

A Rigorous Journey – Bhil Labour Migration to South Gujarat

Findings of a Survey Conducted by Dhas Gramin Vikas Kendra
in association with Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath
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1. Introduction

Chovria Pirla, a Bhilala tribal resident of Darkali Village in Sondwa Block of Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh fell from the fifth storey of a building under construction in Navsari town in South Gujarat and died immediately on 12.10.09. A case of accidental death was registered at the Police Station and the contractor paid his family only the transportation money to take the dead body home. This is the stark reality of the insecurity under which the lakhs of migrants from Alirajpur district work in various destination areas in Gujarat. Before this in 2006 it came to light that hundreds of Bhil tribal workers from the districts of Alirajpur, Jhabua and Dhar were working in the quartz crushing factories in Godhra district of Gujarat without any protective apparels and in conditions in which there were no exhaust systems to remove the quartz dust from the air. Consequently this dust was being inhaled by the tribal workers and soon they became affected with silicosis which is a terminal disease. Hundreds of workers both male and female had died leaving their children orphaned (Baviskar, 2008).

The need to migrate arises from the fact that the average landholding per household in Alirajpur district is less than 1 hectare and the land also is mostly of low quality (GoMP, 2009). Forests too have been decimated drastically reducing the supplementary incomes from minor forest produce and animal husbandry. Development schemes are not implemented properly and are mostly riddled with corruption and have been so for the past few decades (Aurora, 1972). Moreover, literacy levels are low and so there is little scope of skill upgradation. Thus, the tribals have perforce to migrate seasonally to make ends meet. This phenomenon has come to be called circular migration (Breman, 1996). Circular Migration has been distinguished from permanent migration not only because it takes place seasonally on a continuous basis over a number of years but also because of the specific problems that are associated with it due to the general disregard of the rights and entitlements of the migrants in the destination areas.

The Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath, a trade union of Bhil tribals of Alirajpur district, has tried to intervene on behalf of these migrant tribals but has made little headway. With regard to those affected by the quartz crushing units a petition has been filed in the Supreme Court which has resulted in an order that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was to arrange for compensation to be paid to the victims. The NHRC finally issued a recommendation on 12.11.2010 that a compensation of Rs three lakhs each should be paid to the next of kin of those who have died of silicosis and that those who are still alive should be properly rehabilitated. However, the governments of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have still not implemented these recommendations. This after both the Supreme Court and the NHRC deemed these governments responsible for the deaths because of negligence on their part in implementing the various laws that protect the rights of the labourers.

The owners of the quartz crushing units themselves have escaped any legal action because they do not keep any records of the people they are employing and make only cash payments to the casual tribal labourers. So the affected labourers cannot prove their employment in these units. Moreover, the labour court for the districts of Jhabua and Alirajpur is in Ratlam which is two hundred kilometers away from Alirajpur. Thus, it is very difficult to file cases there under the Workmen's Compensation Act and then follow them up. The Interstate Migrant Workers Act on the other hand does not have any provisions for the protection of individual labourers who have migrated on their own without the mediation of a contractor. Thus, it is very difficult to get its provisions implemented in Gujarat in a scenario in which the government there has no intention of providing any security to the tribal migrants. As will be detailed later the government officials in Gujarat refused to be interviewed with regard to the implementation of various labour laws for the migrant tribal labourers.

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There is a total reluctance on the part of the government and the administration in Madhya Pradesh to recognise the fact that a substantial population of Bhils is migrating for work for long periods of time and that they are having to work in abysmal conditions in Gujarat. Consequently the government has no authentic data regarding seasonal migration at all let alone any plan of action for support and protection. The Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath conducted a survey of a sample of all the 2528 households spread over fifteen villages in the three blocks of Sondwa, Katthiwada and Alirajpur in Alirajpur district in 2008 to get a rough idea of the extent and pattern of this migration. The survey revealed that 85.2 % of the families surveyed migrated for work and 60% of these migrated for more than three months a year. The migrants to Surat and Navsari districts in South Gujarat constituted 45% of the whole and this was the destination at which the highest wages were paid in the building construction industry. Therefore, it was decided to undertake a more detailed study of the migrants to South Gujarat at their places of work so as to get some hard data for planning future support action.

2. The Objectives of the Study

South Gujarat is the most economically dynamic region of the state with a strong agricultural and agro-processing base combined with heavy investments in industrial sectors such as Petrochemicals, Textiles, Diamond processing, Engineering and Logistics it is also emerging as a potential hub for IT/ITeS and Biotechnology industry. The Hazira LNG Terminal project is one of the largest greenfield projects in India and overall this district has the second highest industrial growth in the state of Gujarat after Bharuch (GoG, 2010). Moreover, with the onset of globalisation from the turn of the century onwards there has been more and more informalisation of the work force with even established formal sector units farming out unskilled and skilled labour to contractors (Mitra, 2004). Consequently, there is a huge demand for informal labour which cannot be met locally in Surat. Thus, the region acts like a magnet drawing in labour both skilled and unskilled in large numbers from other parts of Gujarat and other states who work as informal labourers without any of the statutory benefits that are there right. (Das & Sahu, 2008).

