from Kerala. She said, 'When they came from Kerala, their faces glowed, and now they have become more mature and disciplined.'

The opportunities that opened up because of the construction boom and allied urbanisation processes that arose in Malappuram because of Gulf migration in turn created opportunities for the small land owing and landless families in Murshidabad, who were the primary victims of the agrarian crisis. The economic conditions

and the social status of these marginal sects in the village have phenomenally improved in past decades due to migration. The cultural remittance from Kerala, though it may be seen as a natural process of migration, also functions as a language to exhibit the economic and social mobility of the people after the migration process.

Investments in higher education

By the 1990s in Kerala, there was a gradual withdrawal of the state from investments in the social sector. This allowed private capital investments to enter the higher educational sector. The capital from remittances was invested substantially in higher education institutions. The emphasis was on professional education colleges like engineering, nursing, medicine, etc. The Muslim Educational Society (MES), which started with the aim of improving the educational outcomes of Muslims in Malabar, played a tremendous role in building the higher education system in north Kerala[390]. MES College of Engineering, established in 1994 as an institution with minority status, is the first self-financing engineering college in Kerala. Today, it is one of the largest educational organisations in the country, with institutions in other states of India as well as in Middle Eastern countries.

In Cheriyangadi, the investments in higher education were limited to vocational education and skill training through Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) and Educational training colleges. The unemployed youth started to enroll for courses that could get them jobs in the Gulf. Many private vocational training institutions sprouted during this time, offering skill training in computers, machine operating, electronic gadgets repair, welding, construction-related activities, catering, paramedical courses, tailoring, technicians, etc. The institutions were set up to meet the job demands of the Gulf and not the domestic market. The Amina ITI in Cheriyangadi started in the early 1970s. It initially offered training in only carpentry because the area had a shortage of carpenters, and they had higher wages than other workers. Later, the institute began offering courses in other fields. In 1975, the institution was recognised by the Technical Education Department, Government of Kerala and became the first institute in Malappuram district to offer a certificate course in automobile engineering accredited by the Kerala government. Another prominent ITI in Cheriyangadi- Valavannur Bafakhy Yatheem Khana (VBY) ITI was established in 1981 under the affiliation of the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT), New Delhi. The institute has provided training in many fields such as civil engineering, electronic repairing, automobile mechanics and electrical works, which had high demand in the gulf. A number of aspiring youngsters in Cheriyangadi benefitted from these institutions and secured employment in the Gulf.

The higher educational institutions in Valiyangadi, which came up thanks to capital from remittances, were primarily professional colleges. With the coming of remittances from the Gulf, the migrants invested a significant proportion of the money in the their children's education. Many engineering, medical, nursing, and pharmacy colleges emerged in Valiyangadi in the 1980s. The 1990s also saw a boom in information and communication technology in India, which opened up extensive employment

390 MES was formed in 1964 under the leadership Dr P.K Abdul Gafoor at Calicut. Although the society was formed in 1964, it was only since the 1990s the investments in higher education started to expand.

opportunities for engineers in the country. This led to a massive demand for engineering colleges in Kerala. However, there were only seven engineering colleges in the state then. The state's withdrawal from social sector investments, especially higher education and the growing demand for engineering and other professional courses provided an entry point for private capital to the education sector. In Malabar, particularly Malappuram, the remittances from migration capital were used to set up higher educational institutions. Today, Valiyangadi has become the hub of private, professional education colleges in Kerala, with an engineering college, an architecture college,a medical college, a dental college, four nursing colleges, four paramedical colleges, and two pharmacy colleges. Valiyangadi also has numerous Arts and Science Colleges, Arabic Colleges, Management Colleges, Polytechnic Colleges, Industrial Training and Teacher Training Institutes. Owing to the demands for educational development in Malappuram, the Aligarh Muslim University Malappuram Campus was established in 2010 near Valiyangadi.

Valiyangadi has become a medical hub in Kerala in the last three decades. Valiyangadi is popularly known as the medical city of Kerala. Urbanisation leads to improvements in education and healthcare facilities [391]. Valiyangadi is an example where the reverse process took place. Education and healthcare institutions initiated the process of urbanisation in Valiyangadi. If a region has something unique to offer, people would travel to that place, and the interaction will be stronger with the nearby settlements. People from nearby districts depended on hospitals in Valiyangadi for their medical needs. The growth of Valiyangadi as a medical town started in the late 1980s. The coming of two multi-speciality hospitals, Al Shifa in 1989 and Moulana in 1990, respectively, changed the landscape of healthcare in Valiyangadi and Malappuram. EMS Hospital and MES Medical College were set up in the later years. Since the government hospitals catered mainly to primary health needs, the void for higher-end super speciality hospitals was filled by private hospitals. The coming up of super speciality hospitals led to spill-off development opportunities for medical shops, X-ray and scanning centres, blood test centres, physiotherapy centres, dental clinics, skin clinics, etc. This also became a drive for doctors' migration to Valiyangadi. Today, there is a residential area in Valiyangadi exclusively for doctors called Doctor's Colony in the town. The medical sector in Valiyangadi also generates revenue from medical tourism. Since the place is connected to the Gulf, many Arabs come to Valiyangadi for medical tourism. Medical tourism opened up new employment opportunities for the locals in the hospitality sector. During the monsoon season, a large number of Arab tourists visit Valiyangadi to experience the monsoon and take a medical retreat. Many people with proficiency in Arabic from their Gulf days worked as local guides for the Arabs.

Looking West

The present generation of Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi no longer find the prospects in the Gulf interesting. With globalisation and copious education overseas institutions, migrating to a Western country is a common trend now in Kerala. The Ministry of External Affairs reports that 30,948 students from Kerala travelled abroad in 2019. Numerous IELTS coaching centres and study abroad agencies have mushroomed in Valiyangadi in the last decade.

391 Scott, *The Constitution of the City*.

The new educational institutions built from the remittances have improved the educational outcomes of the youth in Malappuram. However, the employment opportunities in the region have not expanded to absorb the educated workforce. Globalisation, migration capital and education have increased their capacity to aspire and look for greener pastures. The youth is migrating to Western countries like the UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, etc. Interestingly, students also migrate to unexpected non-English speaking countries like Malta, Italy, France, Mexico, Iceland, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, Barbados in the Caribbean Islands, Slovenia, Slovakia, China, the Philippines, etc. Some students migrate for studies and return once their course is completed. Many ambitious students who could not clear the NEET exams for medical college admissions migrate to countries like Russia, China, Ukraine, the Philippines, etc., for medical degrees[392]. These students return to India after completing their courses to practice in India.

The new wave of migration to the West takes the form of student migration, which is different from the labour migration that was the means used by the earlier migrants to go to the Gulf. The migration is officially undertaken for education, but the real motive for migrating is to find a job and settle in the destination country, a common trend now in Kerala. Youngsters in Cheriyangadi are also following a similar path. Religion, gender, or caste does not play a limiting factor in achieving the Western dreams of youth. The only criterion for this endeavour is economic. With packages ranging from 15 to 25 lakhs, anyone who can afford this price can achieve their dream of studying abroad. Education plays a key role in the migration to the West. If education was an enabler for helping the migrants to migrate to the Gulf, today, education has become a tool for migration. The role of education, i.e. a foreign university degree, is a means to migrate to the destination country. In most cases, the employment after graduating from the course is unrelated to the program.

Earlier, only students from wealthy families could migrate to other countries for education, but now the availability of bank loans has made the migration dreams of students from lower economic strata possible. The parents are also open to sending their children to Western countries for education. Since the family size has come down to one or two children per family, nuclear families can spend more resources per child, and are willing to take loans to sell the property to send their children abroad. Shahrul's son migrated to Canada after his 12th. He has taken a loan of 20 lakhs on his house from the cooperative bank in Valiyangadi for his son's migration. He said prospects in the Gulf are coming down, and there are new opportunities in the West. He added that it is not wise to stay back in Kerala as the youth have no opportunities in the state[393]. The opportunities in Kerala do not match the demands of the youthwho are interested mainly in government sector jobs. However, such jobs are highly competitive, and job creation in the public sector does not match the youth's demands. Families are also not hesitant to send girls abroad for higher education. In a discussion with a study-abroad agency manager, he said that in Valiyangadi, girls are in equal proportion or more than boys in migrating to Western countries. The two reasons for this are that the girls are first more studious than boys

392 The first COVID case reported in India was a medical student from Kerala who returned from Wuhan.

393 Kerala's Finance Minister KN Balagopal, in his 2023 budget speech on February 3, said that the state is paying attention to making the young stay back by creating more job opportunities and better facilities

and score higher in language-related and other tests required for securing admission. Secondly, most girls are married wives who migrate primarily to take their husbands as dependent partners to their destination countries. The new wave of migration to the West has impacted the marriage decisions of young men and women in Malappuram.

The demonstration effect can also explain the youth migration. A person's migration can lead to others' migration from the migrant's peer group, neighbourhood, or family. Ameen, who was planning to go to the UK for his master's in logistics, said he got the idea and information to migrate from his friend who had secured admission to the same program in the UK. He said he wants to settle in the UK because of better quality of life there[394]. When asked whether he could practice his faith in the UK, he said the UK provides a secular space for anyone to practice it.

