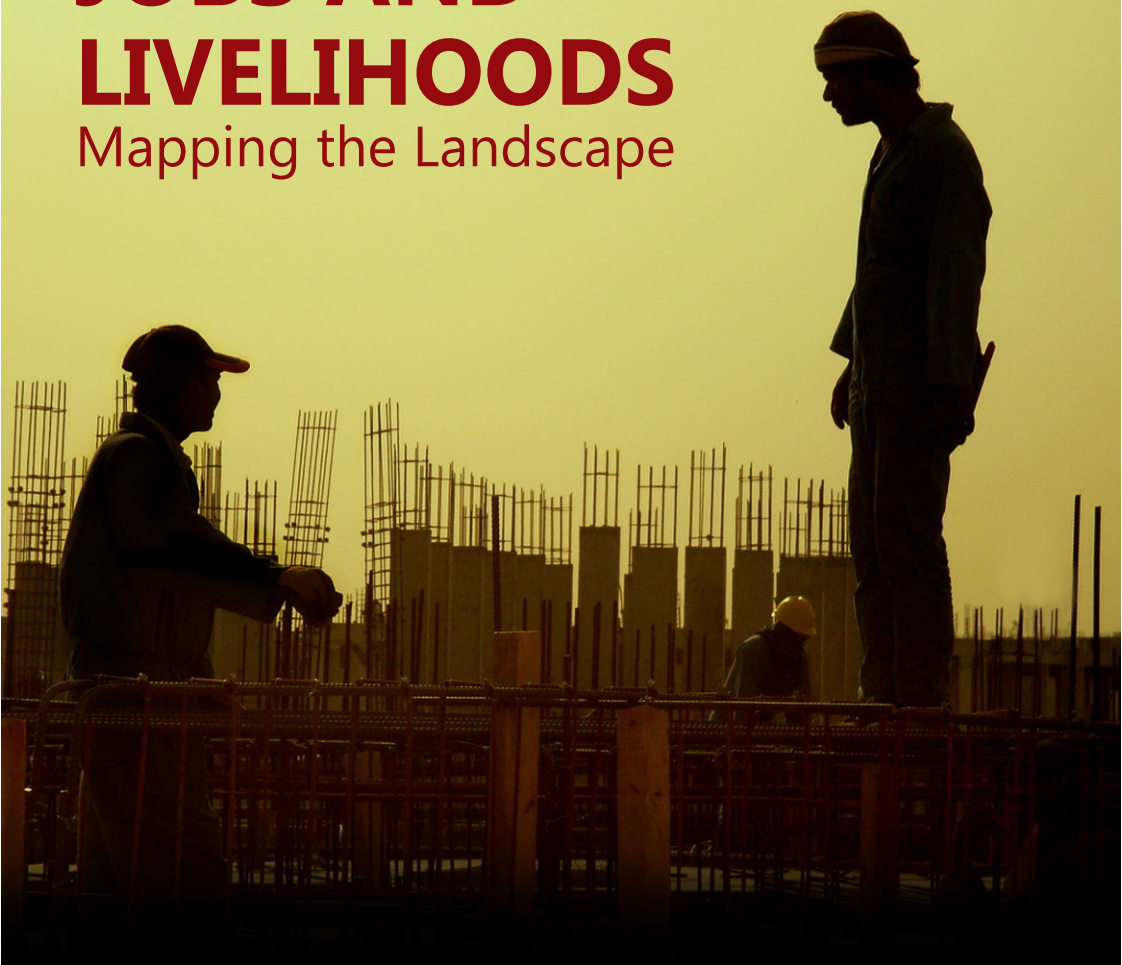


# *eSays*

13<sup>th</sup> June, 2014

## **JOBS AND LIVELIHOODS** Mapping the Landscape



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# Contents

Editor's note	
Agriculture, Technology, Livelihoods and Employment Debates, Issues, and Concerns <i>D.Parthasarathy</i>	1
Labour Force Participation Rates <i>Bino Paul G D</i>	15
Indian Labour Market: An Overview <i>Bino Paul G D</i>	17
Labour Movements in India: A Case of De-democratization? <i>Manjusha Nair</i>	33
Interrogating Employment in IT and ITES/BPO Sector: Quantity, Quality and Disparities <i>Babu P. Remesh</i>	40
Sectoral Employment along with Growth rates	48
Job Search Methods in the Labour Market: An Empirical Analysis <i>Krishna M</i>	49
Negotiating the Intimate Space: Home and Sense of Belonging Among Migrant Women Domestic Workers <i>Bindhulakshmi Pattadath</i>	66
Reading list	81
Glossary	83

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## **Editor's note**

### **Jobs and Livelihoods: Mapping the Landscape**

The essay by Bino Paul 'Indian Labour Market: An overview', using unit records of National Sample Survey 66th Round, examines the structure of the Indian labour market, type of employment, activity wise composition, wages, and social security. The Indian labour market is characterised by abysmally low participation of women in the labour market, enormity of low wage informal employment, and scarcity of decent regular wage employment. In the context of aspiring youth and growing aged population, it is important to draft labour market policies that integrate skill development, inclusion of women and aged person in the labour market, and the inclusive provisioning of social security. There is a need for generating high value adding economic activities in rural areas that create a substantial size of formal employment.

The essay by D. Parthasarathy 'Agriculture, Technology, Livelihoods, and Employment in India: Debates, Issues, and Concerns' points to the significance of transforming agriculture into an innovative, value added, sustainable, gender inclusive, and labour absorptive livelihood system. The essay is quite relevant in contemporary times considering that the agriculture generates more than half of employment in India, and alternative streams of employment in manufacturing and services have not been successful in providing decent jobs to the India rural labour force, in particular the youth. Drawing cues from the field research, the author presents two cases of the positive impact of adopting agricultural technologies by farmers in arid-dry regions like Rajasthan through a collaborative process on risk taking, generation of surplus, sustainable farming practices, optimisation of resources, and effective utilisation of labour. An integrative-collaborative technology adoption tends to be significantly different from the conventional approaches by the state. For example, an innovative technology adoption model puts greater weight on sustainability and protecting the commons against prospective opportunism. In a nutshell, transforming farming to a more innovative, new technology based, high value added and gender inclusive enterprise can trigger off decent livelihood options for rural population in India.

Manjusha Nair in her essay 'Labour Movements in India: A Case of Democratisation' discusses the current milieu of labour unrest in the Indian manufacturing and its trail that is embedded in economic reforms and the associated neo liberal ideology. Interestingly, this essay provides an insight on the discourse on labour market flexibility. While protagonists of neoliberal thinking view workers' rights and the system of labour law as impeding the growth of large scale-organised manufacturing, there is evidence and data such as stagnant real wage rates, lackadaisical approach of the state to the enforcement of labour law, lack of coherence between wage rate and productivity, under investment in worker's training, widening gap between managerial and workers' salaries, discernible deviation from the construct of decent work and scarcely prevalent workers' participation and management that show a different picture. Notwithstanding a long history of labour legislation and labour movement, in contemporary times, there is hardly any progress towards tri-partite industrial relation systems that are backed by the principles of industrial democracy. The author argues that the state that implemented fiscal-welfare based social protection initiatives like National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has turned protagonist of labour market flexibility by tweaking the law in favour of capitalists.

Babu P Remesh in his essay 'Quantity, Quality and Disparities: Interrogating Employment in India's IT and ITES/BPO Sector' demystifies the popular view that information technology is the glimmering hope of India's economy. While IT and ITES/BPO sector appears to generate high paying jobs for the youth, the nature of work is characterised by lower durability of employment, inadequate provisioning of social security, rigid work organisation, dismal scope for career/skill improvement, and weaker social dialogue. It is important to note that the workforce in this sector is the embodiment of class-caste-rural-urban divide that prevails in India, reporting higher concentration of socially and economically advantaged sections of the society. Although the sector is labour absorptive in nature, it captures only a minuscule share of the labour market. Moreover, the sector is yet to create a critical mass employment to trigger off structural changes in the labour market.

M. Krishna's paper 'Job Search Methods in the Labour Market: An Empirical Analysis' examines the search behaviour of workers in the labour market. The study draws from primary data on workers employed at an industrial area in Bangalore, Karnataka.

Job searchers' personal and household identities account for the choice of job search methods. Quite important, only a marginal proportion of the workers sampled made use of the formal search methods such as employment exchanges. Job portals and informal channels like contacts appear to be far more effective than formal channels in not just providing more search options but are more likely to find jobs. While policy discourses on employment are abundant, there are hardly any serious endeavours to evolve labour market policies that integrate search and placement.

The essay by Bindhulakshmi Pattadath, 'Negotiating the Intimate Space: Home and the Sense of Belonging in the lives of Migrant Women Domestic Workers' exposes archaic conceptualisation of labour by the state and formal institutions. In this essay, the author draws from her ethnographic study, to unravel the experiences and lives of women domestic workers from Kerala who work in United Arab Emirates. Women who feature in this study are embedded in a complex network of heterogeneous actors and relations of multiple contents. What may be seen as an exploitative tie that exists between an employer and a live-in domestic worker may have the dimension of emotional bonding between her and employer's family.

**Bino Paul G D**

*Guest Editor*



# **Agriculture, Technology, Livelihoods and Employment**

## **Debates, Issues, and Concerns<sup>1</sup>**

**D.Parthasarathy**

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*The lack of technological transformation in agriculture has drastically reduced income earning opportunities .The sector is still plagued by several challenges related to widespread rural poverty, natural resource degradation and attaining competitiveness in the increasingly globalized economy. Adoption of innovative technologies can lead to sustainable utilisation of labour; particularly in the arid and semi-arid regions, as evidenced by the paper. A holistic and system-wide approach is required in the diagnosis of constraints and opportunities for productivity improvement, employment generation, and poverty reduction.*

Agriculture in India is perennially regarded as being in a state of crisis. Farmers' suicides, frequent movements over remunerative prices, persistent high rates of poverty among peasants (especially small holders) and landless labour, relatively low rates of productivity, and the fluctuating employment potential of agriculture all seem to support the dominant notions of agrarian crisis. And yet, since the time of independence, overall agricultural production has increased and stabilized leading to national (but not household) food security, reduced dependence on food imports, and increased exports of food and non-food crops. Widespread technology adoption and technological transformation, significant crop diversification, enhanced agricultural intensification, increased access to inputs, and increases in labour productivity all partially explain the changes in total factor productivity in agriculture. However, such changes are largely restricted to pockets with better access to irrigation, stable rainfall, and better soil productivity. The semi-arid and arid regions of the country are largely characterized by subsistence peasant farming, feudal agrarian structure, low factor productivity, high

<sup>1</sup> This paper is largely based on insights I have gained while working at ICRISAT (1995-97), and subsequent collaboration in their research projects. In particular I wish to thank Cynthia Bantilan, R.Padmaja, and V.K.Chopde who have in various ways supported me in learning more about agriculture in India's semi-arid tropics. The views expressed in this paper, and errors are solely mine.

rates of climatic uncertainty, price and market fluctuations, out-migration of labour, and problems of labour shortage.

In the first section of this paper, some major issues pertaining to agricultural technologies – adoption, diffusion, constraints, and impacts are briefly outlined based on a reading of the literature, and from long term field work in the semi-arid tropical regions in India, especially in the state of Maharashtra. Some focused questions regarding agricultural R&D and technological innovation are subsequently posed. The second section contextualizes the key debates that have emerged around the critique of narrow technology and productivity focused agricultural strategies in post-independence India, emphasizing in particular the importance of paying attention to issues of environmental sustainability, collective behavior and social networks, issues of social inequality (in particular gender issues), and, class and agrarian power. The final section of this paper uses illustrations from field work in rural Maharashtra to suggest appropriate ways of thinking about agricultural technologies, livelihoods, and employment.

The Indian economy and society has come a long way from the severe food shortages, productivity crisis, agricultural involution, and acute rural poverty of the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. Agrarian studies as a sub-discipline have a very strong tradition in Indian social sciences, with significant contributions from economists, sociologists, and social anthropologists. The slow and gradual urban transition, adverse terms of trade between rural and urban areas, low public investment in agriculture and related infrastructure, and persistent and stubborn rural poverty in the context of the declining share of agriculture in the GDP, have kept the agrarian question boiling in a political as well as academic sense.

Policy mechanisms over the decades to address the agrarian problem have been multifarious and diverse, but have suffered from the absence of an integrated approach to livelihoods, employment, sustainability, and productivity problems. These include:

- Changes in cropping pattern, i.e. more diversified cropping system
- Agricultural intensification, i.e. bringing more land under cultivation and cultivation in more than one season
- R&D, extension, and diffusion of new technologies for addressing productivity problems as well as problems of coping with drought, water scarcity, poor soil quality, nutrition, market demand etc.
- Addressing issues of factor endowment – irrigation, labour, credit, external inputs (fertilizers, seeds, pesticides) etc.
- Increase in yields and productivity
- Improvement in household asset base
- Land and tenancy reforms
- Increase in minimum wages for agricultural workers
- Increased availability of employment throughout the year
- Reduction in indebtedness and easier availability of credit

In spite of these efforts, the agricultural sector is still plagued by several challenges related to widespread rural poverty, natural resource degradation and attaining competitiveness in the increasingly globalized economy. Much of this relates to the lack of technological change and the unfinished transformation of subsistence-oriented agriculture in marginal environments. Unless new strategies are designed and implemented, these problems not only threaten the sustainability of agriculture and future sources of growth but may also amplify the process of marginalization in agro-economic zones, which did not benefit much from the green revolution.

The Indian economy and society has come a long way from the severe food shortages, productivity crisis, agricultural involution, and acute rural poverty of the 1950s and the 1960s. However,, the agricultural sector is still plagued by several challenges related to widespread rural poverty, natural resource degradation and attaining competitiveness in the increasingly globalized economy. The challenges mentioned above are briefly outlined in order to contextualize the relationship between technology, livelihoods, and employment.

Despite the surplus reserve of grains, food insecurity and child malnutrition in South Asia remain at unacceptably high levels. Owing to the high levels of poverty and unequal access to productive assets, the gains from productivity growth in agriculture were not sufficient to bring down the levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Because of limited R&D investments and the harsh biophysical conditions that prevail in dryland agriculture, the incidence and depth of rural poverty is often higher in the semi-arid and arid regions. In marginal areas the productivity of land is low and market access is limited; opportunities for non-farm employment are scarce as well, but are showing signs of increase in the last decade or so. The rate of productivity growth in agriculture has been much lower than in irrigated regions, with small farmers in the arid and semi-arid regions experiencing low crop yields and high costs of production . As land becomes scarce, some workers also migrate to cities and high production regions in search of employment. Increasing mechanization of production and adoption of less-labor intensive technologies in green revolution areas, however, limits the absorption of migrants from the marginal regions. Marginalisation and poverty in arid and semi-arid regions is also associated with increasing scarcity of water, incidence of drought, and degradation of the natural resource base.