The heavy ongoing economic development in Surat has generated a tremendous amount of building and road construction work. Despite mechanisation this is the industry where the demand for unskilled workers to do hard physical labour is at the highest. This is primarily the sector where migrant Bhil tribals from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra work. Apart from this they also work in rice and sugarcane cultivation which are two agricultural activities that require hard unskilled labour. There are no reliable estimates based on detailed sample surveys of the number of people involved in circular migration. The estimates based on the decennial census and National Sample Surveys conducted by the Central Statistical Organisation are flawed because of definitional problems. A different calculation based on statistics of informal labour collated by the departments of industries of various states gives a figure as high as 100 million for the whole of India (Deshingkar & Akter, 2009). However, it is not possible to estimate the number of tribal migrants working in Surat and it can only be said that this must be in many hundreds of thousands. While there have been some detailed studies of the tribal migrants in their source areas (Mosse et al, 1997, Mosse et al 2002, Shah & Sah, 2004) there has been only one in the destination areas by the Bandhkam Mazdoor Sangathan in Ahmedabad and Vadodara based on its support work among migrant construction workers (BMS, 2006). Thus, there is a need to do more in depth studies of the migrant tribal workers in the destination areas and especially in South Gujarat where they form a large part of the workforce in the construction industry and agriculture. Given the near total neglect of the rights and entitlements of the migrant workers by the government and employers, such studies will help to build up an authentic data base for bringing about a change in this sorry state of affairs.

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The present study focuses on the migrant tribal workers in the construction and agriculture sectors in South Gujarat. The objective is to get reliable information from these tribal migrants at the destination areas regarding –

1. Their economic status
2. The methods of recruitment
3. The conditions of work
4. The emoluments received
5. The living conditions
6. Access to public services
7. Status of women
8. Relationship with administration and politicians
9. Awareness of legal and policy provisions
10. Difficulties faced

3. The Methodology and Limitations of the Study

The respondents of the survey are migrant labourers who are available for discussion only late in the evening as in the morning they go away to work early and are not in the mood to answer a lengthy set of questions. Moreover, since the respondents stay in groups it is better to hold group discussions with them instead of asking them questions individually. So it was decided to adopt quantitative participatory analysis (QPA) as the primary data collection methodology. The QPA is a hybrid between questionnaire surveys which yield quantitative data and Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA) which mostly yield qualitative data (James, 2003). Detailed questionnaire surveys of individuals are costly and difficult to administer especially in this case where the migrants have to be surveyed in alien surroundings. Thus, the use of focus group discussions are more appropriate to elicit qualitative data based on the perceptions of the migrants. Focus group discussions also give the participants greater freedom to express their opinions than for an individual in a questionnaire survey. This is especially true when the respondents are mostly illiterate tribals. A predetermined format of questions were administered to groups of respondents in group discussions at the place of their residence. The advantage is that the predetermined format allows the answers to be assigned codes amenable to statistical analysis. This yields both quantitative and qualitative information regarding the subject being researched.

The study was also used as a means to improve the knowledge and skills of the Bhil tribal activists of the Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath. So these activists were given training in filling the formats and it is they who have collected the information. This prolonged the data collection somewhat and in some cases due to bad data collection resurveys had to be conducted but overall the survey experience enhanced the capacities of the activists. Most importantly it made them intellectually engage with the life of the migrant workers in Gujarat in a critical manner.

A total of 809 focus group discussions were held with the formats. The agriculture worker respondent groups were 184 in number. The number of construction workers groups surveyed in Surat city was 293 and the number in Navsari town was 332. Overall these groups were constituted by 2878 families with 7389 members of whom 2913 were adult males and 2512 were adult females. Given the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of migrant workers in Surat and Navsari and there is no reliable data regarding their distribution at the various places of work it was not possible to adopt a systematic sampling strategy. Instead given the financial resources allocated for the survey it was worked out that about 800 focus group discussions would have to be held. The rough distribution was to be 300 in Surat city, 300 in Navsari town and 200 among

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the agricultural workers. The surveyors then visited at random the various locations where the migrants were residing and began surveying them. Eventually numbers varied slightly from the predetermined shares due to the vagaries of the work and the need to resurvey about 35 forms which had to be rejected for poor data quality. Even though the groups were chosen randomly there was an inherent bias because the surveyors being from Alirajpur tended to survey the Alirajpur tribals more. This also happened because the construction workers in Navsari are overwhelmingly from Alirajpur. So the survey can be said to be primarily of the Alirajpur tribal migrants in Gujarat who constituted 53.9% of the total respondent groups surveyed.

The study is an exploratory one that relies solely on the perceptions of the migrants as expressed to the surveyors and these have not been triangulated with interviews of government officials and employers because the surveyors could not elicit any reliable information from the latter. Moreover, the sample is heavily skewed towards the Alirajpur tribals and this too further reduces the generalisability of the findings. The study in the end provides some valuable first time indications regarding the experience of the Alirajpur tribal migrants working in Surat and Navsari that can provide pointers towards future planning and action. A more detailed research has to be undertaken to get generalisable findings regarding all tribal migrants to the region.

The map of the study area showing the three districts of Surat, Tapi and Navsari and there location in relation to India is shown in Fig 1 below.

