Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action (PCLRA)

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

Agricultural Labour in 21st Century India

Trends, Current Status and Prospects: An Overview

Neglected

Ashok Khandelwal

Prayas Centre for Labor Research and Action

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Author: Ashok Khandelwal

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FOREWORD

I am happy to introduce this monograph, which is based on careful and rigorous research by Shri Ashok Khandelwal. It provides insights into the situation and current challenges pertaining to agricultural labour, especially in the wake of the recent employment crisis. This work is a significant addition to the current literature on a subject that has received relatively inadequate attention in contemporary academic and policy discourses. It will be extremely useful for students and activists interested in this area. The author provides an account of the continuing decline in agricultural growth and employment during the last decade or so. He argues that the current crisis is a result of 'stunted distorted growth' rooted in the inadequacies and constraints of the overall trajectory of structural transformation. It is also suggested that the problems have been aggravated in the neoliberal era with the ascendency of finance capital.

It is important to highlight, as also noted in the monograph, that a major structural feature of contemporary capitalism is the 'de-centring' of production. This is characterized by a shift of production from advanced capitalist countries to a handful of developing countries, where metropolitan capital has strengthened its presence to take advantage of, *inter alia*, relatively inexpensive labour and raw materials, as well as to tap the markets. The resultant relative 'de-segmentation' of the world economy has changed the dynamics of labour utilization, labour reserves, conditions of work, etc., through the development of global value systems. It is clear that the concern for the well-being of agricultural labour is almost negligible within this policy regime. This is also reflected in the accelerated penetration of agribusiness and oligopolistic corporations in agricultural production through arrangements like contract farming in export-oriented crops like maize, cotton, soyabean and oilseeds. The famous case of the terminator seed and the rising indebtedness and suicides of farmers is a symptom organically connected with such policies. However, despite signs of deepening agrarian distress,[1] no lessons seem to have been learnt by the Indian policymakers.

Another important feature of this phase of contemporary capitalism has been the deepening of informality in labour relations. Though agricultural labour has always constituted a significant part of informal labour, the character of the workforce has changed significantly, especially with the the sharp decline in women's employment, where more than 8 million women have been pushed out of the labour force. The author terms this phenomenon as 'defeminization of labour' and the expansion of the patriarchal control over the means of production. While patriarchal control over land has existed since quite some time, the sharp drop in employment is largely a result of the uneven impact of the agricultural slowdown on different sections of society. For example, the burden of the decline of worker participation rates (WPR) has been felt largely by historically deprived social groups. For example male scheduled tribe (ST) workers have seen an unprecedented decline of WPR by 2.9 percent in rural and 2.1 percent in urban areas between 2011–12 and 2017–18. In the same period, WPR of rural women from both ST and scheduled castes (SC) fell by 9.8 and 8.8 percent respectively – a rate that was much higher than the overall decline of 7.3 percent for all rural women. A major burden of the contraction of employment in urban areas also fell on ST women whose rate of decline of 2.2 percent was much higher than any other community. It is clear from the available data that many more ST men returned to the rural areas, in comparison to male workers from other communities, and ST women were edged out of the workforce more than any other community in both, rural and urban areas. In fact as far as loss of employment among the SCs and other backward castes (OBC) is concerned, it is significant that male workers seem to have lost more urban jobs than female workers and that the rate of decline of rural work among the men from these social groups was slower than the overall rate of decline in the rural workforce between 2011–12 and 2017–18. These trends highlight the case for a

1. For an analysis of the agrarian distress please see Himanshu (2019a).

more nuanced understanding of the process of 'defeminization' of agriculture.

While it is clear that the burgeoning of labour reserves is structured by the rural employment crisis, the monograph also shows that the agricultural sector is unable to provide full-time agricultural work. Such a situation has contributed to increased migration and mobility of labour, much of it of the distressed variety, resulting in new forms of unfree and attached labour, and a whole range of adverse working conditions. Thus, the precarious situation of the economy has resulted in a more generalized workforce where it is becoming hard to define an 'agricultural worker' as we understand it in different databases. As per the definition by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), if someone gets more than 50 percent of income by working on another person's field, that person is an agricultural labourer. However, given the distress situation it may be more apt to classify anyone who works even for a day on someone else's field as an agricultural labour. The reasons for this are related to the social, cultural and economic hierarchy, where people only work on other people's fields if they are forced to do so because of massive compulsions.

Recent statistics show that roughly 55 percent of agricultural workers are agricultural labour as per the official definition. As per my definition, the count and the incidence would be much higher. Among small and marginal farmers, 30 percent are reported to be working on a regular basis on someone else's field – hence the proportion of agricultural labour is close to 80 percent of the population in agriculture – even by official definitions. However, despite the definitional challenges, it is safe to state that approximately 50 percent of the total workforce is engaged in agriculture and about 65–70 percent of these are also dependent on sale of their labour in non-agricultural activities for their livelihoods. In short, there is little reason to exclude marginal farmers from the category of 'agricultural labour'. It is worth emphasizing that the accentuated crisis in rural India has led to a burgeoning of rural manual labour that seeks livelihoods in multiple sectors, including agriculture. The analysis within this monograph should be seen from this perspective.

There are many other critical themes raised in this monograph including the issue of labour rights for agricultural workers. This is an important issue which has been raised by several peasant organizations and trade unions whose emerging broad unity will be essential to tackle the challenges ahead. This monograph discusses, in some detail, a number of important concerns relating to contemporary politics of agricultural labour in particular, and the agricultural sector in general. The significant study by Shri Khandelwal will provide a good baseline material to scholars and activists for building a united strategy for meeting the challenges outlined here.

February 6, 2020

Praveen Jha

Professor,
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This monograph, based on a quick review of literature, examines broad trends in changes in the 21st century in the agricultural labour force, wage earners in agriculture with or without doing cultivation or other work and identified by official agency in National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) as self-employed in agriculture and agricultural labour. It is located in the wider context of the development process and policies and aims at understanding the challenges and prospects for the future road to a dignified, decent life which eludes despite hard work as producers of vital primary goods and high growth in the economy. The document is divided into six parts.

The Introduction highlights the importance in large numbers and low share in development leading to poverty and briefs about the location, scope and limitations. Section two, based on official figures used in various studies and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019, identifies the main trends in participation, employment and wages and examines the reasons for low employment and its implications for labour in rural areas. Broad changes include: (i) the decline in participation rates in general and worrisome secular long-term declining trend in women participation termed as 'defeminization of labour' ; (ii) decline in absolute number of agricultural workers since 2004–05: total decline from 2004–05 to 2017–18 is 63.4 million, 23.6 percent; (iii) entry of educated youth in agriculture as both cultivators and agricultural workers; (iv) a phase of rise in agricultural wages during 2007–14 followed by stagnation; (v) increasing use of labour displacing machines reflected in growing share of machine costs in total cost of production with government support; (vi) extremely worrisome decline in overall employment in absolute numbers for the first time since 1951 by more than nine millions on rather conservative estimates during 2011–12 to 2017–18; historic open unemployment rate of 6.1 percent which has reached 7.5 percent in July 2019; (vii) rise in underemployment in agriculture in terms of decline in average number of days of employment; (viii) low skills and education and rising seasonal migration in many cases with severe implication for freedom; (ix) high level of indebtedness from non-institutional sources, continuity in suicides of agricultural labour and caste-based hierarchy and high inequity in incomes and resource ownership with good progress in education and some improvement in absolute poverty and social status .

The analysis suggest that decline in labour in agriculture is due to increasing education, increasing use of labour displacing machines, non-availability of jobs, low status, measurement errors; shift from agriculture is not a sign of structural transformation rather indicates towards stunted/ distorted/asymmetrical jobless to job-loss growth reflected in negative growth of employment in manufacturing and stagnant growth in construction industry and new jobs only for educated; despite decline dependence on agriculture is considerable; the decline in women participation is for complex set of reasons like rising incomes, increasing girls education, male-migration, social position of women, non-availability of jobs due to education-skill and mobility deficit; rise in wages could be for public programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Food Security Act (NFSA), National rural Health Mission (NRHM), pensions, etc. and growth of GDP and agriculture; despite rise in wages the overall incomes have not risen to make substantial difference in the level of living due to inadequate wage rates and growing underemployment and unemployment; migration is emerging as a main form of employment and social position has marginally improved but caste and gender discrimination continue.

Section three focuses on the emerging dominant nature of labour market in circular short-term migration of varied nature in time, space and terms, including debt-tied contracts. It shows changing

form of bondage and processes that generate and perpetuate short-term bondage, called as modern-slavery/neo-bondage. It highlights how through unique organization of work, wages and payments the employers ensure supply of self-regulated cheap, docile, hardworking migrant labour for completion of important agricultural tasks like harvesting in time. Four important features of the system include: hiring of migrant labour through advance payments by intermediaries, work-unit consisting usually of husband and wife, arbitrary piece-rate wages, and final payment at the end of the season. This highly exploitative system perpetuates due to non-implementation of labour laws and economic compulsions and lack of awareness in labour. Migrants work for long 12–16 hours and are exposed to sun, rain, storm, dust and grime; live in poor conditions on fields in temporary shelters, under canvas, or just in open; stand deprived of social entitlements, education of children; women live in fear, insecurity and face sexual assault.

Section four examines the state policies and their implementation and highlights the unfinished land reform agenda; shows the continuous problem of 'displacement for development' and land-alienation which has taken away only means of livelihood in land from millions of poor tribal people reducing them to poor distress-migrants, bonded-labour and in perennial poverty; shows how the neoliberal policies of land, labour, agriculture, taxation, etc. favour rich and powerful, marginalize labour and increasing inequalities; failure of the state in providing relief to agricultural labour force by not implementing National Policy for Farmers 2007 and recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission. Overall, policies are increasingly leaving labour at the mercy of markets with declining protection with inadequate labour rights and poor enforcement of available laws.

Briefly recounting the history of contestations, the fifth Section underlines the need for broader unity and flags issues for concerted sustained struggles across sectors, movements and regions including international alliances in the era of globalization and growing corporate dominance in agriculture to realize the labour rights. Based on findings, raises several questions for considered view like Minimum Support Price, use of technology or less labour-intensive crops, specific versus universal demands, value chains and backward and forward relations. It also underlines the need for a better understanding of the changing nature of employment in agriculture and its impact on worker-profile and its implication for organizational forms and strategies. Growing segmentation, individualisation and increasing consumerism are listed as a new set of barriers in the organizational work along with growing divides based on religion and caste and identifies facilitating factors in high unemployment, rising inequality, etc. on the one hand and in daily contestations, rising number of platforms to demand and protests, joints actions at the national level on the other and 'walk the talk' as the goal for workers to realize.

Lastly, underlining the importance and inadequacies of the policy in content and implementation, the report suggests pro-people policies: setting up all-stakeholders high-powered task forces to ensure minimum labour rights; implementation of NPFF, 2007, draft Land Reform Policy, 2013 and Swaminathan Commission suggestions related to definition of farmer, employment, land and social security and agricultural revamp; withdrawal of floor wage in wage code and fixing of minimum wage as per Satpathy report; preparation of employment policies; initiation of an action-plan for financial inclusion by ensuring payment of wages online as per wage laws, awareness and education about labour rights and skill development and calls for implementation of the Mathadi model on top priority, given its benefits to all – as part of a win-win strategy.

Abbreviations

ALF: Agricultural Labour Force as defined by us in Part I
CMR: Child Mortality Rate
COI: Constitution of India
CTU: Central Trade Unions
CWS: Current Weekly Status
DDL: Dignified Decent Living
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
GoI: Government of India
ILO: International Labour Organization
IMR: Infant Mortality Rate
LFPR: Labour Force Participation rates refer to percentage of persons who are either employed or are looking for jobs/ready to take work in the total population
MAKAAM: Mahila Kisaan Adhikaar Manch
MMR: Maternal Mortality Rate
MNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005
MSSC: M S Swaminathan Commission report on agriculture, 2005
NFSA: National Food Security Act, 2013
NHRC: National Human Rights Commission
NIRD: National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
NEP: The new economic policy launched by Government of India in 1991 to promote liberalization, privatization and globalization.
NSSO: National Sample Survey Organisation
NRHM: National Rural Health Mission
PCC: Planning Commission Sub-Committee Report on Land Question, 2007
PIL: Public Interest Litigation
PLFS: Periodic Labour Force Survey, Annual Report (May 2019)
RTI: Right to Information Act
UMPCE: Usual Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure
UPSS: Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status
WPR: Worker Participation Rate; refers to percentage of persons work working as proportion of total population

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PART-I

I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Reality of World of Workers in India[2]

We begin with a brief summary of the reality of world of workers in India in the backdrop of six percent growth since 1980s and rapid growth since 1990s with unequal distribution of employment and GDP share across sectors with primary/agriculture sector in worst situation with almost 50 percent employment and 14 percent share in GDP. Over 90 percent workers work in informal conditions without any social security. Over half the workers are self-employed with very poor asset-base; about 30 percent are casual workers and roughly about 18 percent are regular workers but only about eight percent have regular full-time employment with social protection. Levels of education and professional or vocational skills are very low. Overall, the work participation is low despite the high incidence of child labour primarily due to low and declining participation of women. Women are crowded in low-paid farm employment, domestic work or honorary full-time workers on low stipend. The distribution of good quality formal jobs is extremely unequal. The social backward population in SC/ST/OBC are most concentrated in low-productive sectors and Muslims are concentrated in low-productive self-employment. The upper castes including Jains and Sikhs have a disproportionate share of good jobs and higher education attainments. The labour market is fragmented in terms of employment, sector, location, region, gender, caste, religion, tribe, etc. There is considerable circular/ temporary migration with high incidence of debt-bondage (neo-bondage). Wages and earnings are low. Working conditions are deplorable with high health and life risks.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) has increased and increasing informalization of workers even in highly organized manufacturing sectors to about 35 percent of employment in 2013 from 13 percent in 1995. The wage share of workers in industry has fallen from 21 to 10 percent and profits rose from over 20.7 to over 49 percent during 1980s to 2013. Compensation to employees in the economy (both organized and unorganized) as a share of GDP at factor cost was 38.5 percent in 1980–81 which declined to 22.5 percent in 2012–13 (Abraham and Sasikumar 2017). The relative inequality has reached new heights wherein share in national income of bottom 50 percent population has declined by half from 24 to 12 percent and of 0.01 percent population increased ten times from 0.5 to five percent and that of 1 percent top population to 23 percent from six during the same period (Piketty 2018)[3]. Overall unemployment has reached historical levels with extremely high rates among the young. History was created in 2017–18 when for the first time there was an absolute decline in people employed by more than 9 million turning growth story from jobless to job-loss (PLFS 2019; Mehrotra et al. 2019). Some sectors have increased significantly like IT, automobiles, pharma, services with spill-over impact benefiting skilled educated urban middle class. The divide between rural urban is large and increasing. Informalization of work is eroding the strength of trade unions. Gains of productivity are garnered largely by the employers. Employer supported small section of middle class is rising. The gains to labour are small in higher real wages.

The silver lining for workers lies in increasing awareness and education; recognition of caste and gender inequalities and emergence of popular movements to tackle them; rise in unionisation of informal workers; political democracy and perforce public support programmes by the state like MNREGA, NFSA.

1.2 The Agricultural Labour-Force (ALF)

> The share of agriculture in India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is only about 14 percent, but agriculture employs 49 percent of the total workforce and 64 percent of the rural workforce. The high dependence of the population on agriculture is one of the main reasons for low size of land holding and for low per-capita income as well as high incidence of poverty among agricultural workers. (GoI 2016: 14).

The agricultural labour-force (ALF) constitutes a sizable proportion of the total workforce in rural India, despite falling proportions and the recent significant fall in absolute numbers. They are the producers of food and non-food items, the primary basis of reproduction and development. Despite that, after seven decades of development post-Independence, the mass of ALF stand deprived of a dignified decent life (DDL). For the largest and vibrant democracy that attained the highest growth rate for years, the present socioeconomic situation of the ALF is a matter of serious concern that needs immediate attention. This has been recognized even at international level. Observes a FAO–ILO–IUF report on agricultural workers:

> This Report on Agricultural Workers … focuses on the 450 million women and men who are employed as waged agricultural workers, and who are at the very heart of the food production system. *Beyond*

2. Based mainly on: IHDI (2014); Abraham and Sasikumar (2017); ILO (2017a) and Piketty et al. (2018).

3. It is worth noting here that at the time of second World War one percent of population shared 23 percent of income. Post-independence due to progressive taxation, public sector employment and public sending in education and heath the share declined to six percent by 1980s. The NEP of 1991 has again increased inequality.

forming the core of the rural poor, this workforce is disadvantaged in other respects. It is among the most socially vulnerable, the least organized into trade unions, is employed under the poorest health, safety and environmental conditions, and is the least likely to have access to effective forms of social security and protection ... The Report demonstrates ... agricultural workers ... *remain largely invisible to policy and decision-makers in governments* ... (FAO -ILO-IUF, 2005: 5, emphasis added)

This report examines the broad trends in changes in the 21st century in AGL in the wider context of the development process and policies for the purpose of understanding the challenges and prospects for the future towards a road to DDL, which eludes most workers despite their hard work.

1.2.1 Definition of the Agricultural Labour Force (ALF)[4]

We include in the definition those who (a) survive through wage (cash, kind or share in crop) labour in agriculture – the sellers of labour

Box: 1: The State is duty-bound to ensure the following Constitutional rights of the workers

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Art 19: (1) All citizens shall have the right—
(*a*) to freedom of speech and expression; (*b*) to assemble peaceably and without arms;
(*c*) to form associations or unions; (*d*) to move freely throughout the territory of India;
(*e*) to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; [1][and]

Art 23: (1) Traffic in human beings and *begar* and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law**.**

DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY

Art 37: -----it shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws.

Art 38: (1) The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.
(2) The State shall, in particular, strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations.

Art 39: The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing—
(*a*) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;
(*b*) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to sub-serve the common good;
(*c*) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;
(*d*) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;
(*e*) that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;
(*f*) that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Art 41: The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

Art 42: The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

Art 43: The State shall endeavour to secure, by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way, to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas.

Art 46: The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Art 47: The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.

power and; (b) those marginal/small farmers who survive on both agricultural produce (for self-consumption or partly self-consume and partly sell) and also on wage labour. The proportion of such households is estimated to be at least fourth-fifth (Basole and Basu, 2011) among all agricultural households/workers (over 200 million as of now). Our definition excludes those farmer households who produce enough to survive using their own labour and may hire wage labour and those who cultivate predominantly using wage labour. We are conscious of the fact that the reality of rural labour is complex today and for the majority, agricultural wage labour may be just one source of earning among multiple sources both as self employed workers as well as wage labour and that there is merit in the argument that there are no exclusive categories like agricultural labourers in large measure and a more appropriate nomenclature may be 'rural labour' (Jha, 2015). However, field studies do report exclusive agricultural labour (Sarap and Venkatnarayana, 2018; Singh and Singh, 2015) in Punjab and those in the category of ALF (Garikipati, 2007) in Andhra.

1.3 Framework of analysis:

Development entails the purpose, level and nature of production and distribution of produced goods and services in each society at any point in time. Post-independence while recognizing the welfare responsibility of the State, India opted for a 'profit' driven market-based economy with public sector as role model which with unleashing of NEP in 1991 of liberalization, privatization and globalization[5] has now transgressed into the neoliberal phase putting a severe limit to the 'welfare role of the State' and sale of public enterprises. This is a phase that allows the market to determine everything and where 'one must fend for oneself'. The primary/agriculture sector is at the base of development and operates within the limitations set by the development paradigm and its own peculiar production process. Since within the development process the level, nature and direction of production and distribution is controlled and guided by public/social policy, the role of State is crucial, as it is solely responsible for formulating and implementing policies.[6] The State represented by the ruling class being democratically elected by the people of India under the Constitution, is duty-bound to uphold the sanctity of the provisions of the Constitution of India (COI). Accordingly, we take select provisions of Chapter III (Articles 19 and 23) and Chapter IV (Articles 38, 39, 41–3, 46–7) of the COI as our primary reference point. Added to this are obligations under various international instruments committed to international community by choosing to adopt/ sign them. Further, in our understanding, the various sectors/components of the economy are interlinked with the primary sector, our immediate concern, as base and the role of State is tempered by one-person one-vote-based democratic political system on the one hand and contestations on the other.[7] With this basic understanding of development and reference point, we critically examine the changes in the ALF.

Sources of data: This report is based on a quick review of secondary literature. The main source of evidences used in the reviewed studies are at the aggregate level and are based on official data, especially NSSO[8] and Census, including Agricultural Census Data, with all its limitations.[9] The secondary data-based analysis has been supported by select micro studies and our own experience spanning decades.

Limitations: Due to resource constraints resources the present report merely flags the issues. It is (a) based on a limited survey of literature; (b) the limited analysis is largely confined to rural-aggregate level with limited regional and gender-level analysis; (c) the linkages have not been explored in much detail; (d) limitation of data quality and scope remain because the definitions used in NSSO/Census and the question of unpaid labour in relation to family labour remains and studies related to contestations are simply missing.

4. Based on the definition used by NSSO and Census as our analysis is based on these official sources of data. India has ratified ILO Convention 141 on Rural Workers Organizations which defines a rural worker in agriculture as one who is a wage earner or self-employed as tenant/ sharecropper or as owner but do not employ permanent labour, many labourers or give land on lease. Our definition is less than this as it excludes self-sufficient self-employed who do not participate in wage labour. Analysis excludes plantation workers also.

5. Often, it is also argued that the process of globalization has led to "precarization" of labour in many countries (ILO, 2014).

6. The role of state policies in development is well recognized.

7. Though extremely limited, but the importance of one-man one-vote politics can be understood in specific events of the recent past: (i) the aborted attempt to scuttle rural public employment programmes like MGNREGA; (ii) the clamour for simultaneous polls so that the powers can have enough time leverage to freely implement neo-liberal agendas, and; (iii) cash assistance programme to over hundred million of farmers in debt relief programmes.

8. Our focus is on NSSO data, except population count, as NSSO data are collected more professionally by well-trained and experienced personnel. The quality of data has been acknowledged for long world-wide in academic circles, albeit with its limitations.

9. There are several studies available that analyse the limitations of the NSSO data due to various reasons including conceptual and methodological. See for instance Dhar (2012) on days of employment; Usami and Rawal on wrong enumeration of seasonal migrants' work due to residence issue; Usami et al. (2018) on definitional and coverage issues measurement of women's participation (Jha, 2015; Rawal, 2014).

II

Participation, Employment, Wages and Earnings

At the dawn of Independence, rural India accounted for a large proportion of landless labourers who hailed from the lowest social category in the hierarchy of caste and worked through different arrangements. A large proportion worked as attached labourers for farms and family works. They were forced participants in the then subsistence economy. Post-independence, the profile of these workers started changing gradually through the process of social-political-economic development guided by social policies which included direct state interventions[10] and contestations.

Following the developed economies, it was expected that agricultural and industrial growth will transform the inherited subsistence agrarian economy into a modern one, leading to qualitative changes in the lives of agricultural labour. But the trajectory of development belied this hope as the growth was based on 'betting on the strong' and 'trickle down' has been geographically uneven and highly iniquitous and of 'dual' nature due to differential social structure. The post-independence formal employment in public and private industrial sector raised hopes of transformation with development but with the reversal in policies with NEP in 1991, employment is increasingly becoming scarce and informal. The benefits of overall growth in general, and high rates of growth in recent past, have been marginal for the labour, agriculture labour having gained the least due to social location. Their situation adequately reflects in thousands of suicides of AGL every year and in various broad human development and deprivation indicators like stunted and wasted growth of children; high maternal mortality rates (MMR), infant mortality rates (IMR), child mortality rates (CMR), poverty; poor access to proper housing, safe water, quality education and health[11]; poverty wages, high employment and underemployment and lack of social security. Indian transformation is torturously slow compared to countries like Japan, Korea, China, so much so that researchers say that with the current rates of employment generation and population growth of last two decades such transformation may not be complete in the next 5,000 years (Basu, 2020). In the zig-zag growth path, there are some gains for agricultural labour but with more worrisome indicators.

In a market economy, the need for cash in hand needs no overemphasis. In agriculture this is amply reflected in rising levels of debts and suicides linked to it and the sale of products by small, poor producers by cutting consumption. It is not uncommon in rural India to sell small quantities of milk to meet cash requirements and in consequence depriving children of milk in the poor homes. Disposable income in hand is determined by the level of participation, terms and conditions and the extent and quality of employment and wage rates. Here, we examine recent changes

2.1 Labour Force Participation

Participation of labour has three interrelated aspects: (i) the sectoral distribution of

10. The State has intervened at different points of time through various programmes. For instance, land reforms including land distribution, irrigation, introducing 'green revolution package', starting of public distribution system, creating infrastructure, institutional credit with nationalization of banks, employment programmes, self-help groups, promoting artisans, cooperatives including milk and , village industries and so on. Changes are visible but not at the level of transformation leading to DDL.

11. These are important indicators in the Global Indicator Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (like Goal 2 on hunger and Goal three on hunger, food security, nutrition etc) and form part of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (see: mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/UN20%Resolution.pdf)

Table 1: LFPR and WPR for 15 Years Plus by Region and Gender Over the Years (in Percent)

Year	Type	Rural			Total (Rural +Urban)		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2017–18	WPR	72	23.7	48.1	71.2	22	46.8
	LFPR	76.4	24.6	50.7	75.8	22	49.8
2011–12	WPR	80	35.2	57.8	78.1	30.5	54.7
	LFPR	81.3	35.8	58.7	79.8	31.2	55.9
2009–10	WPR	81.2	37.2	59.5	79.1	31.8	55.9
	LFPR	82.5	37.8	60.4	80.6	32.6	57.1
2004–05	WPR	84.6	48.5	66.6	82.2	41.6	62.2
	LFPR	85.9	49.4	67.7	84	42.7	63.7

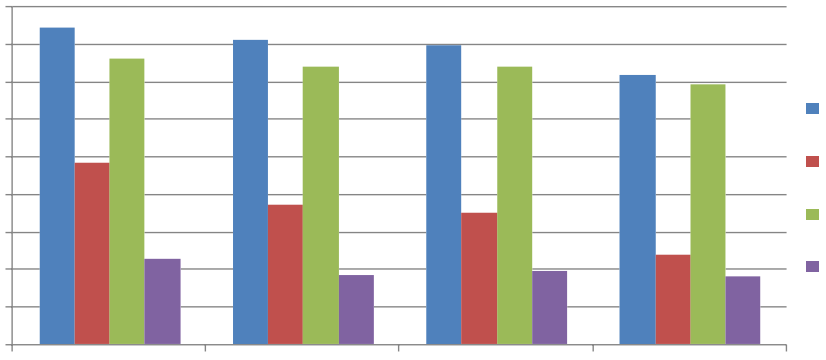
Notes: 1: All data computed from Annual Report PLFS, May 2019; 2: Data for 2017–18 are based on PLFS reports and for others from NSSO; 3: Source for other data: Computed from PLFS: WPR Statement 11on Page 57 and LFPR from Statement 8 on page 53.

employment; (ii) the overall participation rate which determines the dependent-earners ratio, and; (iii) the rate of participation by age and sex, which indicates the levels of participation of children and women. The overall participation rates have two distinct aspects: labour force participation rates (LFPR) and worker-population ratio (WPR), the difference in two being unemployment rates (UR) in addition to nature of participation-self-employment, regular/casual work. With growth, movement of economy towards low dependence ratio, full gainful and regular quality employment, zero participation of children, equal participation of women and most importantly, a shift of 'surplus labour' from informal to formal work are the positive changes considered as the indicators of transformation from a traditional to modern economy. The other dimension of modernity relates to education and skills (Thomas, 2012) and equality of opportunity and relative high levels of living being the major outcomes. The education and skill aspect have a bearing on the overall rate of participation, especially in a country like India which has high rates of child labour and drop-outs at various levels. It is important to underline here that the mere exit of surplus labour from agriculture to non-agriculture may lead to better conditions in terms of higher wages but is no decisive indicator of transformation as it involves movement of economy on a set of indicators as delineated above with formal employment. With this understanding we examine the changes in participation rates.

2.1.1 Decline in participation rates:

Participation rates sharply declined at all levels in 21st Century India (See Table A1 and A1 -A for long term WPR by region and gender and social groups). The participation rates in India have been historically low and they are further declining. At less than 50 percent, our participation rate is much lower compared to 68 in China, 64 in Brazil, 66 in Afghanistan, 59 in Bangladesh, while 61 was the world average in 2019. The latest data suggests that there has

Figure 1: WPR Among Persons of Age 15 years and above in Usual Status



been unprecedented decline in participation rates (15+ age LFPR and WPR) over less than a decade and a half from 2004–05 to 2017–18 (see Table 1 and Figure 1). Whereas the decline has been across the region, gender and social groups, the fall is most prominent and secular for women. Low participation rates may largely be due to higher level of participation in education (refer to Figure 2 and Table 2), and partly due to withdrawal of women, dwindling jobs, increase in unpaid work and despondency.

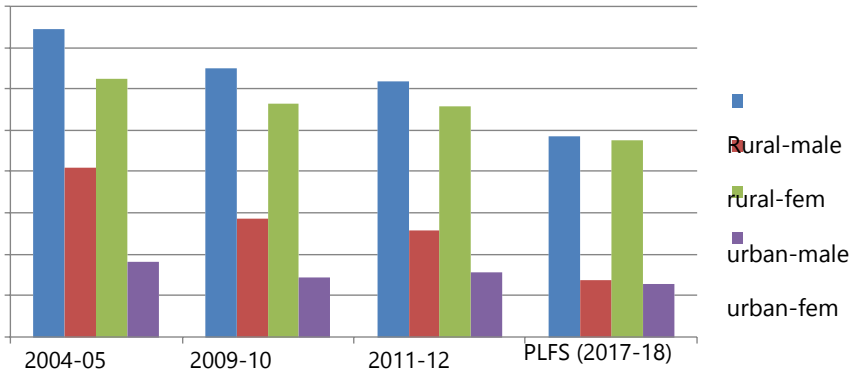
There are several implications of this. First, on the face of it this basically means that the *earner-dependent ratio has deteriorated, and the patriarchy-controlled social roles are perhaps asserting*. Second, the latest set from the PLFS data suggest that the usual monthly per capita consumer expenditure (UMPCE) and the WPR are positively related at household level (PLFS, 2019, Statement 12: 60). The highest UMPCE class reports WPR of 57.8 and next highest of 55.2. The first UMPCE has WPR of only 45.5 and next three 48 to 49. *The declining WPR is likely to have an adverse impact on poor families, particularly STs and SCs, pushing them into lower UMPCE adding to their precarious living due to forced unemployment and increase in earner-dependency ratio*. Third, in addition to the adverse impact on households, the low participation rates also mean that India is losing out on demographic dividend (Thomas, 2012).