The rise in migrant workers, and the rising unemployment among the locals has forced GCC countries to adopt policies to nationalise the labour market and reduce immigration (Shah, 2008). Some of the measures that were taken by the countries are tighter visa regulations, increased costs of hiring foreign workers, imposing quotas for foreign and local workers employed by companies (Nitaqat policy in Saudi Arabia), and taxing remittances. The prospects in the Gulf are also diminishing because of nationalisation. Also, the migration to the Gulf does not provide citizenship to the migrants. The children of migrants have seen how their parents, relatives and neighbours have struggled to reintegrate into the local community after long years of migration. Seeing this, is the younger generation is now interested in migrating to places that offer permanent residency and citizenship.

In this process, Malappuram, as a place, is left behind in some sense. The youth who migrate to the West are not interested in returning, and the internal migrants who come to Malappuram are also not looking for a permanent settlement.

The state of Kerala and Malappuram, in particular, is a place of a mixture of migrations. The place is part of three forms of migration. First, the place sent people to the Gulf in the 1970s who were primarily low skilled workers. The second wave of migration started post 2000s with construction boom and labour vacuum in certain sectors in the state. This was met by internal migration of workers from the eastern districts of India. Finally, since the last decade, the migration trajectories have shifted to new destinations in West. The nature of each migration wave is also distinct from each other in terms of the duration, work, migration capital, etc. The gulf migration was temporary, but the migrants had prolonged years of stay in the destination countries. The internal migration to Kerala is short term with more frequent visits home than the Gulf migrants from Kerala. The present student migration to western countries is permanent in nature, and its effects are yet to be unfolded on an already aging population of Kerala. It is interesting for migration and development scholars to look at the case of Malappuram and Kerala in general because the phenomenon of interlinked migration unfolds there. The place is both an origin and destination of migration. It is an origin of international migration to Gulf and at a later stage to Western countries. For the internal migrants the place is a destination. The complex interlinkages of the

394 The Kerala High Court recently attributed the reason behind the trend of youngsters leaving to the lack of infrastructure and aesthetic appeal in Kerala's cities.

three migration regimes have socio-economic, political, cultural and developmental implications on the place. These interlinkages and the dynamics of migration vary from a village to a town. Whether it becomes a melting pot or there are variegated ways in which these interlinkages function in a rural setting and an urban setting is worth exploring.

This picture is a snapshot of the interlinked migration and how it is reflected in the landscape of Cheriyangadi. The red board is of a Bengali tea shop primarily targeting migrant workers. The name is written in Bengali, which is a phenomenon that has been happening since the second decade of the twenty-first century. Many shops and buses have Hindi and Bengali nameboards to attract migrant customers. It is interesting to note that a Malayali owns the tea shop. The name T.P. is the name of the business enterprise run by the owner, and he owns a few other fruits, vegetables, and fish shops in the same area. The adjacent shop with a green name board has an Arabic script on it, which is a travel agency shop. They provide services for Haj and other ticket bookings for the Gulf migrant workers. These two shops with name boards in two languages other than Malayalam serving two distinct sects of migrants is a snapshot of the larger transformations that interlinked migrations are setting off in Malappuram.

11

Circuits and open migration

Paul Thomas

Labour Circuits

In her work on Global cities, Sassen Sassen, "Locating Cities on Global Circuits."finance and management which may disperse production, yet need (relatively few examines how cities are articulated to global circuits through technology, MNCs, investment and trade, global capital market and transnational labour flows. With rapid globalisation, today, it is not just cities that are connected globally through circuits. Places are able to transcend regional and national boundaries to link up to places across the globe. According to Sassen, it is primarily the hypermobility of capital that facilitates the creation of Global cities. The characteristics of a capital circuit are that it returns to its origin, and hence, it is circular. A circuit is a route or movement that starts and ends at the same point. The second characteristic of a capital circuit is that it does not have spillovers. For example, the capital that comes to the information and communication technology sector to Bengaluru in India from California in the US through investments will go back to their bases in California with multiplied returns. The investments made in Bengaluru by the big tech MNCs will be confined only to the IT sector in the city. The capital is used for building IT campuses, roads that connect these IT parks to the airport, etc. and there is no spillover to other sectors.

Just as capital is hypermobile within a circuit, labour can also form circuits. Labour circuits enable the process of connecting distant geographies through the hypermobility of labour. Similarly, a labour circuit is a kind of labour migration starting from an origin, staying and working at the destination for a period of time, and eventually returning to the origin. The duration of stay at the destination can vary based on each circuit. There can be circuits where labour is employed at the destination for extended periods of years, whereas there can also be labour circuits where labour is brought in for specific short-term assignments. In a labour circuit, the destinations can sometimes change after each subsequent visit to the home; these are just different directions and routes through which the labour moves before it eventually comes back to its origin.

A labour circuit has three characteristics that make it different from a labour migration. The first characteristic of a labour circuit is its circulatory nature. An analogy to an electric circuit can be helpful in understanding the concept of a labour circuit. In an electric circuit, current flows from one point and ends at the same point. Similarly, for a labour circuit, the movement of labour starts and ends at the same point. The second characteristic of a labour circuit is that there is no leakage or spillover of labour from the

designated route or purpose for which the labour moves. Leakage or spillover in the context of a labour circuit means that the migrants function within their own compartmentalised sectors, and their everyday lives are also segregated from the local people at their destinations. The migrant workers do not deviate from the path of the circuit that they are part of. The migrant workers are segregated based on their home, work and leisure. In an electric circuit, leakage of current can lead to a short circuit. Similarly, in a labour circuit, if there is any leakage of labour from the circuit, it will affect the efficiency of the labour circuit. It can have further implications in altering the existing economic and socio-political arrangements at the destination. The third characteristic of the labour circuit is the command and control through which the labour circuit functions. Institutions, actors, networks, and capital enable workers to move through the labour circuit both at the origin and destination.

It is essential to distinguish between three types of labour circuit. The first type is circular labour circuit which is the repetitive movement of migrants from home to their destination at fixed intervals. Agricultural workers in rural areas migrate to urban centres when there are no opportunities in the farming sector but return to their farms when it is time for harvesting or sowing. A labour circuit is different from a circular migration in the sense that once the labour reaches back to its origin, it doesn't migrate further. In other words, it is a life cycle movement of labour where the migrant who has completed his labour circuit has reached his origin for a permanent settlement. Within the labour circuit, a migrant might make multiple trips to their origins for various reasons, but it is his final return to his home that completes a labour circuit. Since a migrant who is part of a labour circuit knows they have to retire at their origins, their aspirations will always be attached to the origin. The second type of labour circuit is short-term assignment based where the labour does not form a fixed pattern of movement between origin and destination like the circular labour circuit. The third kind of labour circuit is the one where the labour stays at the destination for longer periods of time and the employment is generally more formal and long term contract based.

Open Migration

Open migration is a free migration where a migrant does not have many restrictions on his choice of destination, duration of stay and residential status. Open migrations are permanent, where the migrant does not return to their origin. Open migration can differ based on the reason or motivation for migrating. Labour migration can be open migration when the worker decides to stay back in the destination and naturalise their citizenship to the host country or take the permanent residency option. These options are contingent upon the immigration policies and citizenship laws of the host and origin countries. If the host and destination countries provide scope for dual citizenship, then a migrant might choose to keep his interests in both his origin and destination country. Still, if there is no scope for dual citizenship, one must decide where to settle permanently. This kind of open migration is based on the voluntary decisions of the migrant.

There can also be open migration when people are forced to move or when the migrants make decisions involuntarily. War and political refugees move from out of the distressed locations to new destinations permanently. In recent years, climate-induced migration has also significantly contributed to involuntary open migration, where people leave areas where climate change has made it impossible to live in new

destinations. Whether voluntary or involuntary, in open migration, the prospects and aspirations of the migrants are attached to the destination rather than the origin. In the case of climate and war refugee migration, the origins have become uninhabitable for the migrants, so there is no question about thinking about a return to the origins.

Circuits and Open Migration in Interlinked Migration in Malappuram

In the interlinked migration in Malappuram, the interlinkages are between two labour circuits and one open migration. The two labour circuits are the international labour circuit to the Gulf from Malappuram and the second is the internal labour circuit from states in Eastern India. These labour migrations are labour circuits because they return to their origins and complete a circuit. In the lifecycle of a labour circuit, they have made multiple trips home and stayed back for extended periods. Still, in the end, there is a permanent return of labour to where it started its movement; hence, their aspirations are tied to their origins. The open migration in the interlinked migration is the migration to Western countries. The new wave of migration to Western countries like Canada, the UK, Germany and Australia, primarily by students, is motivated by the aspirations to settle in these countries permanently and attain citizenship. The aspirations of the migrating youth are based in the destination countries rather than their origins.