Agriculture and livelihoods in the semi-arid tropics evolved under the influence of biotic (pest and disease incidence) and abiotic (drought) constraints. The most binding abiotic constraints are related to water scarcity and poor fertility of soils. The limited fresh water availability and seasonal variation and unreliability of rainfall particularly make agriculture in the semi-arid regions inherently risky. In rainfed systems of dryland agriculture, the constant risk of drought increases the vulnerability of livelihoods and enhances human insecurity. Since water is vital for crop growth, low and unreliable

rainfall makes drought management a key strategy for agricultural development in these regions (Ryan and Spencer, 2002). Future projections indicate that water availability in the semi-arid regions is expected to decline further mainly due to population growth, depletion of aquifers and competition for non-agricultural water use associated with increased urbanisation and industrial development (Seckler et al., 1998).

Apart from the tightening water scarcity constraint, degradation of soil resources (due to salinisation, waterlogging, soil erosion and nutrient depletion) threatens livelihoods and sustainability of food production across India. The impressive productivity gains in cereal production achieved in the green revolution areas are now showing signs of decline or stagnation. Emerging empirical evidence shows that under intensive rice-wheat monocultures, it is difficult to sustain productivity over a long term. Lowland intensification under the green revolution has been associated with build-up of salinity in drier areas and water-logging in wetter areas, depletion of groundwater reserves, soil nutrient imbalance and increased pest buildup (Pingali and Rosegrant, 2001).

Widespread poverty, water scarcity and soil degradation in the SAT, intensification-induced resource degradation problems and associated productivity decline - these necessitate a development strategy which differs from the intensive-monoculture systems of the green revolution, takes into account environmental externalities, and is compatible with the aspirations for more equitable and sustained productivity growth in agriculture. This task becomes more complex given the demands of adapting to globalisation.

With increasing strides towards globalisation through domestic market reforms liberalisation of import and export markets, production efficiency and competitiveness of agricultural products is becoming an important policy issue in the agricultural sector (Gulati and Kelley 1999). In the past, macroeconomic policies and R&D investments in many developing countries targeted food security and self-sufficiency in major food products. With increasing openness in the global economy, national self-sufficiency may not be a viable development strategy, as certain food products may be cheaper to import than to produce them domestically. However, considering agriculture's role as a means of livelihoods for millions of poor people in South Asia, enhancing its competitiveness through cutting average costs of production is critical for the survival of many smallholder farmers.

Investments in small scale irrigation to boost yields and reduce production risk, extension services, and supply of credit facilities and required inputs at the right time are essential for competitiveness of production. In their absence, there is a real risk that globalisation may lead to further marginalisation and poverty (World Bank, 2002b). Similarly, without adequate investment in productivity-enhancing technologies and basic infrastructure and human resources, arid and semi-arid regions poorly serviced in the past in terms of these investments, may lose out even further as agricultural markets

become more liberalized and competitive. Thus globalisation and increased market liberalisation could further marginalise these areas, potentially leading to worsening poverty and environmental degradation.

Past empirical evidence in agricultural technology development and infrastructural investments in South Asia lends support to this process of marginalisation in resource scarce regions. Fan and Hazell (1999) show that adoption of improved varieties, road density, market access (number of rural markets per 1000 km<sup>2</sup>), and intensity of fertilizer use are consistently lower in rainfed than in more-favored irrigated districts. The high transaction costs and low productivity of rain-fed dryland agriculture affect the relative competitiveness of smallholder crop-livestock production activities in these areas.

It will also influence farm-household decision behavior in terms of crop and technology choice and ability to hedge risk, both from the market and from the adverse biophysical environment.

The basic question then is how agriculture in India can be organized or diversified to overcome complex challenges and capture emerging opportunities in such a way that the forces of globalisation, and technology, policy and institutional innovations can be harnessed to reduce poverty and resource degradation, and generate employment rather than lead to further marginalisation.

### **Agricultural technology and impact**

The gains from the green revolution in agriculture were substantial but had long term adverse ecological consequences, were socially disruptive, confined to a few regions with favourable factors of production, and benefited only a small (upper) section of the peasantry. Studies indicated unequal distribution of benefits from the diffusion of green revolution innovation, related in part to problems of scale neutrality, but also arising from the nature of the factor endowments required to benefit from technology adoption. There were also implications for labour - decreased employment for some sections (especially women), and, increased employment opportunities for men in certain pockets of the country. What explains differences in scale and quality in gaining from an innovation? Does inequality necessarily increase with adoption of an innovation, or does it do so under specific social conditions? Why is there a differential flow of benefits across farmer categories and to male and female headed households from innovation? Such questions have been raised and resolutions attempted through empirical studies across the Indian sub-continent especially following the classic green revolution studies of the 1970s.

Such questions have also been raised regarding intra-family distributional aspects of technological gains, particularly food and nutrition security for women and children. Gender sensitive technologies are observed to contribute to equitable distribution of

benefits within the household (Kolli and Bantilan 1997). At the household level, factors that facilitate uptake of innovations may be different from those facilitating impact. These in turn might be separate from institutional and community level intervening conditions, which expedite adoption and impact. A comprehension of the type of households based on access to resources and institutions, and possession of assets is usually lacking both in R&D and technology diffusion strategies. A consideration of household typologies would establish whether poverty impacts and labour are differentiated by types of households or social category, and identify its implications for providing access to technology, and creating enabling conditions for deriving benefits from technology adoption.

There is increasing evidence to show that the rural poor subsisting on agriculture based livelihoods have been marginalised with reference to state policies, R & D efforts, market and infrastructure development, and provision of other basic social and financial services. With subsistence oriented livelihoods, low levels of resource availability and access, limited welfare measures, policies and programs have had little effects. Access to and management of productive water, land and forest resources, livelihood diversification, market linkages and gender equity are key areas which have been ignored by many of the technological interventions. The rural poor are at further risk of marginalisation and continuing exclusion if left to market forces alone, as current critiques of globalisation and agrarian crisis show. This is essentially due to their vulnerability arising from higher exposure to drought conditions, continuing displacement, and risks emanating from other external shocks, as also due to the constraints of a hierarchical agrarian structure. State strategies regarding agricultural technologies have not seriously considered the problem of the commons; attention to issues of natural resource governance, and access to resources have been limited, downright hostile, or ill-conceived. Similarly R&D strategies as well as overall agricultural policies have in general failed to take into account the socio-economic characteristics of the rural poor, and the agro-ecological conditions in which they eke out their livelihoods; these become important if agricultural innovations are to be appropriate and relevant, enhancing the possibility of wider adoption and diffusion, and better impacts.

The foregoing analysis underscores the need to seek out new opportunities, and address old challenges in tackling agrarian crisis in India. The lack of technological transformation in agriculture has drastically reduced income earning opportunities, forcing farmers and agricultural laborers to migrate to urban centers and distant places in search of livelihood opportunities. Frequent recurrence of droughts, depleting water tables and soil degradation are reducing the importance of farming as a source of income and employment. Without strategic intervention, the future of rainfed farmers in the arid and semi-arid regions of India appears limited. So far, neither the crop production technologies nor the resource management technologies were able to make an impact

on the rainfed areas, at least on an extent comparable to the one that was witnessed in irrigated areas.

In light of old and emerging issues, research needs to examine and understand limiting factors (technology, policy, market, institutional, structural, etc) and identify future development strategies. Dryland agriculture is not a homogenous system; future sources of growth and development opportunities will likely vary across typologies of dryland agricultural and ecological systems. This requires a holistic and system-wide approach in the diagnosis of constraints and opportunities for productivity improvement, employment generation, and poverty reduction. Monitoring changes at different levels (household, community, district, etc) in cropping patterns, in diversification of income-earning opportunities, in the levels of poverty, in livelihood strategies, investment opportunities (including incentives for productivity enhancing and resource conserving investments), and understanding factors that drive these changes is crucial for identification of more sustainable options.

### **Technology, Agrarian Structure and Agricultural Transformation**

Technology and productivity focused agricultural strategies in post-independence India have experienced measured success in selected pockets in India as revealed by many studies. Their consequences for employment and livelihoods have been mixed. Overall, such strategies have not been sustainable in ecological and yield terms, and have not displayed the potential to be transferred to other regions due to problems of agrarian power and social structure, inappropriate R&D and extension, and differences in factor endowments. Critics from an environmental perspective have pointed to the severe consequences of green revolution techniques for soil degradation, water depletion and water conflicts, genetic loss, health effects, and ecosystem problems. Gains for labour and employment were limited and adverse for women agricultural workers. Problems of scale neutrality expanded gaps between peasants and farmers with different land holdings. The green revolution being the single largest source of rapid technological transformation in agriculture, studies yielded many insights into the relationship between agrarian power and technology adoption. While certain sections of entrepreneurial peasants adopted such technologies on a large scale, initial optimism about large scale technological transformation of Indian agriculture were belied. This applies whether one looks at conventional technologies or those that are more sustainable, appropriate, and beneficial to small peasants in dryland agriculture.

The classic work of Desai, Rudolph and Rudra on agrarian power and productivity drew attention to the social and political constraints to technology led productivity, labour, and agrarian transformation in rural India. Likewise the 'mode of production in agriculture' debate (Patnaik 1990) raised larger issues of forced commercialisation, adverse terms of trade, and the conditions under which actual agrarian transformation were taking place. More recently, hopes of a MGNREGA led transformation of labour



market dynamics have been belied by evidence of rich peasants opting to go for a crop holiday rather than raise agricultural wages (Vakulabharanam and Prasad 2011). It is clear that the existing agrarian structure, enmeshed in deeply hierarchical caste and class inequalities and exploitation, strongly resists agrarian transformations. Technologies, - even unsustainable ones- can be disruptive, and the rural dominant class would promote change only on its own terms.

Policy changes push lower castes towards migration, thereby pressurising the labour market and creating rural labour shortage. Similarly the large scale fluctuations in women's employment is especially to be noted, and needs explanation (Thomas 2012). Political changes are pushing dependent lower castes to seek labour outside of their regions putting further pressure on the labour market, creating labour shortages, but unable to force more favourable conditions for rural labour. On the whole these processes create a situation of flux which require further research, and which complicates the process of strategising and policy-making for employment generation in agriculture.

In addition, gender dynamics and feminisation of agriculture also have implications for technology adoption, and the choice of techniques for enhancing productivity and income. It is in such situations that some activists and scholars working on gender issues in agriculture argue that biotechnology has the promise and potential for rural women. Omvedt and Kelkar (1995) and Mitter (1995) among others argue that biotechnology can contribute to low external input sustainable agriculture and help women contest male domination of technology, as well as support the entry of women into high-tech fields. New options are seen to build on the existing knowledge base and enhance technical skills and knowledge, in the process empowering women. While social institutions play a role in this, technology design is also of significance. What is also important is to focus on those crops that are of importance to women in managing their households, rather than develop crops which simply yield more cash income from market sales which may be taken away by male household members.

Studies on the role of women in agriculture provided a better understanding of the increasingly complex challenges of food production, farm structure, and rural development, and present women as productive partners, producers of food, traders and family care-takers. Information of this kind, along with concrete data on women's labour potential and availability will help in better design and development of appropriate technologies, cognizant of the role of women in increasing food production and improving the general standard of living of the average peasant household.

On the issue of agricultural extension, studies and overviews have revealed that public sector extension has had a narrow focus, and has tended to ignore issues of gender, caste, and other forms of inequality. Despite significant innovations and the trying out of different approaches, the link between agricultural R&D and extension has historically been quite weak, and this is more so in dryland, subsistence agriculture, with marginalised peasants and small holders affected the most.



## **Technological Change and Enhancing Livelihood / Employment potential**

Stories of agrarian crisis, out-migration of labour, farmers' suicides, and struggles over remunerative price dominate media reports and academic discussion of the rural situation today. However the overall agricultural production scenario itself is not grim, pointing to important contradictions between the state of the agricultural economy, and its consequences for peasant and farm households. In this section three case studies are presented which provide insights into the possibilities for a kind of agrarian transformation that can enhance livelihood security and employment potential in agriculture. Institutional transformations, policy support, and collaborative research, as well as local level cooperative behavior are identified as factors which have contributed to these results<sup>2</sup>.

### *A. Participatory breeding, climate adaptation and farm livelihoods in western Rajasthan*

As an arid, dryland area, with frequent droughts, little rainfall and sandy soils, farmers in Western Rajasthan eke out difficult livelihoods. In the early 1990s, an innovative collaborative experiment in farmer participatory breeding of improved pearl millet (Bajra) cultivars was started by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics along with the Rajasthan Agricultural University, a local NGO, and farmers in selected villages in Barmer and Ajmer districts. Hybrid varieties of bajra were found to be risky and performing poorly given the agro-climatic conditions and unstable weather patterns. The collaborating teams worked with farmers using on-farm breeding and varietal valuation to enable them to breed and select varieties appropriate for the agro-climatic conditions. Several varieties were selected through multiple-year trials. Bureaucratic apathy and the disinterest of the private seed companies resulted in the delay of release and except for one variety, most of these were never officially released. However a study carried out ten years (Parthasarathy and Chopde 2000) after this experimentation revealed significant positive outcomes. Village farm households, especially women, had worked out mechanisms to save seeds year after year such that they had access to an improved choice of varieties to suit the unpredictable climate; as such, households were able to better manage risk through the availability of varieties of different duration to suit the rainfall and temperature pattern. It was observed that risk reduction led to greater stability of the cropping system; farmers were able to plan better in advance and take optimal decisions regarding the cropping pattern. More importantly, stability led to yield gains, and especially enabled building up of grain stock for lean years. Decreased risk and higher yields changed the cropping pattern. Farmers chose an optimum mix of cash and subsistence crops, to harvest grain yield for consumption, and cash crops for purchasing other necessities, and investing in factors that lead to

<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank V.K. chopde, Valentine Gandhi, Padmaja, and Lakshmi for assisting me in these research projects.

higher yields and productivity. Problems of out-migration and labour shortage were addressed by the tradition of labour sharing prevalent in the area. During times of peak labour demand, the adola or cooperative labour sharing arrangements between small and medium farmers, involving short-term agricultural working parties, was one way of obtaining large amounts of labour for a short time.