2.1.2 Absolute number of workers in agriculture is starting to decline:

Till 2004-05 the share of agricultural workers in rural India declined gradually, but the absolute number increased (Table 3). From 2004–05 onwards, after more than five decades, there is a decisive movement of labour away from agriculture (see Table 2 and Table 3a). Between 2004–05 and 2011–12, for the first time in India, absolute numbers of workers declined from 268.7 to 231.9 million, i.e., by 36.8 million at all-India level and by 19.18 million during 2004–05 to 2009–10 in rural areas. The latest data suggests a further decline from 231.9 in 2011–12 to 205.3 million in 2017–18; a fall of 26.6 million (all-India). The share of employment in agriculture now stands at 44 percent against 49 in 2011–12 at all-India level. Over the longer period from 1993–4 to 2009–10, persons engaged in the primary sector declined by 1.8 million, whereas the total employment in the country increased by 84.7 million. Alternately the estimates suggest that since the 1980s till the end of the first decade of the 21st century the proportion of the workforce engaged in primary sector activities in India declined by 16 percentage points (For detailed discussion of employment during 1983 to 2009–10 refer to Thomas, 2012). This percentage decline now has increased to over 20.

This desirable exit of workers from agriculture coupled with increased participation in education in 15 to 29 year-age group may, in first instance, indicate a transformation. Some have called it profound structural change (Reddy, N. et al., 2014). However, through deeper analysis we see a different picture. First, the employment data for the period 2011–12 to 2017–18 shows an absolute decline, for the first time, in employment by over nine million and very high rates of unemployment.[12] Open unemployment rate increased almost three times from 2.2 to 6.1 percent, which jumped to 7.5 in July 2019 (Basu, 2019). Absolute unemployment in the age group 15–29 increased from 8.9 to 25.1 million (Mehrotra and Parida, 2019). Second, construction is the main sector that absorbs exit labour from agriculture and has added just over three million new jobs compared to 20 million plus, during the previous period (The Census data not only refutes this but also shows that during 1991–2011, the main

Figure 2: WPR among persons of age 15 -29 years in usu-



12. As per Himanshu (2019) the overall decline in employment was to the extent of 15.5 million and from the agricultural sector, 37 million exited. He estimated that the economy, instead of creating 83 million jobs reported a loss of 15.5 million. The difference is due to the method of projections used.

Table 2: Sectoral Employment, Labour Force and Unemployment Trends in India, 2005-2018

Sl No	Sectors	Absolute Numbers (million)						
		Overall Worker Population			Change in 2017-18 over 2011-12(Mil)	Youths (15–29 years)		
		2004-05	2011-12	2017-18		2004-05	2011-12	2017-18
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Agriculture	268.7	231.9	205.3	(-)26.6	85.7	60.7	41.8
2	Manufacturing	53.9	59.8	56.4	(-)3.4	22.4	22.1	18.5
3	Non-manufacturing	29.4	55.3	58.9	3.6	11.6	19.4	17.8
4	Service	107.3	127.3	144.4	17.1	34.5	35.7	37.6
5	Total employment	459.4	474.2	465.1	(-)9.1	154.2	138.0	115.7
6	Labour force	470.2	484.8	495.1	10.3	163.1	147.0	140.7
7	Participating in education					56.8	99	127
8	WPR (%)	42	38.6	34.7	(-)3.9	53.3	41.9	31.4
9	LFPR (%)	43	39.5	36.9	(-)2.6	56.4	44.6	38.3
10	Usual status UR (%)	2.3	2.2	6.1	3.9	5.4	6.1	17.8
11	Weekly status UR (%)	3.4	3.0	8.8	5.8	6.4	6.8	21.4

Source: Mehrotra and Parida, 2019
Note: Non-manufacturing at serial number 3 primarily includes construction.

Table 3: Distribution of Workers in Agriculture-Rural India by Sex, 1993 to 2017-18 (In Percent)

Year	Male Workers in Agriculture			Female Workers in Agriculture		
	Self-employed	Casual +Reg wage workers	Share in Total Male Workers	Self-employed	Casal+reg wage workers	Share in Total Fem Workers
1993	44.8	27.7+1.2	73.7	50.3	35.6+0.5	86.4
2004-05	42.2	23.2+0.9	67.3	53.8	29.6+0.4	83.8
2011-12	38.9	20.0+0.5	59.4	48.1	26.4+0.4	74.9
2017-18	NA	NA	55.0	NA	NA	73.2

Source: Calculated from Table 2 in Usami and Rawal (2018); 2017: PLFS, 2019, Para 3.3.7.2; See: Table A 3 in Appendix

workers declined by 7.1 percentage points and marginal workers increased by 8.8 percentage points.[13] For intersectoral difference between Census and NSSO data for rural areas by gender see Table A2). *To call the exit of labour from agriculture in face of such decline in employment as a structural change is problematic as the other sectors have not accommodated those who exited. Moreover, such transfer of labour from low-wage agriculture to low-wage construction within rural areas is equally problematic to be termed as transformative.* Third, employment in manufacturing is declining. Fourth, the decline in agriculture could be due to several other factors, like the youth not working given the low wages, educated workers exiting, inability of rural women to access jobs and reporting not in labour force, labour displacement due to technological changes/mechanization, crop shifting from labour intensive to that needing less of labour, lower wages in agriculture (Kannan, 2019). Analysis based on village studies finds added factors like negative income of farmers (Ramachandran and Rawal, 2010), adverse climatic conditions of droughts, floods, and unseasonal rains, decline in public investment in irrigation and agricultural research that are pushing workers out of the agricultural sector. Fifth, what the data indicates might not be completely accurate due to enumeration errors, as pointed out by several scholars (Tomas and Jayesh, 2016; Usami et al., 2018). Thus, it is unlikely that the precarious conditions of agricultural labour would improve with the exit the

13. For a detailed discussion on the differences between NSSO and Census data refer to Thomas and Jayesh (2016).

data show. Many economists, on the contrary, find this as a clear sign of weakening of the economy (Himanshu, 2019).

With no additional employment generation and being the world's most poorly urbanized nation, the fastest GDP growth in India appears to be more of a 'stunted growth' (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2013) or 'distorted growth' rather than transformative, leading to DDF for the ALF. Analyzing the data one researcher concludes that: "Those who have lost jobs are all with low education, that is, less than secondary level of education. From a gender perspective, rural women workers are the net losers ... these are clear signs of rural India in distress with strong gender and social dimensions" (Kannan, 2019: 38). Yet another researcher, analyzing the dynamics of changes concludes that *changes in rural labour market in India over a quarter of a century are not always conducive to progress as a large part of it is distress-driven* (Majumdar, 2017). Others have termed it as intriguing structural characteristics (Papola, 2013) or "asymmetrical" and "world's most incongruous society" (Lindberg, 2012).

2.1.3 The agricultural workers in rural areas by occupation status and gender:

Table 3 shows a decline in proportion of agricultural workers in total rural workforce at all levels during 1993 to 2017–18: self-employed and agricultural labour and males and females. In total male workers, the share of agricultural male workers declined from 73.7 to 55 percent and for women from 86.4 to 73.2. If we look at the trend, then we find that between 2011–12 and 2017–18, the relative decline is least in percentage points. Despite this decline, three in four women workers are dependent on agriculture and in case of men this dependence is little less than three in five. To what an extent can we call this transformative decline? Despite this decline, the fact remains that human power availability in agriculture was almost twice in 2014–15 at 0.077KW/ ha compared to 0.043KW/ ha in 1960–61 (NABARD, 2018). And this happened despite substantial displacement of labour by mechanization (See Section 2.5). *The exit, noted above, seems to be due to 'inability to absorb', not driven by transformative development.*

2.1.4 The employment status in agriculture:

The employment status in agriculture is mainly in terms of self-employment (Table 3). This is true for entire rural areas (for rural sectoral distribution of workers by industry, status, sex from 1993 to 2011 refer to tables A 3A & A 3B in Appendix). Researchers suggest that the self-employment, in terms of petty-production[14] for survival, in general has twin functions: informally provide social security in bad times, the formal responsibility of which lies with the state under COI, and subsidize industrial (non-farm) wages. Such informal social responsibility is through intensive exploitation of the entire family, including children (Hariss-White, 2010). The proportion of self-employed in total employment in rural areas in 2017–18 (Table 3A) increased to 57.8 percent from 54.2 in 2011–12 within which 9.8 included unpaid family workers. Within agriculture, self-employed males in rural areas were 77.2 percent which included 15.9 percent of unpaid helpers. In other words, in total male cultivators, 20.6 percent were unpaid family members. In females, this ratio is upside down. Out of the total 65 percent female cultivators in rural areas in agriculture, 16.3 percent are cultivators and 48.7 percent are

Table 3A: Distribution of Workers by Type of Work 2017 -18 by Employment and Gender (In Percent)

	Self-employed			Reg-Wage/ Sal	Casual	Total
	OAW	Helper	Total			
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Rural-total					
Male	48.0	9.8	57.8	14.0	28.2	100
Female	19.0	38.7	57.7	10.5	31.8	100
Person	41.0	16.9	57.8	13.1	29.1	100
	Agriculture-Rural					
Male	61.3	15.9	77.2	1	21.7	100
Female	16.3	48.7	65.0	1.2	33.8	100
Person	47.8	25.7	73.5	1.1	25.4	100

Source: PSLF 2019 OAW: Own account workers

14. There are several studies available on this question. See for instance, De (2017); Basole and Basu (2011); and Harris-White (2010). These explain in detail the process through which the self-employed are exploited through interlinked product and financial markets and how the market development creates and demolishes it.

Table 3B: Rural Labour Force in Millions 1983 to2009–10

Year	Total	Self-employed-ag	Agrl Lab	Total Ag -Col3+4	Men	Women	Cult-AGL ratio
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1983	244.15	112.72	67.73	180.45	154.8	90.5	1:60
1987-88	257.64	110.38	71.7	182.08	166.8	94.8	1:65
1993-94	292.49	124.01	80.43	204.44	189.6	105.1	1:65
1999-2000	304.6	112.89	91.59	204.48	201.2	106.3	1:81
2004-05	343.16	136.44	82.62	219.06	220.4	125.2	1:61
2009-10	336.73	119.66	80.22	199.88	233.7	105.5	1:67

Source: Column 1-5: Jha (2015: 210); Column 6&7. There is a slight difference from two sources in total.

helpers. *Given the extremely low asset-base of self-employed people in India and low farm incomes, high levels of self-employed workers is a sign of distress-adjustment*. At the all-India level, about 65 million workers out of 465 total workers were unpaid family workers assisting the main worker. In view of post-independence development history, petty-production is important in India. *It is necessary that it is strengthened in various ways as per NPFF 2007 and MSSC recommendations*.

Further, during 1983 to 2009–10 (Table 3B): (a) absolute number of male workers in rural India increased from 154.8 million to 233.7 and in case of women from 90.5 to 105.5 million. Increase in male numbers is consistent except during 1990-2000 to 2004–05 when increase in numbers was relatively higher from 201.2 to 220.4 compared to immediately preceding and following periods; (b) for women there are significant changes. *During 1999–2000 to 2004–05 number sharply increased from 106.3 to 125.2 million and thereafter in the next five years from 2004–05 to 2009–10 there was much sharper decline to 105.5 million*; (c) men largely work as main workers indicating that following the norms of patriarchy men continue be bread-earners for the agricultural families and finally; (d) good number of *women work as marginal workers*, implying that for women work is need-based and/or depends on the availability of work within villages. Women thus stand marginalized in paid work and their marginalization has only accentuated, rooted perhaps in gendered roles determined by patriarchy -based social norms.

In conclusion, we find that both the Census (Section 2.1.6) and available NSSO data find: (a) declining trend in the share of agricultural workforce, but the estimated proportions of decline differ, and; (b) continued high dependence on agriculture, of about 55 to more than 60 percent agricultural workers in rural areas. The NSSO data suggests relatively higher dependence on agriculture compared to Census data.

Age-wise distribution of workers show that: (a) new entrants in the workforce in the age-group of 15–21 are lower in 2011–12 compared to 2004–05 by about 22 percent; (b) roughly 60 percent new entrants joined agriculture, and; (c) within agriculture, around 60 percent joined as cultivators and the rest as agricultural labourers. This indicates *increased participation in education of people in the age group of 15–21 and that the new entrants in agriculture are not less than the existing ratio* (Usami and Rawal, 2018).

2.1.5 Millions of new entrants in agricultural work are now educated/ graduates

Another crucial change one finds in the ALF relates to the educational profile of the workers, which may partly explain high wages and exit and may become the harbinger of more qualitative changes related to changing educational profile of the workers in agriculture, both self-employed and wage labour. Among self-employed, 2011–12 data show that among 14.8 million workers in the age-group 22–28 years, who come of age from year 2004–05, about 12 lakh are graduates, 1.6 lakh hold some diploma and over four million are secondary/higher secondary qualified. Even among agricultural labour, out of nine plus million, one lakh are graduates and 1.7 million are secondary and higher secondary passed. The share of below primary is less than 40 percent. This reality is in face of research findings which reveal that educated people exit agriculture (Usami and Rawal, 2018). Given the employment situation in the country, this should not come as a surprise as there is an extremely high rate of unemployment among youth and where even for few posts of the lowest level in government services, lakhs of highly educated aspirants – including doctorates – apply for a job.

2.1.6 Changes in the proportion and composition of Agricultural Workers (cultivators and agricultural labourers):

Census data reveals that during 1951–71 the absolute number of total agricultural workers (includes both cultivators and agricultural labour, as defined in Census) increased from 97 to 125.7 million but the proportion of all rural workers remained stagnant, at around 69 percent. Thereafter, between 1971–2011 the number increased from 125.7 to 263.1 million, but the *proportion in all workers fell from 69.7 to 54.6 percent*. Within the total agricultural workers, the number of cultivators rose from 78 to 118.5 million during the same period from 1971 to 2011 and agricultural labourers from 47.5 to 144.3 million.[15] In other words, the cultivators increased by 51.9 percent whereas agricultural labourers by more than 216 percent. This literally reversed the ratios of cultivators and agricultural workers in the forty years of development. In 1971, the ratio was 62.2: 37.8 in favour of cultivators, which changed to 45.1: 54.9 in favour of agricultural labourers. Thus, the data suggests that: (a) *A huge army of labourers has been created in the agricultural sector*; (b) There has been a shift from agriculture to non-agriculture, but the change is slow, implying that the *non-agricultural sector has failed to create work opportunities*; (c) In 2011, *more than half of the workers in rural areas were still dependent on agriculture*; (d) There is, however, qualitative change within the total agricultural workforce in favour of agricultural labourers. *This is in contrast to NSSO data.*

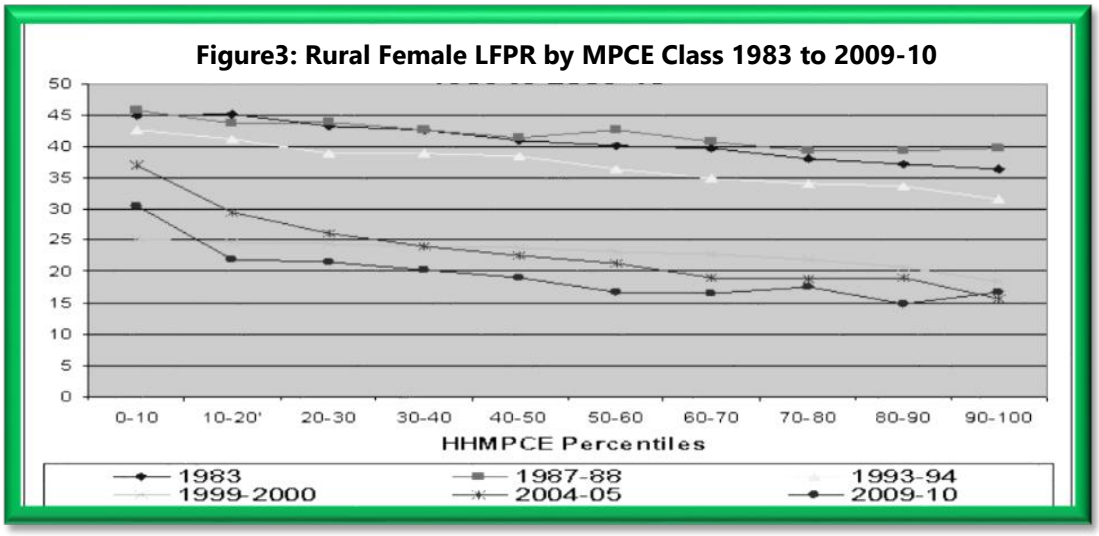
2.2 Defeminization of work

As noted above, the share of women is secularly declining overall and in agriculture in particular. At 23.3 in 201–18, it is the lowest in the world (Basu, 2019). As given in Table 3B, 19.7 million women exited agricultural work in 2009–10, compared to 2004–05. The cumulative number of non-workers among women, excluding the category of workers, unemployed and students increased sharply from 87 to 146.7 million between 1993–2011. Some have named it as 'missing labour force' (Kannan and Raveendran, 2012; Rangarajan et al., 2011) and others as 'defeminization' (Abraham, 2013).

2.2.1 Some important explanations for defeminization:

(a): Rising income and education of girl child and the burden of house work on women: Household incomes have risen due rise in wages and male migration and there is now greater awareness about education of girls. The rise in income improved consumption and reduced levels of poverty (Thorat and Dubey, 2012). The percentage of the girl students increased from 5.4 to 22 million between 1993 and 2011 (Rangarajan et al., 2012; Reddy et al., 2014; Mehrotra and Parida, 2017).

Simultaneously, this has added to the work-burden on women leading to their withdrawal from the labour force as earlier, women participated more in the labour force while their young daughters remained at home to take care of their siblings and helped in household chores (Mehrotra and Parida, 2017). The issue of male migration, however, is conflicting as there are several studies that suggest that male migration has led to 'feminization of agriculture', that is, women have taken up agricultural work, leading



15. This data is diametrically opposed to NSSO data – which for the year 2011 – suggests that within agriculture the proportion of self-employed is more compared to agricultural labour. See Table 3.

to increased work-burden on them (see Section 2.3.4 [iv]).

(b) Contraction of and changes in labour market: Studies find 'crowding out of women labour' for reasons of agricultural stagnation/distress and due to high agricultural population (cultivators and agricultural labourers combined) per unit of sown area of agricultural land, particularly in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Tamil Nadu (Thomas and Jayesh 2016); and general slow-down of economic growth, leading to contraction in non-farm employment. Many of women lost jobs in the textile sector (Chowdhury, 2011). On the one hand, in agriculture, women are being pushed out of labour market due to increasing use of labour-displacing machinery, land concentration, monetization of land, etc. On the other hand, women stand deprived of alternate job opportunities due to lack of education and required skills and mobility constraint. Since a majority of women workers are agricultural workers, women have exited agriculture but there is no commensurate employment for them in the non-agricultural sector. In agriculture, the non-availability of farm machinery suitable to women is also one reason. *The lack of suitable employment opportunities in non-farm sector is the main reason for the sharp decline in women participation rates* (Kannan and Raveendran, 2012; Khandelwal and Deo, 2013; Usami and Rawal 2018; Rawal and Saha, 2015; Mehrotra and Parida, 2017)

Table: 4: Change in All and Female Workers by Status - NSSO Percent-1999-2010

Period	Workers by Status	All Workers	Female Workers
1999-2000 to 2004-05	All workers	18.5	14.4
	Self-employed workers	27.7	16.9
	Casual workers	−7.9	−2.4
2004-05 to 2009-10	All workers	−21.1	−21.8
	Self-employed workers	−23.5	−19.0
	Casual workers	2.7	−2.5

Source:

(c): Patriarchy-controlled society: Scholars find the number of non-workers rising in the context of rising incomes, coupled with rising education rather intriguing because increasing education and gender parity is expected to improve the participation rates of women. Several studies argue that the reason lies in our patriarchy-based social system, which controls women's choice of work and mobility and gender-defined work division within the house. Based on a detailed NSSO data albeit for the country as a whole, it has been empirically shown (See Fig 3: Abraham, 2013) that with the rise in incomes, the work participation rates for women decline, with slight exception in the richest group in recent past. The latest data shows that in 2017–18 the LFPR of women is relatively much higher among the tribal community at 27.6 percent, compared to 15, 18 and 17.4 percent for others, SCs and OBCs, respectively. *This indicates that the participation of socially backward, poor women is relatively more.*

(d): Measurement errors: Several scholars are of the view that the reason for such sharp decline in female workers may be due to changes in the method of data collection leading to measurement errors (Himanshu, 2011; Hiraway, 2012; Sonalde and Joshi, 2019).

(e) Reversal of exceptional rise:[16] One of the arguments is that 1999–2000 to 2004–05 was an exceptional period of high distress, wherein whole families including children and the old who otherwise do not form a part of the labour force contributed their labour to survive. In the following period of 2004–5 to 2009–10 with restoration of normalcy, they did not participate (Abraham, 2009; Himanshu, 2011).

2.3 Employment situation

Post-independence, the nature of employment has changed and with agricultural development, employment in agriculture also grew. At the time of independence, substantial employment was either in terms of bonded labour/attached labour or in terms of tenants in major parts of India. Post development with land reforms self-employment based on land-ownership increased substantially and labour also increasingly became free. Tenancy has come down and terms of tenancy are more in cash than in-kind. Wages, which used to be in-kind, are now in cash almost universally. The other specific characteristic of wage employment in agriculture related to the profile of the agricultural labourers. They belonged to the lowest segment, in terms of social hierarchy, were resource poor with no education, faced social discrimination and oppression which rendered them as the lowest paid workers. This legacy continues. For instance, a recent study of Punjab's villages shows that 93 percent of agricultural labourers belong to SC and 44 percent are illiterate (Singh and Singh, 2015).

In 1970s and 80s wage employment grew particularly fast in several areas like Punjab and

16. See Table 4. The table includes all female workers. Since most of the women work in agriculture, it is equally applicable to agriculture.

Haryana due to the rise of commercial crops following green revolution. There was an expansion of area under cultivation, cropping intensity rose with an increase in irrigated area, use of high yield variety (HYV) seeds and fertilizers and mechanization. All of this contributed to increased employment and agricultural growth. Since NEP in 1991 there is pressure on employment generation. Agriculture is gripped in crisis and growth of agricultural employment by usual status, for instance, fell from an annual rate of 2.08 percent in the period 1987–88 to 1993–94, to only 0.8 per cent over 1993–94 to 1999–2000. In terms of daily status, the fall was even greater, from 2.47 percent to 0.14 percent per year (Ghosh, 2003). Of late, as we noted above, there is a decline in the number of workers in agriculture. The employment problem, which was earlier related to underemployment due to the nature of agricultural work, has now turned into no-employment for many. In addition to decline in employment, the problems of underemployment and low wages with no other employment benefits continue to haunt agricultural labour force. Plus, there are no other alternate opportunities.

It appears that during 2011–12 to 2017–18 many agricultural labourers lost their jobs and joined the pool of unemployed. Data suggests that those workers educated up to primary level, majority of whom belong to ST/SC and work as agricultural labour lost jobs heavily: by 11.86 million, almost four times more compared to 2011–12 (PLFS, 2019). This is reflected in three indicators. One, we see this in the sharp decline of WPR for ST/SC females from 36.2 to 27 percent and 26.2 to 17.4 percent respectively. Since majority of women work in agriculture a decline in WPR points towards job losses. Second, this is also reflected from the major decline in male casual labour in rural areas from 35.5 to 28.2 percent and moderate decline in female casual labour. Finally, increase in self-employment in agriculture indicates that in absence of wage employment many agricultural workers perhaps turned tenants.

2.3.1 Distressing overall unemployment situation:

We see the emerging acute problem of unemployment in Table 5. As per NSSO data, researchers find that the new employment tumbled from 71 in 1983 to 1993–4 to 24 million from 1993–94 to 1999–2000 and any new employment was casual. Between 1999–2000 and 2004–5, overall employment increased by 59.4 million, out of which 17.4 million were self-employed rural females among whom a considerable number was unpaid (Thomas, 2015). This increase in the face of insignificant agricultural growth appears distress-driven (Abraham, 2009; Thomas, 2012). During 2004–5 and 2011–12 the increase was only 14.7 million. NSSO data also suggest that between 2004–05 and 2011–12 against a potential of 14.7 additional yearly jobs in the non-agricultural work, merely 6.5 million were available (Thomas and Jayesh, 2016).

Between 2011–12 and 2017–18, for the first time since 1951, employment declined in absolute numbers by 9.1 million (Table 2). Overall unemployment rate (based on CWS) has increased to an all-time high of 8.8, almost three times more compared to the last NSSO report of 2011–12. The open unemployment rate, as noted above, of the overall population (based on UPSS) also increased from 2.2 percent to 6.1 percent; unemployed persons increased from mere 10.6 to

Table 5: Unemployment Rate (in percent) Usual Status (ps+ss) NSS and PLFS (2017–18) all-India

among the youth (15 to 29 years)					Among 15+ Age group			
Category	2004-2005	2009-2010	2011-2012	PLFS 2017-18	2004-2005	2009-2010	2011-2012	PLFS 2017-18
in 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
rural male	3.9	4.7	5.0	17.4	1.6	1.6	1.7	5.7
rural female	4.2	4.6	4.8	13.6	1.8	1.6	1.6	3.8
urban male	8.8	7.5	8.1	18.7	3.7	2.8	3.0	6.9
urban female	14.9	14.3	13.1	27.2	6.9	5.7	5.3	10.8
PLFS (2019, Statement 33: 85					Ibid, Statement 32 : 84			

30.1 million; unemployment among young (based on CWS) increased from 6.8 to 21.4 percent. The number of open unemployed youth (15–29 years) jumped from 9 to 25 million. And this unemployment is spread across region and gender (Table 5) and over all types of education groups, though more severe for those with higher education, including for those with a technical degree (See Figure 3).

The gravity of the unemployment situation can be gauged from the comparison of 2017–18 data with the data of 2011–12. With respect to the unemployment situation among the 15–29 year age group in the five most developed states, the increase in unemployment rate was highest in Gujarat by more than 10 times from 1.3 to 13.3 percent (from one lakh to ten lakhs in absolute numbers); similarly the figures for other states are: in Punjab there was a decline from 5.8 to 21.6 percent (two to seven lakhs); from 8.1 to 20.7 percent (three to eight lakhs) in Haryana; 3.8 to 15 percent in Maharashtra (6 to 19 lakhs) and from 7.8 to 25.6 percent in Tamil Nadu. In Gujarat, too, unemployment rose (7 to 22 lakhs). In all, 66 lakh young workers looking for jobs were unable to get one (for all the states refer to Table A 4 in Appendix). More worrying is the fact that in the same age group the number of students in these five states was 20.9 million, more than 2 crores. If the situation of unemployment continues to be the same, in next few years there are going to be serious problems.

The condition of growing employment crisis with increasing education since 1990s has seen entry, especially between 2004–5 and 2011–12, as we noted in Section 2.1.4 above, of millions of educated in the agriculture employed as both cultivators and agricultural wage labour. This appears not out of choice but due to overall employment crisis and these workers are likely to exit given the first opportunity. Such entry is perhaps not without social cost for other older workers as their entry has simultaneously also led to exit (forced?) of women from the labour force and of less educated men from agriculture to harder and more difficult and arduous work in construction (Usami and Rawal, 2018). As they state:

> With declining labour absorption in agriculture, rural women workers were left high and dry, and were forced to withdraw from the labour force. On the other hand, new young male workers, jostling for employment opportunities, entered the agricultural labour force. As young and more educated rural male workers entered agriculture, their older brethren, with lower levels of education, were pushed into the construction sector. Over this period, construction emerged as the employer of last resort, requiring most arduous labour and employing workers with lowest levels of education (ibid.)

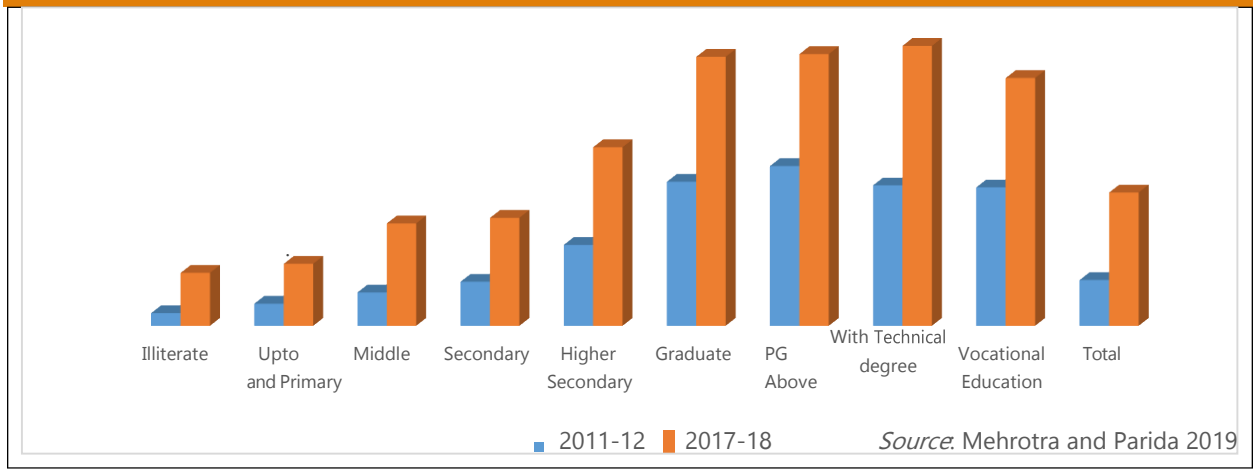
The condition of distress employment is further reflected in rising WPR and LFPR in the 60 plus age group. In 1993–94 it was 68.4 percent for men which declined to 62.2 in 1999–2000 which again rose to 63.1 in 2004–05. Among women, it increased from 174 to 199 in the same period (Abraham, 2009).

With continuation of present policies, this problem is going to get further accentuated in the face of the fact that in the near future, many more educated young facing unemployment are going to get into agriculture on the one hand and mechanization-related surplus labour in agriculture on the other. *An employment policy is the need of the hour.*

2.3.2 Growing rate of underemployment:

In addition to the employment problem, there is an increasing problem of underemployment. Because of its peculiar nature, employment in agriculture is largely irregular. The problem is becoming acute because of the impact of agriculture and other policies. The Rural Labour Enquiry data suggests that during 1993–94 and 2004–05 the *average availability of employment in rural areas declined for both males and females*, from 235 to 213 in the case of males and 203 to 176 for females. The fall has been much sharper in the case of female employees, who are largely employed in agriculture as casual wage labourers. Various field studies, as reported by Dhar and Kaur (2013), between 2003 and 2010 however have reported much lower days of employment availability: (a) in Kerala, women got employment only for 51–110 days and men for 69–145 days; (b) in 2003 in Gujarat, employment availability was recorded for 90–112 days; (c) in Haryana a two-village study recorded employment in 2003–04 to the extent of 44–46 days for women and 102–103 days for men; (d) in Maharashtra in 2006–07 reported employment was for 111 days; (e) a study of nine villages covering different agro-eco zones across the four states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra and Maharashtra, during 2005–2010, finds employment in the range of 83–141 for men and 65–120 for women. Most of the workers do not get employment even for three months and no one for more than six months. The village level field studies clearly indicate *a*

Figure 4: Youth Unemployment, 15–25 Years



Source: Mehrotra and Parida 2019

situation of growing underemployment in rural areas as whole. Overall, the situation of underemployment is quite serious and women are worst hit.