Labour Circuits in Interlinked Migration

The two labour circuits in the interlinked migration, the international gulf labour circuit and the internal labour circuit, both functioned autonomously, but shared a common objective of working intensely at the destination to improve conditions at their places of origin. International and internal migrants did not spend leisure time or holidays at their destinations. They seized whatever work opportunities they got in their destinations. The average number of working days per month for both groups of migrants was the same. The average number of working days for international migrants was 26 days per month, and for internal migrants, it was 25 days per month. In approaching this common objective there were both points of commonality and points of difference between international and internal migrants.

Commonalities

Circular

The main common characteristic of the Gulf labour circuit from Malappuram and the internal labour circuit to Malappuram was the circularity of the migration process. Both circuits were completed once the migrant comes back to their places of origin. The international migrants from Malappuram to the Gulf returned home because they did not have a legal measure to have citizenship in GCC countries, and hence, the state's policy ensures that the migrant workers were guest workers in the country, and they had to return to their origin countries after their work contracts are over. For the internal migrants working in Kerala, there were no legal issues in settling in the state, but once their health conditions weakend, and they had made enough money to start a small business in the village, they returned home and completed their labour circuit. The narratives of a Gulf migrant and an internal migrant about returning to their origins had similarities and differences. Ashique, who works as a software engineer in the Gulf, said:

> *"If there were an option to settle permanently in the UAE, I would have happily done that, but the state's immigration policies are such that I can never become a citizen of the state. I am looking for opportunities to migrate to Canada so that I can get a permanent residency and settle there."*

Ashique is among the few migrants in Cheriyangadi who had a professional job in the Gulf and the luxury to afford to take his wife and kids with him to Dubai. However, the majority of the Gulf migrants and internal migrants left their families and migrated alone to their destinations, and eventually wanted to come back home. From my survey, only 3.18 per cent of international migrants had taken their families along with them to their destinations. With respect to the internal migrants, 4.3 per cent of internal migrants had their families with them. A 17-year-old young Assamese migrant boy responded, when asked why he came to Kerala at this very young age and what his future plans are:

> *"After I completed my 10th grade, I decided to come to Kerala to earn money and save to start a business back home. I will work in Kerala for the next five years, save money, start my business, marry my girlfriend and settle in my village. I will not come to Kerala after that."*

Both the Gulf migrants and the internal migrants made many trips home, but the circuit was only complete after they permanently came back to their origins. When asked about the number of home visits made last year, the internal migrants had an average of 1.67 trips, and the international migrants had 0.66 visits. Even Haneefa had to make multiple attempts to migrate to the Gulf, and during his stay, he visited Kerala many times. Similarly, many internal migrants said they returned homes for agricultural needs, a characteristic of circular migration which also comes in the labour circuits.

Living conditions at the Origin and Destination

The differences between the living conditions of migrant workers at their destinations and at the places where they came from were the outcome of two divergent trends. As workers moved from a relatively less developed region to a more developed one, they were living at the destination in the milieu of better infrastructure. At the same time their intense desire to improve the conditions of their families at their places of origin meant they were willing to accept much lower living standards in order to save more for their families. This basic divergence was reflected in the living conditions of both the international migrants to the Gulf and the internal migrants to Malappuram.

The temporariness of their working arrangements meant neither set of migrants invested in long term assets at their points of destination. Both the international and internal migrants in the survey reported that they did not own houses or have any land at their destinations, though for different reasons. In the GCC countries, buying land and property was difficult for non-citizens, whereas, in Malappuram, internal migrants did not have the means to purchase land there. Also, as in a labour circuit migrants eventually returned to their places of origin, their aspirations were always tied to impact their homes. All the migrants owned houses in their places of origin. In Cheriyangadi, all the locals reported owning their houses. In Valiyangadi, the one family that was living in a rented house said they were doing so only because they were renovating their house at the time.

The overall efforts of the migrants to save at their destinations and spend at their homes was reflected in their household assets. The Index of the Distance from Absolute Deprivation (IDFAD) uses household assets as an indicator of the relative status of a household, with a focus on the poorer households. The IDFAD for the migrants was substantially higher at their homes than it was at their destinations. Table 11.1 compares the average IDFAD based on the household assets of international and internal migrants at their origins and destinations. The average IDFAD of international migrant households at the origin was 54.47 per cent higher than the average IDFAD of their household at the destination. Similarly, the average IDFAD of internal migrant households at the origin was 160.26 per cent higher than the average IDFAD of their households in Malappuram.

The willingness to compromise at their destinations to the point of stressing available infrastructure to its limits and beyond is best seen in the way houses are used at the destinations. The higher levels of overall development at the destinations did mean that both international and internal migrant households lived in housing with concrete roofing. The pressure the workers put on their living conditions was evident in the levels of congestion they were willing to accept. As Table 11.2 shows us, the average number of rooms (excluding bathroom and kitchen) for both international and internal migrants was significantly lower at the destination than it was in their places of origin.

The extent of the congestion was most evident in the number of individuals who shared a room. As can be seen in Table 11.3 the number of individuals who shared a household at the destination was greater than at their places of origin for both international and internal migrants. The average number of individuals in a household was higher for the internal migrants, but this observation needs to be tempered by the nature of the definition of a household used in this study. As a household was defined as a group of people who live together and

Table 11.1: Average IDFAD of international and internal migrant households at destination and origin.

Migrant type	Average IDFAD of Household at Destination	Average IDFAD of Household at Origin
International	30.73	47.47
Internal	2.29	5.96

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

Table 11.2: Average number of rooms (excluding kitchen and bathroom) for international and internal migrant households at origin and destination.

Migrant type	The average number of rooms in Household at Destination	The average number of rooms in Household at Origin
International	1.68	3.76
Internal	1.06	3.07

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

used a shared kitchen, there were institutional households where up to 60 people resided in a single household. These were dormitory-like arrangements made for workers of a specific company where the company arranges a cook for the food requirements of the individuals in the household.

The problem of defining a household in ways that can include dormitories is overcome when we look at the level of congestion in a room. From Table 11.4, we can see that the average number of persons per room at the destination was significantly higher at the destination than it was at their places of origin. This was true for both international and domestic migrants, though the difference was somewhat greater for internal migrants than it was for international migrants. In Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi, up to eight internal migrants shared a single room. In most cases, there were no separate kitchens; the cooking was done in the same room where the migrants lived. Migrants spread their mattresses on the floor and slept there. Except for a very few internal migrant households, none of the migrants used cots.

One area of personal consumption where the migrants did seem to give themselves more than what they could get at home was in their diet. The international migrants and internal migrants did not benefit from any government subsidies for food. None of the internal migrant households in Cheriyangadi or Valiyangadi had their ration cards with them and hence did not get any supplies from the ration shops. For the Gulf migrants, since they did not hold citizenship there, they were not eligible for any welfare provisions from the state. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the internal migrants in Kerala and the international migrants in the Middle East got food and other essential supplies from the respective governments. Ordinarily, the migrants - international and internal - had little engagement with the state concerning the provision of welfare measures.

Table 11.3: Average number of individuals in the household for international and internal migrant households at origin and destination.

Migrant type	The average number of individuals in Household at Destination	The average number of individuals in Household at Origin
International	4.01	3.52
Internal	6.30	4.15

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

Table 11.4: Average people per room (excluding kitchen and bathroom) for international and internal migrant households at origin and destination.

Migrant type	People per room in Household at Destination	People per room in Household at Origin
International	3.99	1.96
Internal	3.89	1.53

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

The internal migrants live in pucca concrete houses in Malappuram, and many live in kutcha houses in their villages of origin. But this doesn't mean their living conditions in Malappuram do not require improvement. In a typical migrant household in Malappuram, four men share a room, and cooking is done in a corner of the same room. The roommates are usually from the same state, same caste and often the same village. Most of them migrate, becoming part of the local network from their village. There are also households where people from different states and castes live together. These are migrants working under the same employer to whom the employer gives accommodation. The major housing issues that the migrants face are congested living conditions and lack of proper hygiene around their living spaces. The state's intervention in the housing policy of migrant workers is minimal in the state but warrants attention.

Left on their own, both international and internal migrants reported higher consumption of meat and chicken compared to their households at their places of origin. The average number of days in a month that an internal migrant household consumed non vegetarian food was 14 days, while the average number of days that non vegetarian food was consumed in their households at their place of origin was 10. Similarly, for the international migrant households, the average number of days they consumed non-vegetarian food was 18 days, while their households in Malappuram consumed non-vegetarian food only ten days a month. In the Gulf, people ate more non-vegetarian food than in Kerala; in Kerala, it was higher than in Murshidabad. The dietary habits of the migrants at their destination were influenced by the existing conditions in the place. Also, the internal migrants I interviewed said that they were engaged in physically demanding jobs, and therefore, needed to have healthier food to sustain them and provide endurance. The international migrants in the Gulf responded by saying that meat was a part

The evening of a migrant, after getting back home from work, is spent preparing dinner. In households where three or four men share the room, the cooking duties are divided among each other for the week. Since it is difficult for the migrants to access firewood, kerosene is the primary source of cooking fuel among the migrants. Diesel was also used instead of kerosene for cooking purposes in some migrant households. The irony of working in a hotel as a migrant worker is that one has to learn and serve food that is not a staple to them. The interstate migrants working in hotels in Kerala get their meals from the hotels they are working in, but on their days off, they cook their favourite recipes from their villages and relish them. The smell and taste of their local delicacies help them sustain their daily connections with their homeland.

of the everyday diet in the Arab world, and since most of the workers were employed in Arab companies or working in Arab households, they got to eat non vegetarian meals more frequently.