Overall, the sustainability of the farming system was enhanced since bajra was an appropriate dryland crop suited to the local soil and climate, requiring less water, and resulted in better utilization of idle labour during drought years.

### *B. Adoption of short duration pigeonpea (turor arhar) in Western Maharashtra*

Pigeonpea (turor arhar) has been a staple of subsistence farming in much of peninsular India. While it was historically a long duration crop (160-200 days), efforts have been ongoing since the early 1970s to develop new varieties of shorter duration to fit into cropping systems with more two or more crops per year. These efforts bore fruit with the development of several new short duration pigeonpea (SDP) varieties by the early 1980s. One of these was ICPL 87 - a SDP cultivar (120-130 days duration). It was collaboratively developed by ICRISAT with international scientists and local agricultural universities. After trials in the All India Coordinated Pulses Improvement Project in the early 1980s, the variety was initially targeted for release in northern India, for cultivation in rotation with wheat, where due to a mismatch of agro-climatic conditions, it proved unsuitable and not appropriate for the cropping systems of the region. Around 1983, a decision was taken to test it for possible release in peninsular India. ICPL 87 was first introduced during the mid-1980s in the Vidharbha and Marathwada regions in eastern Maharashtra, regions which constitute one of the main pigeonpea-growing areas in India. These areas were targeted by the LEGOFTEN (Legumes On-farm Testing and Nursery) technology transfer program—a part of the Government of India's Technology Mission on Pulses. However this variety was found unsuitable for their cropping system due to agronomic and agro-climatic reasons. Nevertheless, the variety soon spread to the western part of the state due to further efforts of local research and extension networks from around 1990. With the launch of one of the few public programmes for pulses in the country – the NPDP (National Pulses Development Programme), ICPL 87 was one of the varieties recommended under this scheme. As farmers in the irrigated tracts of western Maharashtra cultivating sugarcane and banana were facing problems of sustainability, they began to try a rotation of ICPL 87 along with irrigated crops. Due to several advantages including enhancing soil nutrition, adaptation to drought stress, and shorter duration, it was rapidly adopted across all districts of western Maharashtra by the mid-1990s. Seed production to match demand was a problem despite the official release and seed production by the state owned MSSC. Several of the local cooperatives began participating in seed production in association with MSSC, thus assuring themselves

of good returns, as well as meeting their needs in terms of a sustainable crop rotation option. Significant yield and income increases as a result of adoption of the variety were observed. (Bantilan and Parthasarathy 1999).

### C. Groundnut Production Technology in Umra village, Maharashtra

Groundnut Production Technology (GPT), is a package of practices for dryland cultivation of groundnuts. As a natural resource management (NRM) innovation, the GPT was specifically developed for cultivation of groundnuts in dry areas, to promote cultivation in summer using an improved package of practices which included improved cultivars, as well as soil, water, and nutrient management options. The GPT was collaboratively developed as part of the Government of India's Oilseeds Technology Mission, and introduced in Umra village of Nanded district in Maharashtra (along with other villages in the groundnut growing districts of the state), as part of LEGOFTEEN, an initiative supported by Government of India, the

Government of Maharashtra, and agricultural research institutions in the late 1980s. The package had the following objectives:

- Increase the adoption of improved varieties
- Optimise use of fertilizers and encourage the use of micronutrients
- Minimize the need for pesticides and herbicides
- Increase the efficient use of soil moisture, and
- Minimize drudgery for labour, especially women

Early studies revealed significant changes with respect to the gender issue, especially the intra-household distribution of benefits, and changes in access to and control over different post-harvest products (Kolli and Bantilan 1997). Significant impacts on a number of indicators, to diverse social groups were evident during the further research carried out in the late 1990s, ten years after the technology was first introduced in the region (Parthasarathy and Chopde 2000). Adoption of GNPT were seen to have contributed directly to increase in income and yields, and greater stability of the cropping system was achieved. Indirectly, it enhanced food availability, improved nutrition, and led to crop diversification. Also assets acquired for GNPT in the form of farm equipment and tools were being used for other crops, and have enabled cultivation in other seasons. There were positive changes in the condition of agricultural labour. Out-migration of labour was replaced by in-migration of labour due to the higher labour intensiveness of the technology package. Employment opportunities for women went up, since many of the operations were done by women as part of the gender division of agricultural labour. It can be seen from the above that a stream of benefits have flowed due to changes resulting from adoption of the GPT package. In carrying out an informal survey to assess impacts, in attempting to find causal relations between technology traits and the perceived impacts, and in the process of unearthing the reasons for lack of impact during an earlier

study, research identified the role of collective action in unsuccessful adoption and impact in the village. The importance of collective action and of forging unity with members of other social categories was also felt because of the complexity of the technology in terms of more number of operations to be performed and supervised, and hence more dependence on labour. The landowning households therefore consciously attempted to improve relations with the agricultural labour community who were mainly *adivasis*. This is perhaps a classic case of interdependence arising out of modernization and specialization leading to greater social solidarity, typified as 'organic' solidarity by the classical sociologist Emile Durkheim. For the *lambada* labour households, secure work throughout the year, and employment for more members of each family enabled them to fulfil certain social and community social obligations.

## **Conclusion**

Agriculture in the fragile, semi-arid tropics faces a vastly changing landscape in a globally competitive environment. Technology is an integral part of agriculture, and will remain a key factor for agriculture in the future. It is recognized that sustained agricultural research and technological improvements are critical in ensuring food security, and reducing poverty and hunger, without irreversible degradation of the natural resource base. The task therefore is to improve productivity and to diversify agriculture and the rural economy in order to create employment and income opportunities that alleviate poverty and deprivation.

With respect to livelihood asset endowments, land and labour are key. Scarcity of land and abundance of labour may result in adoption of labour intensive and land augmenting technologies, and increased intensity of land use. Technology has a key role here in supporting such strategies. These would encourage adoption of improved technologies, and undertaking of yield increasing and resource conserving investments. Increased access to markets would open up more opportunities in the non-farm sector, thus leading to livelihood diversification. In the absence of market access, off farm employment, or scope for out-migration, farmers may be forced to expand and exploit fragile and marginal environments. The results would include degradation of the commons, encroachment of forest land, and decline in soil fertility levels. Further marginalisation of small and marginal farmers is likely.

The choice of livelihood strategies is based on assessment of comparative advantages as determined by the natural resource and livelihood asset endowments of farm households, and prevailing socio-economic, policy and institutional environment. Hence there is a need to understand adaptive responses and changes in livelihood strategies. For this, household decision behaviour under conditions of risk and uncertainty must be understood and explained, which requires longitudinal studies with panel data. Decisions are made on the basis of resource trends, group dynamics, changing institutional norms,

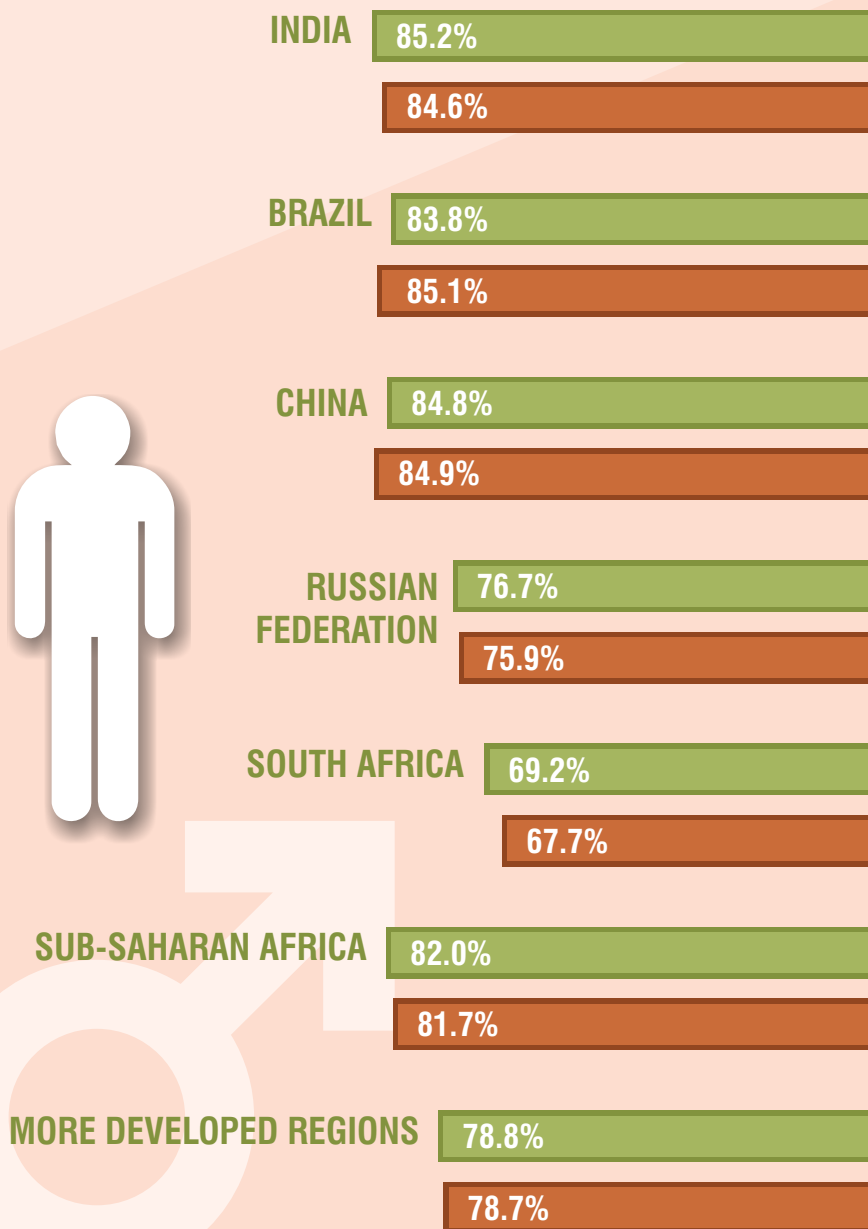
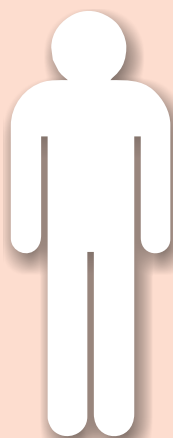
policy mechanisms, and broader economic changes including changes resulting from globalisation and market liberalisation. Decisions regarding livelihood strategies are therefore different for people with differential resource endowments, resource and market access, household characteristics, ability to cope and adapt, and technology availability. The above case studies hopefully show that a collaborative, locally adapted, and appropriate strategy is required to address issues of development, poverty, and employment in Indian agriculture. While a macro-level understanding offers strategies for national agricultural planning, and a better comprehension of broader trends, sustained increases in livelihood stability and employment generation in rural areas require strategies that are locally adapted to address conditions of risk, vulnerability, insecurity, and relations of dominance.

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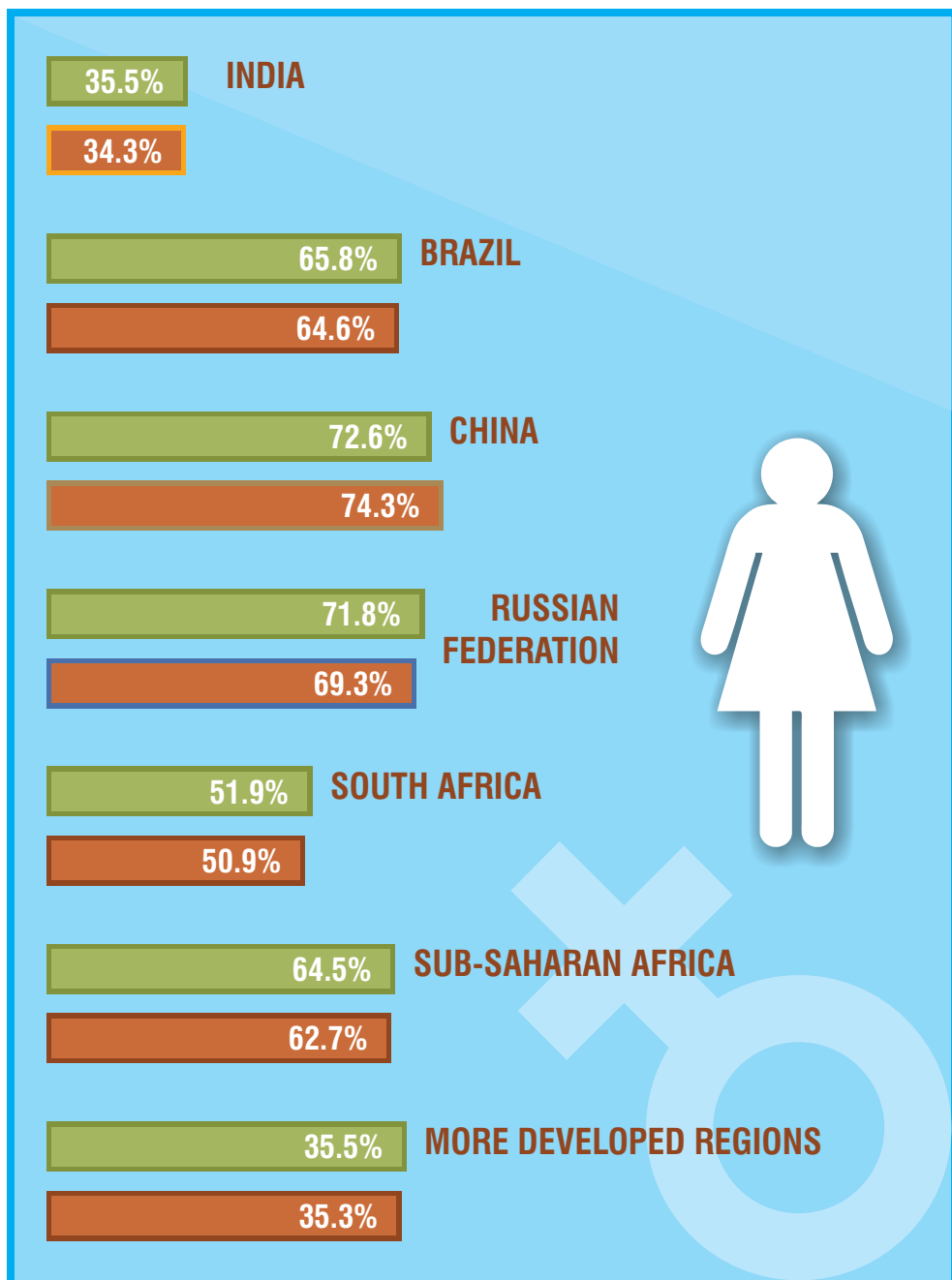
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# LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES



# LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES



Source: ILO Report 2010

 YEAR 2020

 YEAR 2010



# Indian Labour Market

## An Overview

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*Analyzing the labour market dynamics of the BRIC nations, it is expected that the overall dependency ratio will decline in India. However, there exist wide disparities in labour force participation rates across gender in the Indian labour market. In the context of aspiring youth and growing aged population, it is important to draft labour market policies that integrate skill development, inclusion of women and aged person in the labour market, and the inclusive provisioning of social security.*

This essay discusses the salient features of the Indian labour market. First, it captures the emerging dependency scenarios and labour force participation rates in India. It then compares the Indian scenario with that of four big economies: Brazil, China, Russian Federation, and South Africa. Secondly, the essay examines the structure of the Indian labour market, the type of employment, activity wise composition, wages, and social security.