The problem of underemployment is also reflected in the overall economy in data related to number of hours worked in a week (Table 6). The latest PLFS for 2017–18 suggest that in the reference week (a) only 57.8 percent were employed for full week in rural areas; (b) problem of underemployment is much greater among women; (c) a good number of workers work for long hours without a holiday; (d) in urban areas more than one-third of men work for long hours for more than 60 hours a week, some work for 12 hours a day and seven days a week. They thus work under severe conditions of work exploitation. The related data further suggest that the problem of underemployment is highest amongst self-employed and also among the regular wagers.–"In rural areas, during July–September 2017, nearly 11.9 percent of the male self-employed persons in the current weekly status and 11.6 percent of the female self-employed persons reported that they were available for additional work during the reference week" (PLFS, 2019: 79).

The recent data, after three decades of NEP, paints a grim picture with respect to employment availability in agriculture as well as overall and the future prospects appear gloomy. *The root of the problem appears to be the present market-led development (neoliberal) process based on productivity and profits* which is increasingly leaving the labour on the mercy of employers and the state is gradually withdrawing the required crucial policies and other support including ensuring entitlements to labour inconformity with the COI provisions. *The latest Economic Survey released on 31ˢ January, 2020 is rather worrisome as it openly and aggressively commits to push the agenda of ne-*

Table: 6: Percentage Distribution of Workers in CWS by Number of Hours Actually Worked in a Week During the July-Sept 2017 quarter, 2017-18 (PLFS)-all-India

category of worker	0 to 12 hr	12 to 24hr	24 to 36hrs	36 to 48hrs	48 to 60hrs	60-72 hrs	72 -84 hrs	84+hrs	All
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
rural male	1.1	4.0	11.1	20.3	49.2	12.7	1.6	0.0	100
rural fem	3.7	11.5	22.9	22.7	32.9	5.7	0.5	0.0	100
rural person	1.7	5.7	13.7	20.8	45.6	11.1	1.4	0.0	100
urban male	0.5	1.6	4.0	9.5	49.8	25.4	8.5	0.5	100
urban female	2.2	8.0	13.8	18.1	44.7	10.8	2.3	0.2	100
urban person	0.9	2.9	5.9	11.2	48.8	22.6	7.3	0.4	100

Source: PLFS (2019, Statement 27: 78)

oliberal market economy. The government policies of 'fend-for-yourself' for the labour on the one hand and 'out-of-way help and support' to corporates on the other hand, all in the name of development, is proving disadvantageous for a majority of the labouring people. The widely commented measure of recent booster dose in tax concessions to corporates to revive the flagging economy rather than using revenue foregone for boosting demand is one recent live testimony to this. The Atal Pension Yojana, based one's own contribution with return of less than the private insurance schemes for rich is the 'fend-for-yourself' stance for the poor. Obviously, despite the incentives and push there are hardly any takers of this scheme. Specifically in the context of agriculture, state policies failed to address employment issues raised from time to time by concerned stakeholders which has a bearing on the ALF like dispossession of land, continuous decline in public investment in minor and major irrigation projects, fragmentation and declining size of land, lack of access to institutional credit, proper implementation of public employment programmes, distress-driven practice of leaving the land fallow, lack of education and skills, mechanization in agriculture that is affecting labour absorption in agriculture adversely. A more detailed discussion about the crucial role of policies is attempted in the fourth section.

Table 7: Suicides of Agricultural Workers-2014-2018

Year	Farmers	Agricultural Labour	Total
2014	5650	6710	12360
2015	8007	4595	12602
2016	6351	5019	11370
2107	5955	4700	10655
2018	5763(306)	4586(515)	10349
Total	**31726**	**25610**	**57336**

Source: Compiled from reports Alha and Akhil (2018), Down to Earth (2020); for 2018 from economictimes.com, accessed on 9 Jan 2020

2.3.3 Distress conditions reflected in large number of suicides of agricultural labour:

Farmer suicides every year in thousands has been a matter of heated debates and discussions for the last several years in multiple fora, but the fact that farmer suicide data includes a large number of agriculture labourers is overlooked. In a written reply in Rajya Sabha, the state minister for agriculture, Mr. Harish Rawat, informed that as per official records 2,90,470 farmers committed suicide during 1995–2011. Earlier, farmer suicide data included both farmers and agricultural labourers but since 2014, segregated data is available. The latest data for 2017 and 2018 has been released on 2nd and 9th January, 2020. Table 7 shows that in five years – 57,336 agricultural workers killed themselves – out of which 25,610 were agricultural labourers. It is an underestimation, done for political reasons. The ratio between cultivators and agricultural labour is 100: 81. In the year 2014, the number of agricultural labourers was more than the farmers. Since more than 82 percent of the farmers are small and marginal farmers (NHRC, 2019) they also supplement their income through wage labour, including in agriculture. In fact, in case of marginal farmers only 40 percent of income comes from cultivation (Basole and Basu, 2011a: 50). But relief is provided to only farmers and not to agricultural labourers despite MSSC recommendation to treat them as landless farmers. Most of the suicides are reported from the six states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

There are multiple reasons for suicides, but the root cause lies in negative income and high debts. The latest report of NHRC (2019) based on a 2017–18 primary survey of 200 families affected by farm suicides across four worst affected states –Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana – finds disturbing facts: Average income of farm suicide families was just Rs. 3,523 per month in 2016–17, which is below Rs. 4,561, as estimated by NSSO. 92% of farm suicide families were not enrolled under the centre's flagship crop insurance scheme; faced on average more than three economic shocks during a three-year period preceding the survey in death of an earning member, output price fluctuations, crop damage due to drought/floods/pest attacks. Most were heavily indebted with informal loans – Rs. 4.28 lakhs in Karnataka to Rs. 3 lakhs in Telangana, taken to meet agricultural costs (32 percent), consumption needs (18 percent), social and religious purposes (15 percent), and house construction and marriage (13 percent), while half were harassed for repayments. 70% were in the productive age group of 20–50 years and 59 percent were illiterate and most occurred immediately after the harvest season. Coping with death becomes a major issue for the family. For survival, they

resort to further borrowing, reduced consumption of food items like milk and eggs, sale assets and even become bonded to pay loans. For instance, in Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh the creditors in exchange for 4 to 5 bags of wheat or rice take the children perforce for work. The main reason of suicides in prosperous Punjab is high indebtedness. "The Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ugrahan), claims that 1,280 farmers/farm labourers have committed suicide in state in the period April 1, 2017 to August 31, 2019 and ... around 99 percent of these farmers belonged to Malwa region and had loan ranging between Rs 2 lakh to Rs 25 lakh" (Chaba, 2019).

The serious issue of concern in relation to agricultural labourers here is that the focus is only on farmers who have land resource, but resource poor wage labourer remains invisible for any policy relief. In addition to debt relief that runs into lakhs of crores, the PM-KISAN scheme provides about 120 million farmers a small sum of rupees 6,000 every year. There are state schemes also: The Rythu Bandhu of Telangana offers Rs 10,000 per acre a year to all farmers (excluding tenants), Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) of Odisha offers direct cash transfer of Rs 25,000 for a farm family over five seasons to small and marginal farmers. There are schemes in other states like Jharkhand. *These must be mandatorily extended to agricultural labour.*

2.3.4 Other employment aspects:

(i) The problems of education and skill: Historically, an agriculture labourer belonged to a marginalized social group, particularly SC and ST and to some extent OBC. These groups of manual workers were deprived of any education. "Low access to education among socially disadvantaged groups with ST and SC at the bottom lead to low quality of employment (casual as opposed to regular) resulting in low wages and wage incomes" (Kannan, 2018). Overall, technical education is low in India. As per the latest PLFS, among the persons of age 15 years and above, 97.3 percent had no technical education: 98.5 percent were in rural areas and 94.3 percent in urban areas. Similar is the situation of the formal vocational training, as an average of only two percent received it: 1.2 per cent in rural areas and 3.7 per cent in urban areas (PLFS, 2019: 86). Interestingly, in rural areas, among the persons who received formal vocational/ technical training, nearly 56 percent were employed, 13.8 percent were unemployed and 30.2 per cent were not in the labour force. Similar is the case in urban areas. No separate data is available but given the social position of agricultural labourers, one can safely conclude that they stand completely deprived of any skill and training. Given the pay-off of education, education is now increasing but not to make a qualitative difference in their lives. Low education and lack of skills have implications for earning and overall levels of living.

(ii) Rural to rural migration:[17] A perceptible change in the nature of employment is rural to rural migration from poor un-developed to developed regions/areas which perhaps started with agricultural development in Punjab and Haryana in 1960s and has since increased in several parts of the country, in different ways for different crops. Scholars and concerned social activists have identified several streams of migration involving millions of workers, some with a heavy social cost. For employers, the dominant trend now is to hire migrant labour who are poor, socio-educationally backward and in need of employment. Such migration may be inter-state, inter-district, or intra-blocks within the districts or nearby villages. A study in Andhra Pradesh based on the Census of the village shows the typical simple circular migration cycle: (a) 57 percent households reported migration out which 46 percent was to rural areas the rest to urban areas; (b) rural to rural migration was largely to two different districts, some migrate to nearby areas; (c) migration is after the agricultural season in villages and is for about six months during October/November to March/April next year; (d) resource poor ST and SC migrate for survival; (e) migration is with family and in groups for the purpose of first, cotton picking, followed by chilli picking; (f) payment is in piece-rates, Rs two to 2.5 per kg and in a day one earns about 50 rupees (in 2006); (g) employer provides shed for living and work is from 6am to 6pm with one hour rest; (h) migration is taking place since last more than 15 years – 80 percent reported going for last four and more years. They have developed relationships with employers and the cycle repeats year after year (Korra, 2011). More details are provided in the next section.

(iii) Occupational hazards: There is high mortality due to accidents in agriculture. Accident rate is 334 per year per lakh workers and the fatality rate is 18.3/lakh/year. It is estimated that every year 7.6 lakh accidents take place. Out of this, 30.5, 34.2 and 35.2 percent accidents are due to farm machinery, farm tools and other reasons (snake bites, fall in well/pond, heat strokes, etc.) respectively. Annual estimated loss of lives is Rs 45,000, about 120 deaths each day

17. Migration is as old as human history. Contemporary migration in India is for several reasons, most important reason for women being marriage. Economic reason includes better opportunities which is long-term for well-off and short term for survival for the poor. We are concerned only with the migration of resource-poor in rural areas.

and an estimated monitory loss is Rs 5,400 crores every year or Rs 15 crores a day. There is no law for compensation but states have schemes and it is estimated that every year about rupees 100 crores are given in compensation. In addition to this, there are other health hazards like musculoskeletal disorders due to overwork, chemical exposure due to pesticides spray, problems due to excessive vibrations, noise exposure, respiratory problems, extreme weather conditions and dust. Protective wears are not provided and their use is negligible. For instance, the tractor drivers face hearing loss problem due to non-use of ear plugs (Gite, 2009). The growing mechanization is only going to add to these fatalities. *The issue of concern is that there is no system in place to monitor the accidents and therefore, most do not get reported.*

(iv) Quality of employment: One would assume that employment ensures dignified decent lives for the members of the household concerned. The present employment quality concerns among agricultural labourers reflect a lack of job security; low wages, lack of any type of social security, be it in case of sickness, accident, pregnancy, old-age, unemployment/loss of employment; lack of leaves, etc. Policies are either inadequate or not implemented. The other conditions like long working hours, work place facilities, payment of wages, etc. vary as per the nature and location and terms of employment and profile of employer, middleman and workers compulsions and these profiles are far from desirable. Overall, the conditions of work are precarious to the extent that socially, agricultural work is not desirable. NSSO data of 2003 shows that more than two-fifths wanted to leave agriculture.

After NEP, the quality of employment has further deteriorated even in highly organized sectors due to contractual work. For instance, PLFS, 2019 shows that the proportion of regular wagers/salary earners has increased from around 18 to 22 percent (for details in rural areas refer to Section 2.9) but the percentage of jobs without written contract has also increased from around 58–9 percent in 2004–05 to 65 percent in 2011–12 and to 72 percent in 2017–18. Further during 2011–12 to 2017–18 the ratio of jobs without paid leaves increased from 46 to over 54 percent and those who enjoyed social security declined from 54.4 to 49.6 percent. Most importantly, they worked on an average of 58 hours a week, which means that they worked for more than eight hours for each of the seven days in a week. *Increasing job insecurity and informalization indicate deteriorating overall employment condition post-NEP, even for regular wagers/salaried workers.*

(v) Job security versus bondage: Hobson's choice for marginalized workers: The precarious condition of the job situation for the unskilled poor menial workers, especially of those hailing from the most backward tribal and other communities, have become a major source of 'tied' labour arrangements leading to 'bondage'. Such arrangements are usually task specific as in the case of sugarcane harvesting but can involve multi-tasking like in the case of Bhagiya in Gujarat. Bondage is preferred to job security, considered essential for survival, as discussed in the next section. It should be underlined here that the all India average indicates that, typically, bonded labourers belong to SC (61.5 percent) and ST (25.1 percent), and are male (97.5 percent), married (72 percent), illiterate (80 to 91 percent). Most of bonded labour households are landless (63 percent), mostly involved in agricultural work (80 percent) (*Government* of *India*, 1991 as quoted in Marius-Gnanou, 2010). *In the 21st Century, the bondage is more and more confined to the most backward groups of ST and SC, especially the primitive tribes like Sahariyas or Bhils.*

(vi) Feminization of agriculture does not add to agency: Male migration turn women as earners either largely because they have to manage the small landholding or earn extra as wage labour (Pachuri, 2018). In addition to male migration, suicides also push women in agricultural work. Since such forced work on women adds to the already heavy work burden undermining their well-being, it has been therefore termed as the 'feminization of agrarian distress' (Pattnaik, 2017). Garikipati (2007) finds that:

> [D]espite contributing heavily to family provisioning women own very little family land and other assets. Moreover, they have a negligible influence on household decisions which results in a weak claim over resources and incomes. Furthermore, even the incomes they earn are impinged upon in various ways. Overall, the 'gender-based resource divide' impinges on women's status severely. Our empirical investigation also suggests that owning assets significantly improves women's relative domestic power and her ability to bargain for better working conditions (ibid.)

Therefore, the implementation of NPFF (2007) and MSSC recommendations in this regard must be ensured without delay.

2.4 Level, form and payment of wages in agriculture:

The Constitution of India envisages a just and humane society and for realization of this on ground incorporated Part IV entitled 'Directive Principles of State Policy'. Article 43 in the Chapter states:

> The state shall endeavour to secure by suitable legislation or economic organization or in any other way *to all workers*, *agricultural*, industrial or otherwise, work, a *living wage conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities*(emphasis added).

2.4.1 Level of wages:

Immediately after independence in 1948, GoI legislated The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, one of the first countries to do so after the world after World War II. Overall compensation fixation followed four routes: (i) through historical and socioeconomic conditions primarily in rural areas by area, sex, age and work type as in agriculture and for other menial workers; (ii) by negotiations in economic enterprises for workers in the organized sector; (iii) through wage boards; (iv) committees and pay commissions for government employees and followed colonial legacy.[18] In minimum wage law work was divided into two – scheduled and non-scheduled. Wage laws are application to those who receive wages up to certain amount, say, Rs 15,000 per month and nature of work. Those doing supervisory and managerial work are not covered. Payment could be in cash or kind or both and was regulated by another law-payment of wages act. Overall, a highly differentiated and varied 'dual' wage system has developed in India. The lowest wages were fixed in agriculture as historically agricultural labour, hailing from the lowest rung of caste-based hierarchical exploitative and oppressive social system, was attached with no/low wage and causal labour was relatively small with low wage. *The mandate of Article 43 remains on paper till date for poor manual labourers including in agriculture despite adopted principle and recommendation of recent GoI (Satapaty)committee (See Part IV).*

For about two decades post-independence wages remained low and stagnant and then especially in 1980s rose consistently with development in agriculture through the increase in net area and cropping intensity, proliferation of non-agricultural employment and introduction of state welfare schemes, political freedom, contestations, etc. With the introduction of NEP in 1991 the real wages showed no change, in fact, there was even a small decline till about 2006 (Jha, 2015) and then increase for a brief period. For details of wage growth from 1987–88 to 1999–2000 and wage rates in 2000s, refer to Appendix Tables 5 and 6.

2.4.2 Increase in wages beginning 2006–07:

Trends of real wage rates of agricultural labour in rural India during the last two decades from 1998–99 to 2014–15 presents two distinct periods one of stagnation and second of rapid growth (Table 8). In the initial period of 9 years from 1998–99 to 2006–7, wages report no-growth. In real terms the average wages in India during this period ranged between Rs 112 to 119 for ploughing, Rs 94 to 98 for sowing/transplanting/weeding (STW), and Rs 90 to Rs 96 for harvesting/threshing/winnowing (HTW).

The second period from 2007–8 till 2014–15 saw a sharp rise of about seven percent per annum. The real wage rate for ploughing rose from Rs 116.1 in 2007–8 to Rs 176.6 in 2014–15. Wage rates for males for STW rose from Rs 94.5 to Rs 153.4, and for HTW from Rs 93.1 to Rs 156.3. Finally, during 2014–15 to 2017–18 wages saw deceleration as the rise was nominal at 1.5 percent for ploughing in case of males and 1.5 percent for females for harvesting and 2 percent for females in case of STW. In real terms, wages increased by about 8 to 10 rupees a day in three years.

Table:8: Annual Growth of Real Wage Rates for Agricultural Operations from 1998-99 to 2014-15

Period 1	Ploughing-Male 2	STW-Male 3	STW-Fem 4	HTW-Male 5	HTW-Fem 6
1998-99 to 2006-07	(-)0.6 (112-119)	(-)0.1 (94-98)	(-)1.1	(-)0.4 (90-96)	(-)0.6
2006-07 to 2014-15	6.4 (116-176)	6.5 (94-153)	7.6	7.3 (93-156)	7.9

Note: In brackets are wages in rupees from first to last year of the concerned period
Tabulated from the data given in Das and Arindam (2017)

18. For a detailed and comprehensive discussion on different aspects of wages in India one must read Papola and Kannan (2017), a report published by ILO (2018) and for inequality in wages: Kannan (2018).

The sharp rise in growth of agricultural wages in general can be related to several factors. Jose (2016, as quoted in ILO, 2018) broadly identifies three: (i) demographic transition leading to drop in fertility rates; (ii) rise in literacy rates and greater migratory movement of people; and, (iii) impact of MNREGA[19] and overall effect of social spending that is the size of public expenditure on basic needs – education, healthcare, sanitation, shelter and civic amenities in rural areas. In addition, Roa (2016) relates increase in wages to general and agricultural growth rates and social security measures like pensions, public distribution system (ibid., 2016). During the tenth plan (2007–11) the country clocked in highest growth rate with good agricultural growth rate of 3.4 percent (Table 9). *What is important to note here is that this growth was export-led and thus dependent on global economic conditions (see last three rows of Table 9).* 10 percent of our exports are of agricultural commodities; thus, it has implications for the agricultural labour as we witness in the next section (Section 2.4.3). The other contributory factor could be increase in wage rates of workers in the manufacturing industry.

Contribution of MGNREGA in wage rise has been noted by several studies/reports due to its wage being more than the social wage in agriculture, creating leverage for bargaining for better wages (Chand and Srivastava, 2014; FICCI, 2015; Jha 2015). One study observes, "[T]he real wages for farm and nonfarm works exhibited upward trend especially after implementation of MGNREGA in both the states. The average daily wage rate of male farm workers has grown sharply after MGNREGA[19] in both the states compared to almost negative growth rate before MGNREGA. Besides farm wage, non-farm wage of male labour has also increased at a higher rate compared to growth of farm wage. Both the farm and non-farm wage has increased by almost 3 times during the period of MGNREGA implementation" (Nagraj et al., 2016). Another study observes that MNREGA has made a substantial impact on rural employment and rural wages as the number of casual workers engaged in public works (as per NSSO current weekly status data) registered an increase of 5.8 million between 2004–5 and 2009–10. However, there are also studies that did not find any "systematic evidence of impact on wages, and therefore no evidence that public works employment in MGNREGA crowded out casual labour in agriculture" (Varshney et al., 2018). Also, the NSSO data reports a sharp rise in non-agricultural employment between 2004–05 and 2011–12 by more than 20 million in construction industry in rural India (Thomas, 2012). In a similar vein, another research finding states, "Through econometric analysis data set of 16 major states (by pooling) for the period 1990–1991 through 2011–2012, it concludes that the growth 'pull' factors seem to have influenced more the rise in farm wages since 1990–1991 than the 'push' factor of MGNREGA" (Gulati, Ashok et al., 2013). The Census data however contradicts this, as mentioned above. *In conclusion, rise in wages seems was caused due to multiple reasons.*

It would be pertinent to note here that studies suggest that higher wages are good for the economy as they lead to growth including in agriculture as the farmers are able to raise their profits and increase productivity using different means (Rao, 2016). Further, research studies

Table 9: Growth Rate of GDP and Major Sectors in India 1951 to 2012-13

	GDP	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Services
First Plan (1951-55)	3.9	3.2	5.8	5.2
Second Plan (1956-60)	4.1	3.3	6.3	4.9
Third Plan (1961-65)	3.5	-0.3	6.6	5.4
Annual Plans (1966-68)	3.7	4.4	2.2	4.3
Fourth Plan (1969-73)	3.2	2.8	4.9	3.2
Fifth Plan (1974-78)	5.0	3.6	6.5	5.4
Sixth Plan (1980-84)	5.5	6.3	5.2	5.5
Seventh Plan (1985-89)	5.7	3.1	6.3	7.2
Eighth Plan (1992-96)	6.5	4.9	9.5	6.8
Ninth Plan (1997-01)	5.7	2.5	3.6	8.0
Tenth Plan (2002-06)	7.6	2.5	9.0	9.2
Eleventh Plan (2007-11)	8.0	3.8	7.7	9.9
2012-13	4.5	1.7	1.1	6.8
	CF	**DS**	**-**	**Exp**
Tenth Plan (2002-06)	28.1	31.0	-	17.9
Eleventh Plan (2007-11)	33.7	33.5	-	22.6

Source: Agarwal and Sunanda (2015: 10).
Notes: CF: Gross Capital Formation and DS: Domestic Saving Rate; Exp stands for exports.

(As quoted in GoI, 2019, :209) says that it may spurt employment. For Instance, Menon and Rogers (2017) report a positive effect of minimum wages on employment levels for both men and women. They find that a 10 percent rise in minimum wages raised the employment level by 6.34 percentage points in rural areas. However, what we find are two facts: *the growth of GDP in agriculture has come down, wage is at its lowest and the rise has not improved incomes. The agricultural crisis continues in 2018, as over*

19. It is important to note here that MGNREGA wage is not guided by the minimum wage law but is fixed by the central government as per the provisions in the law and is generally less than the minimum wage. It did act in ensuring a floor wage and in rise in wages.

10,000 farmers committed suicide, mostly in AGL.

The rise in wages is not leading to rise in incomes or in the standard of living for agricultural labour because of two reasons: reduced number of days of employment and low wages. Despite rise, wage rates are reported to be below the statutory minimum wages (Dhar and Kaur, 2013; Kannan, 2018). The ICRISAT study shows that: "while farm wages have increased substantially, the employment days have reduced. As a result, despite the higher wages, poverty among labour households has increased. For rapid poverty reduction further increase in wages is essential as well as creation of more employment days for agricultural labourers" (*Down to Earth*, 2016). Also, agricultural labour continue to be the lowest paid. The disparity between earnings of non-farm workers and agricultural labourers though having declined a bit recently, the ratio is still skewed, at 5.06 in 2011–12 (NHRC 2019).

2.4.3 Real wages vary a great deal across regions:

There are variations in the wages across the states (see Table A 6 in Appendix). On the one hand, some of the states like Bihar, Manipur, Meghalaya, Odisha, Tripura, and West Bengal, wages have seen a rising trend in the first sub-period also along with increase in non-agricultural wage rates. These were low-wage regions which thus reached at par with the high-wage regions in this sub-period.

On the other hand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan recorded a negative growth in the period 2014–15 to 2017–18. The wage rates for both male and female unskilled workers declined in Madhya Pradesh. In the major state of Uttar Pradesh, wages remained stagnant. In Assam, wages grew for males but remained the same for women. Gujarat presented a different picture wherein wage rates for ploughing grew and for the remaining occupations and non-agricultural tasks, they declined.

Kerala is a special case, as it has the highest wage rates among all states – almost two to three times more compared to other states. This is one state where the agricultural labour union was strong and also there is a special protective law for agricultural labour since the Kerala Agricultural Workers Act in 1974. In 2017–18, for example, wage rates at current prices for sowing/transplanting/weeding occupations were Rs 718 and Rs 509 for men and women, respectively. By comparison, the wage rates for the same agricultural operations in the same year were Rs 208 and Rs 190 in Madhya Pradesh, Rs 227 and Rs 220 in Gujarat, Rs 239 and Rs 213 in Uttar Pradesh, Rs 249 and Rs 176 in Maharashtra, and Rs 226 and Rs 184 in Odisha. Even in the neighbouring southern state of Tamil Nadu, wage rates were half those of Kerala, at Rs 370 and Rs 237. The all-India average daily wage rates in the same year and for the same operations were Rs 275 and Rs 228. *Compared to the proposed wage of Rs 375 by the GoI-appointed committee, we find that except for Kerala, all states have considerably lower wages.*

Jose (2013) while analyzing wages between 1999–2000 and 2009–10 notes: (a) considerable variation in wages of different states among both male and female workers (Table A:6); (b) no specific trend in movement of wages except that low-wage states have done better; (c) remote possibility of reduction in regional wage disparity; (d) underlines the low-wage pockets among states along with some uniformity in their occurrence across gender groups; (e) the *low-wage states that are 'better integrated to the global economy, have settled for a low-wage growth trajectory further to the onset of recession in the global economy', suggesting wages in states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat are linked with the global economy, as their production is linked with global value chains*, and; (f) standard deviation of men's wage rates among 15 major states has increased from 17.7 in 1999–2000 to 39.2 in 2009–10 and that of women's wage rates from 10.2 to 17.7 during the same period.

2.4.4 Male-female wage disparities:

These have persisted all through, at around four-fifths in favour of men for all agricultural occupations at all-India level. For the latest available data for 2017–18, the gap is relatively higher in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu and relatively low in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Manipur, and West Bengal. However, there is variation in the male–female wage gap across states.

2.4.5 Form and payment of wages determine labour conditions:

The wage laws say that wages should be based on time and must be paid as per wage period which cannot be more than a month and also specifies about the deductions. All these provisions are applicable to agricultural workers. Wages are largely paid in cash but there are instances wherein they are paid as share in crop production. The conditions attached to payment system determine the extent of 'freedom' irrespective of the mode of payment. But in several areas social wage systems have developed in India which violate the provisions of laws, lead-

ing to short-term bondage. The essence of the system, as discussed in Part III, lies in wage-payment system linked to task through oral contracts and piece rate wages with job security.

2.5 Mechanization and crop shift in Indian agriculture to reduce labour use is rapidly growing:

Under the Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) GoI is rapidly increasing mechanization in agriculture and "by 2022, the size of the farm equipment market is expected to reach 9 Lakh Crore. Major components of SMAM are promotion of agricultural mechanization through training, testing and demonstration; dissemination of Post-Harvest Technology and Management (PHTM); establishment of Farm Machinery and Equipment banks for custom hiring; and financial assistance for promotion of mechanized operations" (NABARD, 2018). One explicit reason for promoting 'labour-substituting farm/agriculture machinery' is rising farm wages. According to the *Economic Survey 2017–18* farmers are adapting to farm mechanization at a faster rate. Sizeable funds have been made available for this. In a recently FICCI-organized EIMA AGRIMACH 2019 event, the agriculture state minister reiterated the government's commitment to promote farm machinery in the coming years and extend credit support to facilitate access. A report by FICCI–PwC estimates that the farm equipment market in India will grow by additional Rs 35,000 crores by 2025 and reach Rs 1.77 lakh crore (US $25 billion). Many Indian companies are investing in research and aggressively pursuing manufacturing of farm equipments and foreign companies are entering into this domain. For instance, the Italian trade commissioner stated that *Italian companies will invest more in agriculture machinery and develop newer customised technologies* and support the Indian agricultural sector. The aim is to reduce 20 percent labour cost and increase use of mechanized power from current (2016–17) level of about 2.02kw/ha to 4kw/ha by 2030, a level at par with that of the US. In 2005, National Agricultural and Rural Development Bank (NABARD) started a Farmers' Club Programme at village-level to enhance small and marginal farmers' incomes "*through technology*, good agricultural practices, proper use of credit and marketing skills". They provide financial help for three years. Rural branches of banks and Krishi Vigyan Kendras help in setting up such clubs. Every club elects two persons for two years to manage and coordinate work, arrange for technical advice, maintain accounts and liaison with banks. *The Farmers Clubs are playing an important role in bringing in mechanization* ***to tide over the labour shortage****. The individual farmers and corporates in the agricultural equipment business have grabbed this opportunity to supply machines suitable for Indian farmers.*

To tide over the *so-called labour shortage* research institutions are also promoting crops that need less labour. This is against the recommendation of MSSC who recommended promotion of labour-intensive crops in view of the employment situation (MSSC, RDF Oct 2006). The mechanization is being done despite 88.47 percent holding being small and marginal (NSSO 70th Round, 2013), high level of manpower availability and 3.59 percent average growth in agriculture and without any impact-assessment. It is state supported and corporate-driven under NEP rather than being a farmers' response to rise in wages and consequent increase in cost of production. *The immediate impact of such measures is decline in labour demand and consequent pressure on wages. It appears that big farmers and corporates through contract farming will reap the benefits at the cost of the AGL.*

2.5.1 Spread of mechanization:

With government–corporate push, mechanization in agriculture including sectors like dairy, fisheries, etc. is widening and deepening (for details refer to NABARD, 2018). The use of tractor for ploughing is almost universal now. Estimated use of combine harvester and thresher for major crops of wheat and paddy has reached about two-thirds of total crop and is now being promoted for other crops. High-cost (Rs 1.2 crore) imported combine harvesters were introduced at the turn of the century in Maharashtra for sugarcane harvesting, each replacing 300–400 workers (Bunsha, 2002). Rice transplanters are now being used. Even drones are being used for spraying pesticides.

Given the high cost of machinery and the majority of farmers being resource poor, the rental on machinery is growing. Hiring out machines is now a growing business. For instance, a farmer from Tentuliapada village in Balasore district in Odisha reports *he supplies equipment to 200 small farmers.* He owns two tractors, one power tiller, one transplanter, three combined harvesters, one earth remover and two power spray machines and supplies these equipments on rent. Overall, the proportion of hired machinery in the total cost of major crops is increasing, suggesting increased use of rented machinery. For instance, between 1996–7 and 2010–11 in major states, human labour input declined by more than 21 percent and cost of

owned and hired machinery increased by more than 300 percent (For more details, refer to Mohapatra, 2016).