The self-imposed constraints on consumption were not, and perhaps could not be, extended to the quality of the larger urban infrastructure at the destinations of the migrants. The migrants who moved to the Gulf had better material and infrastructural conditions in GCC countries than in Cheriyangadi or Valiyangadi. The international migrants reported that they had never experienced a power shortage during their stay in the Gulf. There was always a continuous supply of electricity. All the destination households of international migrants had air conditioners.

The conditions at the destination also influenced the kind of cooking fuel a migrant household used. Some forms of cooking fuel that were available at their places of origin were not available at their destinations. The international and internal migrants did not own land or engage in agricultural activities at their destinations. Hence, it was difficult for them to get firewood

for cooking fuel. In GCC countries, cooking fuel had wholly moved to LPG and electricity. Both internal and international migrant households at the destination did not use firewood for cooking, but the households at the places of origin of 77.24 per cent of internal migrants and 53.91 of international migrants used firewood for cooking. The cooking fuel the migrants did use did vary between Malappuram and the Gulf, with 68.96 per cent of internal migrant households in Malappuram being dependent on Kerosene for cooking, and 27.58 per cent on LPG. None of the local households in Malappuram used Kerosene for cooking.

The overall quality of urban infrastructure influenced other elements of the standard of living as well. All the internal migrant households in Malappuram had concrete roofing, while only 24.14 per cent of the migrant households at the origin had concrete roofing, 47.58 per cent had sheet roofing, 17.93 per cent had thatched roofs, and 8.96 per cent had tile roofing. The nature of sanitation for an internal migrant household in Malappuram was better than that of their households at their villages of origin. The average sanitation conditions for households in Kerala were higher than those in states like West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha, which were the origin states of internal migrants. Since the average health and sanitation conditions were better in Kerala than in these states, the migrant workers enjoyed better conditions than that at their homes. According to the survey, 97.24 per cent of internal migrant households in Malappuram had toilets inside their house. When asked about the same at their houses in origin, only 6.21 per cent had toilets inside their houses. For the source of drinking and cooking water, 97.24 per cent of the internal migrant households in Malappuram had access inside the house. Only 4.13 per cent of their households in their villages had access to drinking and cooking water inside the house. 34.48 per cent of these households at the place of origin depended on private hand pumps and wells for water sources, and 46.21 per cent had private hand pumps, but they were situated outside the house.

Differences

Occupational Sectors

The primary difference between the international and internal labour circuits was the occupational sectors of both kinds of migrants. As we had seen in the previous chapter, the internal labour circuit was primarily used to fill the labour vacuum in the local labour market in Malappuram. The internal migrants were employed in lower-end sectors like construction, hotel and trade. In terms of the international labour circuit, labour migration was not because of a vacuum but because of the opportunities arising in various sectors there, thanks to the rapid growth of the economy. In such a scenario, the workers were not concentrated in a specific economic sector but were fluid across sectors. The creation of employment opportunities in sectors ranging from domestic duties, housekeeping, construction, and manufacturing to professional sectors like engineering, teaching and health care attracted labour from Malappuram to the Gulf. International migrants could also climb the occupational hierarchy and start entrepreneurial pursuits in their destination countries. Many have moved from employees to employers and run successful business enterprises in the destination countries. This starkly contrasted the internal migrants who could not climb up the occupational hierarchy. Although there were a few exceptions where internal migrants had started their own small shops and had procured their own construction contracts in Malappuram, one can only wonder if anything of the sort, like the kinds of Azad Moopen or AP family, could

achieve in the Gulf, any of the migrant workers could achieve in Malappuram.

Table 11.5 shows the various occupation sectors in which international migrants are employed. The transport sector employed the largest share of international migrants (22.55 per cent). Many migrant workers worked as drivers in the Gulf. They were employed as taxi drivers, truck and other freight vehicle drivers, and private drivers for the elite locals. The migrants must appear for the driving test and obtain their license in the destination country before being employed as drivers. The second leading sector where the migrants were employed in the Gulf is trade (18.91 per cent). They were employed primarily as salespersons in mobile, textile and footwear shops in the trade sector. The survey found that many migrants from Valiyangadi were employed as salespersons in mobile shops in Saudi Arabia. The international migrants could also tap into government sector jobs in the destination. 6.55 per cent of the international migrants were employed in government sector jobs in the Gulf. Migrants were also found to be engaged in entrepreneurship in the destinations (7.27 per cent), which showed that international migrants could climb up the occupational ladder in the destination and work in a range of sectors based on their capabilities. The labour market and the local economy did not create any structural barriers for the internal migrants to move between sectors.

From Table 11.5, we can see that the internal migrants are employed primarily in the lower end of the economy. More than half of the internal migrants were employed in the construction sector (57.53 per cent), followed by hotel and food supply (26.03 per cent) and skilled work (8.22 per cent). For both international and internal migrants, there were common sectors in which they were employed, like hotels and food supply, skilled work, transport and construction, but the extent to which international migrants were employed in these sectors was far less

Table 11.5: Occupational sectors of international migrants

Occupation Sector	International Migrant Per cent	Internal Migrant Per cent
Construction	1.45	57.53
Did not work but seeking work	0.73	0.00
Entrepreneurship	7.27	0.00
Finance	8.00	0.00
Govt. salaried job	6.55	0.00
Hospitality	1.82	0.00
Hotels and food supply	5.82	26.03
Private salaried job	16.00	0.00
Professional	4.73	0.00
Other wage labour	0.00	3.42
Skilled worker	6.18	8.22
Trade	18.91	4.11
Transport	22.55	0.68
Grand Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Primary survey conducted by the author

when compared to the internal migrants. The terms of employment of internal migrants and international migrants were different. The internal migrants were paid daily for their work, while the international migrants were employed formally and paid monthly salaries rather than daily wages. The survey found that 97.93 per cent of the internal migrant workers were daily wage workers.

Standard of Living

The standard of living of migrants was dictated by the destination to which the labour circuit flowed. The international labour circuit, which flowed to GCC countries and other developed countries in the West, provided better living conditions than the migrants who were part of the internal labour circuit which came to Malappuram. In the previous section, we saw that there was a similarity between international and internal migrants concerning the compromises that they have to make in their living conditions at their destinations. But if we look at the absolute differences in the living conditions of an international migrant and an internal migrant, many stark differences exist. The average IDFAD of an international migrant household at the destination was 13 times the average IDFAD for an internal migrant household.

All the internal migrants had kitchens attached to their households, and they cooked their own food. In the case of international migrants, only 76.03 per cent of international migrant households cooked their own food. A significant proportion of these migrants either got food from their company or ate out. 16.96 per cent of international migrants got food from their company, and 7.01 per cent had food from hotels. The rent of 97.24 per cent of internal migrant households was shared by the migrant members of the household while the rent of the other households was paid by the employer. For international migrant households, 47.71 per cent of the households' rent was paid by the employer, and the rest was paid by the migrant members. Housing standards were also better for international migrants than for internal migrants, and the international migrants's diet contained more non vegetarian dishes in a month than that of internal migrants.

Duration of Stay

There are also differences in the duration of stay, number of visits home, and time spent at home during the visit. The average duration of the first stay at the origin for an international migrant was three times that for internal migration. An average internal migrant in Malappuram had stayed for 7.67 months on his first visit. For an international migrant, the average first stay was 22.65 months, almost two years after the initial migration. This trend continues during the entire period of the migrant's stay at the destination. The duration of the current stay of migrants at the time of the interview confirms this trend. The average duration of the recent stay of internal migrants was 8.03 months, and for international migrants, it was 11.36 months.

The reasons for this difference were the distance between origin and destination, the cost of travel, and the varied nature of work contracts. The distance travel and subsequent travel expenses between UAE and Malappuram were higher than between Malappuram and West Bengal. Even with the time-space compression because of the innovations in mobility technologies, which enable faster travel between places, work contracts often did not allow international migrants to leave for home in the first two years of their employment period. This can be further seen in the difference in the number of visits home that the international and internal

migrants make. When asked about the number of visits home made in the last year, the internal migrants, on average, made 1.69 visits in the year preceding the survey. The international migrants, on average, made 0.66 visits per year. In their visits home, the internal migrants spent more days at their homes at origin than international migrants. The average number of days an internal migrant spent in their home of origin was 68.18 days; for the international migrants, it was 59.93 days.

Since international migrants were employed under working contracts that were subject to the immigration policies of their origin and destination countries, the process of getting leave and travelling back home was difficult compared to that of internal migrants. For the internal migrants, their employment was primarily within the informal sector with daily wages, making it easier for them to take leave and go home. In the survey, 77.66 per cent of the international migrants said that their travel home was based on the leave they got sanctioned from their employer. The internal migrants had a more significant degree of autonomy when it came to making decisions about taking leaves and visiting their homes. This means they could travel home on short notice for festivals, family events, and other emergencies, unlike international migrants. 31. 72 per cent of internal migrants reported that they visited their origin homes during festivals, and 19.31 per cent of them visited for family events in their villages.