As shown in Table 1, in India during 2010-2050, while the proportion of population below 15 years may fall from 31 per cent to 18 per cent, the proportion of those above 60 years may increase from 8 per cent to 20 per cent during the same period. A similar pattern is projected for the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), except for the Russian Federation where the proportion of population below 15 years may show slight positive increase.

**Table 1: Proportion of Above 60 and Below 15 Populations**

Major area, region or country	Population below 15 years (% of total population)			Population above 60 years (% of total population)		
	2010	2030	2050	2010	2030	2050
India	30.8	22.8	18.2	7.5	12.5	19.6
Brazil	25.5	17.0	14.7	10.2	18.9	29.3
China	19.9	16.9	15.3	12.3	23.4	31.1
Russian Federation	15.0	15.2	16.2	18.1	25.0	31.7

South Africa	30.3	26.2	22.5	7.3	11.1	14.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	42.3	35.6	28.4	4.9	5.9	9.1
More developed regions	16.5	15.4	15.4	21.8	28.8	32.6
World	26.9	22.7	19.6	11.0	16.5	21.9

Source: ILO (2010)

It appears that in the BRICS group, India and South Africa may see progressive fall in total dependency ratio (defined as population below age 15 and above 60 as a proportion of population in the age group of 15-60) during 2010-2050, while Brazil, Russia, and China are likely to report consistent increase in total dependency ratios. Quite important, during this period, total dependency ratio of India may drop from 55 per cent to 47 per cent, due to a likely fall in youth dependency ratio.<sup>1</sup> from 48per cent to 27per cent, that emanates from the projected drop in fertility rates. However, old age dependency may increase from 8per cent to 20per cent<sup>2</sup>. This throws a major challenge for the labour market to absorb the burgeoning size of job seekers who are 60 years and above.

**Table 2: Dependency Ratio**

Major area, region or country	Total dependency ratio (%)			Old-age dependency ratio (%)			Youth dependency ratio (%)		
	2010	2030	2050	2010	2030	2050	2010	2030	2050
India	55.6	45.3	47.0	7.7	12.2	20.2	47.9	33.1	26.8
Brazil	47.9	44.2	59.3	10.2	19.7	35.9	37.7	24.5	23.4
China	39.1	48.7	62.9	11.4	23.7	38.0	27.7	25.1	24.9
Russian Federation	38.7	53.0	65.6	17.9	29.7	38.8	20.8	23.3	26.8
South Africa	53.6	51.6	47.9	7.1	11.9	14.5	46.6	39.7	33.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	83.5	65.4	52.4	5.8	6.4	9.1	77.7	58.9	43.3
More developed regions	48.1	61.1	71.3	23.6	36.2	44.9	24.4	24.8	26.4
World	52.7	52.3	56	11.6	17.8	25.3	41.2	34.5	30.6

Source: ILO (2010)

Table 3 shows projected Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR)<sup>3</sup> in BRIC countries during 2010-2020. It appears India reports the most glaring gender disparity in LFPR

<sup>1</sup> Ratio of below 15 years population to 15-64 population

<sup>2</sup> Ratio of above 60 years population to 15-64 population

<sup>3</sup> Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) refers to the ratio of labour force to population.

across age groups. In the working age group (15-64), female LFPR is just one third, lowest in the BRICS groups. A conspicuous phenomenon is that India reports abysmally lower LFPR (2 per cent) for female in the age group of 65 and plus while male in the same age group reports an LFPR of 30 per cent.

**Table 3: Labour Force Participation Rates**

Major area, region or country	Male						Female					
	Ages 15+ (%)		Ages 15-64 (%)		Ages 65+ (%)		Ages 15+ (%)		Ages 15-64 (%)		Ages 65+ (%)	
	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020	2010	2020
India	81.0	80.5	84.6	85.2	29.7	26.3	32.7	32.4	35.3	35.5	2.1	2.1
Brazil	81.9	80.4	85.1	83.8	46.2	52.2	60.4	60.4	64.6	65.8	23.2	24.9
China	79.6	77.2	84.9	84.8	30.0	27.3	67.2	63.0	74.3	72.6	9.4	10.8
Russian Federation	69.5	68.5	75.9	76.7	16.3	16.6	58.0	57.8	69.3	71.8	9.5	9.6
South Africa	63.7	64.7	67.0	69.2	4.3	1.5	47.0	46.4	50.9	51.9	1.6	1.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	80.8	80.9	81.7	82.0	61.9	61.2	61.1	62.7	62.7	64.5	35.9	36.2
More developed regions	68.4	66.2	78.7	78.8	15.1	15.7	53.4	52.7	65.9	67.5	8.8	9.1
World	77.7	76.7	82.6	82.7	29.2	28.6	51.6	50.6	56.8	56.6	11.8	12.8

Source: ILO (2010)

Table 4 outlines the structure of Indian Labour Market, measured by usual principal status (UPS)<sup>4</sup>, based on unit level records of National sample Survey 66th Round (2011). First for all the age groups, population is composed of labour force (37 per cent) and not in labour force (63 per cent). In the whole population, 36.5 per cent are engaged in employment, while 1 per cent is unemployed. Quite important, 27 per cent of population is pursuing education that forms largest component of not in labour force. WPR<sup>5</sup>, LFPR and rate of unemployment<sup>6</sup> are 36.5 per cent, 37.4 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively. Just 6 per cent of population falls within the category of in regular salary/wage employment while 18 per cent and 13 per cent are in the self employment and casual labour category respectively. For the age group 15 years and

<sup>4</sup> According to National Sample Survey (NSS) the usual principal activity status relates to the activity status of a person during the reference period of 365 days preceding the date of survey. The activity status on which a person spent relatively longer time (i.e. major time criterion) during the 365 days preceding the date of survey is considered as the usual principal activity status of the person. Other criteria include Usual Status, Current Weekly Status and Current Daily Status. See [http://atlmri.org/index.php/downloads/doc\\_download/14-india-labour-market-report-2008](http://atlmri.org/index.php/downloads/doc_download/14-india-labour-market-report-2008)

<sup>5</sup> Work Participation (WPR) Rate refers to the ratio of Employment to Population.

<sup>6</sup> Rate of Unemployment refers to the ratio of unemployment to labour force.

above, WPR, LFR and rate of unemployment are 52.3 per cent, 53.6 and 2.4 per cent, respectively.

**Table 4: Structure of Indian Labour Market for all ages (Male + Female; Rural + Urban) 2009-2010**

	Usual Principal Activity Status	For all Ages	For 15 and above
		Percentage	Percentage
1.1	Worked in HH enterprise self-employed own account worker	11.6	16.8
1.2	Employer	0.4	.6
1.3	Worked as helper in house hold enterprise	5.9	8.3
<b>1.1+1.2+1.3 =1</b>	<b>Self Employed</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>25.7</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Worked as regular salaried wage employee</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>8.7</b>
3.1	Worked as casual wage labour in public works	0.3	.4
3.2	Casual wage labour in other types of work	12.2	17.5
<b>3.1+3.2=3</b>	<b>Casual Labour</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>17.9</b>
<b>1+2+3=4</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>52.3</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>4 + 5 =6</b>	<b>Labour force</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>53.6</b>
7.1	Attended educational institution	27.0	11.0
7.2	Attended domestic duties only	13.2	18.7
7.3	Attended domestic duties and was also engaged in free collection of goods for household use	7.5	10.6
7.4	Aentiers, pensioners remittance recipients	1.3	1.9
7.5	Not able to work due to disability	1.2	1.6
7.6	Others	12.4	2.7
<b>7.1+7.2+7.3+7.4+7.5+7.6=7</b>	<b>Not in Labour force</b>	<b>62.6</b>	<b>46.5</b>
<b>6+7=8</b>	<b>(Population according to Census 2011 =1210193422)</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	<b>Work Participation Rate [(Employment/Population)*100]</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>52.3</b>
	<b>Labour Force Participation Rate [(Labour Force/Population)*100]</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>53.6</b>
	<b>Rate of Unemployment [(Unemployed/Labour Force)]</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.4</b>

Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

As shown in Table 5, for the working age group (15-64 years), close to 75 per cent of women are not in labour force. 60 per cent of them are engaged in unpaid domestic activities. On the other hand, slightly above 16 per cent of men are in not in labour force.

While 80 per cent men participate in employment, the share of women is only above 25 per cent (see Appendix Table 1 for share industry wise share of women in employment). It is important to note that not even 1 per cent of men are engaged in unpaid domestic activities. Box 1 captures the dynamics of employment status in India during 1990-2000-2009-2010.

**Table 5: Structure of the Indian Labour Market for the Age Group 15-64 (Male + Female; Rural + Urban) 2009-2010**

	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Worked in household enterprise self-employed own account worker	29.2%	3.9%	16.8%
Employer	1.0%	0.1%	0.6%
Worked as helper in household enterprise	9.0%	8.4%	8.7%
Worked as regular salaried wage employee	15.0%	3.4%	9.3%
Worked as casual wage labour in public works	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%
In other types of work	26.0%	10.4%	18.3%
Did not work but was seeking and or available for work	1.9%	0.9%	1.4%
Attended educational institutions	14.0%	9.5%	11.8%
Attended domestic duties only	0.3%	38.5%	19.0%
Attended domestic duties and was also engaged in free collection of goods for household use	0.2%	22.3%	11.0%
Aentiers, pensioners remittance recipients	1.0%	0.7%	0.9%
Not able to work due to disability	1.0%	0.6%	0.8%
Others	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%
Population	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<b>Self employed</b>	<b>39.1%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>
<b>Regular</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>
<b>Casual</b>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>10.6%</b>	<b>18.7%</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>
<b>Not in labour force</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>72.7%</b>	<b>44.6%</b>
<b>Population</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

The dynamics of Indian Employment has been enumerated in Box 1 for the periods 1990-2000-2009-2010

### Box 1: Dynamics of Employment Status

The following Table below gives the composition of population (P), which consists of persons in the labour force (L) and persons who are not in labour force (NL). L is constituted by employed persons (E) and unemployed persons (U). E comprises three categories: self employed (SE), regular salary/wage employment (RE), and casual employment (CE). The analysis is broken into 2 segments – 1990-00 and 2004-05 – 2009-2010. While the composition of P hardly shows significant change, for rural, urban and combined, during 1999-2000 to 2004-05, the compound annual growth rates (CAGR) of the constituents of P vary from -0.8 to 6.9. Quite strikingly, during this period, the category of unemployed rural persons reports the highest CAGR i.e. 6.9. Among the categories of employment, irrespective of rural or urban, SE reports highest CAGRs while CL shows a trend of deceleration. However, this dynamics is no longer valid during 2004-05 to 2009-10; while unemployment in rural and urban reports discernible deceleration, CL reports the highest CAGRs. Interestingly, during this period, growth of SE, combining rural and urban, plummets to -1.6. Plausibly, the deceleration of unemployment and CL emerging as a principal source of growth in employment, may have roots in social protection legislations such as National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), which provides at least hundred days of paid work for worker seekers in rural India.

### Employment Status in India \* (%) (15 Years and Above) (Male + Female)

	Rural + Urban			Rural			Urban		
	2009-10 (66th Round)	2004-05 (61st Round)	1999-00 (55th Round)	2009-10 (66th Round)	2004-05 (61st Round)	1999-00 (55th Round)	2009-10 (66th Round)	2004-05 (61st Round)	1999-00 (55th Round)
Self Employed (SE)	25.7 (-1.6)\$	30.5 (3.5)&	28	28.7 (-2) \$	34.1 (3.4)&	31.3	18.3 (0.3) \$	21 (4)&	19.1
Regular Salaried/Wage (RE)	8.7 (1.7) \$	8.8 (2.5)&	8.5	4.3 (-0.2) \$	4.7 (2.7)&	4.5	19.5 (2.7) \$	19.8 (2.4)&	19.4
Casual Labour (CL)	17.9 (2.8) \$	17.1 (-0.6)&	19.2	21.9 (2.5) \$	20.8 (-0.5)&	23.3	8 (5.3) \$	7.2 (-0.8)&	8.3
Unemployed (U)	1.3 (-4.5) \$	1.8 (5.1)&	1.5	1.1 (-3.9) \$	1.5 (6.9)&	1.2	1.7 (-5.3) \$	2.7 (3.2)&	2.6

Not in Labour Force (NL)	46.4 (4.1) \$	41.8 (1.4)&	42.8	44 (3.9) \$	39 (1.3)&	39.8	52.5 (4.4) \$	49.3 (1.5)&	50.7
<b>Total (P)</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Bino Paul G D (2014), Exploring the link between labour market, business environment and technology: insights from India in Bhowmik (ed.) The state of labour: the global financial crisis and its impact, New Delhi: Routledge, pp 83-104

Note: Figure in parenthesis is the compound annual growth rate (CAGR); \$ for 2009-10 – 2004-05; & for 2004-05 – 1999-00.

\*Employment is measured in Usual Principal Status. Source: NSS 55<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> round reports

Table 6 captures the trend of employment in India during 1987-88 - 2009-10. In rural India, for both male and female, the composition of employment shows very little perceptible change. The share of regular wage/salaried hovered around 9 per cent for males and 4 per cent for females during last two decades. What makes urban labour market distinct from rural is that, the share of regular wage/salaried in urban employment remained significantly higher in the range of 34-45 per cent for female, while the range for male is 41-44 per cent.