State Governments are promoting group farming and providing financial support to procure and use machinery. Orissa Economic Survey for 2014–15 report 11,648 such clubs. Several thousand farmers have started using machines, bought with the state support. The state allocated Rs 240 crores for providing subsidies to farmers for purchase of machines, in addition to Rs 60 crores provided by the central government. The AP government in 2008–09 started providing 50 percent subsidy on farm machines through the Intensified Farm Mechanization Project under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. The state government is also encouraging farmers to form Rythu Clubs to collectively buy and use machines. Farmers in Korrapudu village of Kadapa district set-up Rythu Club and with the support of the government bought a rice transplanter for Rs 10.20 lakh.

2.5.2 Impact on labour absorption and labour cost:

Mechanization increases productivity and growth, but *it also affects adversely the demand for labour significantly*. Big farmers who use labour extensively appear to be the biggest beneficiaries and workers at the lowest rung are the losers. The impact on labour absorption is vividly explained in a study conducted by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in 18 villages in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Telangana in 2009. It reveals that (*Down To Earth*, 2016):

[T]he daily nominal wage rate of various agricultural activities (ploughing, sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting) increased by 3.6 to 4.2 times of the wage rate between 2003–04 and 2014–15. And *mechanization is helping in reducing the person-days required for different crops*. For example, the 18 villages have reduced person-days on cotton fields from 153 in 2007–08 to 87 days in 2014–15. This is a 43 percent reduction in less than a decade. During the same period, labour use reduced by 58 percent in soyabean (from 55 to 23 person-days); 52 percent in pigeon pea (from 48 to 23 person-days); 20 percent in wheat (from 40 to 32 person-days); and 54 percent in chickpea (from 70 to 32 person-days)".

The big farmers are eloquent about the benefits. Chhattisgarh farmer Rahul Chawda uses a drone for spraying pesticides. *He says that the biggest advantage of drones is that it has substantially brought down his production cost*. "Wages of labourers account for 50 percent of the total production cost. This was not even 25 percent a decade ago. The drone takes 15 minutes to spray pesticide in one acre (0.4 ha) which used to involve two labourers for a whole day. This means a saving of Rs 500 per day (ibid., 2016)." The farmer also saves on the wages of another eight to 10 labourers who were earlier employed to oversee the farm. Chawda, who owns four drones, is now developing sensors that can detect fungus attack on crops. He is a big farmer who used to employ up to 60 labourers and produced a variety of cash crops. *He is like any other industrial employer, who is using technology to reduce the cost of cultivation to maximize his profits*. Use of rice transplanter, as per the farmers in AP, increased the yield by 25 percent and simultaneously *helped them save around Rs 13,600 per ha on labour*.

Overall, in estimation of the Indian Council Agricultural Research the consolidated efforts of different interest groups to save labour expenses the "farmers are already reaping benefits worth Rs 100,000 crore through various attempts to minimise their labour cost".

This is the impact of 'productivity' 'competition' 'profit' centric neoliberal policies in agriculture. It is a complete deviation from the NPFF 2007 (see Section 4.2). There are no studies to support that this has benefitted the 86 percent small and marginal farmers; agricultural distress continues and on the contrary, there is heavy human cost of mechanization, as we noted above in Section 2.3.4. One of the important contributory factors in exit of labour especially of women could be located in the mechanization. *Given the inverse/opposite impact on employment and the experience of the impact of industrial development post-NEP, one has to take a considered view on the question of mechanization in agriculture as this may lead to further worsening of the AGL.*

2.6 Income and social status:

Since rural population is increasingly getting better educated and connected to outside world through growing communication channels as well as high migration, the aspirations and needs of the people in general have reached higher levels, with increased demand for material goods, possession of a mobile phone for instance, expenditure on education and health redefining the minimum levels of living. The incomes do not match even this incremental demand putting pressure on the budget. For most, income levels are too low to realize the DDL. The need for higher minimum incomes is reflected in the overall changes in the consump-

tion expenditure patterns which shows a constant decline in the share of expenditure on the food basket, even at the cost of cutting expenditure on essentials like milk and fruits for children or adequate intake of protein.

In the 3rd decade of the 21st century, incomes in general, have to be seen and understood in this context.

The minimum income as per the 7th Pay Commission should be around Rs 18,000 per month and as per the GoI (Satpathy) report of 2019, minimum wage of rupees 375 per day at 2018 price. The latest PLFS data about average earnings for 2018 (Table 10) provide clinching evidence of the fact that: (a) majority of the rural poor are leading precarious lives as average incomes are nowhere near the minimum required and given the high inequality the majority would be earning much less; (b) the average earning of self-employed is much less than a regular wager/salaried person confirming the fact that self-employment is distress- driven; (c) average daily rural male and female wage which is in the range of Rs 253 to 282 and Rs 160–179, respectively, (agricultural workers' daily wages are lower, see: Section 2.4.1) is far lower than Rs 375 and (c) Urban earnings are higher than rural and men earn much more than women.

The situation was the same about 15 years ago as the NSSO data for 2003 shows acute rural distress

(Table 11). The monthly income and expenditure data suggests that except for 11.2 percent families in the middle and large farm category, all others have more expenditure than income and that dependence on wage income is high but inadequate, forcing families to combine wage labour with petty production as part of their survival strategy. The deficit in income is considerable in case of 60 percent families in the landless category, where most of the agricultural labour force is situated. Even if we presume that there are intra-group variations, the overall picture of distress in rural India does not change.

The worst placed in the rural economy are the agricultural labourers is well reflected in Table 12 which shows that: (a) the economic conditions of the workers are improving a bit gradually; (b) by 2009–10 despite decades of high growth more than one-thirds of agricultural labour households were below the ridiculously low poverty line, and; (c) households engaged in agricultural labour are economically in the worst place in terms of poverty and also in terms of improvement in incomes.

In a self-assessment report, 61.7 percent families engaged in agricultural labour reported that their economic situation did not improve between 2003 and 2011, 22.3 percent reported little improvement and 16 percent stated that their situation has worsened. Within these families the situation of STs was the worst.

Most of the poor workers are placed lowest in the hierarchical caste system suggesting that the historical legacy continues. Though it is weakening it still plays crucial role in the economic life in rural India. There are several studies that highlight the fact that *the people belonging to the scheduled castes and adivasis who constitute majority of agricultural labourers are relatively_deprived, face discrimination, and are disadvantaged with respect to social and economic attainments* (Thorat 2009; Deshpande 2011; Kannan, 2018). The PLFS 2017–18 data suggests that the casual workers are concentrated the most among SCs at 45.5 percent followed by STs at 30.4 compared to 17.8 for others and an average of 28.2. Resource poverty

Table 10: Average Earnings (30 days) by Occupation, Region and Gender, Jan-March, 2018 (Rs)

Category	Self-employed@		Regular wager/ salary		Casual Labour (daily wage)	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Male	8,864	15,935	14,445	18,277	270	328
Female	4,342	7,488	8,549	14,779	175	189
Person	8,111	14,824	13,351	17,483	249	307

Source: Derived from PLFS, 2019, Chapter 3.
@: Income includes value of production for self-consumption

Table: 11 :Monthly Income and Consumption Expenditure (2003, Rs) All Rural Families

Farm Category	Percent families	Wage income	Agriculture income	Income from Animal	Non-farm income	Total Income	Total Expenditure
Landless	57.9	999	223	86	260	1,568	2,366
Marginal	18.7	720	784	112	193	1,809	2,672
Small	12.2	635	1,578	102	178	2,493	3,148
Middle	11.2	637	2,685	57	210	3,589	3,685
Large		496	5,195	26	531	6,248	4,881

Source: Basole (2011[a]: 50)

Table 12: Trends in Poverty Levels in Rural India across Different Categories of Households by their Principal Source of Livelihood

Year	Households by Principal Source of Livelihood				
	SENA	AGL	OL	SEA	Others
Poverty Level: HCR					
1993-94	32.88	54.42	42.15	29.69	18.11
2004-05	23.78	44.14	32.71	21.45	14.35
2009-10	17.39	34.71	25.50	16.60	8.75
Rate of Decline					
1993-94 / 2004-05	-2.5	-1.7	-2.0	-2.5	-1.9
2004-05 / 2009-10	-5.4	-4.3	-4.4	-4.5	-7.8
1993-94 / 2009-10	-2.9	-2.3	-2.5	-2.8	-3.2

Note: SENA: Self-employed in Non-Agriculture; AGL: Agriculture Labour; OL: Other Labour; SEA: Self- employed in Agriculture.
Source: Thorat and Dubey (2013) quoted in Sarap and Venkatnarayana (2018)

increases inequality. *The most crucial finding is 'extreme concentration of income at the top'*. In the three villages referred above, the top 10 percent households accounted for half the income. An analysis based on SC or Dalit households and other social groups, finds that the *Dalit households were over-represented in the lower quintiles suggesting that caste continues to matter* (Rawal and Swaminathan, 2011). Moreover, data on indebtedness (Table 13) suggests an improvement post-independence but the problem of indebtedness remains and is now growing since 1991. The institutional credit did increase but of late, non-institutional (mainly from moneylenders, then from employers and in small measure shopkeepers) has grown to almost two-thirds of total debt. This data is confirmed by micro studies. A study in Punjab in 2012–13 find 78.27 percent of agricultural labour households were indebted to the tune of Rs

Table: 13: Extent of Indebtedness among Rural Labour Households in India: 1964-65 to 2009-10

NSSO Survey Year	% of Indebted HHs		Average Debt (Rs)				% of Debt from Non-Institutional Source	
			Per Rur Lab HH		Per Indebted Rur Lab HHs			
	Rur Lab HHs	Rur Agri Lab HHs	Rur Lab HHs	Rur Agri Lab HH	Rur Lab HH	Rur Agri Lab HH	Rur Lab HH	Rur Agri Lab HH
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*
1964-65	59.2	60.6	148	148	251	244	95.1	94.4
1974-75	65.4	66.4	395	387	605	584	91.1	90.4
1977-78	50.5	52.3	348	345	690	660	85.4	84.1
1983	50.4	51.1	806	774	1,598	1,516	55.9	57.7
1987-88	39.1	39.4	787	769	2,014	1,952	65.4	66.2
1993-94	35.1	35.5	1,113	1,031	3,169	2,901	64.2	64.9
1999-2000	25.0	25.1	1,515	1,312	6,049	5,230	68.9	64.3
2004-05	47.3	48.4	4,852	3,946	10,259	8,145	71.0	73.4
2009-10	35.0	36.9	5,473	4,692	15,654	12,718	63.4	69.6

Source: Sarap and Venkatnarayana (2016: 10).
Notes: 1: Rur Lab HHs: Rural Labour Households; Rur Agrl Lab HHs: Rural Agricultural Labour Households 2: Compiled from various Rural Labour Enquiry (RLE) Reports of NSSO; Author's estimations using NSSO 66th (2009–10) round EUS unit record data.

and dependence on irregular low wage casual work continues to haunt SCs and STs.

A recent field study conducted during 2005 and 2007 in eight villages spread over four states, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan *found high inequality in general*. In terms of Gini coefficient, range was from 0.491 to 0.686, highest being in canal-irrigated villages suggesting rural development

29,214 per indebted family and 85.25 percent loan was from non-institutional sources two-thirds of which was at an interest rate of 24 percent to over 40 percent, mainly from landlords (Singh and Singh, 2015).

Increasing spread and debt size from non-institutional sources since 1991 suggests the deteriorating living conditions of poor labouring people in rural areas post-NEP. Policy changes clearly indicate towards the adverse impact of banking reforms and decline in social spending by the state on the lives of the rural labour. The wages have risen during 2007–2014, but simultaneously, unemployment and under-employment is increasing, consequently neutralizing the net effect on incomes. As noted above, the latest data on employment and wages of 2017–18 is extremely alarming. The continuous fall in growth rate due to falling demand is a broad indicator of the fact that incomes at the household level are declining and usurious debt is rising. Yes, India has achieved food self-sufficiency, absolute poverty is reducing, widespread famines of 60s are no more there, primary, non-farm employment has increased but the goal of DDL is nowhere in sight.

2.7 Proportion of non-cultivating households increases:

The proportion of non-cultivating households has increased to 49 in 2011–12 from 35 percent in 1987–88, that is about half of rural India now is not involved in cultivation (See Annexure Table A7). This trend is across all caste and social groups: between 1987–88 and 2011–12, the proportion of households that did not cultivate any land increased by 20 percentage points among Muslims, 11 percentage points among Dalits, 11 percentage points among adivasis, and 12 percentage points among other households. Compared to 62 percent of Dalits and 60 percent Muslims, 39 percent of adivasi households and 43 percent of other households did not cultivate any land (Rawal, 2014). There are, however, considerable regional variations in the percentage of non-cultivating households. Tamil Nadu, Punjab, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana reported relatively much higher shares, of 78.9, 73.5, 65, 61.2 and 60.4 percent respectively; states of Rajasthan, Assam, UP, Orissa and MP reported relatively low percent of non-cultivating households at 29.4, 38, 35, 40 and 38.3 percent, respectively and hilly and north-east states reported the lowest landlessness, of between 22–29 percent.

This indicates increasing landlessness and consequent pauperisation and marginalization due to rising land concentration, inequalities, land acquisition for non-farm purposes and other factors. Studies suggest that the number of "non cultivating peasant households" (NHPC) are increasing due to economic policy-led structural changes and consequent adjustments in the decision-making process of individual economic agents. Such households are even buying land (Vijay, 2012 and 2013). Such households act as barriers in transformation either by keeping the land fallow or giving it on yearly oral tenancy. Increasing monetization of land explained as 'the growing dominance of the "asset" function of land at the expense of its "means of production" function' for potential profits (Harilal et al., 2018) could be one reason and others may include status of a landlord, security against losses in non-farm activities.

2.8 Labour shortage in agricultural sector:

Several micro studies (Reddy et al., 2014; Mohan et al., 2015; Gunabhagya, 2017; Harilal et al., 2018) report shortage of labour. Locally it may be possible. Farmers' misgiving on this count is understandable given the high wages.[20] However, the employers (FICCI, 2015), and Gov-

Box 2: Labour use in agriculture: Significant supply but drastic decline

1: Human power availability in agriculture increased from about 0.043KW/ ha in 1960–61 to about 0.077 KW/ ha in 2014–15. Human power supply almost doubled.
2: Compared to tractor growth, increase in human power in agriculture is quite slow, according to the World Bank.
3: In 1960–61, **about 93 percent farm power** was coming from animate sources, which has reduced to about **10 percent in 2014–15**. In other words, mechanical and electrical sources of power have **increased from 7 percent to about 90 percent** during the same period

Source: NABARD (2018: 2–3)

20. Noted economist Professor C.H. Hanumtha Rao (2016) observes about farmers: "Even as they effectively cope with a rise in the wage cost by adopting new technologies to raise productivity, farmers hiring labour may continue to express their misgivings about welfare programmes like MGNREGA intended to improve the bargaining power of labour. Such prejudices are inherent in a society as it has been characterized by inequalities of wealth and social status" (ibid: 3).

ernment (NABARD, 2018) reporting labour shortage is difficult to accept and appear favouring industry and big farmers because of, as noted above: (a) high unemployment and underemployment: (b) decline in the number of large farms and area under operation: (c) sharp rise in wages from 2006–07 onwards for all agricultural operations, reducing the gap between agriculture and non-agricultural wages, and; (d) decline in labour absorption due to mechanization and crop shifting. Overall, as discussed in Para 2.4 above, it is unlikely that labour supply in agriculture declined. In fact, Box 2 explodes the myth of labour supply shortage which suggests that labour supply almost doubled and machine use increased considerably over time leading to surplus of labour in agriculture. Indeed, there may be regional variations due to wage differentials and non-agricultural sector opportunities but data does not support the labour shortage argument at the aggregate level.

2.9 Changes in employment patterns:

In this last section of Part II we make an attempt, albeit briefly, to understand the changes which have taken place between 2011–12 and 2017–18 in the employment status and industry in the broader economy. Before that we would like to underline that the PLFS 2019 data we presume to be valid and comparable with the 2011–12 NSSO data as the Economic Survey 2020 released on 31st January 2020 has done so. First positive aspect, as noted in Economic Survey, is the sharp decline in casual wage labour from 35.5 to 28.2 percent and rise in regular wage/salaried persons from 10 to 14 percent among males in rural areas (Table 14). However, we should note that 7.3 percentage fall in casual labour is more than the 4 percent rise. The rest 3.3 percent increase is in self employment. In case of women this rise in regular wage/salary employment (5.6 to 10.5%) is more than the drop in casual employment (from 35.1 to 31.8%). Shift of 3.3 percent male workers to self-employment appears to be due to distress in rural economy reflected in non-availability of work. Given that the regular wage earners are increasingly becoming informal workers without getting the benefits of a letter of appointment, of leaves, social security, etc., to what an extent the casual wager who shifted to regular will be better off and will continue is any one's guess. The regular wagers may shift again later on as casual labour as column three suggests that the percentage of regular and casual wagers keep on fluctuating. The other question is who are the regular wagers from amongst the casual workers? To explore who are these workers we look into the occupation classification of the workers as given in Table A8 in the Appendix.

Table A8 suggests (a) the decline between 2011–12 to 2017–18 was among manual workers by 4.9 percent and craft and related workers by one percent; (b) increase recorded was in skilled workers: plant and machinery by 1.5 percent; 1.4 percent in high paid jobs of professionals/officials; 1.4 percent in clerks etc; 1.4 percent in the occupation categories of shop/sales/service and 1.7 percent among skilled agricultural work. The employment thus has increased largely in occupations that require education/ training/skills. This means that more than three percent jobs of regular/salary nature were created among the skilled and highly educated who may have been earlier unemployed or enrolled

Table 14: Percentage Distribution of Workers in Usual Status (ps+ss) by Statuses in Employment during NSS 38th Round (1983) to 68th Round (2011-2012) and PLFS (2017-18) all-India-Rural

Survey Periods	male			Female		
	self-employed	Reg.wage/ salaried	casual labour	self-employed	Reg. wage salary	casual labour
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PLFS (2017-18)	57.8	14.0	28.2	57.7	10.5	31.8
68th (2011-12)	54.5	10.0	35.5	59.3	5.6	35.1
61st (2004-05)	58.1	9.0	32.9	63.7	3.7	32.6
55th (1999-00)	55.0	8.8	36.2	57.3	3.1	39.6
50th (1993-94)	57.7	8.5	33.8	58.6.	2.7	38.7
43rd (1987-88)	58.6	10.0	31.4	60.8	3.7	35.5
38th (1983)	60.5	10.3	29.2	61.9	2.8	35.3

Source: PLFS (2019, Statement 15: 30)

in schools or colleges. *Thus, we can safely conclude that most of the four percent rise in regular/wage employment is for the educated and skilled who belong to middle classes*. They are not among those who exited agriculture and/or belong to illiterate/low educated manual workers who lost jobs. They are amongst those who are out of employment and most likely fall in the historic category of those 10-15 million who are rendered unemployed. The other plausible reason for rise in regular wage/salary workers could be the definitional problem related to census towns which are actually urban areas but classified as rural.

The other aspect that needs attention is the category of skilled agricultural workers where employment increased by 1.7 percent. This in the first instance suggests that due to mechanization the nature of jobs in agriculture too is changing and perhaps more workers are required who can handle machines. This has two implications. First, women have no opportunity given the fact that most of the agricultural machinery is not women-friendly, a point well-recognized, and second, even the casual manual labour is out of employment as discussed earlier. Our analysis gives credence to what Kannan (2019) observed in his analysis. The growth process is bypassing the manual workers with job-loss development. This cannot be called transformative development and calls for appropriate policy shifts.

III

Circular / Distress Migration[21]

Circular migration for livelihood[22] is widespread, across the sectors all-over India. Our focus here is from rural to rural areas for agricultural operations which, post-independence, is growing primarily due to 'betting on strong' development in agriculture. Such development created demand for labour beginning late sixties in the areas of development like Punjab, parts of Gujarat, UP and opened avenues for additional employment for a large number of poor and deprived, displaced, socially oppressed/discriminated, suffering from continued practises of hierarchical caste-system, without education and skills hailing from the undeveloped geographies historically serving as 'labour catchment' areas like backward areas in Orissa, Bihar, Maharashtra and UP and tribal areas like South Rajasthan, North Gujarat and adjoining Madhya Pradesh. The primary reason for migration is resource-poverty, as a field study in Orissa notes that the majority of rural population suffer from low earning, decline in income, low consumption and high debt despite owning up to five acres of land (Mahapatra, 2007). The compelling cause of poverty is also well-captured in a response of such a migrant who said that often they 'did not even have the money for the fare and so they had to borrow this money and some initial living expenses at an exorbitant interest rate from the *sahukar* (moneylender) and make the trip'(Banerjee, 2011). Millions of such rural poor have latched on to circular migration[23] and they migrate in spite of not being happy doing so.[24]

Another reason for migration[23] is 'dignity'. Due to extreme caste-based discrimination and oppression[25] like from Bihar (Roy, 2019) and Rajasthan, many people tend to migrate (Aajeevika Bureau, 2014). Employers' growing preference for migrant labour and strategies to hire too has fuelled such migration. Moreover, it now is not confined to 'labour catchment' areas. Seasonal unemployment and the need for money drive people to seek employment outside. Such labour migration has been termed as 'distress migration' and has, in many stances, led to conditions of bondage[26] (Srivastava, 2005; Guerin, 2013).

In discussing the causes, most migration literature in the dominant economic frame makes a distinction between 'pull' and 'push' factors. We feel that it is a combination of both in varying degrees. The demand/opportunity in destination areas and economic necessity/social oppression/ unemployment of migrants at source results in migration. Specific need for migration income may differ. Within this broader scenario of 'distress migration for survival' different trends and motivations may be located in specific cases.

21. We have used the words 'distress migration', 'seasonal migration' and 'circular migration' interchangeably.

22. Scores of studies are available suggesting migration as a livelihood strategy of poor households. Srivastav and Sasikumar (2003) provide details of some such studies.

Box 3: Guided by consumerism, youth lured to bondage to own a motor cycle

One of the biggest contractors, Anoop Agarwal in Chhattisgarh opened a bike franchise in the year 2018 and gave away bikes to young brick kiln workers in lieu of an advance amount. One labour contractor (who wished not to be named) stated that Anoop accurately read the aspirations of the young Chhattisgarhi men and made a lucrative deal where he offered bikes for "free" to anyone who is willing to work for him for the next season as a brick kiln worker. Agarwal, the respondent reported, also allowed an arrangement – where if one cannot go to the kilns to work this season, he can go in the next season, without any interest levied for that year. Many youths have accepted the offer indicating that debt-bondage is going 'beyond distress migration'.

Source: Firsthand experience of author in a leadership training of brick kiln workers in Chhattisgarh, 2018; Also Study report of PCLRA (2019).

Box 4: Some specific studies about estimates of circular migrants by stream

1: A study of migrant sugarcane harvesting workers estimated that about 1.5 to 2 lakh tribal workers from Dhule and Nandurbar districts of Maharashtra migrate to South Gujarat for sugarcane harvesting (PCLRA, 2017).

2: A study of BT cotton seed production in North Gujarat estimated that roughly 90,000 migrant workers, half of them young from tribal South Rajasthan are recruited through middlemen for three to four months from July to Nov to work in North Gujarat for BT cottonseed production (Khandelwal et al., 2008).

3: A survey of the Bhil tribals of Alirajpur district of MP in 2008 found that 85% of the families migrate for work to Gujarat and estimated at a conservative estimate of two people per family and a rough count of about 1,25,000 families in the district estimated 1,15,000 families and 2.3 lakh workers migrating (Banerjee, 2011)

4: A research on seasonal migration of workers to the rice-producing belt of West Bengal carried out in 1999–2000 suggests that the number of seasonal migrants, drawn from tribals, Muslims and other low castes, moving to Bardhaman district during harvesting season exceeds 500,000 and this volume has been growing since the 1980s (Rogaly et al., 2001 as quoted in Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003).

5: Other studies in the tribal areas in MP, Rajasthan and Gujarat also indicate a very high rate of out-migration, in some cases involving 60 to 80% of households (Mosse et al., 2002; Haberfeld et al., 1999; Rani and Shylendra, 2001 as quoted in Srivastava and Sasikumar, 2003).

6: A study based on annual seasonal migration of tribal households from Khandesh (Dhule district, Maharashtra) to the sugarcane fields of southern Gujarat in 1988–89 estimated that every year 100,000 to 150,000 labourers are recruited from this region to work in the nine sugar co-operatives of Southern Gujarat (Teerink, 1995).

7: "[B]y the early 1980s nearly seven lakh seasonal migrant labourers were visiting rural Punjab during the peak periods of labour demand". (Singh, 2012)

Source: Studies from Serial numbers 4-6 quoted from Srivastav and Sasikumar (2003).

For instance, of late, consumerism is promoting migration of young with a modicum of education voluntarily, despite knowing well the harsh conditions and adverse terms of work at the place of destination (See Box 3).

The usual causes as related by migrants themselves in various field studies include low or no income at source due to various reasons like too little and/or unproductive land, no employment opportunity, floods, draughts,

23. The word 'circular migration' was perhaps used for the first time by Breman. We prefer to use this word in place of seasonal migration as it denotes repetition of cycles of migration year after year, which is the reality in most cases.

24. In a recent survey of 100 villages of sugarcane migrant workers in Maharashtra, Ugam, an NGO, reports than not a single family is happy with migration.

25. Indian history is replete with instances of brutal oppression across the country. Bihar is a special case where to counter social movements of Dalits for rights, illegal organized gangs of upper-castes emerged like the Ranvir Sena (literally 'army') which alone as per reports massacred 400 *Dalits* between 1995 and 1999 for their struggle for the right to live with dignity. Thousands were killed by many such *senas* in Bihar from late 1960s till dawn of the 21st century (Sarkar, 2007).

26. This is not specific to India. For a descriptive and analytical overview of forced labour globally, see ILO (2005) with regional estimates.

repayment of accumulated debt for one or the other reason, extra money for essential expenditure, redemption of advance taken for consumption and other loans, or house construction (Srivastav and Sasikumar, 2003; Khandelwal, 1984). To conclude, circular migration is generally influenced both by the pattern of development and the social structure mediated by specific needs of a group/family/ individuals.

3.1 Trends in migration:

No definite time series data are available for seasonal/circular migrants. The National Commission of Rural Labour (NCRL) in late 1980s estimated that there were approximately 10 million seasonal/circular migrants in the rural areas, out of which about 4.5 million were inter-state migrants. The NSS 55th round in 1999–2000 estimated the number of seasonal/ circular migrants at 10.87 million, out of which 8.45 million in rural areas (5.39 million males and 3.06 females) were short duration migrants, who migrated for a period between 2 and 6 months doing/seeking work. The number of agri -migrants were about 7.3 million. A study estimates about 100 million migrants (overall) based on statistics of informal labour collated by the departments of industries of various states (Deshingkar and Akter, 2009). The figures vary and do not give any detailed picture but the fact that circular migration takes place in large numbers is established.

Box 4 provides estimates of rural to rural migration in agriculture based on select specific studies and collective estimation. A perusal of details suggests that the process of such seasonal migration, started with the development of agriculture post-independence perhaps sometime in the late 1960s or 1970s and continues till date; the movement is in large numbers constituting area-specific streams for specific purposes; it is both inter-state and within a state.

3.2 Profile of Migrants:

The seasonal circular migrants belong almost exclusively to ST, SC and OBC categories, ST and SC being more dominant. They are, as noted above, displaced, poor in terms of income and resource, illiterate or with low level of education,

Box 5: Profile of Seasonal Migrants of Beed district, Maharashtra	
Survey details	Reference period: Dry season of 2013; Survey done: Sept-Nov 2014; Based on census of 14 villages - randomly selected; 340 households surveyed
Incidence and demography	16% Households reported migration; range 5 to 90% migrants in a village; Family migration: less than one year to 60 plus, males and females
Stream, time and duration	Rural to Rural, Lean Season: October to next April: Six Months 75% reported migrating for last more than five years
destination	Karnataka 58%, within State: 42%: western Maharashtra developed area Purpose: Sugarcane cutting: 98% and brick-making: 2%
Why opt for migration	90% said they are forced to migrate: seasonal unemployment:76%; Low wages in village: 20%; emergency money: 4%; repay debts: 60%
Social back-ground	Tribal: 50.7 %; SC: 33.3%; OBC+Others: 16%
Occupation at source	Cultivation: Small/Marginal farmers: 38.7%; Wage labour: 55.5%; Others: 6%
Facilities at destination (in percentage)	Electricity: 74 (96.5); Improved toilet: 14% (17.8); Water facility: 24% (90.3) Figures in brackets relate to source area.
MGNREGA reach:	20% people; do not know much about MGNREGA; were not aware about right to employment on demand and allowance in case of no employment
MGNREGA is of no help in workers views	A man said, "Two years ago, I got 10 days of work. I received my wages after several months. What is the point of doing such jobs? Payment needs to be made immediately or at least soon after the work. Otherwise, how can we survive" "We have no hope and now we don't wait to be given jobs", a woman said.
Source: Prepared based on study of Jaleel and Chattopadhyay (2019)	

unskilled, landless or own some land (but size is increasingly dwindling and quality is often poor). Migrants include entire families, single male, young girls and boys. The family migrants are usually part of rural to rural migration in agriculture like for sugarcane harvesting, which has a large number of established stream of migrant families working since decades. The migrants mostly work till the age of up to forty years as the work involved is hard and for long hours. The percentage of children is declining due to realized importance of education and many migrant couples now prefer to leave their children behind for education.

The uncertainties and risks lead to movement usually in groups and under the leadership of some experienced person within the community or contractor. The migration is largely a Hobson's choice and is usually determined with limited choice due to various factors like gap in information, skills, education, extent of compulsion, risk-taking ability, employer-contractor traps, etc. Migration may be with advance or without, either a chain migration or through the middleman known by different names in different places. Recruitment through middlemen have implications, which we shall discuss later.

Essential characteristics of such migration based on a field study of Maharashtra (provided in Box 5) substantiate much of this: they predominantly belong to ST/SC; are resource-poor landless small/marginal farmers and are forced to migrate due to unemployment, low wages, debt-redemption; about one-sixth of households migrate from the area during off-season for six months with family for sugarcane harvesting; migration differ substantially from village to village; from 5 to 90 percent; destination includes other states as well as within state; the living conditions are relatively bad at the place of destination, especially drinking water; the workers are either not aware about MNREGA or have lost hope in the programme due to various problems. This is the broad picture of circular migration. We have not brought in the issues related to recruitment including advances and terms of employment with implications and labour rights, which we will discuss later.

3.3 Recruitment practices:

Recruitment essentially means employers hiring labour to get their work done. Employer need is usually associated with high-seasonal requirement structured in the frame of profit maximization. There are several ways in which an employer reaches workers in need for employment. Use of migrant labour as strategy of profit maximization is now well-established even in organized sectors and industries. An important part of the strategy in such process of recruitment, in several situations, is of providing money in advance through middlemen, usually from within the community but not necessarily. Such advance has payment conditions which restricted mobility. Such interlocked relationships for short periods for specific tasks at specific geographies have been in existence for decades now and has been widely discussed in literature in terms of 'unfreedom' and 'neo-bondage', some aspects of which we shall briefly discuss in the next section. Such relationships vary in degree and intensity as well as outcomes and permeates across regions and occupations. Over time, with changes in the overall macro situation, there are changes in details of such relationships. How much is the incidence within agriculture is difficult to surmise, but with some certainty we may say it runs in millions. With a long history of such practice with no change, many have taken such migration as *fait accompli* and some others may opt by choice to migrate under such conditions. There are also instances where workers agree to employment conditions attached without advance which invariably comes at a cost to ensure employment security.