An interesting reason that only internal migrants cited for returning home was agricultural needs. Many internal migrants had their families engaged in agricultural activities. They travelled to their villages during certain months to harvest and sow the crops. In the survey, 25.52 per cent of the internal migrants said they returned home for the harvest season. 45.51 per cent of them reported that they worked in the agriculture sector during their stay in their origin. In the case of international migrants, most did not engage in gainful employment when they came home on leave. The survey showed that 73.48 per cent of the international migrants did not work when they came home. For the internal migrants, the proportion of migrants who did not work when they returned home was 31.03 per cent.

A common theme that comes across the internal and international migrants is that the differences between the migrants are economic and material, but when it comes to the behavior of the migrants there seems to be a convergence between the two groups.

12

Home, identity and place in circuits

Paul Thomas

The concept of home has evolved in contemporary society because of factors such as globalisation and mobility.[395] Bauman argues that individuals often experience a sense of "liquid modernity," where traditional notions of home as a stable and rooted space are replaced by more fluid and transient forms of belonging. From an anthropological viewpoint, the symbolic significance of home varies between cultures and societies. Psychologist Abraham Maslow, in his hierarchy of needs theory, posits that a sense of belongingness and love, which includes the feeling of being "at home" with oneself and others, is a fundamental human need.[396] Maslow's theory emphasises the importance of social connections and a supportive environment in fulfilling psychological needs and achieving self-actualisation. Socio-spatial relations and cultural practices shape people's perceptions and experiences of home. Home is not just a physical location, but a socially constructed space imbued with meaning and significance, shaped by factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.[397] The emotional and sensory dimensions build the attachment to a place which makes it a home. Home is intimately tied to human experiences of rootedness, continuity, and familiarity, influencing how individuals navigate and inhabit their environments.[398] Home is also a sense of security and identity. There are scholars who argue from a gender lens to define home as a 'place of warmth and security' as well as a place of fear and exploitation.'[399]

Home in circuit

The idea of home is central to a circuit because it is where the circuit begins and the circuit ends. The aspirations of the migrants who constitute the circuits are tied to the home at the origin. Home is "a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is invested with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life."[400] Home is both material and symbolic. It is "located on thresholds between memory and nostalgia for the past, everyday life in the present, and future dreams and fears." The everyday practices, material cultures and social relations that shape home on a domestic scale resonate far beyond the household. Geographical research on subjects as diverse as imperial domesticity, anti-colonial nationalism, diasporic resettlement, domestic architecture and design, and work within the global domestic economy, shows how

395 Bauman, "On Glocalization."

396 Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation."

397 Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender.*

398 Tuan, *Space and Place.*

399 Lloyd and Vasta, *Reimagining Home in the 21st Century.*

400 Blunt and Varley, "Introduction."

household geographies are intimately bound up with national and transnational geographies. The everyday practices, material cultures and social relations that shape home on a domestic scale resonate far beyond the household. Geographical research on subjects as diverse as imperial domesticity, anti-colonial nationalism, diasporic resettlement, domestic architecture and design, and work within the global domestic economy, shows how household geographies are intimately bound up with national and transnational geographies.

Home is not just shaped by the social relations within the family, but also social relations beyond the scope of the immediate household can also influence the shaping of home. In the case of diasporic homes, the idea of home is continuously undergoing alterations from the forces in the origin and destination. In such a case, the factors that affect a home in a new country can range from social norms to political, religious and even environmental conditions. It is also shaped by the notion of home that is carried with the migrant to the destination. There will also be continuous negotiations between the two notions of home in the process of making a home in the origin. This is because the diasporic connection in the destination affects the origin, just like how the origin affects the destination. In some sense, this relationship is dialectic in nature.

Home is a situated and intersectional process rather than a status.[401] There are two complexities of home in migration literature arising from the contradictions in the conceptions. Home means settlement, and migration means movement. Migrants have to navigate the complexities and ambiguities that are associated with their "emotional entanglement in relation to places, people, objects and relationships." They are often in situations where they are simultaneously here and there. There can also be situations where there is neither there nor here. Emotional attachments and a feeling of belonging are two important characteristics that make any place home.

Debates on the concept of home go well beyond the physical structure of the house with respect to a migrant and his idea of home.[402] In transnational migration processes, the notion of home is not just determined by the geographical locations in the migration process. The homemaking process moves beyond the transnational geographies to the local geographies of migrant settlement.[403] Home is different from house. A house is a place of dwelling. Home has a special relationship with the place, which has performative and interactive elements to it. The two elements of home are security and familiarity.

Security

The home provides a sense of security and personal protection because it is located in a private place that does not give access to other people. The protection that a home provides extends beyond the physical protection or the sense of shelter. The physical shelter a home provides is protection from extreme weather and climatic conditions as well as protection from the attack of animals or other humans. Home, at a fundamental level, provides security to human life and nourishes it. Home also provides you with food security and delicacies that are most familiar to your taste buds. A home is also a place where you are nursed when you fall sick. This attribute of the home was clearly visible

401 Fathi, "Home-in-Migration."

402 Miller, *Home Possessions; Blunt and Dowling, Home.*

403 Datta and Brickell, *Translocal Geographies.*

during the COVID-19 pandemic when there was an exodus of migrants walking from cities to their homes in the villages. This adventure that the migrants took by walking thousands of kilometres on foot shows how much they value the security that they get at their homes. Whatever the duration these migrants might have spent in the cities, during these crises where human lives are threatened, they wanted to reach their villages- the only place where they could feel safe. Home also provides emotional security in making one feel confident in navigating the world and their social relationships. This involves making one feel at ease in being their true self. Home is a place again where the identity of the person is not questioned. When a migrant moves from his home to a new unknown place, he has to navigate through people belonging to multiple identities, and in this process, his identity can be challenged, questioned, and even threatened at multiple points in life. Home gives control to an individual to express themselves without fearing judgement from outsiders and away from the public gaze. An individual enjoys a degree of autonomy in his functioning within the home.

Familiarity

The emotional and cognitive familiarity that a person has, which comes from stability, routine, continuity and permanence, is altered with movement and migration. Familiarity also extends not just to the home but to the large neighbourhood, community and place, all of which constitute the idea of home at large for a person. A person walking through the streets in the neighbourhood where he was born and raised for a long duration of years will find many acquaintances on his way to the local grocery shop and might also stop a few times on the way to catch up and chat with people on the way. Tea shop discussions on local to global politics are a characteristic of Kerala villages. The migrants from the villages of Malappuram who have migrated to the Gulf countries will never find the same sense of setting in the teashops in the Gulf. Migration also takes away the leisure time that these migrants have in having gossip and political discussions which would become a luxury once they migrate to the Gulf.

Spatiality and Temporality of Home

Home is 'both a material environment and a set of meaningful relationships, recollections and aspirations to be emplaced, successfully or not, over space and time'[404]. Home has both spatial and temporal elements, and they become prominent in the analysis of home within the context of migration. As people move and start their migrant lives, their definitions and practices of home also change. Migrants understand the culture, practices, and values of the society into which they are migrating, and in the process, they reconfigure their individual and collective identities. From the perspective of nations defining who is a citizen and who is not, migrants pose an ambiguous case. Migrants know enough about their destinations to be insiders, but they are by origin outsiders. Boundaries can then be created to demarcate between who can be considered part of us (the ethnic communities that define the nationhood) and who is to be considered as the other.[405] Getting citizenship in the destination country or naturalising does not mean that the migrant has felt at home in the country. The official process of gaining citizenship and availing benefits from the home

404 Boccagni, *Migration and the Search for Home.*

405 Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging."

country is a minor element that contributes to the process of homemaking. On the other hand, there are cases where even without citizenship rights they consider those countries as their homes. The meaning of home changes over time. The time dimension is critical to the homemaking process. For migrants, the process of homemaking is time-dependent.

'Past home-related experiences inform and shape current home-making practices. Habitual dispositions, meanings, use of artefacts and development of skills become inscribed in our bodies, just as much as into the materiality of our domestic spaces. Current practices carry traces that become oriented towards ideal futures. Therefore, it is possible to consider that home-making "makes" time as it unfolds and reconstitutes temporal regimes.'[406]

It can take days, months or years for a migrant to build a home at their destination. The process of homemaking also goes beyond the length of their stay to having intergenerational roots, which is essential in making the sense of home.[407] Having the presence of significant others like spouses, parents, children, siblings, and other family members increases one's sense of home in a place. Learning the language and the culture of a place also depends on the time that a migrant spends in a place. In the case of the Gulf migrants from Malappuram, most of the migrants have some familiarity with the Arabic language through Madrasa education. But just knowing how to read and write Arabic will not help the migrant to secure a job in the Gulf. When I asked about their Arabic proficiency and when and where they learnt the language, most migrants revealed that they learnt to speak fluent Arabic only after staying in the Gulf for long periods of time Similarly, an internal migrant who migrates to Malappuram from Murshidabad in West Bengal or Morigaon in Assam who has no idea about Kerala or the Malayalam language picks up the language as he continues to stay in Kerala for longer periods of time. The migrant workers who worked as waiters in hotels said that for them it was crucial to learn the language because their jobs demanded everyday interaction with the local population. Another migrant who has started taking small construction contracts in Kerala said that he picked up Malayalam quickly so that he could negotiate with his customers and knowing the language increased the trust of local customers in Kerala.