**Table 6: Trends of Employment in India (1987-88-2009-10)**

Rural (Usual Principal Status); age 15 years above						
Survey Period (Round)	Male			Female		
	Self-employed	Regular wage/salaried	Casual labour	Self-employed	Regular wage/salaried	Casual labour
2009-10 (66)*	50.3	5.6	44.1	53.1	8.7	38.2
2007-08 (64)	54.9	9.3	35.9	50.8	5.3	43.9
2004-05 (61)	57.6	9.1	33.3	56.4	4.8	38.9
1999-00 (55)	54.4	9	36.6	50	3.9	46.1
1993-94 (50)	56.7	8.7	34.6	51.3	3.4	45.3
1987-88 (43)	57.5	10.4	32.1	54.9	4.9	40.2
Rural (Usual Principal Status); age 15 years above						
Survey Period (Round)	Male			Female		
	Self-employed	Regular wage/salaried	Casual labour	Self-employed	Regular wage/salaried	Casual labour
2009-10 (66)	40.9	42	17.1	35.2	44.7	20.1
2007-08 (64)	42.5	42.1	15.4	35.8	43.2	21
2004-05 (61)	44.6	40.8	14.6	40.4	42.2	17.4
1999-00 (55)	41.2	41.9	16.9	38.4	38.5	23.1
1993-94 (50)	41.1	42.7	16.2	37.2	35.5	27.3
1987-88 (43)	41	44.4	14.6	39.3	34.2	26.5

Source: National Sample Survey Organization (2010)

Note: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

While the table points to a temporally stable employment status, it is important to examine the coverage and type of social security that the employment provides to the employed persons. Broadly, there are five instruments of social security: Provident Fund (PF), Pension, Gratuity, Health Care and Maternity Benefit. Table 7 provides the percentage distribution of employed persons who are entitled to combinations of these instruments. While the percentage of employed persons in rural areas without any social security entitlement is 97 per cent, this proportion is 79 per cent in urban area (see Appendix Table 2). Aggregating rural and urban areas, a whopping 92 per cent of employed person were not covered under any social security instruments, called informal employment, while the other segment that captures only persons who are entitled to at least one type of social security (8 per cent) is called formal employment. Moreover, there is hardly any formal work in two segments—self employed and casual labour—while slightly above 40 per cent of regular stream, rural (40 per cent) and urban (47 per cent), is formal (Table 8).

**Table 7: Social Security for Employed in India (2009-10) (Age group 15-64; Male + Female, Employed) (Per cent)**

Social Security	Rural	Urban	Rural + Urban
Only PF/ pension	0.9	4.8	1.9
Only gratuity	0.2	0.4	0.2
Only health care & maternity benefits	0.1	0.8	0.3
Only PF/ pension and gratuity	0.2	1.2	0.5
Only PF/ pension and health care & maternity benefits	0.2	1.5	0.5
Only gratuity and health care & maternity benefits	0.1	0.8	0.3
PF/ pension, gratuity, health care & maternity benefits	1.9	11.0	4.2
Not eligible for any of above social security benefits	96.5	79.4	92.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

**Table 8: Social Security and Employment Status (Rural + Urban) (2009-10) (Age group 15-64; Male + Female, Employed) (Per cent)**

	Employment Status	Informal	Formal	Total
<b>Rural</b>	Self employed	100.0		100.0
	Regular	59.9	40.1	100.0
	Casual	99.3	0.7	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>96.5</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>



<b>Urban</b>	Self employed	100.0		100.0
	Regular	52.8	47.2	100.0
	Casual	98.6	1.4	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

**Table 9: Social Security and Employment Status (Rural + Urban) (2009-10)**

**(Age group 15-64; Male + Female, Employed) (Per cent)**

<b>Economic Activity</b>	<b>Informal (%)</b>	<b>Formal (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	99.9	0.1	100.0
Fishing	98.3	1.7	100.0
Mining & Quarrying	66.3	33.7	100.0
Manufacturing	87.7	12.3	100.0
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	27.5	72.5	100.0
Construction	97.8	2.2	100.0
Trade	98.2	1.8	100.0
Hotels & Restaurants	96.5	3.5	100.0
Transport, Storage and Communication	85.1	14.9	100.0
Financial Intermediation	44.5	55.5	100.0
Real Estate & Other Business activities	73.5	26.5	100.0
Public Administration	13.4	86.6	100.0
Education	42.5	57.5	100.0
Health and Social Work	54.9	45.1	100.0
Other Community, Social, Personal services	96.6	3.4	100.0
Undifferentiated Production	98.6	1.4	100.0
Extra Terrestrial organization	100.0		100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>92.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

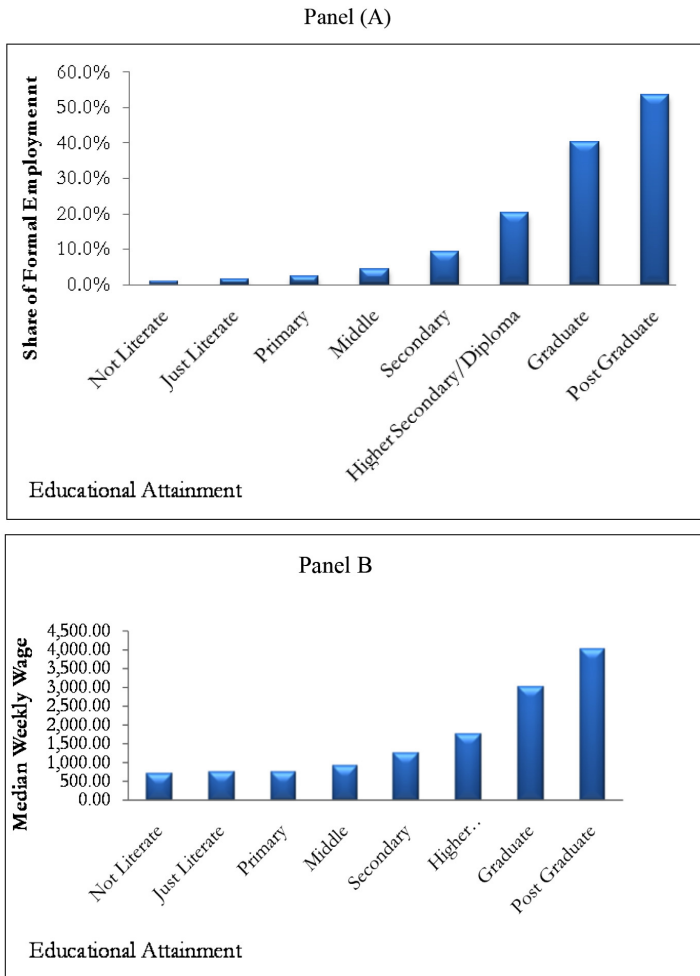
**Table 10: Social Security, Social Group, and Religion (Rural + Urban) (2009-10)**  
**(Age group 15-64; Male + Female, Employed)**

	Informal	Formal	Total
Social Group			
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	95.8%	4.2%	100.0%
Scheduled Caste (SC)	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%
Other Backward Class (OBC)	93.7%	6.3%	100.0%
Others	86.7%	13.3%	100.0%
Religion			
Hinduism	91.8%	8.2%	100.0%
Islam	95.7%	4.3%	100.0%
Christianity	85.5%	14.5%	100.0%
Sikhism	90.8%	9.2%	100.0%
Jainism	84.2%	15.8%	100.0%
Buddhism	86.7%	13.3%	100.0%
Zoroastrianism	39.2%	60.8%	100.0%
Others	94.5%	5.5%	100.0%
Total	92.0%	8.0%	100.0%

*Source:* Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

As shown in Table 9, across economic activities, share formal work in employment varies between 0.1 per cent (Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry) and 87 per cent (Public Administration). Quite important, economic activities showing higher share of formal employment such as Electricity, Gas and Water Supply (73 per cent), Education (58 per cent), Financial Intermediation (56 per cent), and Health and Social Work (45 per cent), compared to other activities, are noteworthy for state's involvement as the principal employer. Proportion of formal employment appears to be sensitive to social category and religion. The formal employment accounts for 13 per cent for others, the category majorly represented by forward caste, share of formal employment of socially disadvantaged groups - Scheduled Tribe (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Other Backward Class (OBC) - varies in the range of 4 per cent to 6 per cent. By disaggregating formal-informal composition, for religion, Islam reports highest proportion of informal employment (96 per cent) while Zoroastrianism reports lowest proportion of informal employment (39 per cent).

**Figure 1: Share of Formal Employment, Median Weekly Wage and Educational Attainment in 2009-10 (Age 15-64; Male + Female; Rural + Urban; Regular Wage & Salaried Employed)**



Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

As portrayed in panel A of figure 1, share of formal employment increases as educational attainment increases. While close to 55% of post graduates are engaged in formal employment, just 10% of matriculates (secondary education) are in formal employment. Further, there is a direct relation between educational attainment and median weekly wage as well (panel B, Figure 1).

By cross tabulating employment status with gender and area of residence, we find that formal workers appear to earn a significantly positive differential wage over informal workers (Table 11). The median wage of male is discernibly higher than that of female across all levels of disaggregation. As shown in Table 12, across economic activities, wage rate appears to vary directly with years of schooling. While agriculture presents a combination of lower median wage (Rs 563) and lower median years of schooling (4 years), median wages and median years of schooling for financial intermediation are Rupee 3500 and 15 years, respectively.

**Table 11: Nature of Employment, Gender, and Area in 2009-10**  
(Age group 15-64; Male + Female, Regular Wage Salaried Employed)

Nature of Employment	Gender	Rural	Urban	Total
		Median Weekly Wage		
Informal	Male	600.00	850.00	660.00
	Female	350.00	490.00	360.00
	Total	511.00	786.00	560.00
Formal	Male	2,500.00	3,400.00	3,000.00
	Female	1,500.00	3,000.00	2,500.00
	Total	2,300.00	3,250.00	3,000.00
Total	Male	620.00	1,167.00	700.00
	Female	360.00	700.00	400.00
	Total	560.00	1,050.00	666.00

Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

**Table 12: Economic Activity, Median Weekly Wage, Median Years of Schooling in 2009-10**  
(Age group 15-64; Male + Female, Rural + Urban, Regular Wage Salaried Employed)

Economic Activity	Median Weekly Wage	Median Years of Schooling	Share in Employment
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	563.00	4	50.3
Fishing	817.00	0	0.4
Mining & Quarrying	1,890.00	10	0.7
Manufacturing	1,000.00	10	11.3
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	3,000.00	12	0.3
Construction	1,400.00	10	10.0
Trade	875.00	10	10.0
Hotels & Restaurants	910.00	7	1.4
Transport, Storage and Communication	1,250.00	10	4.8
Financial Intermediation	3,500.00	15	0.9

Real Estate and Other Business Activities	2,180.00	15	1.4
Public Administration	3,000.00	12	2.3
Education	2,100.00	15	2.8
Health and Social Work	1,500.00	12	0.8
Other Community, Social, Personal services	700.00	7	1.9
Undifferentiated Production	583.00	0	0.8
Extra Terrestrial organization	3,000.00	17	0.0
Total	1,350.00	10	100

*Source:* Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66<sup>th</sup> Round unit level records, 2011

The Table further shows that the four industries -Agriculture (50 per cent), Hunting and Forestry (11 per cent), Manufacturing (11.3 per cent), and Construction (10 per cent) - form 80 per cent of employment in India, which are characterised by enormity of informal employment, lower median wage and lower years of schooling. On the other hand, industries which offer formal employment is formal, paying higher median wage and having employers with higher median years of schooling –for example Financial Intermediation, Public Administration and so on – provide just minuscule share of employment.

Quite evidently, the Indian Labour Market appears to be floating along the equilibrium with abysmally low participation of women in the labour market, enormity of low wage informal employment, and scarcity of decent regular wage employment. In view of the emerging demographic milieu of aspiring youth and burgeoning aged population, it is important to innovate the labour market policies that integrate skill development, inclusion of women and aged person in the labour market, and substantial increase in the provisioning of social security. Moreover, urban-rural dichotomy is quite evident in wages and formal employment; the differential in favour of urban region. This pattern points to the need for generating high value adding economic activities in rural areas that create substantial size of formal employment. Further, the rural to urban migration needs to be more fluid and gainful for the job seekers.