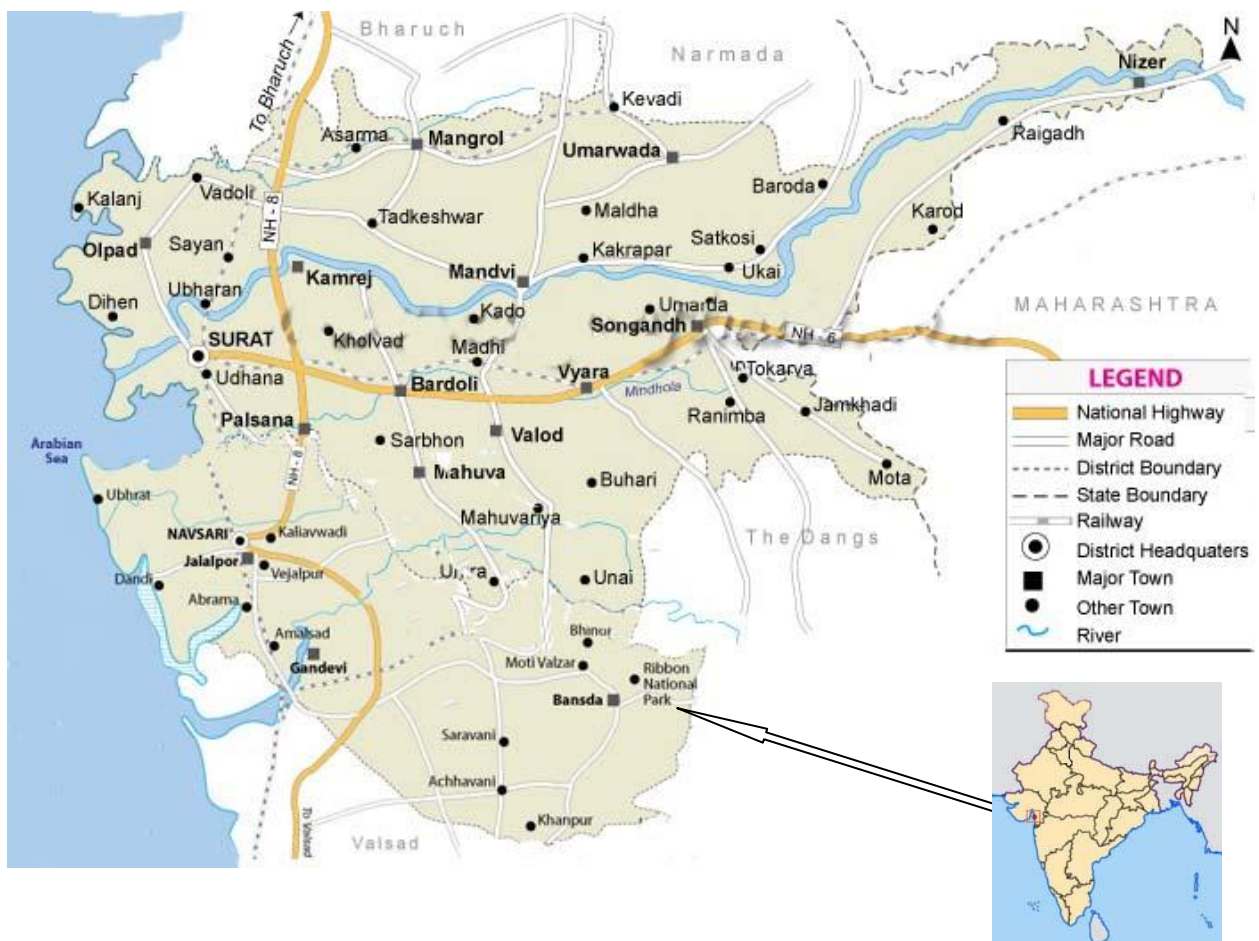


Fig. 1: Map of Study Area showing Surat, Navsari and Tapi districts of South Gujarat

4. The Findings of the Study

The basic statistical analysis of the responses to the questions have been given below in tabular form with critical comments in this section. The tabulation has been done separately for the Bhilala tribal agricultural workers and the Dubla tribals who are from Tapi district so as to be able to compare their separate situations. The responses of the construction workers in Surat and those in Navsari too have been tabulated separately for the same reason.

4.1 Distribution of Migrants by Source Area

State	District	Agriculture Bhilala	Agriculture Dubla	Construction Surat	Construction Navsari	Total	(%)
Madhya Pradesh	Alirajpur	45		71	320	436	53.9
	Jhabua			54	1	55	6.8
	Dhar	20			2	22	2.7
	Ratlam			58		58	7.2
Rajasthan	Banswara			63	1	64	7.9
Maharashtra	Amalner			1		1	0.1
	Nandurbar			1	7	8	1.0
	Dhulia			1		1	0.1
Gujarat	Amreli			2		2	0.2
	Dahod			42	1	43	5.3
	Tapi		119			119	14.7
Total		65	119	293	332	809	100.0
(%)		8.0	14.7	36.2	41.0	100.0	

A considerable number of tribals from as far as Banswara in Rajasthan and Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh are labouring in Surat. As mentioned earlier the number of tribals from Alirajpur in Navsari is very high. The tribals surveyed from Tapi are Dubla tribals while those surveyed from Alirajpur engaged in agriculture in Gujarat are Bhilala tribals. The Dubla tribals of Bardoli in Surat district have been studied in detail (Bremen, 1996) but the phenomenon of the Dublas from Tapi district also migrating is one that has not been studied yet. The tribals engaged in construction labour are Bhils, Bhilalas, Patelis and other subtribes of the generic Bhil tribe. There is a very large number of tribals from Dangs, Dhulia and Nandurbar involved in sugarcane cutting and crushing but since their situation has already been studied extensively (Bremen, 1990) they have not been surveyed here.