The embodied home practices can be sensorial as well as in the material details of the domestic home. Home for transnational migrants is dissociated from the geographical places and instead attached to everyday practices. In this context, cultural practices become central in transnational home-making processes. Objects in the process of migration 'act as translators, shifting the terms of uprooting and regrounding, moving between different orders, locations, sensoria and histories'[408].

Identity of migrants at Origin and Destination

At the destinations, the migrants form a collective migrant identity irrespective of their origins, religion, and caste. For international migrants, the migrant identity often transcends the differences in ethnicities and nationalities. At the destinations, they lived together in the same households and became coworkers in the same sectors and offices. But on the other hand, both the international and internal migrants lived

406 Nieto, "Temporalities."

407 Lam and Yeoh, "Negotiating 'Home' and 'National Identity.'"

408 Accarigi, "Transcultural Objects, Transcultural Homes."

in their own identity silos back at their origins. The same migrants who were ready to come together under the common shared identity of migrants were not willing to blend in with the migrants at their origins. The Gulf migrants from Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi shared their workspaces and households with people from other countries, states, religions and even castes. But in Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi, they lived within their comfortable identity silos. At origin, they liked to have segregation and keep up with their own individual identity of caste, religion, ethnicity, state, etc. The same migrant identity was not shared with the internal migrants, as seen from the residential and occupational segregation of migrants and locals in Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi.

The same is the case with the internal migrants in the two places. In Malappuram, the internal migrants compromised on various identities to come together for a single migrant identity. The internal migrants in Cheriyangadi and Valiyangadi lived and worked with migrants

This picture taken from one of the many fancy parda shops in Valiyangadi demonstrates how the social remittances in the form of clothing have influenced the culture and economy of Valiyangadi. Parda's popularity among Muslim women results from the Gulf migration. Saudi Arabia was the preferred migration destination for the people of Valiyangadi because the earlier migrants from Valiyangadi migrated to Saudi Arabia using Haj visas. Till 2018, wearing a Hijab was compulsory for women in Saudi Arabia, irrespective of nationality. This meant that women migrating from Valiyangadi for work or to visit their husbands needed to carry parda with them. The demand for parda in the local economy was capitalised by many returning migrants who set up parda shops in Valiyangadi. Many shop owners complained that the popularity of online shopping negatively affected their businesses. Today, women can get the latest fashion parda trending in the Middle East and purchase it in Kerala through online stores.

from different states of origin, religions, and castes. Whether it was international or internal migration, what these labour circuits had in common was a migrant identity at the place of destination, which disappeared once the migrants were back at their origins. As per the survey, 30.4 per cent of the internal migrants shared their household in Malappuram with others who were also from outside Kerala, including those who had come from outside India. For the internal migrants, 36.79 per cent of the households had people from different states staying in the same household.

Centrality of Place in Interlinked Migrations

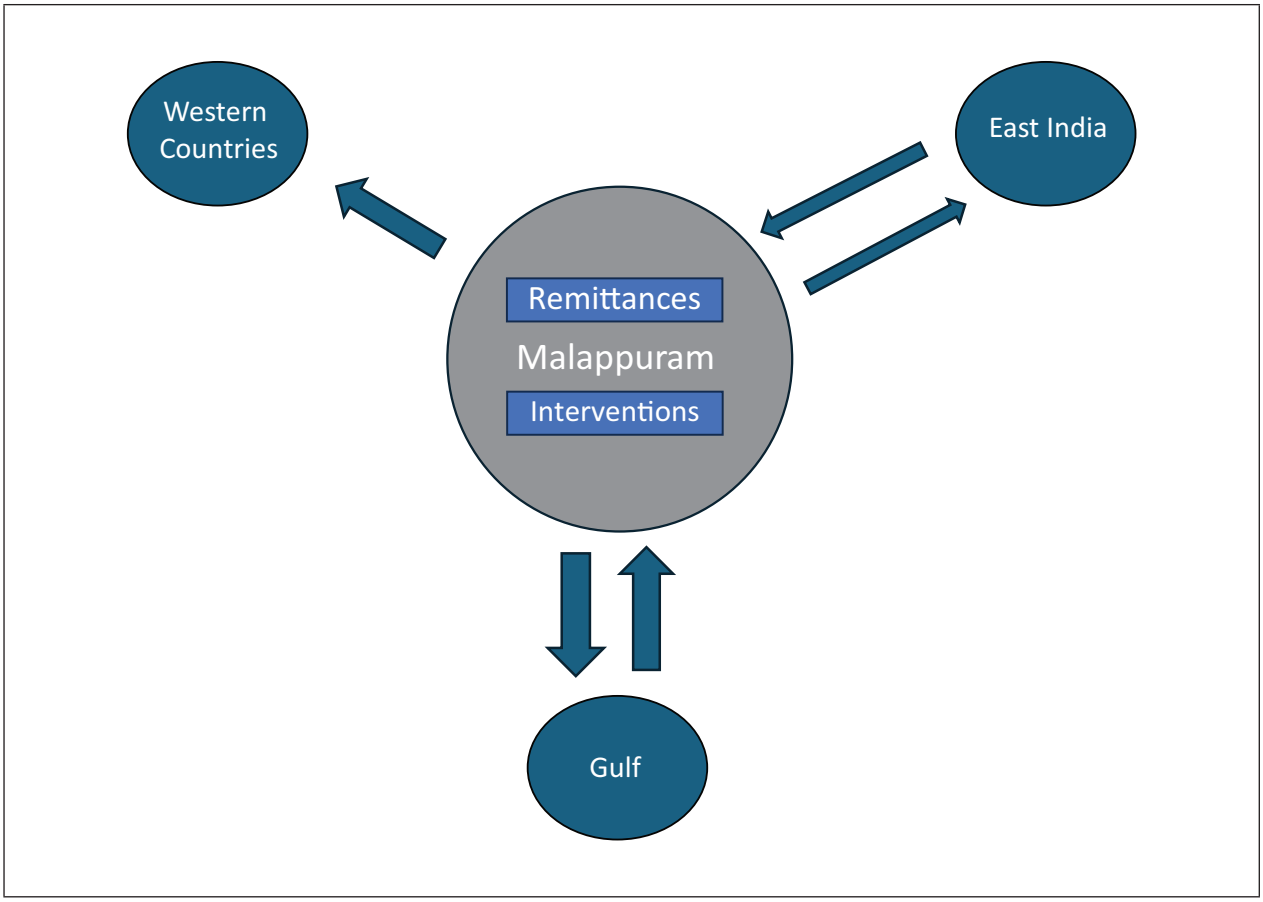
The central part of an interlinked migration, or any migration, is the place. It has a fixed as well as an evolving element. Seeing migration as an event only requires the analysis of the place of origin and place of destination. In the case of interlinked migration, a place becomes both an origin and a destination. It acts as a junction where different migration circuits meet and interact. The traditional way of looking at migration from an origin or destination alone would not suffice in understanding the complete story of interlinked migrations in Malappuram. It is not a singular process where it starts at one point (origin) and ends at another (destination). The interlinked migration is like a chain reaction where one process leads to another and then to the next.

If we see interlinked migrations as processes that involve a series of interactions, then these diverse processes leave an impact on a place. To understand the nature and dynamics of interlinked migrations, it would be best to study the transformation of a place most affected by this process. Malappuram as a place is best suited to understand interlinked migration because various migration processes have impacted the place. Figure 1 shows the different geographies and how they are interlinked through different migrations. We have three different migrations. First is the international Gulf migration from Malappuram, then internal migration to Malappuram and finally, international migration to the Western countries. In all three migrations, Malappuram is involved either as a place of origin or destination. It is the origin of both international migration to the Gulf and West and a destination for internal migration.