## Appendix

**Table 1: Share of Formal Employment in 2009-10 (Age group 15-64; Male + Female)**

Industry (National Industrial Classification 2004 2 Digit)	Percentage of female in employment	Industry (National Industrial Classification 2004 2 Digit)	Percentage of female in employment
Agriculture , hunting and related service activities	31.6%	Manufacture of other transport equipment	0.6%
Forestry, logging and related service activities	16.0%	Manufacture of furniture; manu- facturing	9.3%
Fishing, operation of fish hatcher- ies and fish farms	8.7%	Recycling	39.0%
Mining of coal and lignite; ex- traction of peat	3.9%	Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply	9.1%
Extraction of crude petroleum and natural gas; service activities	1.8%	Collection, purification and distri- bution of water	7.7%
Mining of metal ores	3.4%	Construction	10.8%
Other mining and quarrying	14.9%	Sale , maintenance and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; retail sale of automotive fuel	0.9%
Manufacture of food products and beverages	24.3%	Wholesale trade and commission trade	5.5%
Manufacture of tobacco products	77.3%	Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles; repair of personal and household goods	10.4%
Manufacture of textiles	29.1%	Hotels and restaurants	14.7%
Manufacture of wearing apparel; dressing and dyeing of fur	32.2%	Land transport; transport via pipelines	1.9%
Tanning and dressing of leather; manufacture of luggage	9.6%	Water transport	0.2%
Manufacture of wood and of products of wood and cork	17.1%	Air transport	11.4%
Manufacture of paper and paper products	19.6%	Supporting and auxiliary transport activities; activities of travel agencies	4.4%
Publishing, printing and repro- duction of recorded media	8.4%	Post and telecommunications	7.6%
Manufacture of coke, refined pe- troleum products and nuclear fuel	5.7%	Financial intermediation, except insurance and pension funding	12.8%
Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products	27.3%	Insurance and pension funding, except compulsory social security	18.0%
Manufacture of rubber and plastic products	13.4%	Activities auxiliary to financial intermediation	10.2%
Manufacture of other non-metal- lic mineral products	15.9%	Real estate activities	4.3%

Manufacture of basic metals	4.4%	Renting of machinery and equipment without operator and of personal and household goods	3.9%
Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment	4.4%	Computer and related activities	14.8%
Manufacture of machinery and equipment	3.6%	Research and development	16.0%
Manufacture of office, accounting and computing machinery	3.0%	Other business activities	9.7%
Manufacture of electrical machinery and apparatus	4.8%	Public administration and defence	13.9%
Manufacture of radio, television and communication equipment and apparatus	6.2%	Education	40.7%
Manufacture of medical, precision and optical instruments, watches and clocks	19.3%	Health and social work	41.3%
Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers	4.3%	Sewage and refuse disposal, sanitation and similar activities	31.4%
Manufacture of other transport equipment	0.6%	Activities of membership organisations n.e.c.	7.8%
Manufacture of furniture; manufacturing	9.3%	Recreational, cultural and sporting activities	7.4%
Recycling	39.0%	Other service activities	31.1%
Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply	9.1%	Others	56.3%

Source: Computed from National Sample Survey (NSS) 66th Round unit level records, 2011

**Table 2: Share of Formal Employment in 2009-10 (Age group 15-64; Male + Female)**

State	Share of formal employment		State	Share of formal employment	
	Rural	Urban		Rural	Urban
State	Rural	Urban	State	Rural	Urban
Jammu & Kashmir	14.5%	30.9%	West Bengal	2.1%	22.1%
Himachal Pradesh	9.2%	36.1%	Jharkhand	3.6%	26.5%
Punjab	5.7%	19.5%	Orissa	4.2%	25.1%
Chandigarh	37.5%	30.8%	Chhattisgarh	2.6%	23.2%
Uttaranchal	5.1%	21.3%	Madhya Pradesh	2.3%	17.9%
Haryana	8.1%	18.8%	Gujarat	2.9%	17.2%
Delhi	20.8%	19.2%	Daman and Diu	28.4%	15.0%
Rajasthan	3.1%	17.8%	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	9.7%	64.7%
Uttar Pradesh	2.0%	16.3%	Maharashtra	4.4%	27.6%
Bihar	1.7%	11.1%	Andhra Pradesh	2.3%	18.2%
Sikkim	14.8%	24.1%	Karnataka	2.3%	19.3%
Arunachal Pradesh	10.5%	39.6%	Goa	49.3%	31.7%
Nagaland	13.6%	44.5%	Lakshadweep	29.5%	35.9%
Manipur	10.4%	24.0%	Kerala	9.6%	21.1%
Mizoram	7.8%	27.7%	Tamil Nadu	4.4%	18.6%
Tripura	7.4%	28.4%	Pondicherry	12.0%	34.7%
Meghalaya	7.1%	35.6%	Andaman& Nicobar	23.1%	46.4%
Assam	4.8%	34.5%	India	3.5%	20.6%

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# Labour Movements in India

## A Case of De-democratisation?

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*The de-democratization of labour, especially in the manufacturing sector, has led to sporadic outbursts rather than unionized protests. There is evidence and data to point to a number of factors for this state of affairs: stagnant real wage rates, lackadaisical approach by the state to the enforcement of labour law, lack of coherence between wage rate and productivity, under investment in worker's training, widening gap between managerial and workers salaries, discernible deviation from the construct of decent work and scarcely prevalent workers' participation and management. The silver lining is that the increasing informalisation of the workforce has eroded the divide between organized and unorganized workforce, undermined the labour aristocracy and has made broader associations and coalitions possible.*

In the Suzuki-owned Maruti-Manesar car assembly plant in Gurgaon near New Delhi, in 2011, workers' unrest led to arson and death of a human resource manager. These migrant workers demanded the right to represent themselves through independent unions. The insurgency had been one among a series of protests in the automobile sector in India, starting with the contract workers strike at the Honda plant in 2009. The disputes about recognition of unions and wage agreement at the Honda plant led to the death of a worker, after which the AITUC union called for a one-day-strike – around 80,000 to 100,000 car workers did not work on the October 20, 2009, leading to factory closures at GM and Ford in the US due to lack of parts. This unrest was among a series of protests in the automobile sector, starting in 2009 with the Honda plant strike. In Pricol, an auto part plant of the Toyota in Coimbatore, and in the Graziano Transmission unit at Greater Noida, the vice-president and CEO were killed during workers' agitations. The rise in anxiety about the future of the working class in India was reflected in the 48 hours India-wide strike held on February 2013. Some 100 million workers from all sectors --- dock workers to miners to migrant workers --- and trade unions, including the ruling Congress-linked Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) and the BJP-linked Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), came together with a 10-point charter of demands asking the government to take firm and swift measures to check price rise, strengthen the food security system, and fix minimum wages.

This essay focuses on the significance of labour unrest. Some of the incidents were remarkable due to the show of collectivism, use of disruption and violence, and demands that pertained to workers as a whole such as right to representation. They implied a move from conventional union-based articulation by formally employed workers, to new demands for independent unions by migrant labourers. These protests were organically connected to production and the socialization process in the factories, and hence stood apart from other workers' campaigns inspired by transnational imperatives.

These unrests are symptomatic of the de-democratisation of workers' politics in India after the introduction of economic reforms. India, as most parts of the world, underwent tremendous economic transformation in the last three decades. An economy and society that was hitherto organised according to the paradigms of nationalism and self-sufficiency was integrated into the world economy market, unleashing market forces, good and bad, to obstinately pursue growth and material rewards. The state reversed its protective and regulatory role by trimming social policy spending, liberalising existing laws or creating new laws to smoothen the process of economic growth. The Labour unrest phenomena is an outcome of this situation. .

In the period of postcolonialism, the dominant economic goal of the Indian state was to reach the level of advancement of the western states. By postcolonialism, it is implied independence from colonial rule, the formation of new nation-states, forms of economic development dominated by the development of indigenous capital and the continuity of the effects of colonisation in the decolonised society (Hall, 1996: 248). The dominant political ideology was that of self-reliance. In the modernisation and industrialisation drive that followed the state-owned sectors were to play a dominant role played and Indian business groups were to have prescribed roles. Labour regulations were tilted against workers and in favour of economic development (see Bhowmik, 2011). Workers were prevented from disrupting production by industrial regulations that rendered strike illegal, hegemonic means such as the idea of nation building, and some material rewards for the less than 5 per cent of the organised workforce represented through registered and recognised trade unions. The state also maintained an immense reserve of informal workforce, through which most of the production was performed. The lack of emphasis on implementing agrarian reforms and development policies, and the upkeep of the urban-rural divide, ensured this informal workforce was always in excess supply.

However, a culture of democratic dissent was embedded in the labour regime of this period. Labour regime here means the system that safeguards the regulation of labour in the production process. The labour regime consists of both hegemonic and coercive measures to tame the workers and maintain labour discipline. The trade unions were affiliated with the many and opposing political parties and workers, both formal and informal, who were also citizens with electoral rights. The ruling state, depended on this workforce for providing the legitimacy to rule. Frances Fox Piven's concept of

‘interdependent power’ is useful in understanding the mutual dependence of the Indian state and the citizens. Interdependent power means that the “State elites can invoke the authority of the law and the force of the troops, but they also depend on voting publics” (Fox Piven, 2008: 5).

The Indian public has persistently used the spaces of contentious democratic politics to make demands on the apathetic state. If we examine the postcolonial Indian political scene, conflicts and contentions are part of everyday life, and the repertoires vary from organized social movements to that of spontaneous disruption. The presence of conflicts in India, along with the political stability of the democratic regime, made Myron Weiner name it the “Indian Paradox” (Weiner and Varshney, 1989). It was this democratic space that the workers have been using to protect their interests.

The market reforms were introduced in India officially in the 1990s, though many reforms have been under way since the 1980s that gave more powers to the private sectors. It has been argued that since 1990s, the Indian business groups have strengthened their already accumulated powers. Atul Kohli argues that the Indian state changed “from reluctant pro-capitalist state with a socialist ideology to an enthusiastic pro-capitalist state with a neoliberal ideology” in that period (Kohli, 2009: 14). The Indian state aggressively facilitated what can be termed as “capitalist activism,” such as innovation, expansion, diversification and acquisition by business groups and weakened labour activism. The ideology of the time revolved around competition, free market and economic growth. The Indian state opened up its economy to foreign capital, privatised the hitherto state owned sector, deregulated industrial policies and labour laws, facilitated flexible labour, and reduced social spending. The political impact of the pro-business tilt, in terms of shifting public opinion influenced by the corporate media in favour of private capital, institutionalisation of the money and electoral politics link through the chamber of commerce, and influencing economic policy decisions through bribing, has created a very unsavory climate for democracy (see Kochanek, 1987).

An important, yet under analysed, characteristic of neoliberal India is the rise in the economic power of regional state economies. While the networks of indigenous business elites and the regional state have been characteristic of the period of economic nationalism in India, the neoliberal era has provided much more powers to the regional state in economic decision making, in luring private capital, both indigenous, diaspora and multi-national. While labour regulations have always been a state subject, this decentralisation gave unprecedented powers to the state to act in favour of business. The nature in which the state acts vary: while in states such as Tamil Nadu that are growth oriented, but have firm populist politics in place, workers’ interests are better protected (Agarwala, 2013). In mineral rich states such as Chhattisgarh that is developing an extractive economy, the state, as the owner of land, has been indiscriminate in the allocation of natural resources, one example being that of 42 new coal based thermal

power plants coming up, with a total area of 52, 201 square miles. The incumbent BJP has been in power for two continuous terms, and has just had an electoral victory to rule for a third term in 2013. The state has been able to suppress democratic dissent, and maintain legitimacy by the provision of welfare and services, and also by communalizing politics. This new politics and political culture have pre-empted all other politics for rights, such as the right to unionise, and right to strike, as shown in detail elsewhere (Nair, 2011). The most recent example of the state suppression of workers' rights is the failure of a contract teachers' strike. Over two and a half lakh school teachers held a strike in December 2012 against contract work, downgraded working environment and salaries. Around 35,000 striking teachers were suspended by the state, and it threatened to replace all the striking teachers with new teachers. It also tried to break the movement by deciding to regularize around 17,000 of the teachers.

Despite the feminization of informal work highlighted by scholars such as Munck (2002), in India, the majority of informal workers are still men, still with no rights to regular employment, wages, and unions to represent them. It is not surprising that the labour unrest has risen in those sectors that are dominated by male migrant workers. Approximately 487 million people are employed in the informal sector of Indian economy. There has been no assessment of the use of the informal workforce in the formal industries, precisely because of the difficulties of measuring workers that are not officially in the payroll. A report by the now defunct NCEUS, based on a survey of eight industries in the manufacturing sector found that in four of them, casual and contract workforce was more than the regular workforce (Kannan & Papola, 2007). Most of the informally employed are men (67 per cent) and most of the employment of informal labor is in agriculture (64 per cent). The non-agricultural sector, including rural industries, employs only 35 per cent of the informal workforce. Of this informal labour force in the non-agricultural sector, 87 per cent are men.

In India, more and more workers find themselves in situations where neither national labour law nor strong industrial relations systems protect them, yet labour scholars have only recently begun to acknowledge that this situation is increasingly the norm rather than the exception for waged labour.

Even for the minute section of the labour force that is part of conventional organized unions, and are protected by the earlier labour regime, democratic means of redress of grievances were becoming increasingly difficult. Emmanuel Teitelbaum found that throughout the 1980s and 1990s, average dispute duration in the Indian industrial sector fluctuated between forty and sixty days per striking or locked-out worker and in the early 2000s lengthy lockouts pushed average dispute duration above eighty days. In the early 1970s, average dispute duration was about 20 days per striking or locked-out worker, which demonstrated the relative ease with which workers could win demands (Teitelbaum, 2011). The Indian planners aim to increase the sectoral contribution of the

manufacturing industries to 25 per cent (currently it is 16 per cent) of the GDP and to create 100 million additional jobs by 2022 to catch up with China (The Hindu October 22, 2011). Given the expanding reserve army of labour caused by de-regulation of labour laws in the existing sectors, and the influx of migrant workers to produce in the rising manufacturing sector, it is entirely normal to expect increasing discontent among the working classes.

### **Glimmers of Hope**

What is the future of labour movements in India? What agency do workers have in negotiating the conditions of their employment and wages? One silver lining in the otherwise grim horizon is that unions are embracing informal labour and representing the entire working class. Trade unions that ignored the informally employed workers so far were bringing them under their umbrella. Between 1996 and 2008, the number of registered unions went up from 58,955 to 84,642 and total membership went up from 5601 to 9573 million. Labour unions have been rising in strikes for more general causes than those relating to work.

The latest among such strikes have been the nationwide strike held by CITU on February 20-21, 2013, in which 100 million workers stimulated by the state's plan to privatize the retail, insurance and aviation sectors by opening them up to foreign investment. The workers demanded a legal minimum wage, better protections against poor working conditions for those in low paying or unskilled positions, and halt the outsourcing of jobs to foreign investment and private sector markets. The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry estimated losses from the strike at around 200 billion rupees (\$3.7 billion) (The Hindu, February 21, 2013). The strike affected state-run institutions where the workers were organized. Drawing on Karl Polanyi's ideas on the separation of economy and society, self-regulating market and double movement, it can be concluded that the activities of unions constituted the counter movement at national and global levels resisting marketization and pushing for labour de-commodification (Bandelj, Sorette and Sowers, 2011). Some new unions such as The New Trade Union Initiative was formed in 2004, as a non-partisan left-democratic trade union to link the formal and informal workers (Hensman, 2011).

Under the aegis of the Decent Work agenda of the ILO, the Indian state has been implementing social policies to defend the poor, especially after the global financial crisis. In 2004, the National Security Scheme for Unorganised Sector Workers was introduced. In 2006, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was implemented, which provided a legal warrant for one hundred days of employment in every year to adult members of any rural household. The Act has been hailed as a testimony to the ruling United Progressive Alliance Government's commitment to helping the poorest of the poor. Many have argued that the introduction of these and

other policies such as the food security bill and right to education exemplifies a shift to a post-neoliberal state, where the state is actively intervening to support citizens. Nonetheless, these policies are also strengthening the taming of labour politics. The same state introduced a labour law titled the Labour Laws Amendment Bill, 2011, in parliament, which exempted employers of establishments employing up to 40 persons from the obligations of almost all the basic labour laws governing matters such as minimum wages, payment of wages, working hours, contract work, and payment of bonus. Though initially the exemption was for a larger number of employees, protests from the left parties reduced the number to forty. Even with the number of employees down to forty; nearly 78 percent of the workforce in the manufacturing sector would be out of the purview of the basic labour laws (Frontline, April 23-May 06, 2011). Workers, no longer have entitlements as workers. But as the poor, they have entitlement to work, only if they leave their contentions in the towns and return to their villages.