Indeed, there are instances in the agricultural sector wherein labourers are directly recruited by the employer. Such recruitment is usually reported at destination places where labour crowd -in on arrival, like railway stations in Punjab (Sidhu and Grewal, 1980) and bus stands in West Bengal. At times, employers visit source areas to recruit. Recruitment channel could also be through friends and relatives, termed as chain migration. Generally, once a route is established and workers are not unsatisfied, they continue with the same cycle year after year.

3.4 Circular migration and bonded labour (neo-bondage): [27]

The process of development and contestation has helped extinguish the old social system of attached labour due to debt-bondage in agriculture as specified in the Bonded Labour System Abolition Act like system of *Hali* in

27. The word 'neo-bondage' implies 'unfreedom' irrespective of the fact that such 'unfreedoms' are universal or not and whether it is out of deliberate choice or forced on the part of the labour. In several orders Supreme Court of India in different cases has held workers tied under such contracts as bonded labour within the meaning of BLSA and has passed order, as late as in 2012, to monitor the bonded labour problem to NHRC. Some of the scholars do not consider such advance based short-term contracts to be part of 'unfreedom' as workers enter such contract knowing the conditions out of their own free will and complete the contract and re-enter the same. For instance, Marius-Gnanou (2010). For an extensive review of literature on bonded labour and its changing forms refer to Srivastav (2015). For us a worker in 'neo-bondage' relationship is a 'bonded labour'.

Box 6: The tale of Kamiyas of Yesteryears

1: Take the case of Punau Ram of Putaka village. His father was a *kamiya* of Bhojraj Bhoi from his childhood, i.e., he must have grown from kuthihahood into kamiyahood. Punan cannot tell how his father became *kuthiya* or *kamiya*. When father died, the master agreed on 'compassionate' grounds to write-off debt of the deceased if one of his sons became his *kamiya*. Punan took Rs. 160; got married and became a *kamiya*. But the rigours of *kamiya's* work enervated Punan into illness within a year. So, his younger brother Manboth had to replace him. But as Manbodh was not yet married, he was engaged as a *kuthia* instead of a *kamiya* although he did all the work that Punan did as a *kamiya*. As a *kuthia* Manbodh was to get 23 *khandi* (about 3+5 kilo/khandi) paddy in a year. After two years, Manbodh fled from the village. His 23 khandi paddy is withheld by the landowner.

2: Gobind Birla of the same village also carries the burden of his father's debt as a *kamiya*. Mukteshwar of this village has been a *kamiya* of the same landlord for three generations. He is bearing the yoke after his elder brother, father, and grandfather.

3: Sumitlal of Rikhadadar presented a tale of despair, helplessness and resignation. His father was *kamiya*. He fled away without telling his son anything. Now the *Gauntia* (literally, village leader) has forced him to work as a *kamiya* for the debt of his father. The master claims that the outstanding amount is Rs 500. He lives in utter despair and longs for any chance of liquidation of debt and of his freedom. He has no doubt that he is *Bandhua* (bonded). The question whether he is a bonded labour or a contract labour is meaningless to him.

Source: Chandra and Khandelwal, 1984 (Para 16 and 17; based on interviews by the authors)

Gujarat and Rajasthan, *Sangari* in Rajasthan, *Kamiya* and *Kuthiya* in MP, *Jeeta* in Andhra Pradesh and which tied the entire family to a landlord for generations within a village setting (Srivastav, 2015). This system did have an element of advance, but it was more entrenched in feudal caste-based division of society (See Box 6). This system of bondage which operated almost across the country was declared unconstitutional under Article 23 under COI and legally abolished in 1975 when Bonded Labour System Abolition Act was promulgated, wherein 21 of such relationships were specifically mentioned which were presumed to be part of bonded labour system. Gradual disappearance of such attached labour system was the logical outcome of political freedom, essential part of which is social emancipation and an essential condition for the development process India followed post-Independence, which needed free labour.[28] This is, however, not to suggest that elements of extreme force in attached labour have totally extinguished (Singh, 1995; Rawal, 2006; Bhatia, 2012; *Down to Earth*, 2019).

What we find today is a different system of labour relations, not a relic of past as observed by scholars (Guierin, 2013; Lerche, 2012; Breman, 2007), the essential element of which includes *advance payments for work outside the village for a given task, mainly seasonal*, wherein, in the words of a well-known researcher "owner of the commodity labour-power is (i) prevented from entering the labour market under any circumstances; (ii) prevented from entering the labour market in person, or; (iii) permitted to enter the labour market in person but only with the consent of the employer" (Brass, 1986: 52). In addition, they receive less than minimum wage. Some researchers are of the view that present models to explain neo-bondage are inadequate and ahistorical and there is a need to develop specific analyses of the processes underlying both free and unfree labour relations in the present context, and their relation to neoliberal globalization as well as country-specific conditions (Lerch, 2007). But so far as the legal position is concerned, they are bonded labour as defined in BLSA 1976. In several cases, the Supreme Court of India has released workers working under such contracts including in brick kilns where advance-based migration is for a short period as in case of sugarcane harvesting. Accordingly, we will prefer to use the word 'bonded labour' as is commonly used in India.

The outcome of contractual relation between labour and employer or contractor may vary from mild to severe depending upon the profile of workers and employers/middlemen. *Interestingly such bonded contractual relationship may occur even without advance,*

28. There are several field studies that have reported decline of attached labour over the years across the country. See for instance Himanshu et al. (2015); Jha (2015) and studies quoted therein.

just in lieu of job security. For instance, not all harvesters or moulders in the brick industry take advance or the advance amount may be small (PCLRA, 2017: 48) yet they are obliged to work till the end of the season and their movement is restricted due to the system of payment at the end of the season. Else, they may incur penalty or face other action, including assault. The advantage such workers hold is that they save interest on advance or their remuneration may be slightly higher compared to those who avail interest-free advance like in brick kilns. Such bondage falls within the modern labour–employer relation as it emanates in pursuance[29] of profit and advance (with or without interest) is in essence part of wage extended to ensure labour supply.

The debt-bondage system exists and perpetuates due to gross violation of labour laws[30] on the part of the employer, compulsion of workers and deliberate absence of any The debt-bondage system exists and perpetuates due to gross violation of labour laws on the part of the employer, compulsion of workers and deliberate absence of any intervention from the state and silence of civil society (Khandelwal et al., 2008: 58). The lack of administrative and political will can be traced in the hierarchical social system which considers social location of a person as given (Arnold, 1967). Case of sugar factories in South Gujarat is a classic example. To begin with, they had the bi-monthly system of wage payment. In early 1980s they changed the system to make the payments at the end of the season *on the pretext of prevention of spending money on gambling and alcohol by the male workers*[31] and yet, they do not consider them as their workers, and the system continues (PCLRA, 2017,: 47). The tacit consent of the state is obvious from the legal history of public interest litigations on the issue and the number of Supreme Court orders under PILs and their follow-ups (Srivastav, 2015; NHRC, 2018) and their implementation on the ground. The state thus becomes party to this super-exploitative social relation. Baak (1999) tracing the history in plantations is of the view that the free and unfree labour exists due to the often-conflicting strategies of labourers, owners, and the government because abolition of slavery in India and other legislation did little to clarify or improve labourers' status and conditions.

3.4.1 Genesis of modern advance lies in labour shortage: The case of Punjab:

As per one researcher, the contractual relationship between employer and labour can be traced back in anti-slavery law of 1843. To quote, "The status of slaves was simply "reconstituted" through the British-approved contractualization of labour relations between landlords and

labourers: the practice criticized as slavery nominally became debt bondage" (Prakash, 1990). In more recent times, with capital-driven agricultural development, such contractual system emerged in Punjab due to acute shortage of labour, not in all cases though (Bardhan, 1983)**.** Green revolution led demand-supply gap in labour gave rise to new rural to rural migration stream. During the 1970s/early 1980s due to rise in productivity, crop intensity and crop diversification, special demand for outside labour that had experience of paddy cultivation, high unionization leading to high cost of local labour, shift of local labour to better paid non-agricultural work and/or from wage labour to self employment led extremely high demand for migrant labour reached new highs. To quote:

"Factors such as schedule caste out migration

29. The middlemen, known as, *mukkadams*, in sugarcane harvesting charge 50 percent of advance as interest in Maharashtra but not in Gujarat. In cottonseed production advance is interest-free.

30. This point was made recently by Justice P.C. Pant, Ex-Supreme Court of India Judge and currently member, NHRC, in his address on 8 November at IIC Delhi in a National Seminar on Bonded Labour in the presence of Union Labour Minister. Everyone knows about it for decades yet the situation remains the same.

31. The essence of such change may be due to cultural values of the employers to control workers who are born to serve and have no personal rights to do what they want with the money paid and to work or leave in between.

to Gulf States, the shift to non-farming occupations (Jat Sikh families), the extension of paddy cultivation and higher urban wages, all of which combined to intensify the scarcity of labour in Punjab, also strengthened the bargaining power of the local farm workers who remained. Hence, the real level of farm wages rose, and between the late 1950s and the late 1970s there was a fourfold increase in the average annual membership of the Punjab Agricultural Workers' Union. The response of peasant farmers in Punjab has been to replace this relatively costly and increasingly politicised local workforce with cheap migrants from labour surplus area in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (Bras, 1986.: 60–1)."

Under this situation, the employers resorted to a system of advance. It perhaps started at Ludhiana Station on arrival of migrants during peak season when one could see scores of farmers jumping to grab the workers with the arrival of a train (Khandelwal, 1984). The farmers would entice workers with money in advance to ensure labour supply. Stray cases of use of even brute force to capture labour emerged. Later the farmers started establishing linkages with potential migrants at source areas through labourers themselves and ensuring labour supply through the means of advance. Such bondage as several scholars have argued is an instrument used by capital to ensure cheap labour supply for surplus generation (Singh ,1995, Singh, 1997; Ansari, 2001).

3.4.2 Magnitude and spread of '(neo) bondage':

As noted above, there are no authenticated data about total circular migration and more so about bondage. Some estimates are available by ILO[32] (2017b) and other international organizations. GoI accepts such bondage as in its vision document for 2030 it commits to rescue and rehabilitate 1.84 million under Bonded Labour System Abolition Act 1976 (Indian Today, 2016). It is a widespread practice, observed in varied occupations across sectors like brick-moulding, sugarcane harvesting, cottonseed production, paddy transplantation, far-off construction sites,

quarries and mines, etc. The extent of such '(neo)bondage' in agriculture is not known, but is widespread. Recent field studies of workers recruited for sugarcane harvesting in Maharashtra (Jaleel and Chattopadhyay, 2019)

Box 7: It's a national shame that bonded labour still exists in India

Last week, 25 bonded labourers, including children, were rescued from farmlands in Rajasthan's Baran district.[33] The rescued workers said they were lured from Madhya Pradesh with loans between Rs 500 to Rs 20,000 and the promise of work. But they were made to work on the fields without pay.

Source: *Hindustan Times*, 30 Sept 2019

32. In its 2017 report "Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage" it was estimated that 25 million people were in forced labour and 50 percent were debt-bonded. The Global Slavery Index estimated 1.8 4 million were in modern slavery in India and 46 million in the world.

33. Baran district is a newly carved district in Rajasthan and is agriculturally rich and houses a group of about 20,000 households of the only primitive tribal group (PTG) called Sahariya in the state, majority of whom live in adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh. They lived in forests for generations, turned as bonded cheap labour, their lands and livelihoods having been usurped buy powerful landlords and others. They have been in the news due to hunger deaths for years and for being released from bondage in hundreds in the early 21st century. A special food package including two litres of edible oil, two kg of pulses, 35 kg of wheat and one kg of desi ghee was finally provided to them after lots of struggle and advocacy. It also provides an interesting case of collective farming of restored alienated lands.

and Gujarat (PCLRA, 2017) testify to such large scale migration. For the 2019 instance of a rescued group of bonded labour, see Box 7. One can often see such reports.

3.4.3 Why employers invest and workers tie themselves

The arrangement serves immediate purposes of both. On the one hand, employers look out for assured labour supply of needy, hard-working, self-disciplined, docile, committed and cheap workers to ensure that the work is completed on time and without much hassle of supervision of and control over workers which they find in needy migrant labour, as local labour cannot fulfil these conditions. This task is performed through contractor, known by various names locally like *thekedar, mukkaddam, sirdar*. On the other hand, workers in distress opt for such labour tying arrangement for reasons of assured employment and income in addition to meeting off season money requirements through instant money as advance. In addition to minimum consumption expenditure, in the face of changing profile of workers due to entry of a young and literate workforce, enticing imposed consumerism like mobile phone, clothes and motorcycle and rising aspirations the need for money-in-hand is rising of late so much so that young males with modicum of education commit themselves by taking advance. Largely, workers, short of cash during the lean season, are left with a Hobson's choice. The work-related difficulties and attached conditionalities may not be even worth considering partly due to the level of living at source or are deliberately ignored under the dire need for money in hand. At times for a reluctant worker, a skilful contractor may even lure him into contract, especially the young ones to tie-up labour through advance.

3.4.4 Recruitment process: [34]

The initial recruitment is through a local contractor in the source area. Such contractors are usually from within the community and are relatively better placed in understanding, communication and work. They may operate independently or may work on behalf of an employer or large contractor as a sub-contractor, but get remunerated by the employers, including factories in case of sugarcane harvesting (PCLRA, 2017). Largely, the demand is from the employer or employers with whom he is in live contact. The employer advances money on agreed terms for a given number of assured workers. Sometimes the contractor gives the advance without the support of employers. It has become a business where money is taken on loan for advance. Advances are usually interest-free, but sometimes, like in parts of Maharashtra, advance comes at a high interest of 50 percent for six-months of production, which is adjusted at the time of final payment at the end of the season. Many contractors have started investing their own money. The contractor recruits by giving advance, ensures workers reach the destination in time, and do the assigned task in time as per requirements. There is no written agreement. The recruitment system through contractors has become well-established with a variety of contractors. In some areas from where large number of workers migrate as routine for decades, large contractors with political patronage have emerged who recruit thousands of workers and invest and

34. For details of the process and role of middlemen in cottonseed production and sugarcane harvesting, refer to Khandelwal et al. (2008) and PCLRA (2017).

Box 8: Social Cost Migrants Pay in Loss of Life, Limb and Freedom

1: The migrants worked sometimes under very harsh conditions. This was very well illustrated by the news that out of 5,000 deaths resulting from the farm machine accidents in India in 1978, almost 500 deaths, mostly of the migrants,took place in Punjab only – the damaging fall-out of farm mechanization (Dhanagre, 1985).

2: The Bihari migrants in Punjab were reportedly sometimes forcefully withheld with the particular employers like attached labourers. A few tribal migrants had been recruited by force and deceit committed by the contractors in Hoshiarpur; the latter acted in cooperation with the Teli and Punjabi agents situated at Ranchi. Sometimes, the out-migrants had been virtually sold to Punjab employers as bonded labour too (Singh, 1995).

3: The incapacitation of workers in the form of loss of limbs in thresher accidents had been high enough, and over the years on the increase in Punjab, and the majority of victims of such accidents had been the migratory labour from Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Ansari, 2001).

earn millions. They are ferocious and at times enforce the contract with chilling brutality. One can find such large, powerful contractors in Orissa and Chhattisgarh from where lakhs of workers migrate.

3.4.5 The importance of piece rate for employers:

Employers prefer piece rate for several reasons. First, the wages are usually fixed arbitrarily by the employers and do not have any relation with time wage, though legally it should relate to time. Compared to time wage they save on wages. Second, the system of piece rate leads to voluntary hard work on the part of migrant labour who puts in maximum possible of work hours to maximize his income. It thus obviates the need for supervision and control for the employer saving on resource. Third, since the work is usually by work-unit consisting of two or more workers, the employer pays to head of the unit and thus does not have to deal with individual labour. Fourth, it masks the overtime wage. Such wage has been considered as part of coercive informal process. Piece rate system is against the worker as it is invariably lower compared to time wage. The labour, unaware of the fact that time is the criteria of wage fixation, overtime wage rate is double and to not to work beyond maximum hours of work in a week is a right to be enjoyed, voluntarily consents for self-exploitation adding to the profits of the employer. It has been argued that "piece work wage can only be practiced in labour processes that are characterized by cycles of repetitive and simple actions that are reducible to a specific duration of time" (Aglietta, 2001: 142). Despite this, government has yet not initiated studies to specify the relation between time and piece rate wages. *A major labour reform is required in specifying the relation between piece and time rate from labour point of view. The new wage code completely overlooks this.*

3.4.6 Organization of work, wages and payments:

The common practice in agriculture for important tasks like harvesting and transplanting involving major labour time use is, as mentioned above, piece rate wage paid to the head of work-unit comprising of a family consisting usually of husband and wife but may involve more members including children or a group in cash at the end of the season. In between, the *mukhia* (literally; the head) of the group of workers is paid a small amount for essential needs (every week/ten days/fortnightly as per the practice) which may differ in space, time and occupation. These payments are part of the wage earned and are adjusted at the time of final payment. This entire system is in gross violation of legal provisions as wages are not fixed by time; not paid as per the wage periods, overtime wages are not calculated; wages are not calculated for individual workers and are not calculated and paid individually. The violation of laws is at the root of the system of work, wages and payments which leads to bondage as the *workers are forced to work for the entire season against the advance. In this, women and child workers lose their identity and compensation*. In addition, there are others ways of wage-theft like illegal deductions, wrong calculations, denial. The way migrant labour work is organized is quite rewarding to the employers. No wonder therefore that the total earnings for many, in sugarcane harvesting for example, are insufficient to clear the advance and the expenses, forcing workers to commit to work for the next season or even for several years in succession. One recent study for instance finds that only a little over half the

workers (54 percent) could earn enough by the end of the season to adjust the entire advance and save some money to take back home. The remaining could not repay the advance and therefore they remained tied to the contractor to repay by doing work the next season. The study finds that such advance-based tied labour relationships, on an average, continued for 6.6 years (Jaleel and Chattopadhyay, 2019: 33; see also PCLRA, 2017). *Legally, the advance cannot be carried forward* – but the workers, for twin reasons of lack of awareness and/or economic and/or moral compulsion – do not resist or raise voice against this.

3.4.7 Share crop as wage- the Bhagiya system in Gujarat:

The Bhagiya system, extensively found in Gujarat, is a variant of the earlier particular farm-attached migrant family labour, hired through advance, called *Upaad*. Such arrangements could be for one season or for both seasons, lasting 8–10 months. The entire family works without any timings. It may appear to be a form of tenancy but it is not as the inputs are provided by the owner and control over production is that of the owner, who also keeps regular vigil. It is a form of wage labour as the wages are paid in cash after the owner sells the crop in the market on the basis of the agreed share in crop which varies according to the crop and value. This system is practiced by rich agriculturalists who do not participate in the labour process and do not give land on lease . The hiring is through an oral agreement called as *naukarnama (naukar* means servant). As per the usual terms of the agreement farmers are not responsible for any financial losses and accidents; in case of leave/absence bhagiyas have to arrange for alternate labour on their own cost; loss resulting due to delay has to be borne by the bhagiya. These workers face several problems like non-payment of wages, holding back information on crop prices received in the market, cheating at the time of share of division of crop, verbal and sexual abuse, coercion to do unpaid labour like cleaning cow-shed, cutting fodder, tending animals, loss of child education and social benefits, etc. Almost all such workers are poor tribals, a large number from Kotra tehsil of Dungarpur in Rajasthan and can be located in adjoining areas of Sabarkantha and Banaskantha Gujarat. In the end, "on an average, a group of sharecroppers working together are able to make Rs 50,000 for one sharecropping contract, making per capita earning of Rs 10,000 for eight months (Rs 1,250 per month or Rs 42 per day)" (Aajiveeka Bureau, 2014 : 52).

3.4.8 Working and Living Conditions at Destination:

Migration entails heavy social cost (see Box 8). Studies as well as our own experiences suggest that the migrants work long hours – on an average for 12 hours, are exposed to sun, rain, storm, dust and grime. They live in poor conditions on fields in temporary shelters, under canvas, or just in the open. In case of couples, their sex lives are disturbed due to lack of privacy leading to inter-personal problems including assault on women for no fault of theirs. There is complete lack basic amenities, sanitation and safe drinking water, clean fuel and access to health facilities. They stand deprived of social entitlements. The children who accompany their parents stand deprived of schooling; women live in fear and feel insecure and suffer from several health-related problems; many a times face sexual assault, including rape.

IV

State policies and Implementation[35]

> "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [her]. Will he [she] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [her] to a control over his [her] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj(freedom) for the hungry and spiritually starved millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away." Mahatma Gandhi, Father of Nation (1958: 65)).

We noted above some of the manifestations of the changes in the ALF and rural areas and reasons thereof. In this section, we shall critically but briefly look at state policies including legal instruments related to land, agricultural development and labour protection which are crucial in determining living conditions of the ALF. Whereas the policies related to land and agriculture development have much wider implications, our discussion here related to labour protection as legal right will confine to wage labour – both in agriculture and non-agriculture.

4.1 The land policies

> "Land is the most valuable, imperishable possession from which people derive their economic independence, social status and a modest and permanent means of livelihood. But in addition to that, land also assures them of identity and dignity and creates conditions and opportunities for realizing social equality. Assured possession and equitable distribution of land is a lasting source for peace and prosperity and will pave the way for economic and social justice in India (GoI, 2013: 1)."

The existence of society is directly dependent on land, a primary development resource, and more so of the AGL. In the words of noted economist Y.K. Alagh, "Agricultural labour cannot be separated from land in rural life" (NIRD, 2018). The conditions of the workforce are determined by the dynamics of operation of land relations within and outside. The source and pattern of inequality and conflict is rooted in ownership, control and use of land.[36] In 1947, India inherited an unequal and unjust land ownership system in which land was owned by a few landlords/zamindars/jagirdars and the actual cultivators/tenants did not have the right or security of tenure with some exceptions in ryotwari and mahalwari systems. Such ownership structure was the biggest barrier for any meaningful just development. Post-independence, the first task of the state was land reforms aimed at abolition of intermediaries, abolition/ regulation of tenancy, limiting ownership through ceilings on land holdings and redistribution of ceiling surplus land. Seven decades down the Independence, we

35. The policy here includes legal instruments which can be used for legal redress in a court of law. We have added 'implementation' here, knowing the fact that there is considerable difference in articulation and intent (practice) in relation to policies. The difference between policy on paper and policy on ground is determined by the process of implementation. We are of the view that the state has the wherewithal to implement a policy.

36. For an insightful account of struggle for change around the land question in late sixties in select parts of India after political freedom, refer to Beteille (1974).

find goals of land reforms partially achieved with adverse consequences for development.[37] True, land reforms did confer ownership rights on millions of tenants leading to creation of a vast category of cultivators and lakhs of agricultural labourers were given cultivable land as a result of land reforms but they remained unfinished because of many loopholes in the laws including in the very definition of cultivator. Observes one perceptive scholar, "The land reform programme in India has been one of the most comprehensive and elaborate programmes of its kind. But the measures devised to evade the new laws and to use them to disadvantage of weaker sections have been no less elaborate" (Beteille, 1974: 198). The story of land ceiling is best summed up by the PCC, to quote:

> "... the ceiling laws of the early seventies were more radical, both in form and content, yet in implementation, they too failed in most parts of rural India. For example, at the national level, area cumulatively declared surplus till March 2001 did not make up more than 2.0 per cent of net operated area. As on 30-06-2006, the total land declared surplus in the entire country is 68.61 lakh acres, out of which about 60.15 lakh acres have been taken possession of and 49.87 lakh acres have been distributed to 53.98 lakh beneficiaries of whom 38.94 percent belong to Scheduled Castes and 15.87 percent belong to Scheduled Tribes. An area of 8.56 lakh acres has been involved in litigation. *The failure is manifest at each stage of implementation, practically in all states* (PCC, 2007: 118)."

4.1.1 Displacement for development and other alienation: [38]

Since independence, along with land reforms, land alienation has happened on several counts with severe adverse implications for tens of millions socially deprived who needed state support. Most ironically, in the footsteps of the colonial rulers, in large measure it is 'displacement for development' by state in 'public good'. It continues to be more pronounced despite stiff resistance and conflicts. People have been forcefully evicted to build dams, for mining, industrial purposes, infrastructure projects, creation of national parks, for SEZs and so on *without proper rehabilitation and alternatives*.[39] The other types include illegal individual land alienation, again of tribals[40] and scheduled caste people; manipulation of land records like recording community land as government land; to settle refugees; and exclusion from or non-implementation of Forest Rights Act of 2005 (For comprehensive analysis see: GoI [2014] [Xaxa Committee Report]; several SC/ST commission reports).

This process, started by the Britishers continued after independence and has got accentuated under the same law of 1894 with its name changed in 1948. With NEP in 1991, acquisition started for private industrial, infrastructure, real-estate businesses with state support rather forcefully (Levien, 2015: 146). The story of SEZ following Special Economic Zone Act, 2005 eloquently tells it (Parvez and Sen, 2016). The process has further deepened with competition among different states to enlist support of corporates in the name of growth. A bureaucrat in Tamil Nadu compared private companies to 'bridegrooms', who approach a state with 80–90 demands associated with the piece of land they want to which the states often agree (Sud, 2014 quoted in Exclusion Report, 2018). Eagerness to extend state help to corporates exemplifies in an attempt in 2014 of the then GoI, immediately after assuming office, to temper with the Land Acquisition Act, 2013 which was legislated after decades of struggle of the people. The draft policy on land reforms of 2013 has been dumped and for the GoI the question of land reforms does even exist. Rather, it is being considered as an anti-development issue. *The issue of land thus is the most prominent challenge confronted by the AGL today*.

(i) Magnitude of displacement: No consolidated official statistics are available.

37. The classical example is Bihar. The Land Reform Commission Report of 2007 for the state observes that despite having the most fertile land, growth remains sluggish. To quote, there is 'structural bottleneck in Bihar agriculture due to a very queer pattern of land ownership and very extortionate system of tenancy at will which is causing great impediment to accelerated rate of agricultural growth.

38. There is abundant literature available on the subject, including on land-alienation, unfinished agenda of land reforms. They include several government reports. Some famous works include Joshi (1975) based on review of literature on land issues. Part II of the book provides a selected bibliography on different aspects related to land reforms from 1947 to 1973, running into about 60 pages with more than 1,000 references.

39. Post-independence history is replete with instances of non-rehabilitation, delayed and meagre amount and struggle for proper compensation primarily due to arbitrariness and complete lack of accountability and transparency. The proper procedure for rehabilitation is specified for the first time in 2013 in the related law. The story of dimensions and depth of failure of rehabilitation in case of World Bank funded (in)famous Sardar Sarovar dam affecting tens of thousands of poor tribal families of states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh is captured in a voluminous independent review report by Morse and Berger (1992) instituted by the funder World Bank.

40. For exhaustive methods and processes of tribal land alienation, refer to the report of the Ministry of Rural Development, DoLR (2008), Section 4.4 to 4.9:133–38. The report at Para 1.8 says that tribal population is 9 percent but of total land acquired their share was 40 percent.

Studies between 1947–2000 estimate that 50 million were displaced. Some give a much bigger number. Orissa, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh have together caused more than 100 lakh DPs (those physically displaced by acquisition), or 50 percent of 213 lakh, over half of them for purposes of building dams. They do not include high displacement states like Chhattisgarh. Studies also indicate that around 20 million hectares of land has been acquired by all the development projects between 1951–95 (Fernandes, 2004: 1192). As per GoI estimate in 13 states, 20.41 million were displaced/project-affected, out of which 15.65 percent are Dalits, a high proportion of STs at 30.7 percent (GoI, 2014, p. 259). During 1991 to 2003, 2.1 million hectares of land was acquired for non-agricultural purposes, a large area for SEZ given on cheap rates remain vacant and when land prices shot up the same was mortgaged to raise funds from banks for non-industry purposes (NIRD 2018: 6).[41]

(ii) The social consequences of displacement:[42] The worst affected are tribal as they lost *only productive resource in land* and were reduced to sellers of cheap labour power. For instance, in 2004–5, most ST households (70%) were either landless (33.8%) or had less than 1 acre of land (46.06 percent). In all social categories they figured lowest and due to their social and cultural location the loss of land has landed them into poverty and misery. "... 45.7 percent of the population as a whole was below the poverty line in 1993–94. In the same year, 63.7 percent of tribal people were living below the poverty line, almost 20 percent more than the rest of the country. The poverty figures were 37.7 and 60.0 percent respectively in the year 2004–05. The scenario has been similar in the sphere of education and health. The literacy rate of tribes in 2001 was 47 percent as compared to 69 percent for the general population. Moreover, as per the National Family Health Survey, 2005 – 6, the Infant Mortality Rate was 62.1 per 1,000 live births among tribes, and under-five mortality was as high as 95.7 per 1,000 live births" (GoI, 2014: 25–6). NSS data shows that the proportion of rural adivasi households who do not own any land (including any homestead land), increased from 16 percent in 1987–8 to 24 percent in 2011–12. Research study finds the proportion of adivasi households that do not possess, cultivate or own any land has gone up from 13 percent to 25 percent in the same time period (Karat and Rawal, 2014136). A majority of such displaced are likely to have joined the ranks of agricultural wage labour and distressed migrants.

Tribal people, the original inhabitants of mineral rich areas, are worst affected by the acquisition of land for mineral-based industries, national park, individual alienations due to social location, non-implementation of FRA on the one hand and non-payment of rehabilitation or very low compensation and their social deprivation on the other hand. *In conclusion, through 'displacement for development' the marginalized are pushed into poverty and get displaced, while benefits are being cornered by those already developed, thereby increasing inequality*.

4.1.2 Other land-related issues:

In addition to land alienation, other land-related issues that have direct bearing on the ALF are unfinished agenda of land reforms in land acquisition and distribution to agricultural labourers, land consolidation, lack of land records and tenancy related issues. Monetisation of land and insecurity of owners is also a problem that needs immediate resolution as that leads to large tracts of land uncultivated. The PCC recommended that: (i) the additional area under irrigation should be brought under ceiling limits and surplus area should be taken over and distributed among eligible beneficiaries; (ii) an area of 8.33 lakh acres involved in litigation be taken out of courts' purview and be distributed to eligible beneficiaries; (iii) an estimated 15 million hectares of cultivable wasteland and 26 million hectares of fallow land should be acquired, reclaimed and distributed among the landless households (P:126–7). *These, along with NPFF 2007 and MSSC recommendations on land should be implemented without delay*.