John Agnew and Doreen Massey define place as a process rather than a fixed and unchanged location[409]. Using this definition, Malappuram as a place is constantly undergoing rapid changes as a result of multiple migration processes. A place has three dimensions. First is the *location* of a place 'where an activity or object is located and which relates to other sites or locations because of interaction, movement and diffusion between them.' Malappuram has a specific location which is different from Dubai or Murshidabad. But the location of Malappuram can also be related to Dubai and Murshidabad, not just in terms of the migrations between them but also in a location sense. We can say that Malappuram and Murshidabad are in India but in different states. Similarly, Malappuram and Dubai have their shores on the Arabian Sea, but they are located in different countries. The second dimension of place is '*locales* or settings where everyday-life activities take place.' This dimension moves beyond the address of a place to the social interactions and environmental transformation aspect of a place. Everyday life in Malappuram would involve interactions between local

409 Agnew, *Place and Politics*; Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*.

Figure 12.1: Interlinked Migration in Malappuram



Malayali employers and Bengali migrant workers at the workplace, the built structures of hotels, shopping malls, mosques and temples, vegetation and animals. The complex interactions between these actors and entities form norms, values, and behaviours. Locales need not always be fixed within the location of a place. A Malayali migrant in Dubai can design his house in a setting of Malappuram *locale*. Similarly, the room of an Assamese migrant in Kerala can have the *locale* of his village in Assam. The third dimension is place as a *sense of place*. The sense of a place comes from the uniqueness of the community that identifies itself with the place, its landscape and its moral codes. The sense of Malappuram is determined by the people who identify themselves as a community who belong to Malappuram, the beaches, the Western Ghats hills, and the moral order that binds the place together. The sense of a place need not be totalistic for a person because an individual can have a sense of belonging to more than one place. A migrant can have a sense of place in multiple places.

Understanding place through these three dimensions, Agnew has identified six characteristics of a place.[410] First, every place is unique and thus singular. Massey argues that uniqueness is defined by the social relations of the place.[411] Second, places are not bounded,

410 Agnew, *Place and Politics*.

411 Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*.

isolated entities but interconnected with other places. In a globalised world, economic, political and social networks are increasingly connecting different places across the globe. Third, mobility plays an important role in how some places are defined and operated. Fourth, contexts of place and time have both elements of the local and the regional. A place needs to be understood with context that is stretched over space. This point is explained by Massey, "This is a notion of place where specificity (local uniqueness, a sense of place) derives not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of isolation – now to be disrupted by globalization – but precisely from the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found together there."[412] Fifth, the networks of information and communication technologies are rooted in an individual's socio-spatial imagination. Lastly, place plays a fundamental role in the production and dissemination of knowledge.

412 Massey, *Power-Geometries and the Politics of Space-Time*.

13

Interventions

Paul Thomas

Most migrants are not sure of what they want to do when they return home. They do not have any plans or strategies on where to invest their savings, what work to do and what business activities to start. From our survey, it was clear that many Gulf return migrants engaged in small-scale businesses and entrepreneurial activities.

Economic reintegration

It was found that a significant number of the migrants set up small shops attached to their homes after they returned home. There are two reasons for this economic behaviour of the migrants. First is the issues related to the health conditions of the migrant. Most migrants engage in physically demanding jobs in challenging environments without taking care of their health. This leads to the deterioration of their health by the time they return to their homes. In my study, I found that many returned migrants suffer from lifestyle diseases. There are many specialised health clinics that were set up to cater to the specific demands of the returned migrants. One of the main ailment issues that migrants were suffering was related to orthopaedics. Migrants were found to develop problems with their bones, joints, ligaments and muscles. There were many clinics in Malappuram that specialised in joints and bone-related illnesses. Knee replacement surgery is one common treatment that many migrants took up once they returned from the Gulf. The health conditions of the returned migrants are such that they are no longer fit to be employed in physically demanding jobs. The second reason why many Gulf returned migrants prefer to become entrepreneurs is that they want to show their success in their Gulf migration by starting up a business. The title of being called as a businessman has social status attached to it. Returning from the Gulf and still engaging in manual labour is associated with a failed migration. This stigma associated with entering the labour market after returning from the Gulf often affects families from lower economic backgrounds in an adverse manner. Even when the families are not financially well off to afford the luxury of not having the migrant male in the household go for work, they might not want to go to work because of the social pressure to not work in physically demanding sectors. The shame of being labelled as an unsuccessful migrant in the Gulf who could not succeed in saving enough money to start a business when he returned back forces many migrant men not to enter the labour market even when their livelihood means are precarious.

There were many households in the survey where the family had to support the migrant in the gulf by sending money because the

migrant is unemployed for long periods of time. The migrant was also caught up in a dilemma of staying in the Gulf unemployed or returning home. The household supports the migrant to stay in the Gulf during the period of unemployment, hoping that the migrant will find a job sooner. The household prefers the migrant to stay in the Gulf because, if the migrant returns home without a job, it is a matter of shame for the migrant and the entire family. To avoid this situation, the family supports the migrant during his unemployed periods in the Gulf. Another reason why the migrant decides to stay in the Gulf is because once he returns the next opportunity to migrate is not certain. The uncertainty associated with finding jobs in the Gulf is also a reason why migrants prefer to stay in the Gulf even when they are unemployed.

In my study, I also interviewed many stakeholders of migrant welfare associations and local philanthropic institutions to understand how the nonstate actors engage in the local distribution of welfare, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the migrants the most. Information gatheredthrough my interviews revealed that many migrant households were affected during the pandemic to the extent that food security of these households was also impacted. The welfare provision in terms of distribution of food supplies were coordinated by migrant welfare associations during the pandemic. The distribution of food supplies was done anonymously by the organisations so that the families would not feel the shame of revealing the fact that their economic condition was worse than that of their neighbours.

Another important issue that the return migrants face is not having adequate information on the pulse of the local economy to make decisions on what investments to make and what business enterprises to start. Since migrants spend most of their time in the Gulf economy, they are not aware of the conditions in the local economy and the demands in the local market. They follow the traditional paths that the former migrants have chosen and invest in the same sectors. This leads to overcrowding of supply in specific sectors, which will result in negative returns on the investment made by the migrants. The returned migrants also find it difficult to get loans and capital investments to start their businesses.

Social Reintegration

The social reintegration of migrant workers is as important as the economic reintegration of the returned migrants. There have been many discussions, both academic and policy-oriented, on migrant integration in destination countries. These discussions revolve around how migrants face difficulties in adjusting to new cultures in destination countries. There are very few discussions on the reintegration of migrants to their home countries when they return after their long migration years. This disregard for the reintegration of migrants back to their homes stems primarily from the idea that migrants naturally belong to their home places, and even with sustained periods of migration, they will feel at home after returning back to their native lands. This is a false conception that puts pressure on the migrants to believe that they are returning to a place where they left many years ago. All places undergo changes with respect to time, and home is no exception to this. We have discussed how homemaking is a process for migrants in the destination countries which is a time-consuming process. The migrant has to go through the exact same process in his own home after his return to build a home where he can feel at home and be part of.

A person who leaves his home in his early twenties and stays away from home for the next forty years with occasional visits of two months every 3 years will definitely find it difficult to cope with the reality of his home on his arrival in his sixties. His children have grown up in his absence, his wife and parents have gotten old in his absence, and the migrant will also have undergone a personal transformation during his years at his destination place. The changes in the local area and the neighbourhood where he spent his youth will also be overwhelming for the migrant. A migrant will also have weakened his bond with his friends and peers during the course of his migration years. On arrival after retirement, the inability to make a meaningful social and personal life is a serious challenge that migrants face. This leads to a serious mental health crisis among the returned Gulf migrants.

Mental health is a taboo topic in Kerala, especially among men and the older generation. This is primarily with respect to the local connotations associated with the word mental health, which often equates the condition to a psychiatric disorder. People with mental health issues or psychiatric disorders are looked down upon with sympathy, and they experience severe social exclusion in Kerala society. I interviewed a social worker cum counsellor working with the returned migrants in Malappuram, who explained the extent of the issue. A large number of returned migrants werefound to be suffering from mental health issues and were not able to discuss this. He also mentioned that many returned migrants in Cheriyangadi were on anti-depressant drugs, without the knowledge of their family members. His source of information was from his counselling practice and also informal conversations with the medical store owners in the village. The migrants also face the humongous task of rebuilding their homes after they return. Migrants undergo tremendous pressure and anxiety in this process and are not given the due attention that is required. The main reason for these issues not being discussed in mainstream platforms is the taboo associated with the issues revolving around mental health, which makes it difficult to assess the extent of the problem and the number of people affected by the problem.

Responses needed

In order to address the problems with respect to the economic integration of migrants, the first response that needs to be taken is to have a consolidation of capital for migrant entrepreneurs. The capital and savings that migrants bring back can be consolidated together to form a large corpus of capital to set up large business enterprises. One way of doing this is to set up cooperatives for Gulf returnees. Setting up cooperative societies where people can deposit their savings and also take loans for business and other needs can improve the entrepreneurial activities of migrants and boost the economy of the state. One area where the state lags behind is with respect to the investment and savings behaviour among migrants. These cooperatives can target migrants of various economic capacities to inculcate savings behaviour among them. Kerala, which already has a well-functioning cooperative banking system, can be leveraged for this new scheme for migrants. Each panchayat or Municipality should establish a cooperative association for the welfare of the migrants. Migrants can contribute to the cooperatives to deposit their savings and also take loans from these cooperatives to set up their own businesses. This should be done at the local level to ensure that there is decentralisation in the usage of funds and that the local demands of the people in each place are addressed. The best way to ensure this would be to connect

these initiatives with the respective Panchayats or Municipalities.