4.2 Composition of Respondent Focus Groups

	Agriculture Bhilala		Agriculture Dubla		Construction Surat		Construction Nav		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Families	255		491		1083		1049		2878	
Members	833	100.0	1487	100.0	2692	100.0	2377	100.0	7389	100.0
Adult Females	213	25.6	502	33.8	898	33.4	899	37.8	2512	34.0
Adult Males	265	31.8	485	32.6	1147	42.6	1016	42.7	2913	39.4
Adolescent Males	112	13.4	75	5.0	110	4.1	67	2.8	364	4.9
Adolescent Females	130	15.6	65	4.4	87	3.2	69	2.9	351	4.8
Male Children	45	5.4	169	11.4	238	8.8	133	5.6	585	7.9
Female Children	47	5.6	139	9.3	192	7.1	103	4.3	481	6.5
Infants	28	3.4	52	3.5	90	3.3	77	3.2	247	3.3

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The high proportion of adult female workers almost on par with adult male workers is notable in fact adolescent females are more in number than adolescent males. The proportion of children and infants together too is quite high at 17.7% and as many as 322 of the focus groups or 39.8% had children or infants with them making things difficult for them as will become clear later. Children and infants in fact outnumber adolescents. The proportion of infants and children are comparatively less as compared to migrants in the brick kiln industry because here the migration is mostly of a short duration of about a month or so.

4.3 Average Productive Resource and Debt per Household

	Land-holding	Irrigation		Oxen	Cows	Buffaloes	Goats	Chicken	Debt
	Hectares	Hectares	(%)	number	number	number	number	number	Rs
Agriculture Bhilala	1.972	.402	20	2	1	1	4	4	13368
Agriculture Dubla	.008	.003	33					1	3353
Construction Surat	.913	.143	16	2	1		2	3	17014
Construction Navsari	.989	.185	19	2	1		2	3	6110
Total	.896	.160	18	2	1		2	3	10242

The Bhilala migrants working in agriculture have an average household landholding of close to 2 hectares which is the upper limit for the small farmer otherwise all the other categories have landholdings less than 1 hectare which is the upper limit for the marginal farmer. The Dublas from Tapi district are mostly landless. The overall irrigation percentage is also very low at 18%. Overall 20% of the families are landless. Among the rest of the landed households as high a proportion as 85% reported having bad quality lands. The ownership of other productive assets like animals and chicken is also minimal. The average debt burden is Rs 10242 sourced mainly from moneylenders who served 65% of the respondents and only 10% of households took loans from banks and cooperatives. Thus, the level of debt is high given the lack of other resources and access to cheap credit is also limited. Consequently, it is safe to assume that all the migrants are economically poor and unable to meet their livelihood expenses from agriculture on their farms and that is why they have had to migrate. The Dublas of Tapi district are mostly landless and so have no other choice but to do labour. The overall literacy rate is about 7% and this too precludes most of these migrants from doing skilled work and they have to do unskilled labour only. While the Dublas paid only Rs 50 as one way fare for reaching their places of work the average one way fare for others was a very high Rs 200.

4.4 Method of Finding Work

	Naka		Recruited from Home by Owner		Searched & Found		Relatives		Contractor		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Agriculture Bhilala	19	29.2	46	70.8							65
Agriculture Dubla					115	96.6	4	3.4			119
Construction Surat	147	50.2		0.0	114	38.9	11	3.8	21	7.2	293
Construction Nav	290	87.3		0.0	9	2.7			33	9.9	332
Total	456	56.4	46	5.7	238	29.4	15	1.9	54	6.7	809

The overwhelming majority of workers are employed from the informal labour markets called "Naka". Many workers also find work by themselves by visiting the work sites. A small proportion of workers have found work through their relatives who are already working in the destination areas. It is interesting to note that some workers are recruited from their homes by the

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land owners or contractors who have their mobile phone numbers and vice versa. Cell phones in fact are an indispensable accessory for migrant workers as they keep in touch with their villages as well through these. The migrants are now extremely mobile and there is a constant movement to and fro of individual workers from a group while the others stay on. This helps to keep continuity both at the work place and also at the temporary shelters that they reside in.

4.5 Place of Work

The places of work have been given separately in the tables below for construction labourers in Surat and Navsari and the Agricultural Labourers in Surat. The number of migrants for each work place from the different source districts has been shown.

4.5.1 Places of Work for Construction Labour in Surat

Sl. No.	Place of Work	Source District of Migrant									Total Migrants
		Alirajpur	Amalner	Amreli	Banswara	Dahod	Dhulia	Jhabua	Nandurbar	Ratlam	
1	Bhagwan Nagar	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	26	34
2	Bombay Gate	1	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	5	18
3	Bonda Borasa	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
4	Dindoli	35	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	38
5	Kabutara	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
6	Lajmani	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
7	Mota Bangla	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
8	Navagaon	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
9	Nawagaon	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	13
10	Parvat Patia	1	0	0	27	29	1	12	0	6	76
11	Poona	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
12	Puna Gaon	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
13	Sara Darwaja	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
14	Sartana Jakat Naka	0	0	0	2	5	0	17	0	3	26
15	Udna	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
16	Varasa	0	0	0	31	4	0	5	0	17	57
	Total Migrants	71	1	2	63	42	1	54	1	58	293

The places of work are quite varied and seem to indicate that the migrants have a fairly wide choice due to the system of nakas and also due to the massive construction work going on that increases employment opportunities. Some places like Parvat Patia, Varasa, Dindoli and Bhagwan Nagar have more migrants working there.