Leasing out land in India was restricted to those owners who could not till. But it continues much beyond that due to unfinished land reforms, lack of consolidation, rising number of people leaving agriculture, monetization of land and so on. Mostly being oral and at will, it is a drag on development affecting the development and AGL adversely. First, the exploitative part of tenancy lies in high land rent due to oral tenancy that effectively asks the land to feed two families out of a small piece of land, which at times is not enough to feed even one. Second, insecurity of tenure deprives land of investment and thus land is not cultivated to its full potential. Observes one researcher, 'tenancy adversely affects productivity is true in case of India where the tenants do not take the risk of investment because of significant psychological

41. For blatant misuse of SEZ to accumulate money with impunity, impact on farmers including agriculture labour and body of references on land acquisition, see Pervez and Sen (2016).

42. For a lucid and simple account of disastrous implications, refer to Bhaduri (2015).

difference, i.e., land does not belong to them' (Shiviah, 1978). Tenancy reform is largely restricted to West Bengal in 'operation Barga'. The need for tenancy reform has been articulated at different levels and accordingly GoI appointed a committee which has given its report along with a draft tenancy law (GoI, 2016). The committee after examining the legal provisions in the various states related to tenancy and listing various restrictions, barriers and inadequacies in land-lease market due to existing legal regime, observes:[43]

> "There is a strong case for legalization and liberalization of land leasing as it would help promote agricultural efficiency, equity, occupational diversification and rapid rural transformation. In the past few decades, even socialist countries such as the Peoples Republic of China and Vietnam have liberalized agricultural land leasing with significant positive impact on economic growth as well as equity."

The implementation of the recommendations is pending. How effective such measures could be in view of land rent is to be seen given the fact that about 10 percent land is reported under tenancy as per NSSO's 70th round report. There could be potential danger also in terms of corporate control and permanent loss of land for small and marginal workers leading to further marginalization.

4.1.3 Completion of unfinished land reforms, purpose of revisiting and process of land acquisition:

The question of land is crucial for transformation of economy to ensure DDL for AGL. Two issues are important from land policy perspective. First, the unfinished agenda of land reforms needs to be immediately taken up as suggested by NPFF 2007, MSSC, DoLR Report (2008) and several other committees, including the Draft Land Reform Policy of 2013. Second, the experience of SEZ in particular suggests that there is a need for revisiting the purpose and process of land acquisition (Parvez and Sen, 2016; CED, 2009). The relentless drive for land despite cases of misuse and large tracts of unused land at the cost of livelihood of the people dependent on land should be unacceptable as the purpose then becomes profits for few rich and poverty and loss of livelihoods for thousands and lakhs of poor. State cannot be party to such a process. For this purpose, high level task-force that includes all stakeholders including of AGL be constituted forthwith.

4.2: Agricultural policies and programmes:

Following MSSC recommendations, a national policy for farmers (NPFF 2007) was adopted by the government with *a greater focus on the economic well-being of the farmers, rather than just on production'* (Section 1.5) and a *comprehensive definition of farmer which included agricultural labourers, tenants, share croppers*, etc. It set fifteen major goals, including that of completing the unfinished agenda in land reforms and to initiate comprehensive asset and Aquarian reforms, introducing measures which can help attract and retain youths in farming and processing of farm products, developing and introducing a social security system for farmers. Regarding land at Para 4.2.1 it states, "Considering the skewed ownership of land, it is necessary to strengthen implementation of laws relating to land reforms, with particular reference to tenancy laws, land leasing, distribution of ceiling surplus land and wasteland, providing adequate access to common property and wasteland resources and the consolidation of holdings". With regard to social security at point number 5.9 it states, "Coverage of farmers, particularly small and marginal farmers and landless agricultural workers, under a comprehensive national social security scheme is essential for ensuring livelihood security. The government would, therefore, take necessary steps to put in place an appropriate social security scheme." The policy is comprehensive and includes all other issues like credit, forward and backward linkages in terms of input prices and value chains, irrigation, marketing, warehousing, agricultural extension services, technology use, social security, etc.

What is the status of implementation after twelve years? In 2016, after ten years of the policy, the architect of the policy Prof MS Swaminathan writes,

> "Today, the *main issue seems to be a total lack of implementation*. Meanwhile, several new issues have emerged in relation to farmers' economic and ecological survival, which also need careful consideration. Some of these are as follows. (a) Local climatic variability has been rising, but cropping choices and patterns are not adapting at the same pace, leading to greater seasonal vulnerability, inadequate nutrition levels, and *enhanced migration because of distress*; (b) Market mechanisms have penetrated even deeper into the rural areas, signalling the types of *crops to be*

43. For a detailed reasoning in favour of regulated tenancy refer to report.

grown with the purpose of economic gain, even if not appropriate for soil and water conditions (e.g., sugarcane in Maharashtra); (c) While research exists, *mechanisms for sharing public sector research knowledge have virtually collapsed* (Swaminathan, 2016; (emphasis added)."

The non-implementation of the policy is worsening the situation which reflects in growing unrest among farmers and in continuation of farmer and agriculture labourers' suicides. The farmers collectives in fact find a reversal of policies like changes in the Land Acquisition Act of 2013. Non-implementation has been observed by researchers as well. To quote, "In India, there is an urgent need for public investment and specific government policies to enhance agricultural incomes, stimulate rural enterprises, and help create new rural non-agricultural jobs. In the absence of such policies, it is certain that the country will face a twin crises in the coming years: of poverty and joblessness in rural areas, and a rising tide of distress migration of rural workers to urban areas (Thomas and Jayesh, 2016: 108)."

4.2.1 Appropriate state action is required to implement the MSSC recommendations and NPFF, 2007:

Agricultural labour is conspicuously missing from the benefits of the schemes and programmes of the farmers. There is an urgent need to reformulate/redesign the schemes/ programmes so as to incorporate these recommendations. The benefits of the social protection schemes like debt liquidation, PM Kisan Yojana, newly proposed pensions scheme, cheap credit and other similar state schemes should be extended to agricultural labourers. Additionally, in conformity with the M.S. Swaminathan committee, the employment programme should be extended as part of the agricultural policy given the underemployment and open unemployment and conditions of distress migration due to single crop and crop failures as this report reveals. For this like farmers are, the agricultural labourers should also be registered.

An action plan is required for speedy distributions of ceiling-surplus and wastelands; land rights for women; preventing diversion of prime agricultural land and forests to corporate sector for non-agricultural purposes; ensuring grazing rights and seasonal access to forests to tribals and pastoralists and access to common property resources; *attention to the problems of small farm and landless agricultural labour families with a sense of urgency and commitment; comprehensive social security package including for landless agriculture labour.*

4.2.2 Contract farming and value chains:

In recent past, agribusiness has emerged at large scale in India as part of Global Value Chains who control production of agricultural commodities through contract farming. In total Indian exports, the share of agricultural commodities has increased up to 15–20 percent. Demand for processed foods in urban India has also risen fast. The corporate culture is on rise. FICCI identifies five arrangements, and for various purposes for agro-processing, seed production, retails of agri-products, etc. After more than two decades of unregulated contract farming, GoI finally drafted a Model Act in 2018 and shared with the states. Tamil Nadu has enacted the law recently. But the law does not take into account several concerns raised by farmers and researchers. For instance, under the law the farmers are going to be 'price takers' and not 'price makers', similarly the corporates and global markets are going to decide about the crop pattern which will expose farmers to global crises, they will control the input and credit supply to farmers as well as the level of mechanization eroding the autonomy of the farmers and making them dependent on powerful corporates. Also, as the reports suggest the small and marginal farmers are unlikely to benefit as the corporates prefer minimum size of farm (Sengupta, 2019). Over 88 percent of small and marginal farmers may not even be in the ambit of such farming. There are no statutory provisions to share profits of the corporates/ agencies. For instance, a study of three different agribusiness organizations: PepsiCo, PRAN (Bangladesh) and Mahagrapes finds that 'these organizations have failed in sharing the benefits and profits equally with their farmers, this needs to be corrected as the long-term objective of these agri-business models should be connecting the farmers to the market and provide the equal share of benefits to them' (Kumar and Sharma,2016). The other issues that research studies have raised also remain like poor extension services, over-charge for services, passing on of risks to producers, offering low prices for the produce, delayed payments, not providing compensation for loss from natural calamities loss and most do not even explain the pricing method (Glover et al., 1990). There is no safeguard for the ecological and economic degradation of the production system (Singh, 2000). There are no safeguards for employment, the wages and work conditions

of labour. Most importantly, it fails to have the participation of all stakeholders. *As per Prof Alagh, the central principle we have to work on is whether the small farmers and landless labour stakeholder will be part of the institutional processes of organizing agriculture or not. Such stake-holder participation is efficient, that this is a concept of dynamic and not short-run efficiency* (NIRD, 2018: 9). The model act fails here. Contract farming models can sustain in the long-run only if the initiative/empowerment comes from the farmers rather than the user (corporate).

Bt cottonseed production by Monsanto through contract farming provides another case to the fact that the terms of contracts are unfair to farmers who (are forced to?) hire cheap child labour under conditions of bondage as adults refuse work at wages they can afford. As per the study the company paid about rupees Rs 230–250 per kg of seeds to the farmers but sold at an exorbitant rate of Rs 3,875 per kilo in 2005 which was challenged by MRTPC which ordered the company to reduce the price who challenged the order in Supreme Court which it refused to stay. But given the attitude of the company the government finally intervened and put a cap on MRP of Rs 750 per 450-gram packet in 2006 (Khandelwal et al., 2008: 15).

Given the increasing value-chains controlled by powerful corporates with global presence as well as the emerging big retailers in India who too are already in thick of the value-chain business, controlling the production and prices, participation of all the stakeholders including the labour on equal terms is essential. *The present form of contract farming reduces the farmer to contract tenant/wage labourer as the producer farmer has no control over the inputs and product. This contract farming model does not fall in the NPFF objective of 'welfare of the farmer' and therefore requires appropriate policy changes.*

4.2.3 Crop insurance premium turns into corporate profits: Measures are required for effective implementation of policies:

Policy implementation should ensure that money spend on welfare of farmers does not become source of profit for corporates. The recent data about crop insurance are rather disturbing. First, the coverage is only about forty percent and there are problems of calculation of compensation as individual farmer claims are only about five percent of total. Moreover, as per the sixth parliamentary standing committee report (December, 2019), during three-year period of 2016–17 to 2018–19 total premium paid to insurance companies is 76,169 crores and the compensation farmers received is 55,090 crores. The companies thus earned a profit of 21079 crores which comes about 28 percent of the total premium paid and 67 percent of rupees GoI premium of Rs 31,426 crores. Rs 13,514 crores were paid by the farmers themselves. The moot question is: for whose benefit does the central government make such schemes based on a corporate business model? We strongly feel such schemes need rethinking as the money for the welfare of the poor should not fill the kitty of corporates as profits which are extremely high even if we account for 3–4 percent as operational cost (Sixth Report of the Parliament Committee Report on Financial Allocation on Agriculture, 2019). Researchers have called such social security schemes as 'corporate capitalism' (Kannan, 2015).

The coverage under PM Kisan Yojana is also problematic as coverage even after one full year is only about 50 percent at 7.17 crores out of a total of about 14.5 crore farmers. The payments are abysmally low. For example, payments for the third instalment in 2019–20 are to the tune of only rupees 6,678 crores and for the second instalment, payments were of 11845 crores. That means at the rate of rupees 2,000 per farmer, 3.339 crore farmers have been paid the last instalment and before that 5.9225 crores. One of the major problems for coverage is the land records and in case of payments relates to linking of payment to Aadhaar and bank accounts. *The Aadhaar problem appears to be adversely affecting the beneficiaries in large numbers as is the case with other social benefit schemes.*

In conclusion, state policies are not oriented to the 'well-being of over 88 percent of the small and marginal farmers', rather, they favour the agribusinesses. The attempt seems to be to develop agriculture on lines of industries with focus on productivity and exports at the cost of millions of the poor producer farmers and farm-labour and those who combine the two.

4.3 Labour policies:

> "Nothing distinguishes more clearly conditions in a free country from those in a country under arbitrary government than the observation in the former of the great principles of known as the "Rule of Law" (GoI, 2019: 6 , paragraph 1.40)."

Labour policy, which in the first few decades after independence found a central place in government now, especially after NEP has been relegated to the margins. The basic labour rights guaranteed by the Constitution, provided in

namesake legal provisions stand violated, as noted in Section 3, denying the labouring people fundamental right under Article 21 to live with dignity. Labour reforms are driving the existing small labour force in formal sector to informalization/casualization without any social security and forcing them to work harder for long hours in poor and hazardous work conditions. In the name of simplification and expansion the existing laws are now been reduced to four codes, one wage code already enacted, rather arbitrarily without effective participation of workers. Emerging labour codes favour the corporate employers as they leave labour more vulnerable to market forces bereft of any effective state protection, free employers from obligation to provide social security and other benefits and dismantle the well-accepted and practiced labour regulation mechanism of tripartite engagement. The labour unions who earned rights with hard fought struggles have been constantly contesting these developments but to no avail. The twin challenges that labour in general face today include work of manual and industrial workers being devalued and diminishing role of labour in democratic participation in party politics without any exception (IHDI, 2014). Effective labour policy on ground to regulate including the recruitment practices, ensuring living statutory wages, adequate comprehensive social security, humane conditions of work and residence and right to form collectives is both the challenge and need of the hour. *In the context of labour law implementation in India based on the principle cited above the only conclusion we reach to is that we have an 'arbitrary government'.*

4.3.1 The basic labour right to organize and freedom to work requires policy push:

Two basic rights include right to organize and right to freedom, both of which are guaranteed as fundamental rights in the COI under Article 19. The right to form a union is also legally guaranteed under Trade Union Act, 1926. India universally accepted this right by signing the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights, Clause 23 (4) of which states, "Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests." Work without freedom is prohibited under Bonded Labour System Abolition Act, 1976. Unfortunately, the agricultural labourers stand deprived of both these rights for various reasons important being lack of awareness,[44] their peculiar location and poor implementation machinery. The Central Board of Workers Education under GoI is mandated but has completely failed to make workers aware about their rights and help in unionization and collective bargaining. The labour departments of state governments do not have any policy to make workers aware and inform. Labour education and skill programmes are urgently required for agricultural workers.

4.3.2 Wage to live a dignified life and access to minimum social security eludes, forcing workers to lead a precarious life:

Though every state notifies minimum wage, the legal wages are quite low and arbitrarily fixed and, in many instances, not linked to inflation and are not revised for years. Current wages are too low for DDL. Time has arrived to fix minimum wage based on widely discussed criteria of 15th Indian Labour Conference along with Supreme Court judgements. The 7th Pay Commission recommended 18,000 per month using this criteria and recently the Satpathy committee has recommended a minimum wage of Rs 375 per day at 2017 prices. The prevailing wages as we noted above in Para 2.3 are much below this threshold for a majority of workers. More worrisome is the concept of floor wage in wage code, currently fixed at Rs 178 per day is not even half of the recommended 375 and is below current minimum wage, is likely to be used only in the context of rural labour being placed lowest among wagers with severe social implications. Floor wage concept should be done away with. The wages under MNREGA should be equivalent to minimum wage of central government.

Social security of any kind is completely lacking due to filters used in the existing laws like laws related to pensions, health and maternity benefits, etc., making them non-applicable in the case of agriculture. Government support is negligible and there is no provision for employer's contribution in terms of land revenue or share in sale proceeds even after a threshold. There is no specific law for agricultural workers like Kerala Agricultural workers law or a welfare board like construction workers or beedi workers. A policy push is also required to safeguard the employment of agricultural labour through an employment policy as a labour right in tune with the peculiar conditions of employment.

44. One recent study about the tribal migrants from Alirajpur, MP to South Gujarat states, "The most disturbing finding was that none of the migrants surveyed had any knowledge of the laws, policies and institutions that were in place for their protection" (Banerjee, 2011: 11)

4.3.3 Employers and state fail to ensure available labour rights: [45]

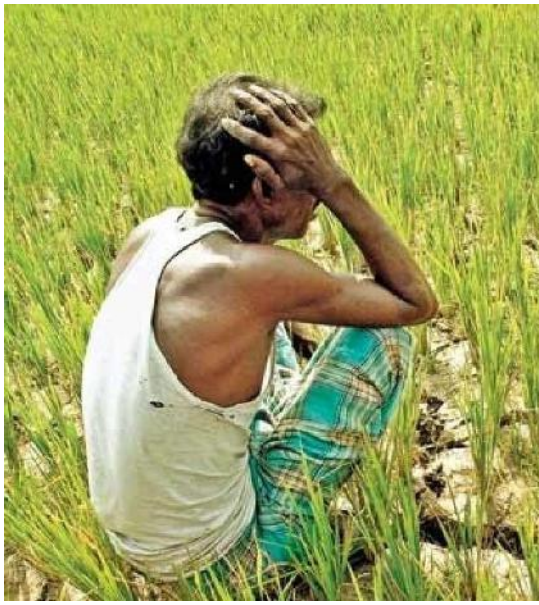
Whereas several laws related to pensions, maternity benefits, health benefits are legally available through various labour laws, which are now being re-written in four codes, they are enjoyed only by a select group of workers. Majority of workers are denied of these rights for reasons of number and money filters inserted in the laws, which continue in the codes. The agricultural workers are deprived of the benefits of even applicable laws like Minimum Wages Act, Payment of Wages Act, Workers Compensation Act, Interstate Migrant Workers Act due to reasons of lack of awareness, structural deficiencies and highly poor and ineffective implementation; torturously expensive and time-consuming legal redress and segmentation of labour. The non-implementation provisions time-based minimum wage and payment of wages by wage periods is extremely serious because, as we noted above, this pushes millions of labour into the condition of 'bondage' (see also Jaleel and Chattopadhyay, 2019: 32-33).

4.3.4 States deny labour rights:

The existing CTUs have not taken up the issues of migrant labour and efforts of several local, regional unions of affected workers have helped workers at local level in different ways, but are too weak to make an impact at the policy level. At a broader level on generic demands which may benefit the migrant workers as well, the CTUs have either failed or stand hijacked by the political party occupying seat of power for political purposes only or for weakening the struggle of national joint action programme.[46] Finally, the active role of state in buying dissent, dividing and diverting attention of mass workers in the name of region, religion and security and as a last resort the crackdown on any militant and sustained labour struggle by the state power limits the collective strength and gain of the collective power of workers, including at regional and local level. For labour, denial of their rights can be summed up as: *The denial is by design*.

4.4 Resource mobilization and allocation need structural changes:

Often, the logic given by the government is that there are not enough resources, that is, money to spend on social welfare. For instance, we are far behind in spending money on education and health compared to the well accepted ratio of six percent of GDP for education and three percent for health. Our total expenditure is not even at half and the logic given is the same. The reason for this lies in policies of taxation in allocation which are biased in favour of the rich. We have seen above in this section how the rich are allowed to become richer on the resources of the poor making the poor poorer. The same thing is happening on the taxation front, where the burden is increasingly placed on majority in terms of indirect taxes and with concessions to rich minority in terms of direct tax concession, including corporate tax. There is too much theft of direct taxes as well. The net losses are heavy in millions of crores. Feudal lords raised money from public through lag-bags, GoI is raising money through ever-widening and deepening indirect tax burden on the masses. Economists have made several suggestions to raise money for welfare of the people, directly and indirectly, like levying inheritance tax, wealth tax, mandatory payments from all categories of employers for labour welfare, no tax concessions to corporates, multiple tax-system for welfare programmes, and so on. Resources have been adversely hit because of the liberalization policy. The essence of the problem lies in the neoliberal policies. The budget proposals for the year 2020–21 announced on 1st February, 2020 are extremely disappointing as it cuts on the existing provisions for MGNREGA, food security, PM Kisan Yojana, education, etc. Though there are certain provisions for irrigation, skills, etc. but the overall budget is pro-market and provides more tax cuts to corporates; at 22 percent, corporate taxes are now lower than the global average of 23.79 percent and lower than countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Sri Lanka, Brazil, etc.



45. There are innumerable instances wherein the efforts of the unions, courts, civil society have failed to ensure even the fundamental right to form a union and struggle for just demands being crushed by blatant partisan roles in favour/in connivance with the employers. The classic cases in the recent past are the Maruti strike in Gurgoan (Venkat et al., 2017), Hero Honda in Alwar district of Rajasthan (Jha, 2016); the strike of sugarcane harvesters in South Gujarat just a few months back.

46. In the last few years for instance, there has been a joint national platform of all CTUs who are struggling for implementation of a 12-demand charter. There have been national strikes on several occasions. But despite having agreed with demand charter, the trade union affiliated to the ruling party backed out of joint struggle.

V

Contestation

Contestations, which takes several forms including day to day protests, shapes the social outcomes on the development path of a society. The historic role of contestation in shaping the development process and labour relations is well -accepted and documented. Emergence of May Day is an eloquent testimony to this. In contemporary India, to ensure DDL for the AGL, more effective contestation is required due to gross violation of labour rights as well as policy inadequacies under neo liberal regime, as noted above.

5.1 Broader unity essential to make the state duty-bound and accountable in ensuring labour rights:

The state, the union as well as state governments, duty-bound to ensure labour rights to workers, has, as this report establishes, miserably failed to enforce even minimum labour rights. Labour is the least priority for the governments which is amply reflected in the fact that labour portfolio is never given to a cabinet rank minister. The inspection machinery is highly inadequate and confined to employer-computer now, the penalty clauses are such the employers gain to violate than follow rules and unions are controlled by the ruling parties.[47] The fact that despite the long and powerful struggle, the demand for legislation to protect agricultural labourers could not be realised at central as well as most of the state levels barring the state of Kerala, which legislated Kerala Agricultural Workers Act, 1974, shows complete lack of political will. Of late, there is rampant exploitation of labour by the employers with impunity. Labour segmentation is part of the strategy. *Broader unity of the workers is the only way out*.

5.2. The past and the present:

Historically, there have been strong agricultural labour movements as well as peasant movements in several parts of India, especially in states of Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal. The impact of strong agricultural labour unions in Kerala reflects in highest agricultural wages, much higher than any state (see Section 2.4 on wages). The West Bengal tebhabaga movement or Andhra Pradesh land-grab movements are well-known.[48] Indian history is replete with

47. This is a peculiar feature of India which began on the eve of transfer of power in 1947 when on 3 May 1947 the Indian National Congress in the presence of a galaxy of leaders including Sardar Pater and Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation of INTUC in the Constitution Club Delhi. The first CTU-AITUC formed in the 1920s thus was no more the only platform and the journey of political party affiliated unions thus began in India. Now most of the CTUs are affiliated to parties and one affiliated to party in power becomes the most powerful, like BMS today. This is the reason that BMS does not join the joint public action. Interestingly, after split in Communist Party of India, the AITUC also split in 1964 and CITU emerged the trade union of CPI(M) party. This affects the labour rights adversely.

48. For first-hand account of *tebhaga* movement, visit labour archive website of VVGNLI to read the interview of Abini Lahiri, one of the leaders of movement. The website provides the history of several of the labour movements in India. For multi-state study of peasant movements consult several volume-report published by NLI. Abundant literature is available on peasant movements in India

strong peasant and labour movements.

5.2.1 The agricultural labour movement:

There exist federations like All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWU) and Bhartiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU) which claim membership in millions. For instance, the AIAWU claims membership of over 1.5 million people (Chopra, 2014). Hundreds of independent and other unions also exist across India. There are unions of sugarcane harvesters in Maharashtra for instance, who have fought and signed agreements. But national level efforts are missing at industry level like sugarcane harvesters, which are spread over several states. There is a need for that. There have been successes at local levels due to struggles, but the mass of agricultural labourers stands deprived of labour right of any kind, be it adequate wages and employment, decent work conditions and social security of any kind. On the contrary, millions are forced to work under conditions of modern slavery/debt-bondage due to non-implementation of available minimum legal rights. *Though unions are present, yet they are absent as they are working locally and in isolation.*

5.2.2 Current farmer/CTU agitations:

The ongoing Peasant agitations due to growing agrarian crisis has forced the state to act in the recent past. Under the pressure of agitations, GoI set-up committees/commissions for agriculture policy, land reforms including tenancy reforms; legislated land acquisition Act of 2013; several states announced loan wavers, GoI announced cash support in PM Kisan Yojana and states like Orissa and Andhra have announced similar and much better cash support programmes. More recently, the call of mass action by a collective of 250 organizations under AIKSCC on 4 November 2019 against the RCEP trade pact forced the GoI to withdraw support to RCEP.[49] But despite clamour for labour–peasant unity, agricultural labour remains out of the purview of AIKSCC struggles though one of the two main demands related to freedom from debt for all farmers include agricultural labourers and Minimum Support Price at C2 plus 50 percent cost as per MSSC.

On the labour front, the overall scenario is grim, though, on the eve of the national strike called by the CTUs on September 2, 2017 the GoI announced a raise in minimum wage on 31st August, 2017 and a committee was constituted to suggest minimum wage. The impact of the recent 8th January, 2020 national strike by the joint action platform of CTUs does not appear to be much. GoI has totally undermined the CTUs in preparing the labour codes, which literally put the labour on the margins.

5.2.3 The other newer forms of agitation: [50]

In addition to contestations by the worker collectives, in recent past one has witnessed several kinds of newer forms of mobilization in the form of campaigns like right to food campaign, right to employment, right to health, right to information, transparency and accountability, social security campaign, right to education, right to safe water and environment, protection of animals and bio-diversity, gender equity, and so on.[51] These are organized and led by rights activists coming from middle class, are educated and articulate and their base among rural mass is primarily through non-governmental organizations and activists associated with rights-based movements of all shades. Participation of labour unions is rather low in such forum. All the issues raised by these campaigns are equally important for the agricultural labour and collaboration needs consideration.

5.2.4 Linkages with international unions:

World over, about 1.1 billion people or 40 percent people are employed as wage workers in the agricultural sector. They are placed similarly socially, as they receive poverty wages, their living and working conditions are inhuman and they face oppression and discrimination on a daily basis. Many are forced to migrate. Their labour rights stand denied and violated by employers, state, and of late corporates in different ways. Across globe they are fighting for rights through unions and alliances using various methods of struggles including strikes and boycotts, bravely facing repressions of different kinds. In the era of globalization when global value chains and international corporations are playing a major role in

49. The AIKSCC is a joint platform of farmers and agricultural workers that emerged in 2017 with two main demands of freedom from debt and remunerative prices, loaded in favour of farmers in terms of both name and demands, though demand for freedom from debt includes both tenant and landless farmers but not agricultural labour. In the name of labour also does not appear. In 2017 the number of affiliated organizations was 150 and now it has grown to 250. For details of RCEP related news refer to https://www.business-standard.com/article/printer-friendly-version?article_id=119103101505_1

50. These movements have been instrumental in ensuring important legal rights in MNREGA, NFSA, RTI and raising several other issues prominently.

51. These movements have led to several legal rights for the people of India like MNREGA, NFSA, RTI.

integrating the agricultural sector globally and in the process influencing local agriculture sectors, *it is important that the concerned labour movements in individual nation states form alliances to fight jointly to realize their common set of demands*. Such alliances would, *inter alia*, help individuals and country-specific movements in several ways by sharing and learning about each others' knowledge and experiences.

In a recently concluded meeting (October 2018) in Stellenbosch, South Africa, of International Farm Workers Forum the common demand charter included right to organize and collective bargaining, living wage, effective implementation of laws, social security and social protection, not undermining and confusing rights, and legal provisions and regulation of supply chains to reign in corporate power.

It further resolved to work together to: organize and fight jointly including with other progressive social movements; increase political education of membership; work for women's participation and gender equity including fighting against gender-based violence; strengthen the alliances between us and across borders and sectors; link up struggles of workers along supply chains; fight for land and water; protect workers threatened with eviction, including after land redistribution; fight divisive policies between domestic and migrant workers , and; work towards new strategies to organize migrant workers. *The agenda is strikingly similar to what we want. To face global capital, global labour unity is imperative.*

5.3 Weakening agricultural labour movement:

The strong mobilisations of yester years is not to be seen. There may be several reasons for the weakening of agricultural labour movements in-line with overall labour conditions. Village-based agricultural labour force is no more a dominant labour force in contemporary India which was the basis of strong militant agricultural labour movements in the past; male/family circular migration[52] is a dominant form of employment; existence of multiple sources of livelihoods; replacement of local labour with migrants in several areas of where powerful labour movements started like in Punjab; changing values, morality, aspirations of the new generation; resource crunch to support full-timers; no work among migrants and so on. The large unions seem to have largely overlooked these aspects of changes in worker-profile in their work strategies as there is no visible change of strategy in unionization work to account for these changes.[53] Another significant reason is the changing character of the *Dalit* movements. Researches related to struggles of labourers for wages, land, and freedom from forced labour were the struggles of the Dalit workers (Omvedt, 1980). Over the years, due to differentiation within the *Dalit* community, contemporary *dalit* movements have been captured by elite within the community with focus on job-reservation and other benefits. Issues like minimum wage, labour rights and neo-bondage are of least concern to them and efforts get lip service. Giving the strategies a rethink is necessary on the part of existing CTUs and others working to organize workers.

5.4 Some critical issues

In the context of agenda and strategy, this overview raises some critical questions/issues that need deliberation and understanding by workers' organizations: What kind of structural changes are taking place in the economy with what impact on the labour/ALF? How should one view it and what strategy one should have towards technology and in that the mechanization of agricultural processes that is displacing and will continue to displace millions of workers in the near future? What is the understanding and what are the views on forward and backward linkages, especially in relation to the corporate control of inputs, value chains, contract farming, etc.? What are the views on the role of state, specifically in the context of the land question and agricultural development? What is the stand on remunerative prices which benefits the rich farmers who produce for market and adversely affects the mass of labour and provides little or no benefit to small and marginal farmers[54] who produce for self-reproduction or part sale? Is scarcity of labour a reality or myth? Are high wages a threat to agriculture? Do high wages make agriculture unviable? What are the implications of this for ALF? What stand does one take on self-employment? How essential is it and how to forge effective unity with peasants and alliances with other groups, campaigns and social movements? What should be the view on occupation-specific and universal entitlements and/ or combination of both? What strategies can be planned for ensuring benefits of labour laws? And in this context around issues like neo-bondage, rights of women, child exploitation, general and worker-awareness? What view should be taken on employers' contribution towards agricultural labours rights to social security and other benefits and taxing the rich farmers?

52. Circular migration for instance needs a different strategy of organization as the place of work and residence are located at a distance. The usual strategy of organization at place of work is unlikely to be useful and fruitful.
53. Recently, in one of the meetings one senior trade union leader confessed that they have so far not paid much attention to migrant labour which now is the dominant mode of work in agriculture.
54. Researchers find that millions of small and marginal farmers all over the country purchase a significant part of their staple food in market and are harmed by a rise in the food prices as they buy from the market and sellers do not get benefit of MSP (Dogra, 1998).