To re-state the argument in this essay, in the period of economic nationalism, the Indian state was not really pro-labour for most of the workforce; nonetheless there was the existence of a contentious democratic space that allowed the workers, both formal and informal, to challenge the state and the capitalists. Further, it has been argued that the changeover to the period of neoliberal labour regime was characterised by the state turning pro-business; the state has indeed become a clear and aggressive facilitator of capital; but the mechanism that tilted the playing field against the workers was the manner in which the business could persuade the state to pre-empt democratic politics, which rendered workers' resistance ineffective. For any workers' movement to create success, at least in the short run, the tactics had to be radical, disruptive and violent. One silver lining in the dark sky was that the increasing informalisation of the workforce eroded the divide between organised and unorganized workforce, undermined the labour aristocracy, thus making broader associations and coalitions possible.

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# Interrogating Employment in IT and ITES/BPO Sector

## Quantity, Quality and Disparities

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*During the past two decades, the IT and ITES/BPO Sector has generated millions of jobs in India. However, employment in the sector constitutes only a minor fraction of workforce/employment in the economy as a whole (0.7 per cent of the total workforce in India). The growth in employment through this sector has been concentrated to the socially advantaged and economically well-off sections. It is the reflection of class-caste-rural-urban divide that prevails in India. Also to be focused is the observed division of skill endowment and competencies among the workers in this sector.*

### **I. Introduction**

Information Technology and IT Enabled Services/Business Process Outsourcing (IT and ITES/BPO) Sector is one of the new sunshine sectors of Indian economy. From its nascent beginning in the late 1990s, the sector has grown to a stunning height, with India claiming more than half of global outsourcing Industry in 2011. Available estimates suggest that the aggregate revenue of the sector has crossed USD 100 billion, by now. In a faster growing overall economy, the sector's growth has been fastest so much so that its share as a proportion of country's GDP has risen up from 1.2 per cent in 1998 to about 7.5 per cent in 2012. During the same period, the export share of IT and ITES/BPO sector in total exports (merchandise plus services) increased from less than 4 per cent to about 25 per cent, as per estimates provided by National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM)<sup>1</sup>, the prominent trade-association/employer's collective in the sector. At the employment front too the sector's performance has been considered impressive, as it provides direct employment to about 2.8 million, besides indirectly employing 8.9 million people.

All the above information, *prima facie*, prompt one to perceive the IT and ITES/BPO sector as a major 'change-agent' that altered the economic and employment scene,

<sup>1</sup> All the estimates given in this section are those of NASSCOM. Despite the fact that NASSCOM data lacks authenticity due to unavailability of methodology of data gathered and its estimation, these figures are used to provide a crude and broader picture, in the absence of any other reliable sets of macro data.



by providing unlimited employment opportunities to the unemployed youth of India, along with enviable levels of incomes and labour standards. The employment-claims of NASSCOM in its website<sup>2</sup> also resonates this view, as evident from the following extracts:

*The industry has helped India transform from a rural and agriculture-based economy to a knowledge based economy*

*In addition to fuelling India's economy, this industry is also positively influencing the lives of its people through an active direct and indirect contribution to the various socio-economic parameters such as employment, standard of living and diversity among others.*

Notwithstanding the impressive statistics and the positive notes of the employers' body, some basic analysis of secondary data suggests that the relative contribution of the sector towards employment provision is quantitatively weak. Further to this, a growing body of research points to the inferior quality of employment in the sector. In this backdrop, the present essay exclusively discusses various facets of employment in IT and ITES/BPO sector, in the light of findings of some of the extant research studies.

The remaining part of the essay is structured as follows. Section I critically assesses the employment gains of the sector and questions the potential of the sector to bring in a structural transformation in the overall employment scenario in India. This section also discusses the quality of employment in the sector and highlights some of the apparent insecurities. Subsequently, Section II discusses the distributive aspects of employment-benefits in the sector and captures the socio-economic inequalities and digital divides brought out by this sunshine sector. Section III concludes the paper.

## **II. Probing Employment Claims**

By now it is widely understood that, the IT and ITES/BPO Sector has generated millions of employment in India, during the past two decades. The sector's contribution in terms of employment provision has been impressively superior vis-à-vis the other sectors and when compared to the employment-performance of overall economy. As mentioned earlier, as per NASSCOM's estimates the sector provides direct employment to 2.8 million and indirect employment to 8.9 million workers, in 2012. Even if one agrees blindfolded to these employment figures of NASSCOM, it is a fact that the employment in the sector constitutes only a minor fraction of workforce/employment in the economy as a whole. The fact that direct employment in the sector is only less than 0.7 per cent of the total workforce in India (and slightly above 2 per cent of the employment in tertiary sector<sup>3</sup>) itself rejects the NASSCOM's claim of the IT and ITES-BPO sector's capability of structurally transforming the entire economy – by quickly shifting its agricultural-base to one of knowledge-embedded!<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> www.nasscom.org (all data/information accessed on 24th December 2013).

The growth of employment in IT and ITES-BPO sector in India can be broadly be divided into two phases. In the first phase (say since mid-1990s to around 2005), the employment was primarily generated in the international segment of the sector. During this phase, the employees were predominantly engaged in internationally outsourced business processing options (in call centres, software developing firms and medical transcription firms, to name a few). Following this phase, in the most recent years (say from 2005 onwards), there is a steady expansion of IT and ITES-BPO employment within the domestic economy. By 2009, the employment generated in the domestic sector was about 4, 50,000 (Remesh, 2009) and the overall growth trends suggest that these in-house employment opportunities are steadily on the rise.<sup>5</sup> Since there exists a drastic contrast between the nature and issues of employment (as well as the profiles of workforce) between the international and domestic segments of IT and ITES/BPO sector, it is reasonable to discuss the quality of employment in the sector in a phase-wise manner.

Most of the pioneering studies carried out during the initial phase of spread and growth of IT and ITES-BPO sector in India looked at the weak base of employment in the sector (Remesh, 2004; Upadhyaya and Vasavi, 2006, Tailor and Bain, 2005, Noronha and D’Cruz, 2006). Detailed analyses provided by these studies establish that despite having relatively higher salaries and dazzling work environment (compared to other sectors of the domestic economy), the sector is marked by lower security of employment, adverse impacts of flexible employment practices, inappropriate social security measures, rigid work organisation with stringent control mechanisms, dismal scope for career/skill improvement, near absence of worker collectivity, weaker social dialogue mechanisms and so on.

It was shown that the job insecurity in the sector is strikingly severe, due to its excessive reliance on contract/project based assignments, derived through business process outsourcing (BPO) arrangements internationally (Remesh, 2004; Carol and Vasavi, 2006). As the employment situations are ‘derived’ rather than actually ‘generated’ in the economy, permanency in job and related securities were often considered as incompatible with the sector.

It is widely understood that adherence to the demanding frame of global production chains and its underlying logic of cost-cutting prompted the firms in the sector to follow

<sup>3</sup> These ratios are arrived at using the latest employment figures based on 68th Round of NSSO data for 2011-12, as reported by Shaw (2013). , The total number of workers in India and the employment in tertiary sector are 434.64 million and 128.02 million respectively. compared with latest figures of NASSCOM on employment in IT and ITES-BPO sector, the share of the sector vis-a-vis total workforce in India and with respect to total workforce in service sector are 0.64 per cent and 2.19 per cent respectively.

<sup>4</sup> D’Costa (2011) also explains that given the fact that the new rich and highly salaried professionals represents only a small fraction of India’s total workforce, the NASSCOM’s claim of the sector bringing a massive transformation is far from reality.

<sup>5</sup> As per NASSCOM’s recent estimates, domestic IT-BPO market growing fastest in India (by 20.7 %).

rigorous efforts towards rationalisation of work and workforce, through observance of rigid systems of work organisation, monitoring and control (Taylor and Bain, 2005). The resultant excessive use of Tayloristic norms in 'new economy' had led to intensification of work so much so that the workers are even reduced to 'cyber coolies' (Remesh, 2004). Further to this, due to unearthly hours, odd time tables and unusual norms (such as 'locational masking') followed in an excessively client-oriented sector, the employees were often found themselves in 'socially excluding' and 'demeaning situations'.

The acute absence of basic workers' rights in the sector in terms of restrictions to freedom of association and the resultant 'representation/voice insecurity' in the sector is also reported widely (Sinha, 2004; Sandhu, 2006; Remesh, 2007). It is also found that through carefully planned management strategies, workers are often trained to act as 'individuals', whose patterns of socialisation are molded as per the desired limits stipulated by the management<sup>6</sup>. Changed paradigms of human resource management in the sector, with 'concerned and caring managers' are also found restricting the workers from getting organized through traditional forms of worker associations/collectives (Noronha and D'Cruz, 2006).

On the whole, during the first phase of outsourcing revolution in India, the central focus of research on quality of employment was on understanding of the inherent and implicit dangers of globally outsourced work options. Accordingly, it was shown that these new generation occupations are visibly marked by inherent insecurities, vulnerabilities and 'decent work deficits', largely on owing to the specificities of regime of production organisation, under Global Production Systems (Remesh, 2009).

The quality of employment in the sector has deteriorated further in the second (and current) phase of 'outsourcing revolution' in India, where employment catering to domestic sector firms flourished considerably. In a pioneering study on domestic call centres Remesh (2009a) shows that the domestic call centres are distinctly different from their international counterparts in terms of profile of workforce, organisation of work, terms of work, work relations and so on. The study also shows that despite the striking changes in the working time and changed requirements of customers, the work in domestic sector exhibits acute insecurity of job and unimpressive working conditions. Given the low level requirements of skill, the workers are found agreeing to inferior salary packages, unimpressive and rigid control systems. With little scope for skill upgradation, the works remain at 'low end', with considerable levels of employment-insecurities. The findings of yet another study, Taylor et.al, 2013, also reaffirms these findings, thereby suggesting that the quality of employment in the domestic sector of IT and ITES-BPO sector is quite unattractive compared to the international segment of the sector.

<sup>6</sup> Remesh(2004) explains this as 'structured socialisation' to create a workforce, which is 'productively docile'.

### III. Digital Divides and Unequal Distribution of Employment Gains

Are the employment benefits of IT and ITES/BPO sector equitably distributed, socially, spatially and across different groups of beneficiaries? Answering this question will lead one to the distributive inequalities of employment in the sector. A growing stock of research suggests that the advent and spread of IT and ITES/BPO sector also led to emergence of new forms of dualisms and digital divides. In a detailed sociological study of IT sector worker in Bangalore, Carol and Vasavi (2006) explains the new social stratification and urban dualism brought out by the IT and ITES/BPO sector. The relatively higher pay packages in the sector vis-à-vis other sectors of the domestic economy has led to a distinctly sharp social divide between IT workers and 'other workers' in the economy. The inherent bias of the employment in the sector towards 'urban creamy layer' is explained by Remesh (2004). It is shown that skill and language requirements of the jobs in the new economy naturally favour those who are educated and socially groomed in urban centres. Upadhyaya (2007) also supports this argument by explaining that the new employment opportunities of IT industry have been largely accessed by those who are from and/or educated in urban areas. It is viewed that given the sharp differences in terms of languages (and communication skills), education and access to IT training, the high tech jobs in new economy will may exacerbate the socio-economic dualisms (Upadhyaya, 2007).

Recent empirical evidence suggests that even with the picking up of domestic outsourcing sector, the rural-urban divides are found continuing, albeit in different tones and shades. For instance, a study on low-paying and low-end work and workers in domestic call centres (Remesh, 2009a) shows that workers from rural areas do find some place in these new generation 'precarious' urban jobs, while there was hardly any presence of educated youth from rural areas in the first phase of outsourcing work (which solely engaged urban educated youth in better-paid jobs).

Along with the urban-rural divide, one also needs to understand the differential gains of employment accruing to various caste (social groups) and class categories. We now know that job options in the IT and ITES sector are more accessible to those who have better socio-economic backgrounds. There are several studies that shows that the workers in the IT and ITES/BPO sector are mostly from socially better off families in terms of their positions in caste and class hierarchies (Remesh, 204; Upadhyaya and Vasavi, 2006; Upadhyaya, 2007; Krishna and Brihmadേശ, 2006; D'Costa, 2011). Upadhyaya (2007) explains the homogeneity in the social composition of the workforce, where majority are from urban, middle class and high-middle castes. Krishna and Brihmadേശ (2006) shows that most of the parents of the software engineers interviewed in their study were highly educated and from better off segments of the social hierarchy.<sup>7</sup> All these suggest that entry into the new occupations in the sector is often restricted to those who posses

<sup>7</sup> Remesh (2004) also shows similar findings.

higher levels of social and cultural capital (Upadhyaya, 2007). Given this, the employment in the sector could only deepen and cement the pre-existing social inequalities, through disproportionately favoring better off caste and class groups.

The educational policy in India has been perennially biased in favour of upper classes and castes (D'Costa, 2011). This advantageous position of upper castes in education, largely on account of historical and class backgrounds (Upadhyaya, 2007), helps the youth from these social groups to disproportionately reap the benefits of IT education in India, which *inter alia* leads to their edge in accessing the skilled jobs in the IT and ITES/BPO sector. Recruitment patterns and norms of selections followed in the sector are also found favoring those who are from better social and class backgrounds (Remesh, 2004; Upadhyaya and Vasavi, 2006).

Sharp divisions in terms of skill endowments and competencies of the workers is yet another aspect to be highlighted. The expansion and spread of the technology based and aided employment in the sector is believed to have brought in skill dichotomies both within the sector and the economy as a whole. With the advent of the high-tech jobs in the sector, especially in the first phase of outsourcing revolution, there has been a 'polarisation' in the labour market, with sharp differences between highly skilled and well-paid workers and those who work with lower wages and insecure conditions (in other sectors and ancillary industries)<sup>8</sup>. This 'skill-dualism' is increasingly visible even within the sector itself, with the spread and growth of domestic outsourcing activities. A mere comparison of compensation packages and terms of work of call centre workers in international and domestic segments clarifies this.<sup>9</sup> The earlier concept of well-paid IT worker with state of the art work environment has now increasingly blurred, when one considers the ill-paid employees engaged in precarious work environments in domestic segment of the IT and ITES/BPO sector.