4.5.2 Places of Work for Construction Labour in Navsari

Sl. No.	Place of Work	Source District of Migrants						Total Migrants
		Alirajpur	Banswara	Dhar	Jhabua	Nandurbar	Panchmahal	
1	Ambavadi	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
2	Athgaon	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	Bijalpura	19	0	0	0	0	0	19
4	Chhapra Road	26	0	0	0	6	0	32
5	Galtekri	38	0	1	0	0	0	39
6	Girawal	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

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Sl. No.	Place of Work	Source District of Migrants						Total Migrants
		Alirajpur	Banswara	Dhar	Jhabua	Nandurbar	Panchmahal	
7	Jalalpura	61	0	0	1	0	0	62
8	Lakshminagar	35	0	1	0	0	0	36
9	Lalpur	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
10	Mith Kua	10	0	0	0	0	0	10
11	Muhrigava	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
12	Nagarpalika	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
13	Navagaon	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
14	Navdurganagar	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
15	Panchkoti	18	0	0	0	0	0	18
16	Rajatpur	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
17	Sindhi Gate	84	0	0	0	1	2	87
	Total Migrants	320	1	2	1	7	1	332

Once again like in Surat in the table before in Navsari too the places of work are quite varied offering the migrants a wide choice due to the naka system and the increased employment opportunities due to heavy construction work going on. Sindhi Gate, Jalalpura, Galtekri and Lakshminagar are the places that are more favoured by the migrants. Overall the construction industry offers much more to the migrant labourers in terms of choice of places of employment and wages as will become clear later.

4.5.3 Places of Work for Agricultural Labour in Surat

Sl. No.	Place of Work	Source District of Migrants			Total Migrants
		Alirajpur	Dhar	Tapi	
1	Bardoli Bhatlav Falia	0	0	42	42
2	Bardoli Khara Falia	0	0	43	43
3	Bardoli Koli Basti	0	0	34	34
4	Asarma	1	0	0	1
5	Haripur	4	3	0	7
6	Kareli	0	2	0	2
7	Kim	2	0	0	2
8	Kosamba	22	0	0	22
9	Kudsad	0	3	0	3
10	Murdar	0	7	0	7
11	Olpad	11	0	0	11
12	Ranakpur	5	0	0	5
13	Sayalda	0	2	0	2
14	Vadda	0	3	0	3
	Total Migrants	45	20	119	184

The Dublas from Tapi district are concentrated in Bardoli where there are also resident Dubla labourers competing for work resulting in wages being depressed as will be seen later. Whereas the Bhilalas from Alirajpur and Dhar have a wide choice of places of work where they earn much more than the Dublas. This wide variety in places of work, however, means that the labourers are spread out thinly and cannot be easily organised to demand their rights under the provisions of the various laws.

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4.6 Type of Work

	Banana		Cotton		Sugarcane		Rice				Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Agriculture Bhilala	10	15.4	20	30.8	35	53.8					65
Agriculture Dubla					2	1.7	117	98.3			119
Total	10	5.4	20	10.9	37	20.1	117	63.6			184
	Cons. Labour		Driver		Tractor Loading		Roadmaking		Pipeline Digging		
Construction Surat	234	79.9	1	0.3	25	8.5	19	6.5	14	4.8	293
Construction Nav	328	98.8		0.0	2	0.6	2		0	0.0	332
Total	562	89.9	1	0.2	27	4.3	21	3.4	14	2.2	625

While the Bhilala tribals are mostly engaged in Sugarcane, Banana and Cotton Cultivation, the Dubla tribals are employed in rice cultivation. Among the construction labourers whose total number is 4293 only 30 are skilled masons or steel reinforcement binders which is a telling commentary on the situation of these tribals at the bottom of the labour market.

4.7 Hours of Work

	Five		Six		Seven		Eight		Nine		Ten		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Agriculture Bhilala		0.0		0.0		0.0					65	100.0	65
Agriculture Dubla						0.0	113	95.0			6	5.0	119
Construction Surat	1	0.3	1	0.3	6	2.0	269	91.8	2	0.7	14	4.8	293
Construction Nav	0	0.0		0.0	0	0.0	320	96.4	10	3.0	2	0.6	332
Total	1	0.1	1	0.1	6	0.7	702	86.8	12	1.5	87	10.8	809

Apart from the Bhilala tribals engaged in agriculture most of the migrants seem to be aware of the daily eight hour work regulation.

4.8 Days Worked in a Week

	Two		Three		Four		Five		Six		Seven		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Agriculture Bhilala		0.0		0.0		0.0	1		9		55	84.6	65
Agriculture Dubla			1		19	16.0	64	53.8	34		1	0.8	119
Construction Surat	1	0.3	11	3.8	67	22.9	177	60.4	32	10.9	5	1.7	293
Construction Nav	0	0.0	5	1.5	14	4.2	55	16.6	178	53.6	80	24.1	332
Total	1	0.1	17	2.1	100	12.4	297	36.7	253	31.3	141	17.4	809

The tremendous demand for unskilled labour in Surat and Navsari is revealed by the fact that 95.4% of the migrants work for five days or more a week. However, except for a handful most workers complained that the work was hard and they frequently fell ill as a result.