5.5 The Challenges

There are a host of challenges that confront the agricultural workers, the largest segment in the informal workforce, for effective unionisation. One relates to their varied conditions, location and employment relations they enter into under force of existential reality of poverty and social backwardness. Tens of millions of workers, as we noted above, are forced to migrate for short durations to earn a livelihood. At the place of destination for a short period to complete the given task, they find it difficult, even impossible, to raise their voice against their powerful employers. Moreover, millions of circular migrants are tied to debt-advance and work in conditions of neo-bondage facilitated and managed by their own kin and kith in many instances or a powerful and oppressive contractor. The terms of oral contracts are such that migrants voluntarily chose to work for long hours without any respite to maximize their earnings under the most hostile and difficult conditions of work and living. Organizing them at workplace is extremely challenging

Whereas it has always been a difficult task to unionise the agricultural workers, recent developments pose a new set of challenges. Growing segmentation, individualization and increasing consumerism poses new barriers in the organizational work. Some have gone to the extent of equating the rising consumerism with 'opium'. [55] The growing division among people based on region, religion and caste is diverting attention from the material/substantive issues; media apathy towards unions and neoliberal policies of free market in addition to labour related issues stated above, are equally formidable challenges. Use and promotion of fast developing technology that replaces labour with machines, drones and 'robots' and use of the technology to control and misguide the masses, is yet another major challenge before the workers. Artificial Intelligence may prove to be the most important challenge. All this makes the task of unionization and broader unity challenging and simultaneously most urgent.

5.6 The prospects

There are positive sides as well. The emerging adverse objective conditions manifested in high unemployment, low wages, rising inequality, etc., on the one hand and favourable subjective conditions in articulation of rising discontent in effective demands for changes in policies which are expressed in daily contestations, rising number of platforms to demand and protests, joints actions at national levels has resulted in successes on the other hand. The urgency and need for broader unity is now realized more than ever and accordingly, efforts are being made, as mentioned above, at several levels and platforms. The major unions are now becoming more inclusive and taking leads in broader unity of workers. Growing education, awareness and articulation are positive aspects that need to be harnessed. The material, social and political conditions today is a subject of much discussion and efforts are being made and experiments done to find meaningful and effective tactics and strategy for furthering the cause of the workers, including at the international level. The political process routed in one-man one-vote compels the state to talk welfare and appear to be doing everything for the welfare of the people.

How, through contestation, compel the state to 'walk the talk' as per Part IV of the COI referred at the outset is the goal that workers need to realize. The ALF has to not only join and play an effective role in this process of such contestation, but perhaps it has to take lead. Baba Saheb Ambedkar, in his speech of 25th November, 1946, on the eve of Constitution day, talked about the 'trinity' of 'political, social and economic' equity and said the Constitution has conferred 'political' equity in one-person one-vote but the more onerous task of social and economic equity lies in the implementation of the provisions of the Constitution and warned that the political freedom achieved will be at stake in absence of social and economic equity. Broad unity and sustained struggle are essential to realize the goal of trinity.

55. Professor Arun Kumar, noted economist, has been talking about it in most of his addresses. For instance, he referred to this in his address to the meeting of Social Security Now on 5th November 2019 at VYK, New Delhi.

VI

Conclusion: Issues and Suggestions

Our conclusion is crystal clear. Changes in the economy in the wake of growth are not transformative enough to provide a dignified decent life to agricultural labour force. For that to happen, state interventions are inevitable and exist but are highly inadequate at both policy level and in implementation of policies adopted and require a fresh look on both counts, keeping in view COI provisions, in light of Mahatma Gandhi's Talisman and Baba Saheb Ambdekar's dream in consultation with stakeholders and the goal of DDL. Our report underlines urgent need for policy shift in consonance with several recommendations submitted by the government -appointed commissions and committees. Based on our report following measures, jointly taken by the workers, employers and the state, it should help realize the goal of a dignified decent life to all. It is the duty of the people of India to ensure fair share of workers in the value created. Collective effort is inevitable and so is contestation.

6.1: Ensure minimum labour rights to agricultural wage earners through an empowered mission/task-force

Seven decades post-independence, access to the bare minimum labour rights eludes the AGL. In our view, GoI in consultation with the states, must forthwith constitute an empowered mission/task force with workers representative with a simple mandate of ensuring a set of minimum labour rights to the ALF and their effective implementation. The minimum rights should include: (a) recognition as a worker through the process of registration of employers and employees to ensure visibility and identity of workers, right to organize and collective bargaining; (b) ensuring minimum wages on time-basis by developing a mechanism for fixing piece rates through time and motion study; (c) ensuring access to social security in old-age pension, sickness allowance, maternity and accident benefits, unemployment allowance, and; (d) humane work and living conditions. To move towards this, a model, based on Maharashtra Mathadi Workers Act which has been held as the best model, should be adopted and implemented, a model that puts zero burden on the government for welfare of the workers and even management of the labour regulation mechanism. Hailed as the best model in the world by ILO, why should this not be a top priority for the state in a phased manner?

6.2: Employment policy

The most worrisome issue the present report underlines is the critical employment, underemployment situation in general and the ALF in particular. There is sharp decline in employment of agricultural workers to the tune of 63.4 million over a period of 13 years from 2005 to 2018 with no adequate number of alternative jobs, which is a serious issue that needs immediate attention. Moreover, the implementation of the MGNREGA is very poor to the extent that workers have lost hope. Wages are low, payments are delayed and corruption is high. Two-fold State intervention is immediately required – a policy on employment in consultation with workers and strengthening and effective implementation of MGNREGA to regain confidence of workers. Specifically, about MGNREGA: (a) identify 'labour catchment' areas and increase days of employment to 200 days there; (b) link wages with minimum wage; (c) make employment on individual basis and link it with agricultural policy, and; (d) initiate mass awareness as a legal right.

6.3: Implement NPFF 2007 and recommendations of MSSC and take up the unfinished agenda of land-reforms on urgency with top priority and align other policies

More than a decade has passed since the submission of the MSSC report and NPFF, 2007 but no effort has been made for effective implementation of the recommendations, especially the one related to the AGL like considering landless labour as a farmer and extending benefits of social security like PM Kisan Yojana, the new proposed pension scheme, and debt-redemption, providing land, public employment to them. MSSC had warned of serious social consequences if immediate steps are not taken in "social disruption, violence and increasing human insecurity. Without peace and security, enduring economic progress will not be possible." Implementation of NPFF, 2007, MSSC is inevitable for '*sabaka saath, sabak vikaas*'. Equally important is to revive the Draft Policy on Land Reforms of 2013 and finalize the same in consultation with stakeholders and implement it. GoI should immediately set-up a high-powered task force with representation of all stakeholders for this.

6.4: Implement Satpathy Committee report on minimum wages:

The present Union government had appointed this committee, which submitted its report in February, 2009. The recommendation of the committee regarding minimum wages has been totally ignored in the new wage code passed after the submission of the report. The new Wage Code, in fact, creates confusion about wages as two concepts have been introduced. In addition to minimum wage, the concept of a 'floor wage' has been introduced. The present national wage of Rs 178, presumed to be floor wage is less than half of the Satpathy committee's recommended minimum wage of Rs 375 per day at 2018 prices. This is a regressive step as it is less than the average a worker is getting and will harm the ALF the most. It is necessary that this confusion is cleared by withdrawing floor wage and fixing minimum wage as per the recommendation of the Satpathy committee. The well-accepted criteria of fixation of minimum wages of 15th ILC with the Supreme Court judgments should be made part of the main law itself by amendment.

6.5: Ensure financial inclusion of the ALF on priority basis:

The need for financial inclusion is well recognized by the GoI and major ground has been covered in opening accounts. But the ALF which constitutes majority of workers, is excluded from this, especially the most vulnerable who resort to 'distress migration' for bare survival. Our report suggests that lack of transparency in calculation of wages earned and timely payments are the major problems that these workers face leading to their severe exploitation, deprivation and 'bondage' earning a bad name for the country. It must be unacceptable. GoI should issue a notification under Section 15 of the Wage Code to ensure payment of wages by cheque or online and as per wage period in accordance of Section 17 of wage code to all the (migrant) workers, irrespective of their destination. Simultaneously a massive programme for financial literacy with wage literacy should be launched without any cost to the poor labourers who are too simple and can be exploited and manipulated.

6.6: Awareness, education and skilling:

The profile of the ALF is changing slowly as more educated young persons are joining it, but largely, the question of awareness about policy provisions related to labour rights and education and skills remain. The latest PLFS says that only two percent people are formally skilled. Skilling about 250 million is a massive task. Without skilling, they will lose work opportunities. There is an urgent need for a special package to create awareness, education and skilling of the ALF including for those who are exiting. In the context of education, the most importance intervention required is to reduce the wide gap between the education of the poorest and the rich. CBWE and VVGNLI should be given the task of awareness, education and Ministry of Labour for skilling.

6.7: Put in place a policy for circular migrants:

Circular migration as section three of our report indicates is one of the important aspects of employment not only for the ALF but for the economy as a whole. There is literally no policy including housing policy for the mass of workers, forcing them to lead a life in inhuman conditions, work like slaves with adverse implications. They even do not have the right to vote at destination. The slogan of housing-for-all as part of GoI's vision sounds hollow looking at the conditions in which these workers live at the place of destination despite the fact that in many cases, the employers would be the factory owners. A comprehensive policy is required to redress these issues.

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Annexure – I

Definition of Workers: Census and NSSO

- According to the Census, workers are persons who participate in "any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit." Workers include supervisors, part-time helpers, unpaid workers, as well as those engaged in cultivation or milk production solely for domestic consumption.
- The NSSO defines "workers" as "persons who, at the time of enumeration, are engaged in any economic activity that adds value to the national product." Such activities may include (i) the production of all goods and services for the market; (ii) government services; (iii) the production of primary commodities for own consumption; and (iv) own-account production of fixed assets, including the construction of own-houses, roads, and wells.
- The Census categorises workers as main and marginal based on the number of days they worked during the reference period, which is one year preceding the date of enumeration. Main workers are persons who worked for a major part of the reference period (that is, for six months or more). Persons who worked for less than six months during the reference period are termed marginal workers.
- The NSSO defines "usual principal status workers" as persons who worked for a "relatively large part" of the reference period, which is one year preceding the date of the survey. From the rest of the population, the NSSO identifies "usual subsidiary status workers," persons who worked for at least 30 days during the reference period.
- PLFS Definitions: An activity on which a person spent 'relatively long time' (major time criterion) during the 365 days preceding the date of survey was considered the 'usual principal activity status' of the person. 'Subsidiary economic activity status' in addition to his/her usual principal status, some 'economic activity for 30 days or more' during the reference period of 365 days preceding the date of survey. In case of multiple subsidiary economic activities, the major activity and status based on the "relatively long time spent" criterion was considered.
- PLFS defines 'workers' as those persons who were engaged in "any economic activity or who, despite their attachment to economic activity, abstained themselves from work for reason of illness, injury or other physical disability, bad weather, festivals, social or religious functions or other contingencies necessitating temporary absence from work, constituted workers". Unpaid household members who assisted in the operation of an economic activity in the household farm or non-farm activities were also considered as workers. Relevant activity status codes 11 to 72 were assigned for workers. Workers were further categorized as self-employed (relevant activity status codes: 11, 12, 21, 61, 62), regular wage/salaried employee (relevant activity status codes: 31, 71, 72), and casual labour (relevant activity status cods: 41, 42 and 51).

Annexure – 2

TABLES

Table: A1: WPR (*in per cent)* in usual status (ps+ss) during 1972-73 (27th round) and PLFS (2017-2018) usually (ps+ss) employed

All-India

Round	Rural			urban			all		
(year)	Male	Fe-male	Person	male	female	Per-son	male	female	Person
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
PLFS (2017-18)	51.7	17.5	35.0	53.0	14.2	33.9	52.1	16.5	34.7
68th (2011-12)	54.3	24.8	39.9	54.6	14.7	35.5	54.4	21.9	38.6
66th (2009-10)	54.7	26.1	40.8	54.3	13.8	35.0	54.6	22.8	39.2
61st (2004-05)	54.6	32.7	43.9	54.9	16.6	36.5	54.7	28.7	42.0
55th (1999-00)	53.1	29.9	41.7	51.8	13.9	33.7	52.7	25.9	39.7
50th (1993-94)	55.3	32.8	44.4	52.1	15.5	34.7	54.5	28.6	42.0
43rd (1987- 88)	53.9	32.3	43.4	50.6	15.2	33.7	53.1	28.5	41.2
38th (1983)	54.7	34.0	44.5	51.2	15.1	34.0	53.8	29.6	42.0
32nd (1977-78)	55.2	33.1	44.4	50.8	15.6	34.1	54.3	29.7	42.3
27th (1972-73)	54.5	31.8	*	50.1	13.4	*	*	*	*

Source: PLFS, 2019 Statement 10 Page 56

Table A1A : Worker Population Ratio (WPR) (in per cent) according to usual status (ps+ss) for different social groups during NSS 61st (2004-05), 66th (2009-10), 68th (2011-12) rounds and PLFS (2017-18)-all- India

NSS Rounds	Household social groups				
(year)	ST	SC	OBC	Others	all (incl. n
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
			rural male		
PLFS (2017-18)	53.8	52.3	50.5	52.2	51.7
68th(2011-12)	55.7	53.9	53.8	55.2	54.3
66th (2009-10)	55.9	54.8	54.0	55.2	54.7
61st (2004-05)	56.2	54.5	53.7	55.7	54.6
			rural female		
PLFS (2017-18)	27.0	17.4	16.8	14.1	17.5
68th(2011-12)	36.4	26.2	23.9	20.1	24.8
66th (2009-10)	35.9	26.9	26.7	19.9	26.1
61st (2004-05)	46.4	33.3	33.0	26.2	32.7
			urban male		
PLFS (2017-18)	49.9	52.5	53.2	53.1	53.0
68th(2011-12)	52.0	54.5	54.6	54.9	54.6
66th (2009-10)	51.0	55.0	54.3	54.2	54.3
61st (2004-05)	52.3	53.7	55.4	55.0	54.9
			urban female		
PLFS (2017-18)	17.0	17.2	14.3	12.6	14.2
68th(2011-12)	19.2	17.2	15.1	12.9	14.7
66th (2009-10)	20.3	17.8	14.5	11.3	13.8
61st (2004-05)	24.5	20.0	18.5	13.4	16.6

Source: PLFS 2019 Statement 43 Chapter 3

Table A2: Size of India's work force according to Census of India (2001, 2011) and NSSO surveys (1999–2000, 2011–12) in millions

	2011 or 2011–12			2001 or 1999–2000			Increase between 2001 (1999–2000) and 2011 (2011–12)		
	Persons	Males	Females	**Persons**	**Males**	**Females**	Persons	Males	Females
Main workers (Census)	362.4	273.1	89.3	313.0	240.1	72.9	49.4	33.0	16.4
PS workers (NSSO)	434.6	339.3	95.4	367.4	270.3	97.1	67.2	69.0	–1.7
Marginal workers (Census)	119.3	58.7	60.6	89.2	34.9	54.4	30.1	23.8	6.2
SS workers (NSSO)	37.9	4.3	33.6	31.0	4.1	26.9	6.9	0.2	6.7
Total Census	481.7	331.9	149.9	402.2	275.0	127.2	79.5	56.9	22.7
Total NSSO	472.5	343.5	129.0	398.4	274.4	124.0	74.1	69.1	5.0

Source: *Notes:* NSSO=National Sample Survey Organization; PS=principal status workers; and SS=subsidiary status workers.
Source: NSSO (2014); Economic Tables, Census of India 2011.(Quoted from Thomas and Jayes, 2016)

Table A3-A: Percentage distribution of workers by employment status and industry (percent)

Employment Status	Industry	Rural male			Rural female		
		1993-94	2004-05	2011-12	1993-94	2004-05	2011-12
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Self-employed	**Agriculture**	44.8	42.2	38.9	50.3	53.8	48.1
	Manufacturing	3.5	4.1	3.6	4.6	6.3	7.4
	Trade	4.9	6.6	6.4	2	2.4	2.5
	Transport	0.8	1.7	1.8	0	0.1	0
	Construction	0.5	1.2	1.3	0	0	0
	Other Ser	2.7	2.1	2.4	1.3	1	1
Regular wage	**Agriculture**	1.2	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
	Manufacturing	1.6	1.8	2.5	0.6	0.7	0.9
	Transport	1	1.4	1.7	0	0.1	0.1
	Other Ser	3.8	3.3	3.6	1.5	2.4	3.9
Casual labour	**Agriculture**	27.7	23.2	20	35.6	29.2	26.4
	Construction	2.6	5.5	11.4	0.8	1.4	6.6
	Manufacturing	1.8	1.9	2	1.7	1.2	1.4
	Total	96.9	95.9	96.1	98.9	99	98.7
Total by status	**Self-employed**	57.4	58	54.4	58.2	63.7	59
	RegularWage	8.6	9	10	2.6	3.7	5.6
	Casual Wage	34	32.9	35.5	38.9	32.4	35.2

Source: Taken/Calculated from Table 2 in Usami and Rawal (2018)

Table:A 3-B: Percentage distribution of workers in usual status (ps+ss) by broad industry division during 1977-78 (NSS 32nd round) to 2017-18 (PLFS) by regions and gender, all-India

broad industry division	Category	1977-78	1983	1987-88	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	2017-18
	NSS Round	32nd	38th	43rd	50th	55th	61th	66th	68th	PLFS
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Agriculture	rural male	80.6	77.5	74.5	74.1	71.4	66.5	62.8	59.4	55.0
	rural fem	88.1	87.5	84.7	86.2	85.4	83.3	79.4	74.9	73.2
	urban male	10.6	10.3	9.1	9.0	6.6	6.1	6.0	5.6	5.4
	urban fem	31.9	31.0	29.4	24.7	17.7	18.1	13.9	10.9	9.1
Manufacturing	rural male	6.4	7.0	7.4	7.0	7.3	7.9	7.0	8.1	7.7
	rural femle	5.9	6.4	6.9	7.0	7.6	8.4	7.5	9.8	8.1
	urban male	27.6	26.8	25.7	23.5	22.4	23.5	21.8	22.4	22.4
	urban fem	29.6	26.7	27.0	24.1	24.0	28.2	27.9	28.7	25.2
Construction	rural male	1.7	2.2	3.7	3.2	4.5	6.8	11.3	13.0	14.5
	rural fem	0.6	0.7	2.7	0.9	1.1	1.5	5.2	6.6	5.3
	urban male	4.2	5.1	5.8	6.9	8.7	9.2	11.4	10.7	11.7
	urban fem	2.2	3.1	3.7	4.1	4.8	3.8	4.7	4.0	4.1
Trade, hotels and restaurants	rural male	4.0	4.4	5.1	5.5	6.8	8.3	8.2	8.0	9.2
	rural fem	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.5	2.8	3.0	4.0
	urban male	21.6	20.3	21.5	21.9	29.4	28.0	27.0	26.0	24.5
	urban fem	8.7	9.5	9.8	10.0	16.9	12.2	12.1	12.8	13.0
Transport, storage and communication	rural male	1.2	1.7	2.0	2.2	3.2	3.8	4.1	4.2	5.2
	rural -fem	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
	urban male	9.8	9.9	9.7	9.7	10.4	10.7	10.4	11.7	12.7
	urban fem	1.0	1.5	0.9	1.3	1.8	1.4	1.4	2.7	3.3
Other Services	rural male	5.3	6.1	6.2	7.0	6.1	5.9	5.5	6.4	7.6
	rural fem	3.0	2.8	3.0	3.4	3.7	3.9	4.6	5.2	8.9
	urban male	24.3	24.8	25.2	26.4	21.0	20.8	21.9	21.4	21.5
	urban fem	26.0	26.6	27.8	35.0	34.2	35.9	39.3	39.6	44.4

Source: PLFS 2019, Statement 16 P:65

Table: A 4: Youth (age 15 to 29 years) unemployment and NLET in Indian states, 2005-2018

Name of the States	Unemployment rate (%)			Unemployed (million)			Not in Labour Force, Education and Training (million)		
	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18	2004-05	2011-12	2017-18
Andhra Pradesh*	3.2	5.9	18.9	0.5	0.7	2.2	4.2	5.3	5.8
Assam	7.8	15.0	27.0	0.3	0.5	0.8	2.0	2.5	2.6
Bihar	5.4	9.8	22.8	0.4	0.8	1.8	6.7	8.9	10.9
Gujarat	2.4	1.3	13.3	0.2	0.1	1.0	3.2	4.2	5.2
Haryana	6.3	8.1	20.7	0.2	0.3	0.8	1.6	2.1	2.4
Himachal Pradesh	4.7	4.0	18.4	0.06	0.04	0.17	0.1	0.2	0.3
Jammu & Kashmir	6.0	9.5	15.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.5
Karnataka	2.8	4.4	15.8	0.3	0.3	1.2	3.3	4.3	5.0
Kerala	28.2	20.6	36.3	1.3	0.7	1.0	1.7	1.8	1.3
Madhya Pradesh	2.1	2.6	12.0	0.2	0.2	1.3	3.9	4.8	5.9
Maharashtra	4.7	3.8	15.0	0.8	0.6	1.9	5.5	6.6	7.2
Odisha	12.5	6.5	23.6	0.9	0.3	1.1	2.9	3.2	3.8
Punjab	10.0	5.8	21.6	0.4	0.2	0.7	1.6	2.0	2.0
Rajasthan	2.7	2.9	14.3	0.3	0.3	1.2	3.1	4.0	5.6
Tamil Nadu	5.2	7.8	25.6	0.5	0.7	2.2	3.3	4.5	4.1
Uttar Pradesh	2.7	4.3	16.7	0.6	1.0	3.6	13.8	16.2	20.7
	7.7	8.8	13.2	0.9	1.0	1.5	7.5	6.9	8.8
Delhi	10.4	11.3	22.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	1.0	1.0	1.6
Chhattisgarh	2.0	4.1	10.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.9	1.1	1.5
Jharkhand	5.5	7.7	20.4	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.7	2.4	3.0
Uttarakhand	5.1	10.2	27.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.7
NE states excl. Assam	9.0	16.3	26.0	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.6	1.0
All India	**5.4**	**6.1**	**17.8**	**8.9**	**9.0**	**25.1**	**69.5**	**83.7**	**100.2**

Source: Authors' estimation based on NSS and PLFS unit level data. Note: * The state *Telangana* is combined with Andhra Pradesh (Mahrotra and Parida, 2019)

Table A5: Rates of Growth of Real Wages 1987-88 to 1999-2000 (in%)

States	1987-88 - 1993-94 Male	1993-94- 1999-2000 Male	1987-88 – 1999-2000 Male	1987-88 – 1993-94 Female	1993-94 – 1999-2000 Female	1987-88- 1999-2000 Female
Andhra	**2.01**	**3.96**	**2.98**	**3.80**	**3.15**	**3.47**
Assam	**0.68**	**1.63**	**1.16**	**0.21**	**0.69**	**0.45**
Bihar	**-0.58**	**5.31**	**2.32**	**0.17**	**5.64**	**2.87**
Gujarat	**3.33**	**3.76**	**3.54**	**3.71**	**1.68**	**2.69**
Haryana	**0.04**	**3.25**	**1.63**	**0.48**	**4.50**	**2.47**
Karnataka	**3.06**	**3.59**	**3.32**	**4.97**	**2.79**	**3.87**
Kerala	**-0.12**	**6.31**	**3.05**	**0.71**	**5.11**	**2.89**
Madhya Pradesh	**2.64**	**0.63**	**1.63**	**2.70**	**1.19**	**1.94**
Maharashtra	**3.03**	**2.63**	**2.83**	**3.33**	**3.45**	**3.39**
Odisha	**3.15**	**1.44**	**2.29**	**3.30**	**2.35**	**2.82**
Punjab	**2.85**	**-0.40**	**1.21**	**6.45**	**1.31**	**3.85**
Rajasthan	**1.37**	**3.23**	**2.30**	**3.93**	**1.76**	**2.84**
Tamil Nadu	**5.74**	**4.40**	**5.06**	**6.23**	**4.20**	**5.21**
Uttar Pradesh	**2.30**	**2.37**	**2.33**	**2.20**	**2.50**	**2.35**
West Bengal	**1.67**	**2.80**	**2.23**	**1.96**	**2.22**	**2.09**
All India	**1.43**	**2.80**	**2.11**	**2.41**	**2.95**	**2.68**

Source: Jose, 2013

Table A6: Average Wages (Rs) per day of Rural Casual Labourers in Operations Other than Public Works

States	1999-2000*		2004-05		2007-08		2009-2010	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Andhra Pradesh	40.67	26.48	50.30	30.88	81.69	55.02	115.41	75.71
Assam	48.82	35.33	62.59	53.29	74.05	58.25	94.38	74.87
Bihar	36.53	31.57	45.41	37.42	60.35	50.99	81.03	65.81
Gujarat	43.91	34.43	52.80	43.17	68.53	58.97	87.31	70.09
Haryana	62.65	51.01	75.26	59.34	103.48	81.48	146.08	99.12
Karnataka	42.51	27.14	48.33	30.74	68.54	44.92	96.91	62.77
Kerala	100.78	56.65	134.86	65.75	170.47	86.46	226.60	119.31
Madhya Pradesh	30.15	24.91	38.58	30.53	53.79	44.45	74.46	58.13
Maharashtra	41.32	25.28	47.37	28.16	63.99	39.87	86.01	58.22
Odisha	31.14	23.34	42.29	29.65	55.56	42.00	81.00	59.06
Punjab	65.86	49.48	75.14	53.10	100.74	73.57	133.46	91.80
Rajasthan	55.19	37.02	64.33	52.03	85.29	70.14	132.29	94.31
Tamil Nadu	60.20	30.78	70.45	36.53	101.70	51.30	132.14	72.62
Uttar Pradesh	43.50	30.08	53.37	39.54	73.46	58.26	97.04	68.21
West Bengal	44.60	35.59	49.88	39.99	68.83	55.82	87.76	65.94
All India	44.84	29.01	55.03	34.94	75.30	51.17	101.53	68.94
Standard Deviation	17.69	10.21	23.55	11.97	29.28	14.14	39.23	17.72

Source: Jose, 2013: * Figures for the year 1999-2000 are for the age groups five years and above; from NSS Report No 458: *Employment and Unemployment Situation in India*, 1999-2000, Table 6.11; Figures for 2004-05 refer to average daily wages of casual workers in operations other than public works taken from NSS Report Number 515: *Employment and Unemployment Situation n India,* 2004-05, Statement 5.11.3 Figures for 2007-08 are wage earnings of rural casual workers for agricultural, public and non-public works and taken from NSS Report No. 531: *Employment and Unemployment Situation in India*: July 2007-June 2008, Statement 21.1 Figures for 2009-10 refer to wage earnings of rural casual labour engaged in works other than public works, and are from NSS Key Indicators of Employment and Unemployment in India, 2009-10, Table S39.

Table: A7: Proportions of households that did not cultivate any land, by State, rural India, 1987–88- 2011–12

State	1987–88	1993–94	1999–2000	2004–05	2009–10	2011–12
Andhra Pradesh	45.9	49.5	52.3	60.9	66.2	61.2
Assam	31.2	29.4	35.6	25.8	27.1	38.3
Bihar (undivided)	34.7	37.5	41.5	41.8	48.7	45.7
M. P. (undivided)	25.8	24.9	27.4	31.6	32.5	38.3
Goa	–	60.4	68.8	72.9	67.7	95.3
Gujarat	47.2	46.3	42.8	51.6	44.8	52.7
Haryana	45.6	51.5	48.8	59.4	59.9	60.4
Himachal Pradesh	11.4	13.3	17.4	19.6	17.8	21.3
Jammu & Kashmir	14	16.2	13.3	10.6	15.9	22.7
Karnataka	40	38.3	42.2	46.4	53.4	47.9
Kerala	19.6	69.4	36.1	40.4	45.6	52.7
Maharashtra	39.1	43	42.8	48.3	47.6	49.7
Manipur	16.2	22.1	34.3	17.2	25.8	29.8
Meghalaya	18.4	17.2	12.4	16	36.6	26.4
Mizoram	17.2	5	14.4	12.8	22	24.2
Nagaland	–	4.4	10.5	8.9	14	8.1
Orissa	35.7	35.4	38.4	41.8	38.2	40.5
Punjab	57.1	61.5	61.2	68.3	68.2	73.5
Rajasthan	21.9	18.9	21.8	26.3	30.4	29.4
Sikkim	15	32.2	35.1	44.2	41.9	22.2
Tamil Nadu	57.1	63.4	67	72	77.4	78.9
Tripura	58.7	52.1	57.8	54.6	63.3	62.2
Uttar Pradesh(undivided)	22.7	22.9	26	28.8	33	35
West Bengal	39.6	41.6	48.1	47.8	62.2	65
India	**35.4**	**38.7**	**40.9**	**43.4**	**47.1**	**48.5**

Source: Rawal, 2014.

Table A 8: Percentage distribution of workers in usual status (ps+ss) by broad occupation division of NCO 2004 2011-12 and 2017-18 all-India

Occupation Division	Rural-male		Rural-Female		Urban-male		Urban-female	
	2011-12	2017-18	2011-12	2017-18	2011-12	2017-18	2011-12	2017-18
1	2	3	3	4	6	7	8	9
1.Legislator/officials	4.2	5.1	2.0	2.9	17.0	15.4	10.8	9.8
2 Professionals	1.9	2.0	1.1	1.8	8.1	8.4	11.6	13.1
3 Technicians etcetera	1.8	2.0	1.9	4.0	6.0	6.6	9.5	11.7
4 Clarks	1.0	1.2	0.3	0.4	4.9	4.1	5.0	4.8
5 Service/shop/sale	5.6	7	2.7	4.1	15.4	16.6	11.5	15.3
6 Agriculture skilled	38.8	40.5	47.9	47.1	4.1	3.8	6.4	4.9
7 Craft etcetera	11	10	10	6.6	19	18.8	19.9	16.7
8 Plant machinery	4.1	5.6	0.6	0.5	10.8	11.1	2.7	1.9
9 Elementary	31.4	26.5	33.3	32.6	14.5	15.2	22.5	21.9
X Unspecified	0.1	-	0.1	-	0.1	-	0.1	-
all (inl. n.r.)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: PLFS 2019 Statement 17 P: 67. The occupation divisions of NCO-2004 are: **Division 1:** Legislators, officials, managers, **Division 2:** Professionals, **Division 3:** Technicians/associate professionals, **Division 4:** Clerks, **Division 5:** Service workers and shop & market sales workers, **Division 6**: Skilled agricultural/fishery workers, **Division 7:** Craft and related trades workers, **Division 8**: Plant and machine operators and assemblers, **Division 9**: Elementary occupations and **Division X:** Workers not classified by occupations

PART 2

Annotated References

1. Abraham, V. (2009). Employment Growth in Rural India: Distress Driven? *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 44(16), April 16, pp 97-104.

The 61st round (2004-05) of the National Sample Survey showed that there was a turn around in employment growth in rural India after a phase of jobless growth during the 1990s. Paradoxically, this employment growth occurred during a period of widespread distress in the agricultural sector with low productivity, price instability and stagnation leading to indebtedness. This paper reveals that employment growth in the rural areas was probably a response to the income crisis that is gripping farming. Under distress conditions, when income levels fall below sustenance, then the normally non-working population is forced to enter the labour market to supplement household income. The decline of the agricultural sector has also probably created forced sectoral and regional mobility of the working population with the non-working population complementing them. The therefore debunks all hype related to job creation during 1999-2004.

2. Agarwal, M. & Ghosh, S. (2015). *Structural Change in the Indian Economy.* Centre for Development Studies, Working Paper No 465 Nov.