Apart from the state-led initiatives, consolidation of the migrant welfare organisations and philanthropic organisations can also be used for this purpose. In Cheriyangadi, there was an institution set up by a wealthy migrant businessman to improve the welfare of the people in the village. This initiative is similar to the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives but differs with respect to the motivation for undertaking such an initiative. The primary motivation for such an initiative is not for tax exemption reasons. The sole motivation that drives this initiative is to improve the well-being of the people of the village. It is also, in some sense, giving back to the community that they are part of.

During my fieldwork I was intrigued by the capacity of this organisation in the welfare provision in the village. The institute functioned as a parallel actor to the panchayat in both the provision of welfare and local governance. The institute had undertaken many surveys to create socioeconomic profiling of the village and to create a database about the migrant households in the village. These surveys and databases were useful during the COVID-19 pandemic to assess the vulnerabilities of the households in the village and work in tandem with the panchayat and other state machinery to provide welfare during the pandemic. The organisation also engages in projects that empower the women of migrant households who have to take in the responsibility of being the head of the household during the absence of their husbands, child development programs, counselling and guidance cell for community mental health, employability and education empowerment project, and the Pravasi Mithra project for the migrants.

Apart from this particular organisation, many retired migrants engage in full-time social work and philanthropic activities like palliative care, blood donation, building houses for the poor, sponsoring the education of talented students and helping with the marriages of girls from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. The philanthropic initiatives among the returned migrants have a religious dimension attached to them. In Islam, sadaqah (charity), zakat (poor tax), and waqf (trust) are the main tools in philanthropy which are shaped by Islamic history.

There should be training programs and skill development initiatives for returned migrants to help them adjust locally and integrate them into the local economy. Migrants face the problem of information asymmetry, where they are not aware of the local demands and situations, and this lack of information leads to situations where migrants make wrong investment choices. There should be training programs and workshops that are directed at bridging this information gap. Successful migrants can mentor other migrants by giving masterclasses and personalised mentoring for those migrants who are interested in setting up business initiatives once they return. The important point that needs to be addressed here is that the planning and preparation for the reintegration of migrants into the local economy should start well in advance before the arrival of the migrant. We need to get a stock of the number of migrants in the village through a survey by the local administrative body and keep an account of that. From this list we can find the number of returned migrants and understand their future plans and individual concerns with respect to the kind of economic activity that they would like to engage in. This list of migrants will also help the cooperatives anticipate the incoming retired migrants and

plan in well advance for their integration into the local economy. A migrant who is planning to retire and return to the village can plan his retirement plans by consulting with the local migrant welfare association or the cooperative well advance before he actually retires and comes back. This will save the adjustment time that most migrants take to reintegrate into the local economy.

Interventions to improve the health conditions of the migrants would require the creation of a new insurance scheme specifically for the migrants where they can contribute a small monthly premium. This will allow a safety net for migrants when they have to undergo unexpected medical emergencies. This health scheme for migrants should also have health checkups when the migrants come to Kerala during their leave. In most cases, the migrants do not undergo regular health check-ups, which results in untimely diagnosis of health issues and serious ailments.

With respect to the mental health issues faced by the return migrants, the first response required is to create awareness among migrants and family members. The stigma and taboo associated with mental health issues should be addressed using campaigns both at the state level and at the local village level. Recreational centres for migrants to come together and discuss their problems and concerns can be another targeted intervention to address the issue of mental health crises among migrants. These recreational spaces will also offer opportunities to build connections and improve the social well-being of migrants who find it difficult to adjust to society after they return. The second intervention to help migrants cope with mental health issues is to set up counselling centres at the village level to provide professional medical support for such individuals. Every village should have a counselling centre with a psychologist and counsellor to provide support.

Authorities that should be involved in such interventions include the state, home and identity. The state becomes an important factor in implementing the interventions with respect to the consolidation of capital for migrants to invest, setting up of cooperatives and counselling centres, and appointment of health professionals to support returning migrants who face mental health issues in adjusting to society.. The authority of the state is crucial because of its power to make legislation and implement policy across the state. The authority of home can be useful in intervening in the home-making process of the migrants, where they make arrangements for the migrants to reintegrate into their family and social life after retirement. The authority of the home can also be extended by providing warmth and support for the migrant workers. The authority of identity, whether it is the religious identity or the identity of a Gulf migrant, should be tapped into for the interventions discussed above. Religion can be a crucial authority in acting as a welfare provider through philanthropy. Similarly, the authority of migrant identity can be harnessed in setting up migrant welfare associations to provide welfare measures locally. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives can be used for interventions in creating awareness of mental health issues of migrants and conduct health check-ups for them. They can also intervene in providing workshops on investment strategies and mentorship for people who are interested in setting up business enterprises after their return.

Housing, Sanitation and Financial Literacy Issues of Internal Migrants

The main problem faced by internal migrants in Malappuram is with respect to the housing conditions. Poor sanitation facilities where many migrants had to share the same toilet were common among the internal migrants. Internal migrants also faced issues with respect to not having access to proper cooking fuel. Many households reported that they were relying on petrol and diesel for their fuel needs. With respect to the health conditions of the migrant workers, there is scope for many interventions. The migrant workers do not undergo health check-ups regularly, and even though government hospitals provide free healthcare facilities, most migrants do not avail of these facilities because of their lack of knowledge in accessing these medical facilities. Many internal migrants do not prioritise their health needs because going to a hospital becomes a full-day program, and in doing so, they will miss the opportunity to work on that day. The opportunity cost associated with losing one day's work hinders many migrant workers from going to the hospitals. They go to hospitals only when it becomes very necessary and unavoidable..

Apart from the housing and health needs of the migrants, another area that requires intervention is with respect to the financial literacy of migrant workers. The migrants save a significant amount of their earnings, but many of them are not familiar with the banking facilities. Many migrants still use informal means to send remittances back home. A common channel to transfer remittances to India is by paying cash to local shop owners who are originally from Kerala. They collect cash and transferit to UPI-linked accounts of family members. . These small shops are setup near the migrant housing colonies to cater to the cash transfer and mobile recharge demands of the migrants. The fee charged for transferring cash as digital payment to a family member's account is ten rupees for every thousand rupees. There are two reasons why it is difficult for migrant workers to send money directly to their homes without any middlemen. First, the migrant workers are paid daily wages in cash and not through digital payment. It is difficult for them to directly deposit cash into their accounts because many of them do not have bank accounts in Kerala or are not familiar with the banking facilities available to them. When asked about using a Cash Deposit Machine (CDM) or going to a bank to deposit money, most migrants said that doing so would require them to take a day off, and they do not want to miss a day's work in going to the bank. Most migrants also remit cash on a daily basis, which means that they require some form of technological intervention to help them transfer their daily portion of their daily wage to home. Financial literacy can also improve the savings behaviour of migrants and help them plan their financial needs more effectively.

Responses Needed

The first intervention that can be implemented for the internal migrants is to improve their housing conditions and sanitation facilities and also provide LPG connections to migrant households so that they can switch from the existing petrol and diesel alternatives that they use. These interventions can be designed and executed by the government and local administrative bodies by studying the local demands of migrant workers. In order to improve the health conditions of the migrants, interventions should be designed by providing monthly health checkups for migrants

and raising awareness among them on how to avail government health facilities in the state. There is already an existing medical insurance scheme for migrant workers called the Awaz Health Insurance by the Kerala government that provides coverage of upto Rs 15,000 to migrant workers in case of illness or injury. It also provides accidental death coverage limited to Rs. 2 lakh. Even with the existence of such a scheme, many migrant workers are not aware of the scheme. Creating awareness about such facilities, conducting membership drives among migrants and enforcing employers to register their migrant workers in this scheme would be a crucial intervention in this arena. With respect to the financial literacy issue among the migrants, again, the first intervention would be to create awareness programs among migrants on using digital banking facilities, opening bank accounts for all migrant workers and introducing them to various saving schemes linked to their respective banks.

The two authorities that will have to engage in the interventions for the internal migrant workers are the state, NGOs and CSR programs. Improvements in housing and sanitation facilities of internal migrants can be improved with the interventions from the state as well as CSR initiatives. Health checkups and medical camps are already being provided among migrants by various NGOs, and the involvement of the state or CSR programs would improve the delivery of these initiatives. Finally, with respect to improvements in financial literacy of migrant workers, the state and CSR programs are the two major authorities that can intervene and make substantial positive changes in the lives of the migrants by initiating the interventions discussed.

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Document Control Sheet

1	**Document No and Year**	:	NIAS/SSc/IHD/U/RR/08/2024
2	**Title**	:	INEQUALITY AND INTERVENTION Volume 4 The Left Behind in Migration
3	**Type of Document**	:	Research Report
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8	**Programme**	:	Inequality and Human Development Programme
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11 **Abstract:**

This report looks at the relationship between inequality and migration. Using three studies of gender-based negotiation of women in migration, the role non-migrants play in supporting migration, and migration-led-migration from India, this report makes the case for viewing migration as a process that is shaped by and shapes inequality.

12 **Keywords:**

Inequality; Intervention; Transformation; Migration; Process; Left-Behind; Women-Headed Households; Interlinked Migrations

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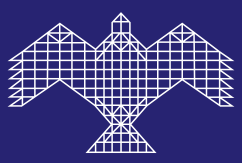

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