4.9 Residence at Place of Migration

	In the Open		PolytheneTent		Work Place		Hired Rooms		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Agriculture Bhilala	40	61.5	21	32.3	4	6.2	0		65
Agriculture Dubla	4	3.4	63	52.9	47	39.5	5	4.2	119
Construction Surat	186	63.5	102	34.8	2	0.7	3	1.0	293
Construction Nav	293	88.3	16	4.8	0	0.0	23	6.9	332
Total	523	64.6	202	25.0	53	6.6	31	3.8	809

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An overwhelming 64.6% of the migrants reside in the open and another 25% in polythene tents. Only some of the groups having masons mostly are able to hire rooms. Thus, along with the hard work this lack of a proper shelter is also a major contributing factor to the migrants being prone to illnesses.

4.10 Source of Drinking Water

	Handpump		Borewell		Standpipe		Well		Bought		Borrowed		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Agriculture Bhilala		0.0	12	18.5	7	10.8	46	70.8					65
Agriculture Dubla	103	86.6		0.0	13	10.9	3	2.5					119
Construction Surat	1	0.3	5	1.7	98	33.4	2	0.7	58	19.8	129	44.0	293
Construction Nav	104	31.3	2	0.6	92	27.7		0.0	19	5.7	115	34.6	332
Total	208	25.7	19	2.3	210	26.0	51	6.3	77	9.5	244	30.2	809

Sourcing of water is a big problem for the migrants. Often the public sources like handpumps, standpipes and wells from which most people get their drinking water are situated at a distance from their place of stay and so considerable amount of time has to be expended in getting water. A very high 30.2% of the migrants have to borrow their water from neighbours and this is an uncertain situation as they have to go to different neighbours every few days given the general under supply of water that affects all poor urban residents. What is of the greatest concern is that 9.5% of the respondent groups had to buy water sometimes at as high a price as a rupee a litre. Under the circumstances both the quality and quantity of drinking water supply is very poor and this too affects the health of the migrants.

4.11 Source of Bathing and Washing Water and resultant Health Situation

	Handpump		Borewell		Standpipe		Well		Bought		Workplace		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Agriculture Bhilala	15	23.1	13	20.0	4	6.2	33	50.8					65
Agriculture Dubla	103	86.6		0.0	13	10.9	3	2.5					119
Construction Surat	2	0.7	5	1.7	99	33.8	4	1.4	58	19.8	125	42.7	293
Construction Nav	105	31.6	3	0.9	92	27.7		0.0	19	5.7	113	34.0	332
Total	225	27.8	21	2.6	208	25.7	40	4.9	77	9.5	238	29.4	809

The situation with the supply of bathing and washing water is as constrained as that with drinking water and in this case as many as 29.4% of the groups bathe and wash at their workplace itself due to lack of water at their residence places. This, when seen along with the fact that 96% of the respondent groups reported that both women and men bathe and defecate in the open, presents a horrifying picture of the living environment of the migrants. Not surprisingly the level of illness in the groups was very high and only the Dublas were able to access government health services. Among the rest of the migrants, a high proportion of 99% had to rely on private quacks and the per family average cost of medication during one migratory season as reported by the respondents came out to be Rs 415. Some migrants fall seriously ill and have to go back to their homes.

Apart from 7 groups who said that they visited cinemas to see films the rest of the 802 had no entertainment facilities. 76% of the groups had their children with them and there were no facilities for looking after them or educating them so they went along with their guardians to the workplace. Some groups reported that they had to keep their smaller children tied with ropes, tethered like animals, while they worked. Consequently even if the proportion of children and infants is less due to the fact that there are a number of single males and females in the groups nevertheless for those children the situation is extremely hostile. Not only do they lose out on their education but they also have to bear extreme conditions which almost certainly have a negative psychological effect on their development.

4.12 Awareness Level of the Migrants

None of the Bhilala agricultural labourers knew the names of the contractors or the principal employers for whom they worked. The Dubla labourers were better in that 75% knew the names of their employers. Among the construction labourers 88.4% did not know the names of their contractors while 98.1% did not know the names of the principal employers. All the respondents said that they did not have any contact with the police, administration, labour department officials and politicians in the destination areas. A handful of groups said that they were harassed by the police at night in their residence areas. The groups also said that they had no contact with the police and labour department officials in their own villages. Most people had contacts with their village sarpanches and only a handful with the Member of the Legislative Assembly from their area. 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. This is one of the principal reasons for their not being able to get compensation for loss due to accidents at the workplace that happen quite frequently. Attempts by the surveyors to interview the lower level officials in Gujarat were fended off by the latter and they were asked to file applications under the Right to Information Act instead. Thus, there is a serious lack of awareness among the migrants and a near total neglect of their rights and entitlements on the part of the government and administration both in the source and the destination areas.

4.13 Economic Evaluation of Migratory Employment

A rough evaluation of the economics of tribal migration for the present study has been done here on the basis of the information provided by the migrants. The basic unit considered here is a family with one male and one female earning member and the average income and costs for such a family and the net income calculated by assuming a migratory cycle of four weeks are as given in the table below. The daily family food cost includes other side costs also.