Paper analyses the evolution of the Indian economy over the past six decades and tries to identify structural breaks. It finds that usually there has been a gradual change in the indicators of the economy. The growth rate of per capita GDP after falling in the decade mid- 60s to mid- 70s has been accelerating gradually since then. Since 1991 exports have played an important role in this growth. The various crises and the measures taken to tackle them have not disturbed this evolution, except the policy changes ushered from 1991. The structural breaks identified do not usually coincide with these crises.

3. Arnold, R. M. (1967). Hindu Values and Indian Social Problems. *The Sociological Quarterly* 8 (3): 10.

The article explores relationship violation of rights and cultural values in Hindu beliefs leading to perpetuation of social problems. A belief in the concept of *dharma*—the idea that a person's role and purpose are determined by his status in society—results in an acceptance of the status quo and an absence of concern for individual welfare. These themes result in a lack of genuine attention to social problems such as poverty, prostitution, child labour, and poor working conditions. The notion of social responsibility, outside of family loyalties, does not exist in India. The traditional hierarchy places women below men in the social strata. According to Arnold, women's role and their nature determine that they will suffer and be punished. It provides cultural explanation of forced labour, explanations that provide insight into the Indian government's lagging enforcement of abundant legal restrictions that helps perpetuate bonded labour.

4. Baak, P. E. (1999). About Enslaved Ex-Slaves, Uncaptured Contract Coolies and Unfreed Freedmen: Some Notes about 'Free' and 'Unfree' Labour in the Context of Plantation Development in Southwest India, Early Sixteenth Century-Mid 1990s. *Modern Asian Studies* 33(1): 121-157.

This article places Indian agricultural debt bondage in a wider context of the practice in Asia, employing plantation labour in southwest India as a case study. The article is a discussion of 'free' and 'unfree' labour in a long-term historical context, from pre-colonial years (early 1500s) to the post-colonial period (the 1990s). The author critiques two approaches that have emerged in the literature that plantation work was beneficial to, and knowingly chosen by labourers, and conversely, that workers' debt contracts and highly regulated labour environments prove that coercion and poor conditions defined their plantation experiences. The author adds a third perspective: that estate workers were, and are, simultaneously free and unfree, due to the often-conflicting strategies of labourers, planters, and the government. A multi-faceted, historical understanding of agricultural forced labour requires a willingness to concede that abolition of slavery in India and other legislation did little to clarify or improve labourers' status and conditions.

5. Bardhan, P. K. (1983). Labour-Tying in a Poor Agrarian Economy: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 98(3): 501-514.

Given limitations of demand-supply model of analysis, using an alternative interesting econometric analysis of empirical data for rural India, the paper challenges the bonded labour as sign of stagnation and observes that agrarian bonded labour may intensify with the growth of capitalist agricultural development. Technological advances in agriculture and the tightening of labour markets may increase voluntary labour-tying contracts. However, the mechanization of some agricultural processes, and the introduction of seasonal migrant labour, may help reduce

employers' dependence on bonded labour.

6. Binswanger-Mkhize, H. P. (2013). The Stunted Structural Transformation of the Indian Economy: Agriculture, Manufacturing and the Rural Non-Farm Sector. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 49 (26&27) Pp 5-13.

Paper argues that India's economy has accelerated sharply since the late 1980s, but agriculture has not. The rural population and labour force continue to rise, and rural-urban migration remains slow. Despite a rising labour productivity differential between non-agriculture and agriculture, limited rural-urban migration and slow agricultural growth, urban-rural consumption, income, and poverty differentials have not been rising. In his analysis Urban-rural spill-overs have become important drivers of the rapidly growing rural non-farm sector, which now generates the largest number of jobs in India. He finds rural non-farm self-employment especially dynamic with farm households diversifying into the sector to increase income. In his analysis increasing labour in rural areas means that farm sizes will continue to decline, agriculture will continue its trend to feminisation, and part-time farming will become the dominant farm model.

7. Brass, T. (1999). Towards a Comparative Political Economy of Unfree Labour: Case Studies and Debates. London: Frank Cass.

The author examines the relationship between bonded labour and economic growth in the agricultural sector, through case studies of bondage in north-eastern and north-western India, and in eastern Peru. The occurrence of unfree labour is much greater than generally estimated, and it may be increasing in specific contexts, in certain scenarios rural employers prefer a bonded workforce. The author focuses on how bonded labour contributes to workforce composition and addresses the implications for the kinds of political action undertaken by rural labourers. He does so by applying Marxist and neoclassical economic theories to the role of bonded labour, and by looking at unfree labour in the context of debates over capital, modes of production, and class struggle.

8. Breman, J. (2007). *Labour Bondage in West India: From Past to Present*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press.

Tracing history of bondage in agriculture the author in the western state of Gujarat, reaches to conclusion that during pre-independence period the regular agricultural labour was bound in patron-client relationship which can fairly be termed as 'bondage', which was considered as natural social relationship by the colonial rulers. Whereas the present form of attached agricultural labour is based on economic motive wherein the employer ensures cheap regular labour and the labourer accepts employment relation which ties him to employer to ensure in order to ensure some economic security by taking advance against pledging of labour. Such relationships thrive despite highly developed capital driven monetized market economy of the state primarily due to entrenched social history of caste hierarchy based on debt payments.

9. Das, A. & Yoshifumi (2017). Wage Rates in Rural India, 1998-99 to 2016-17. *Review of Agrarian Studies*, Vol 7(2) July-Dec. Pp 4-38.

Using Labour Bureau data, this article analyses trends in real wage rates in agriculture and other rural areas in India over the last two decades- from 198-99 to 2016-17. The analysis is both at pan-India as well as major states level. Findings suggest that from 1998–99 to 2006–7 the wages were almost the same whereas during 2007–08 to 2014–15 period real wages rose with good rate. In the year 2015-16 the wages do not record growth and during 2016 -17 a marginal recovery in real wages was visible. These findings however should be noted with caution as the data are not strictly comparable since November 2013 due to change in the definition of occupations and non-availability of indicators for making data comparable. It also provides estimates regarding State-wise growth in wage rates for selected occupations and examines trends in female-male disparity.

10. De, R. (2017). *Exploitative Informal Labour Processes in India: A Conceptualisation*. Working Paper No 7, Azim Premji University, Bangalore, July, Pp 1-24.

This working paper focuses on conceptualising why informal labour continues to persist in the Indian economy. More specifically, it theorises as to why, despite generating growth, informal labour has been locked in unequal and exploitative terms of contracts. It tries to critically understand why informal labour processes do not evolve mechanisms for providing security and support to labour in the form of benefits and rights. The paper focus specifically on highly exploitative and unequal informal labour processes and categorises those labour processes that do not provide a mechanism to reproduce labour power. These processes are predicated on maximising the appropriation of surplus from labour, without providing any provision to support the workers in ill health, facing work related accidents and injuries, or due to retrenchment.

11. Desai, S. & Joshi. O. (2019). The Paradox of Declining Female Work Participation in an Era of Economic Growth. *Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol 62, Pp 55-71. Published online

5June2019. Retrieved from: link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs41027-019-00162-z.pdf.

The article explores the paradox of declining participation rates of female work participation particularly in the rural areas despite reduction in time spent in domestic chores, rising education among girls and declining fertility rates, better infrastructure and increase job opportunities due to high growth rate. Using NSSO data for 2004-05 and 2011-12, it examines three explanations for the decline: withdrawal of women due to rising incomes, lack of suitable employment opportunities and measurement errors. Based on analysis it concludes that that decline in female participation rates may be over-estimated as the supply factors explain a relatively small proportion of decline and public policies such as improvement and transportation along MGNREGA have enhanced work opportunities for women.

12.Dreze, J. & Sen, A. (2002). Democratic Practice and Social Inequality in India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 37(2): 6-37.

The authors examine the role of democratic practice in contemporary India, defining human rights as key to the integrity of democracy. The achievements and limitations of Indian democracy are assessed in light of functional institutions, public participation, and equity, with special attention given to the adverse effects of social inequality on democratic practice. The authors argue that while the quality of democracy is often compromised by social inequality and inadequate political participation, democratic practice itself is an important tool for eliminating these obstacles. The paper's relevance to practices of bonded and child labour emerges in its discussion of human rights, violations of which compromise the integrity of democracy. The authors draw particular attention to class discrimination as grounds for these violations, and to the difficulty of bringing human rights issues into mainstream politics due to class differentials.

13.GOI (2014). *Report of the High-Level Committee on Socio-economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities in India*. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, May, Pp 431 (Known as XAXA committee report).

The report provides rich data and analysis about the reality of the tribal population and various issues the community is facing in India. In a historical backdrop, the report highlights (a) share in population and spread of the tribal community across districts with its richness in diversity (b) the relative poverty and socio-economic backwardness of the tribal community (c) the terrible impact of land-alienation in the name of development and due to social discrimination (d) the process and provisions of legal and programmatic protection and support and tardy/non- implementation due to lack of adequate framework and politio-administrative apathy of important protective legal instruments like Forest Rights Act of 2006 and Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 (e) benefits of constitutional protective provisions especially in the employment.

14. Guierin, I. (2013). Bonded Labour, Agrarian Change and Capitalism: Emerging Patterns in South-India, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol 13(3) Pp 405-423.

The author based on the analysis of various case studies from the state of Tamil Nadu concludes that the bonded labour exists in contemporary agrarian India but is qualitatively different from the one earlier feudal type. The contemporary 'unfreedom' is not a 'relic of past' but is a result of mechanism developed by capital for surplus accumulation through the modality of extending household debt to ensure supply of cheap labour. It is product of 'modes of conflict, contestation and worker identity formation that engage with both governmental programs and consumerism' in contemporary India.

15.Gulati, A. et al (2013). *Rising Farm Wages in India: The "Pull" and "Push" factors*, Discussion Paper number 5, Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi.

The paper examines the two contrary factors of push and pull behind highest increase in the farm wages which increased by 17.5 per cent per annum (p.a.) in nominal terms and by 6.8 per cent p.a. in real terms. The study observes the real farm wages increased by 3.7 per cent p.a. during 1990s compared to only 2.1 per cent p.a. during 2000s. So, if real wages had followed the same trend of 1990s in 2000s, the current level of real farm wages would have been higher than what it is today with MGNREGA. However, during the 2000s, wages declined by 1.8 per cent p.a. during 2000–2001 to 2006–2007, and then rapidly rose by 6.8 per cent p.a. during 2007–2008 to 2011–2012. Through econometric analysis data set of 16 major states (by pooling) for the period 1990–1991 through 2011–2012, it concludes that the growth 'pull' factors seem to have influenced more the rise in farm wages since 1990–1991 than the 'push' factor of MGNREGA. That the growth in construction sector GDP has somewhat stronger influence on farm wages than the growth of overall GDP or even agri-GDP. Impact of MGNREGA is also significant but is 4 to 6 times less effective than growth variables since 1990–1991.

16. Gunabhagya, A. T., Joshi, Patil, S. T., & Monadali, G. N. (2017). Agricultural Labour Shortage: An Abysmal to Agriculture in North Eastern Karnataka. *Economic Affairs*, Vol 62(4) Pp 589-

594.

Study noting decline in agricultural labourers creating labour scarcity for agricultural operations explore the reasons of labour shortage. 180 farmers were interviewed. Study finds demand for labour exceeded supply for almost seven months and peaked in sowing and weeding seasons in the both rabi and kharif crop seasons. According to responses of migration of labourers to the nearby villages for higher wages was the main reason behind labour scarcity.

17. Harilal, K. N. & Eswaran, K. K. (2018). The Agrarian Question and Mechanisation of Agriculture in Kerala. *Review of Agrarian Studies*, Vol 8(1), Jan-June.

The researchers examine two features of agriculture in Kerala that has significance for low agricultural mechanisation: the relative shortage of agricultural workers, and the comparatively high wage rate in agriculture. It argues that the failure to mechanise agricultural operations cannot be explained without examining the larger question of the stunted development of agriculture in the State. A revival of agriculture, therefore, cannot be based entirely on mechanisation, for it must address a range of problems including the growing dominance of the "asset" function of land at the expense of its "means of production" function, and the atomisation of farming. In author's view the social organisation of production needs to be reoriented so that the means of production function is reinstated and the limits imposed by the small size of farms are overcome. Possible remedies to this problem include collectivisation of agriculture, appropriate organisational structures for production, and State support.

18. International Labour Organization (2005). A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour. In *International Labour Conference 93rd Session*. Geneva: ILO.

This ILO conference paper, its second global report on forced labour, provides a descriptive and analytical overview of forced labour based on commissioned studies and general academic literature. The report includes estimates of forced labourers, broken down by region (led by Asia and the Pacific) and form of forced labour; the ILO does not disaggregate any of its estimated figures to the country level. The 92-page document details the legal domestic and international frameworks addressing forced labour, degrees of law enforcement, ILO assistance to member-states, and the creation of a Special Advanced Programme to Combat Forced Labour. Bonded labour in India in particular, and South Asia in general, receives consideration with regard to sectoral trends, poverty and caste discrimination, and labourer rehabilitation efforts. As the only extant, empirically based overview of forced labour worldwide, the report is a valuable research tool. Although framed as part of the organization's "fair globalization" initiative, the report fails to present the continued proliferation of forced labour in the last thirty years as explicitly linked to the globalized economy.

19. Jaleel, A. C. P. & Chattopadhyaya, A. (2019). Livelihood Crisis and Distress: Seasonal Migration in Beed District of Maharashtra. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LIV (41) Oct 12. Pp 30-35.

After sowing the rabi crops, villages in Maharashtra are faced with severe seasonal unemployment. To tide over the lean season, thousands of small and marginal peasant households migrate to other districts of the state, and even outside, in search of livelihood opportunities in sugar factories and brick kilns. Seasonal migration compensates for the lack of employment opportunities during the dry season and reduces seasonal income variability of the poor households in Beed district. Based on a field study this paper provides details of the various aspects of circular migration for sugarcane harvesting including reasons, processes and implications, work conditions etc. for the poor harvesters. It shows the exploitative aspects leading to long term bondage, loss of education of the children and despite hard work literally no improvement in live situations.

20. Jha, P. (2015). Labour conditions in rural India: Reflections on continuity and change in Carlos Oya and Micola Pontara (Eds) Rural Wage Employment in Developing Countries: Theory, Evidence and Policy, Routledge, Chapter 8, Pp 205-229.

This chapter in the book, based on macro official data and micro field studies done by the author as well as others, while examining the development process underlines in relation to conditions of the rural labour in India various aspects of changes along with the issues that remain the same. One aspect of change emphatically put forward is the very nature of the work wherein, as per the author, pure category of workers such as 'agricultural labour' are no more seen as majority of workers now are involved in multiple occupation. The other perceptible change include liberation from worst kind of oppression in bondage, violence and sexual abuse and some improvement in overall socio-economic conditions due to rise in wages, education and positive state interventions, though the changes vary in degree and content. Decent living however continues to elude majority. But their historical legacy of being lowest in caste hierarchy continue to bother. Finally, author ends on rather pessimist note due to dim chances of sustainable gainful employment given the current macro-economic policy regime of neo-liberalism.

21. Lerche, J. (2007). A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour? Unfree Labour, Neo-liberal Globalization and the International Labour Organization. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 7(4): 27.

This article surveys the ILO approach to forced labour, recent theoretical debates regarding forced labour and recent empirical work on bonded labour in India. It argues that the ILO 'ghettoizes' forced labour, and that existing theories do not provide an alternative to this, as they focus on high-level ahistorical models. There is a need to develop specific analyses of the processes underlying both free and unfree labour relations in the present context, and their relation to neo-liberal globalization as well as country specific conditions. The review of Indian case studies and of aspects of neo-liberal globalization points towards such an analytical approach.

22. Mahapatra, S. (2007). Livelihood Patterns of Agricultural Labour Households in Rural India: Evidences from Orissa, *South Asia Research*, Vol 27(1), Sage Publications, New Delhi pp 79-103.

Using secondary data from different sources, the article analyses employment generation, income, indebtedness among rural landless labourers and agricultural households in rural Orissa. Out of total rural population one -third constitute landless labour households totally dependent wage employment. Another 60 per cent of rural households are comprised of marginal farmers and small farmers who cannot sustain on land. Even small farmers with up to five acres supplement their agriculture with outside jobs or wage employment. Further evidence shows decline in employment both for male and female labour. There is also a decline in the average number of earning members per household. Majority of rural population suffer from low earning, decline in income, low consumption and high debt.

23. Majumdar, R. (2017). Mobility and Stagnation in India's Rural Labour Market. *Journal of Rural Development*, Vol 36(1) pp 1-19.

This paper attempts to examine the dynamics of changes in rural labour market in India over a quarter of a century and finds that that the changes taking place are not always conducive to progress as a large part of it is distress driven. While some social groups are going up the ladder, a large mass of others are stagnating in the same or similar occupations. The author opines that agriculture still holds the key to rural development and suggests a three-pronged strategy of agricultural progress, human capital formation and rural industrialisation to break the shackles of continuity and bring is qualitative changes.

24. Mehrotra, S. & Parida, J. K. (2019). *India's Employment Crisis: Rising Education Levels and Falling Non-Agricultural Job Growth*, Centre for Sustainable Employment, Azim Premji University, Banglore. Pp 1-23.

The paper is based on latest data from annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for the year 2017-18 and NSSO Employment-Unemployment survey for 2004-05 and 2011-12. The findings present grim employment pictures in an unprecedented fall in employment from 2011-12 to 2017-18. Following earlier trend sharp decline of employment in agriculture continues. But this fall has not been absorbed by construction or manufacturing as was the case earlier. What data suggest now is a large open unemployment, huge stock of unemployed youth and lack of quality non-farm jobs. The other findings include increase in informal jobs within government/public sector, stagnant real wages and rise in number of job contracts of less than one year in both government and private sector increased since 2011-12.

25. Mohan, G., Kunal, L. B. & Kamanad, S. V. (2015). Supply-Demand analysis of agricultural labour in Dharwad district. *International Journal of Agricultural Economics and Statics*, Vol 6(1), March Pp 182-185.

This study is based on interview of 120 farmers in Dharwad district of Karnataka. The reports stated that the farmers show growing concern regarding declining availability of agricultural workers. In farmers view the reasons for decline are several and include occupational change, people's mind-set about the agriculture work, government policies and reforms.

26. Mohapatra, R. (2016). Dynamics of Agricultural Mechanisation and Rural Labour Force. *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol 6(1), Pp 26-40.

Based on the analysis of cost of cultivation data, NSSO data and poverty data of Planning Commission from 1996-97 to 2010-11, paper shows decline in share of human labour cost and increase in machine cost in total operational cost of paddy and wheat. Paper further argues that increase in employment is due to non-farm jobs which reflect in the decline in rural poverty during 2004-11 at the rate 2.32%. And surprisingly bets on policy to promote farm mechanization which will lead to diversification of rural activities.

27. Omvedt, G. (1980). Caste, Agrarian Relations and Agrarian Conflicts. *Sociological Bulletin* 29 (2): 142-170.

Historically the employment relations have been shaped by caste structure and twentieth-century agrarian conflicts are rooted in this reality. Analysing the struggles of the middle-caste cultivating peasants, and the struggles

of the Dalit labourers for wages, land, and freedom from forced labour (*vethbegar*) it suggests that struggles of the Dalit workers constitute a primary form of modern class conflict and helps in understanding the origins and persistence of bonded labour.

28. Pachuri, S. (2018). Defeminisation of Indian agriculture, *Down to Earth*, March.

The author says that the due to make migration and suicides women are being pushed into agriculture work leading to feminisation of agriculture. This however increases the burden of the work and does not lead to any empowerment of workers or increase in their resource base. The draft land reform policy of 2013 of Govt. of India recognised the need for granting land ownership rights to women and redistribution of land to all the landless poor, but this has been kept in cold storage by the new government.

29. Pattnaik, I., Dutt, K. L., Lockie, S. & Pritchard, B. (2017). The feminization of agriculture or the feminization of agrarian distress? Tracking the trajectory of women in agriculture in India. *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, DOI: 10.1080/13547860.2017.1394569.

Based on an analysis of four sets of occupational data drawn from the Indian Census (1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011), this paper demonstrates that, male migration from rural areas lead to feminization of agriculture but this does not necessarily lead to women's social or economic empowerment. The women's growing participation in agriculture is due to poverty and adds to the already heavy work burdens of most rural women, thereby further undermining their well-being, and suggests that the feminization of agriculture may better be described as the feminization of agrarian distress.

30. Prakash, G. (1990). *Conclusion: Freedom Bound* in Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labour in Servitude in Colonial India. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The author argues that the value of studying the history of bonded labour in India lies in uncovering a colonial legacy of false freedom in the evolution and persistence of debt bondage as a legitimate practice. In his view the British colonialists' abolition of slavery in 1843 was a result of an understanding rooted in worldly sense of progress and individuality which guided the thoughts and practice of colonial administrators. Since, the lack of freedom that abolition supposed to end did not have a basis in the dependence between masters and slaves, the status of slaves was simply "reconstituted" through the British-approved contractualization of labour relations between landlords and labourers and the result was the practice criticized as slavery nominally turned into debt bondage. The author's reading of history points to the relationships between capitalism and the abolition of slavery, and between the appearance of legal rights and actual freedom.

31. Rawal, V. & Swaminathan, M. (2011). Income Inequality and Caste in Village India, Review of Agrarian Studies, Vol 1(2) pp 108-133.

Based on the field study of eight villages spread over four states, this paper examines income-inequality between households of different castes in rural India with focus on socially backward caste that is Dalit or Scheduled Caste households. Inequality between groups is measured in a very simple way in terms of proportional representation in different quintiles and the frequency distribution of households across income levels in different social groups. It also attempts to estimate a standard GE (2) inequality index along with its decomposition by caste. Inter-group inequality has also been measured using Elbers, Lanjouw, Mistiaen, and Ozler suggested method. The result shows high levels of income inequality between households of different caste groups.

32. Rawal, V. (2014). Changes in the Distribution of Operational Holdings in Rural India: A Study of NSSO Data, Review of Agrarian Studies, Vol 3(2).

Using NSSO data on employment and unemployment, while discussing the limitations of the data in details, analyses changes in the distribution of operational holdings of land. The findings suggest that (a) there has been a sharp rise in landlessness in rural India (b) caste based disparities in access to land perpetuates over time (c) inequality in distribution of land cultivated by households has increased and (d) there has been a decline in the proportion of manual labour households that combined wage labour with cultivation of small holdings. The paper while analysing state level data about land distribution finds 'some puzzling' features perhaps due to human errors in data collection.

33. Reddy, A. B. & Swaminathan, M. (2014). Intergenerational Occupational Mobility in Rural India: Evidences from Ten Villages. *Review of Agrarian Studies*, Vol 4(1).

In the backdrop of relatively limited employment opportunities within villages, the paper based on field study in ten villages representing diverse agro-climatic zones from different states, examines intergenerational occupational mobility among rural males in India from rural to urban/semi urban areas. The method used relates to two father-son pairs: heads of households and their fathers and heads of households and co-

resident adult sons and four occupations, namely, big farmers, small farmers, skilled workers and persons engaged in business or salaried employment, and rural manual workers. Results reveal a low intergenerational occupational mobility in all ten villages, particularly among big farmers and rural manual workers. Intergenerational occupational immobility was higher among manual workers from Scheduled Castes compared other Castes. It also indicates relatively higher mobility from any occupation to that of manual worker in case of Scheduled Caste men. The data thus strongly support the view that Scheduled Caste men who remain in villages are unable to move out of rural manual employment.

34. Singh, M. (1997). Bonded Migrant Labour in Punjab Agriculture. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 12(2).

According to the author, the capitalist system takes advantage of the disparities in wealth and equality between the Bihar "hinterlands" and the productive Punjab, perpetuating a cycle of bondage and poverty. Based on field research undertaken in two Punjab districts in 1980-81 and revisited in 1990-91, the article provides a clearly outlined case study within which to analyse common bonded labour practices. The author discusses the social relations of production and the use of migrant slave labour to finance the growth of capitalist agriculture and the "green revolution" in Punjab. The persistence of the system highlights an overall pattern, the tendency of the capitalist system to rely on rural, socioeconomically inferior areas for growth. The article is of value to those interested in the cultural and structural causes of agricultural labour and socioeconomic transformations.

35. Srivastav, R. (2005). *Bonded Labour in India: Its Incidence and Pattern, Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour*, Geneva, ILO.

This is a compilation and assessment of the contemporary evidence on bonded labour in India that has appeared in secondary sources and shows that new forms of bondage have emerged in modern agricultural and informal sectors of the economy. Social movements, economic modernization, and state intervention have helped in reduction of bonded labour in traditional agricultural settings and in caste-based, long-duration relationships. The report includes recent academic literature, data from the Government of India, the National Human Rights Commission, other human rights organizations, and press reports—all of which contribute to a widely varied bibliography. The review of Indian constitutional law and Supreme Court rulings on the nature of bonded labour is exceptionally specific. As an up-to-date survey of the incidence of labour bondage, a widely differentiated practice that is difficult to quantify and verify, the report provides a clear and comprehensive overview.

36. Thomas, J. J. & Jayesh, M. P. (2016). Changes in India's Rural Labour Market in the 2000s: Evidence from the Census of India and the National Sample Survey. *Review of Agrarian Studies*, Vol 6(1) pp 81-115.

This paper examines changes in India's rural labour market after 1991, but mainly in the 2000s, using evidence from the Census and the National Sample Survey (NSS). The Census data show a large decline in the size of main cultivators and an increase in the size of marginal agricultural labourers in the two decades after 1991. These changes were more marked in the eastern, northern, and central-eastern States, than in the western and southern States of the country. According to the Census the combined size of cultivators and agricultural labourers increased between 2001 and 2011. On the other hand, the NSS registered a decline in the size of the agricultural work force and an increase in rural construction jobs after the mid-2000s. The discrepancies between these two data sources are particularly striking in some States, including Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. The findings of this paper suggest that a structural transformation of the work force away from agriculture is yet to begin in many parts of rural India, and that the optimism generated by the NSS data on this count is perhaps unwarranted. At the same time, the paper highlights some of the problems with India's employment statistics, especially with regard to measuring the short-term migration ofworkers.

37. Thorner, D. & Thorner, A. (1962). *Land and Labour in India.* Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

The author provides a comprehensive survey of the relationship between agriculture and labour in India since 1760, and demonstrates its implications for the economy and for workers. The authors discuss Indian bonded labourers as those whose bargaining power is virtually non-existent, and who do not possess the right to refuse to work under their masters' terms. The chapter on employer-labourer relationships in agriculture provides a detailed categorization of seven types of agricultural labourers (four free and three unfree, based on duration of work and type of contract), and articulates the importance of the distinction between free and unfree labour as critical to an analysis of the market for agricultural labour in India. It contains an interesting

and thought provoking analysis of statistics and agricultural survey data.

38. Usami, Y., Patra, S. & Kapoor, A. (2018). Measuring Female Work Participation in Rural India: What do the Primary and Secondary Data Show?. *Review of Agrarian Studies*, Vol. 8(2), July -Dec.

The researchers in this paper explores the reasons behind the serious problem related to structural changes in the Indian economy in terms of secular decline in worker-population ratio (WPR) of women in rural India over the last three decades. They note that the fluctuations in the estimated number of workers across different categories of workers is due to classification errors in the NSSO/EUS and suggest, based on empirical validation, alternate method. Using village surveys data from West Bengal in 2010 and 2015 show that female employment opportunities outside the village were limited and that most employment was in agriculture and female WPRs in West Bengal are low. Animal husbandry is an important aspect of the work of women in the village. A majority of female workers engaged in animal husbandry belong to poor, marginal, and landless households in the village and argue that WPR defined as usual principal and subsidiary status (UPSS), plus specified activity participation rate, may be more appropriate for measuring women's participation in economic activities in rural areas, than WPR (UPSS) alone.

39. Usami, Y. & Rawal, V. (2018). *Changes in the Structure of Employment in India: A Study using Age-Cohort Analysis of NSS Data for 2004-05 and 2011-12*, SSER Monograph 18/2, Society for Social and Economic Research, S3/209 Saraswati Towers, Sector D6, Vasant Kunj New Delhi-70.

This paper presents an analysis of overall trends in the structure of employment, differentiating these trends between men and women. It provides an overview of the changes in the overall size of the labour force and in work participation rates between 1993–94 and 2011–12, explainsthechangesinemploymentstructureacrossdifferentindustries. It analyses data by age using age-cohort and discusses theimpactofimprovementineducationalattainmenton employmentconditions ofyoungworkers.

40. Korra, V. (2010). Labour Migration in Mahabubnagar: Nature and Characteristics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 46 (2) January 8, pp 67-70.

This study focuses on the nature and characteristics of seasonal labour migration in the Mahabubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh. It evaluates the forms/types of migration and analyses the migrants' wage rates, working conditions and the expenditure patterns. It reveals that migration from the study village is essentially seasonal and cyclical in nature and differs for the rural and the urban emigrants. It also finds that migration takes place mainly for survival and repayment of debts, and that a large proportion of their earnings from migration is utilised for day to day expenses.

41. Vijay, R. (2012). Structural Retrogression and Rise of 'New Landlords' in Indian Agriculture: An Empirical Exercise. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVII(5) pp 37-45.

Based on the analysis of the NSSO data on household assets and liabilities in India notes the increase in the non -cultivating-peasant-households (NCPH) in rural areas with implications for structural changeThis kind of structural change, in the view of the author, is largely due to economic policies and consequent adjustments in the decision-making process of individual economic agents. The structural change observed is in terms of reduction in the share of households dependent on the farm sector due to a decline in the share of cultivators in the workforce. Correspondingly, the set of non-cultivating "peasant" households is increasing in importance and its stakes in land is also on the rise. Since the NCPH have a low incentive to invest in agriculture, this has adverse implications for growth. The article brings into focus the barriers such changes create in agrarian transformation.

42. Vijay, R. & Sreenivasalu.Y. (2013). Agrarian Structure and Land Lease Arrangements: An Investigation in Nine Villages in AP. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 48 (26&27), Pp 42-49.

The article is in continuation of his earlier article at serial number 53. Whereas the earlier article was based on secondary data, this is based on the field study of nine villages in the state of Andhra Pradesh and taking his arguments further discusses the undergoing changes in the rural economic structure in terms of land ownership and land use for agriculture. It has noted growing number of households who own the land but do not cultivate the same i.e. withdrawing from cultivation, underlines the potential impact of tenancy arrangements in rural areas of the state. Analysing the resource adjustment process through the land lease market notes that such resource adjustment can act as a shackle on agricultural growth and development of the economy.

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Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action (PCLRA) promotes workers' rights in the vast informal sector economy of India. It undertakes research to document the work conditions in the informal sector followed by policy advocacy with the state so that the workers receive their due entitlements. The centre has done pioneering work in documenting the seasonal migration streams that feed labour to labour intensive industries like agriculture, brick kilns, building and construction. Its work has facilitated development of an alternative paradigm of organizing workers that factors in the constant movement of workers, the critical role of middlemen, the nature of production process, and the socio- economic profile of workers.

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The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is German- based foundation working in South Asia and other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic social order, and aims to present members of society and decision- makers with alternative approaches to such an order. Research organizations, groups working for social emancipation, and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models that have the potential to deliver social and economic justice.

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