Table 4.13 Economics of Migratory Employment (Rs)

	Male Daily Wage	Female Daily Wage	Days Worked per Week	Total Four Week Income	Daily Family Food Cost	Four Week Food Cost	Four Week Health Cost	One Way Fare per Person	Total Fare Cost per Cycle	Net Income per Cycle
Agriculture Bhilala	102	102	7	5712	60	1680	250	238	952	2830
Agriculture Dubla	51	48	5	1980	50	1400	300	50	200	80
Construction Surat	176	145	5	6420	80	2240	500	176	704	2976
Construction Nav	137	118	6	6120	70	1960	300	182	728	3132

While the Dublas seem to be just making ends meet due to the low wages they receive the other tribal migrants are making a good income relative to their subsistence agriculture back home. If one takes into consideration the fact that each grouping has single adults also who add to the income apart from the basic family unit it becomes clear why the tribals migrate despite the tremendous hardships and dismal living conditions that they have to put up with.

Here it may be appropriate to discuss briefly the situation of the Dublas. The Dublas of Bardoli have been studied extensively over thirty years and it has been established that they have not been able to break out of the stranglehold that the upper castes have had on the rural economy (Bremen, 1996). Even when some of them have migrated to as far places as Mumbai they have had to work as menial labourers and so have not been able to improve their socio-economic status. However, they have over the years moved away from agriculture to other occupations mainly in the factories that have come up. This is the reason why now there are migrant Dublas coming in from Tapi district to work in the agricultural fields but they too are getting very low wages as compared to the Bhilalas mainly because they do not work as hard as the latter.

4.14 The Gender Situation

A special set of questions were asked of the women in the focus groups separately by women surveyors relating to problems that were specific to them. All the women said that the lack of privacy was a serious problem especially during menstruation. Nine women reported that they had suffered molestation either by masons or contractors. The women said that they were not at all in touch with government health workers or doctors in the destination areas.

In their villages back home also at most they were visited by the Auxiliary Nurse Medic (ANM) once in a while mainly for pulse polio vaccination. They do not receive other support even though the Janani Suraksha Scheme has been running for over five years now. In fact they have to arrange for their own transport to go to hospital for delivery and then pay bribes to the doctor and nurse there. Payments under this scheme were also not made on time and in full to the pregnant mothers. The care of children and cooking are a heavy burden in the destination areas where there is no domestic support. Due to the hard work and unhygienic conditions the women suffer from a variety of reproductive health problems and the details of those reported by them are given in the table below.

Table 4.14 Reproductive Health Problems suffered by Women Migrants

		Agriculture Bhilala	Agriculture Dubla	Construction Surat	Construction Navsari	Total
Women Reporting Problems	No.	29	72	95	87	283
	%	44.6	60.5	32.4	26.2	34.9
Dizziness	No.	10	1	1	3	15
Vaginal Itch	No.	12	10	1	2	25
Lower Abdomen Pain	No.	19	9	28	34	90
Waist Pain	No.	17	8	27	17	69
White Discharge	No.	24	44	46	43	157
Deilivery in the Open	No.			14		14
Menstrual Disorder	No.			2	3	5
Burning during Urination	No.	12		71	71	154

The overall proportion of women who have reported having reproductive health problems is 34.9% with the highest being among the Dublas at 60.5%. This is not surprising that innumerable studies have established that there is a strong correlation between poverty and reproductive health problems (Parikh et al, 1996) and as we have seen earlier the Dublas are economically poorer and earn much less than the other tribals. Studies have also established that women generally under report their problems because in many cases they are not even aware that they have gynaecological problems and even if they are aware the patriarchal taboo against talking about these problems prevents them from expressing themselves freely (Dixon Mueller & Wasserheit, 1991). Thus, there is a high chance that the actual number of women suffering reproductive health problems is much higher. The women reporting problems have reported

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having at least two and sometimes three and that is why the total number for the various problems is more than double the number of women reporting problems. The three most reported problems are that of white vaginal discharge, burning during urination, lower abdomen pain and waist pain which all result from infections of the reproductive tract arising from lack of menstrual hygiene. Given the lack of privacy and the unsanitary conditions in which women have to live in the destination areas this is the most serious problem. Apart from this 14 women in Surat have reported that they had to deliver babies in the open. This is an extremely disturbing revelation. Pregnant women in the final months of their pregnancy too are forced to migrate because there is no one to look after them if left behind and then they cannot access the health system in the destination area even in a city like Surat and have to go through labour and parturition in the open. Overall the picture that comes through of the gender situation of the migrants is horrifying to say the least. A detailed reproductive health study of migrant women involving clinical testing will almost certainly provide an even more disturbing picture.

4.15 Difficulties Faced

Given the dismal situation of the migrants revealed by the findings so far it is only to be expected that they were quite vocal about the many difficulties that they face. These have been given below –

1. Many of the respondents complained about their extreme poverty back home which forced them to migrate. They 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* and make the trip.
2. The farms and work places are often very far from the places of residence and so people have to wake up very early and return very late from work.
3. The work is very hard and results in illnesses. Spraying of pesticides for agricultural workers and lifting heavy sacks of cement up ten storeys for construction workers are the most dangerous of occupations that sometimes lead to fatalities.
4. Wages are paid late and sometimes only at the time of returning and so the labourers get short changed due to deliberate wrong calculations by the employer or contractor who take advantage of the former's lack of numeracy.
5. Cooking of food is a big problem. Fuelwood is expensive and the wood fire dies out in the open when there is a strong wind blowing.
6. The scarcity of water and lack of sanitation facilities are a serious problem especially for women who have to do their ablutions in the night.
7. Care of children is a problem and they have to be taken along to places of work where they sometimes meet with accidents.
8. The lack of free medical care is a persistent problem. The labourers frequently fall ill living as they do in the open and then they have to spend a lot of money on private treatment. Sometimes they have to return home.
9. Due to their lack of legal knowledge and non-functioning of government support systems they are unable to get proper compensation from the contractor or principal employer in cases of loss of limbs or death in the course of work.
10. The police often bother the migrants and implicate them in false cases apart from siding with the employers and contractors when there are occupational accident cases.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study provides further confirmation of the violation of the rights of circular migrants evidence of which has been provided by other studies (Deshingkar & Akter, op cit). More importantly it provides solid evidence of the sorry situation of the Bhil tribal migrants in South Gujarat and especially the women and the neglect of their rights by the governments of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. While the first is both a source and destination area the latter three are source areas. Significantly the economic evaluation also shows that despite the appalling working and living conditions the migrants are able to take back with them a net income which would not be possible if they stayed back and this is why there is so much migration. On the basis of the findings of this study and the experience of the Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath over the past five years or so in trying to improve the condition of the tribal migrants the following recommendations are being made –

1. The Government of Gujarat must pro-actively implement the provisions of the Inter State Migrant Workers Act (ISMW), The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, The Workmen's Compensation Act. Mechanisms must be put in place to enable migrants to easily lodge complaints against the rampant violations of these laws that are taking place with impunity at present.
2. Under the provisions of the ISMW Act the contractor or principal employer is responsible for providing shelter, water, sanitation and health facilities and creches for their children to the migrant labourers and this has to be strictly implemented through the registration and regulation of all establishments in which migrant labour are employed. This is something that the Government of Gujarat has to ensure as on their own neither the contractors nor the principal employers will do this.
3. The Gujarat Government must ensure that the police and other government staff do not harass the migrants as they do at present. This is one of the main reasons for the migrants not organising to demand their rights.
4. The source area governments too are lax in providing support to the migrants. The surveys by the Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath in Alirajpur have established that 85% of the families there are migrating for work to Gujarat. Even at a conservative estimate of two people per family and a rough count of about 1,25,000 families in the district this comes to about 1,15,000 families who are migrating. As calculated earlier each family brings back about Rs 3000 in net earnings which they then spend in Alirajpur district. This works out to a total consumer expenditure of Rs 34.5 crores a year which is not only a boost to the rural economy but also through taxes a contribution to the coffers of the state and central governments. A similar contribution is being made by the labourers from Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

Under the circumstances this neglect of the rights and welfare of the migrants by the source state governments is nothing short of criminal. The apathy of the source state administrations to the plight of the migrants was poignantly revealed by the residents of Tembli village in Nandurbar district where the first Unique Identity Cards were distributed. The residents have to migrate to Saurashtra in Gujarat to make ends meet but were prevented from doing so for a month because the Prime Minister was to come and give them the identity cards. Immediately after receiving the cards they went off to Saurashtra for their customary migration saying that the cards would not get them anything in Maharashtra (Devasia, 2010). Thus, the source area governments need to set up migrant worker facilitation centres to make the migrants aware of their rights and entitlements and take action on their behalf with the Government of Gujarat.

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5. Women migrants face severe problems with child care and reproductive health and so the Gujarat Government must make special provisions for them. The women and child welfare programmes are largely non-functional for the migrants in the destination areas and even in the source areas they are sputtering along somehow. There has to be a concerted effort to weed out corruption and ensure greater participation of NGOs and mass organisations. A special effort has to be made to ensure that the new Right to Education Act is implemented for migrant children in Gujarat also.
6. The respondents have clearly stated in the survey that they mostly have contact only with the Sarpanch of their village among government officials and politicians. Thus, there is a need to set up Panchayat level facilitation centres for the migrants where they can get legal aid and be made aware of their rights and entitlements. This is crucial as the present mechanisms for redressal of grievances are too far off from the tribals for them to even contemplate approaching them.
7. To facilitate all this the ISMW Act has to be amended drastically. This will only be possible if there is a civil society initiative in this direction. There has first to be a consultation between organisations working on migration followed by the formulation of a draft bill and policy.
8. NGO facilitation centres have to be set up in Surat and Navsari where migrants can register complaints. At present the members of the Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath even after being made aware of their rights find it difficult to get them implemented. Primarily because they are distributed thinly over many locations in Gujarat and so cannot coalesce into a critical mass that can put pressure on the employers and the Gujarat Government. The surveyors too could not get any information from the lower level government staff they approached given the reluctance of the Gujarat Government to help the migrants.
9. Detailed research has to be carried out primarily by the concerned governments but also by NGOs to determine correctly the extent and character of the migration that is taking place and the problems the migrants are facing so that appropriate institutional, legal and policy measures can be taken to improve the sorry situation that prevails at present. The present survey provides only indicative pointers and due to sampling problems cannot be made the basis of any projections regarding the number of migrants as a whole and their living and working conditions.

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