A sharp 'gender divide' is also discernible, when it comes to distribution of employment gains of the new generation jobs in the information economy. By now, the myth of new generation jobs promoting greater gender equality was questioned by many research studies. The 'women friendly' and 'gender neutral' images of employment in the sector are demystified in these studies, which show that compared to their male counterparts, women are increasingly pushed to low-end and low paying jobs. On the whole, these studies suggest that women are disadvantageously placed to share the employment benefits of information technology-(IT) based occupations in the new economy, with bleak career prospects and upward mobility. Along with this erstwhile gendered notions are also found reproduced in the new workplaces which are not so 'woman friendly'

<sup>8</sup> Refer Upadhyaya and Vasavi (2006) for more clarity on this argument.

<sup>9</sup> In a pioneering research work on domestic call centres, Remesh (2010) explains that given the low level requirements of skill, the workers are found given inferior salary packages. Further, the work in domestic call centres is also found providing less scope for skill up gradation. Thus, on the whole the work is found as 'low end', which provides little scope for human resource development.

(Carol and Vasavi, 2006). A comparison of employment and workplace issues of women in the international and domestic call centres<sup>10</sup> suggest that over the time women's disadvantage in the sector has become more sharpened, over time. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that despite the expectations generated by the sector in terms of provision of 'empowering' and 'modern' jobs to women workers, in reality they continue to operate within the narrow paradigms, which are (re)constituted by gendered constructs (Raju, 2013).

#### IV. Conclusion

On the whole, the above discussion suggests that the euphoria about the employment contributions of the IT and ITES/BPO sector needs to be understood more carefully. Given the insignificant share of employment generated in the sector (vis-à-vis the total workforce/employment), the sector is incapable of majorly and structurally transforming the total employment scenario of the country. Besides, the quality of employment in the sector is far from satisfactory due to inherent dangers of the cost-cutting philosophy and the resultant regime of rationalised work organisation. The essay has also highlighted the unequal and skewed distribution of employment gains of the IT and ITES/BPO sectors giving due attention to deepening socio-economic stratifications, dualisms and disparities (spatial, skill-based and gendered).

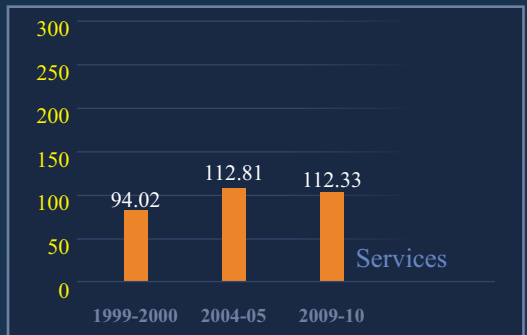
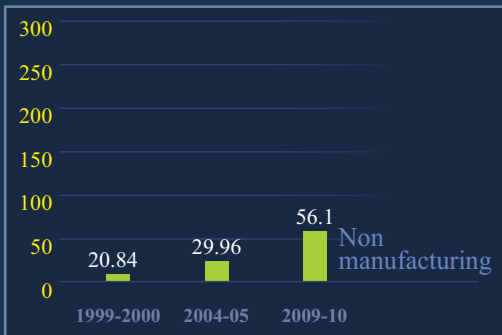
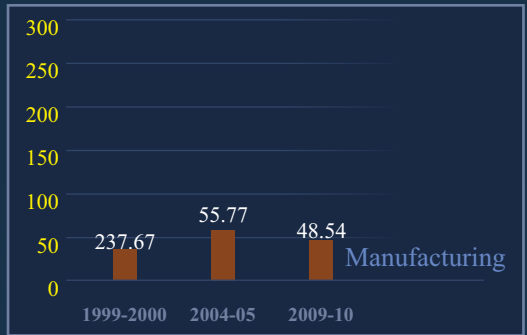
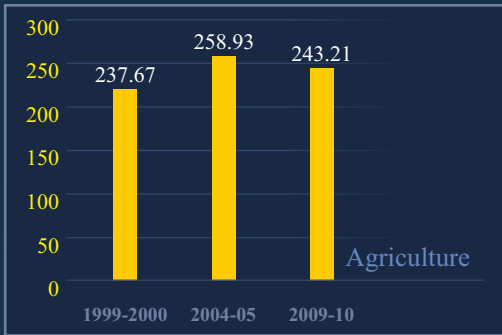
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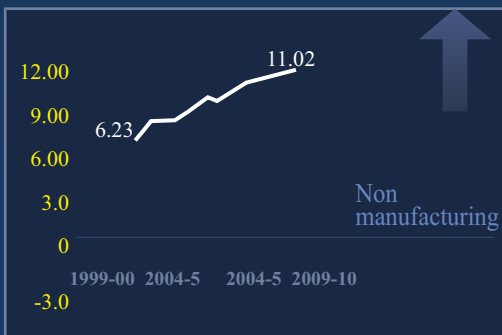
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# Employment



# Employment Growth Rate





# **Job Search Methods in the Labour Market**

## **An Empirical Analysis**

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*How do people go about finding jobs? A widely acknowledged presumption is that that 'job-search process' plays a critical role in the determination of labour market outcomes. This essay underlines the critical importance of understanding the process by which people find jobs. It examines the search behaviour of workers in the labour market, with special reference to the workers employed at an industrial area in Bangalore, Karnataka*

The functioning of labour markets has conventionally been confined to two fundamental axioms of the market: the demand for and the supply of labour. While the demand for labour is constituted by firms, workers represent the supply of labour. As with goods markets, there is a trade-off between the demand for and the supply of labour with respect to wages that are paid in return for workers' allocation of time in the labour market. In fact, the wages, the cornerstone of the labour market analysis, balance the conflicting interests between the two forces. Interestingly, within the conventional framework, the assumption of perfect information, albeit quixotic, allows little scope for the occurrence of any form of distortions such as involuntary unemployment or wage differentials. From a pragmatic point of view, job searchers, for instance, hardly possess the complete information about the availability of various job offers in the labour market. Taking cues from Stigler (1961) and Akerlof (1970), the labour market information imposes various forms of constraints in the interaction between workers and firms.

In this context, getting suitable job opportunities become a strenuous task without being engaged in search process. Job search, like any other activities in the labour markets, incurs money and time. As often as not, search is associated with more than one possible offers and the probability of each offer is unknown. Search being uncertain, job searchers are likely to undergo a series of untoward events such as protracted search, incongruous offers, and human capital degradation. Moreover, accepting a job offer may be a leap in the dark. Therefore, on the part of job seekers, search needs to be carried out judiciously by possessing fruitful labour market information. That is why, as Stigler (1962), put it: "the information a man possesses on the labour market is capital: it was produced at the

costs of search, and it yields a higher wage rate than on average would be received in its absence” (p.103). It throws light on the widely acknowledged presumption that that ‘job-search process’ plays a critical role in the determination of labour market outcomes. Search is a multifaceted term and has been contextualised, albeit differently, by scholarly community within the spectrum of social science discipline. For instance, while a plethora of economic studies attempt to underline various criteria for an optimal job search strategy (McCall 1970; Mortensen 1970; Mortensen, D and Pissarides 1999; Burdett 1978), the sociological analysis is mainly concerned with two aspects: first, the job search mechanism by which the job searchers possess labour market information; and second, the underlying structural features of search process (Reynolds 1951; Wilcock and Sobel 1958; Granovetter 1973 and 1995). Generally speaking, job search takes place through two distinct channels: formal and informal. In fact, by examining the type of intermediaries, it is plausible to distinguish formal from informal job search. While the formal methods specifically emphasize the impersonal intermediaries between searchers and firms, the informal methods are more of personal in nature. By definition, formal search methods include advertisement in newspaper, employment exchanges and private agencies. By comparison, informal search methods such as referrals from employee or employer, personal contacts, family members are frequently used.

An important point to be noted here is that the job search process involves not only the choice of search methods, but also the number of firms to be contacted, rate of job offers, and decision to accept or reject an offer (Blau and Robins 1990). In essence, an anatomy of these four aspects would reveal that the choice of search methods has a decisive role in determining the magnitude of job offers and firms to be contacted over the course of job search. In this context, it would be interesting to pose a pertinent question that has been little addressed: what accounts for the choice and efficacy of job-finding methods? It is worth mentioning that, barring a few studies in the developed countries (Reynolds 1951; Wilcock and Franke 1968; Wilcock and Sobel 1958; Granovetter 1973), developing countries such as India, where a significant proportion of its workforce are engaged in vast array of unorganised economic activities<sup>1</sup>, have not witnessed any attempts to identify the underlying personal and household characteristics influencing the choice of search methods, and to examine the impact of differences in search methods on the labour market outcomes. Against this backdrop, this paper aims to explore some of the discernible structural features of job search based on the field survey conducted at Peenya Industrial area in Bangalore, Karnataka.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section I lays out a theoretical framework that encapsulates the state of embeddedness in the functioning of labour markets. Section II explains the details of field survey conducted at Peenya Industrial area in Bangalore. Taking cues from the field survey, section III presents the dichotomy

<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that about 94 per cent of the workforce are engaged in the unorganized sector

between formal and informal means of job search and its implications in the labour market, followed by section IV, which describes the link between personal characteristics of job searchers and search methods. In continuation of section IV, section V presents the effects of different search methods on labour markets. Section VI describes the role social networking in the search process by examining the type of relationship between searchers and their personal contacts and the degree of tie strength between them. Section VII provides discussion and concluding remarks.

### **Theoretical framework**

Job search is a widespread phenomenon in the labour markets, irrespective of the dichotomy between developed and developing countries. Essentially, search is an activity carried out by those who are looking for jobs, but not able to find suitable jobs. In fact, search became a formal part of the labour supply theory in the 1970s when economists had confronted the unemployment conundrum emanating from the provision of unemployment insurance benefits. Taking cue from Mortensen (1986), the conventional approach to labour supply analysis consists of two distinct constituents: leisure and work. While leisure delineates the allocation of time in non-labour market activities, work represents the category of economically active participation. Given the time constraint, individuals decide to allocate the time by way of generating various combinations between work and leisure. In addition, the approach discards the chances of being unemployed in the labour market, a situation of individuals' willingness to participate in the labour market, coupled with difficulty in finding suitable jobs. Presumably, the assumption of perfect information about the conditions of work, wages, and availability of potential job opportunities does not pave the way for a situation of job search. Pragmatically, job searchers hardly possess the complete extent of job offers available in the labour market, and more importantly, job offers are to be found through a process called 'search'. Like work and leisure, search is an activity, entailing money and an investment of time. Over the course of job hunting, a typical searcher is likely to receive a range of job offers with multifarious wages. It is worth mentioning that the job offers arrive at random and the probability associated with each job offer is unknown. Therefore, in the context of uncertainty, the task of the searchers is to seek out a suitable offer congruent with their skill and choice. The difference between offer and reservation wages determines the 'stopping rule' for the job search. When the offer wage is higher than the reservation wage, job searchers are more likely to accept the offer and to participate in the labour market.

A major lacuna of economic models of job search is that it seldom explains the role of social networks, an arrangement of social relation in which a group of people interact and share information, in the job search. The gist of classical and neo-classical analysis is based on the presumption that human beings behave rationally and the interaction

of agents does not take into account the role of social structure (Granovetter 1985; 2005). There are various approaches to understanding the degree of networking in rationality model, but most of these approaches may be subsumed under the following three frameworks: over-socialized, institutional embeddedness and under-socialized. By discarding the notion of individuals being rational, the 'over-socialized' approach emphasizes that the degree of networking, to a great extent, influences the actions of agents. Put simply, it indicates that the decisions are inextricably linked with social structure, which, in turn, shapes up the functioning of labour market (Wrongs, 1961). On the contrary, taking cue from Turk (1965), the mainstream economic analysis is predominantly based on the assumption that human actions have nothing to do with social structure and markets more or less operate in a self-regulating mode. For instance, human capital theory postulates that wages are mainly determined by the years of investment in schooling and labour market experience, providing little scope for seemingly important variables such as social stratification, rural-urban dichotomy, and social networks. The fact is that agents in the real-world economies are rather embedded in various forms of formal and informal institutions that influence the behaviour of firms, workers and their interaction in an economic system. Although the concept of embeddedness dates back to Polanyi (1944), Granovetter (1985), who has made significant attempts to explicate the state of 'embeddedness' in the functioning of the labour market, points out that economic actions are not only driven by profit and cost, but also embedded in networks of contacts. Strictly speaking, the state of embeddedness is regarded as neither over-socialised nor under-socialised, but somewhat between these two extreme positions.

### **Data Source**

Generally, the major unit of analysis in job search is people who are looking for jobs. Identifying individuals who are engaged in job search poses a challenge from a pragmatic viewpoint. It is quite reasonable to choose employed workers as the unit of analysis and one of the prerogatives of choosing them is that a great deal of information about the search process can be gathered, including the efficacy of different search methods. The data used for the present study are from the field survey conducted in 2010 at Peenya Industrial area in Bangalore, one of the largest industrial areas in South Asia. At present, the area is known for the sundry manufacturing units in India and over one-fifth of the firms are involved in the manufacturing of machine-tools. By using simple random sampling, the survey covered 367 workers located at Peenya. The firms that employed the workers sampled were comprised of small, medium and large scale industries and the size of employment in these units ranged between 7 and 536. Considering the workers sampled, the following features are noteworthy: first, migrants constituted a significant proportion of the sample compared with urban natives; second, the sampling frame covered only regular/salaried workers aged between 15 and 70, excluding those who

were not on the payroll; third, the workers reported that a significant proportion of them had changed their jobs before being employed in the present jobs.. It should be noted that the analysis of job search methods is limited to the principal methods through which the workers sampled gained access to the labour market. In the subsequent session, we present the major findings from the field survey.

### **Job Search: Formal-informal Dichotomy**

A significant proportion of the sample workers applied informal job search methods to access the labour markets (Table 1). In point of fact, this finding is quite consistent with the general pattern observed in the vast majority of job search literature. The use of informal methods in job search is widespread, irrespective of developed or developing countries. This compels us to ask an important question.

According to Brown (1967), Rees (1966), Reid (1972), the informal search methods are widely regarded as an efficient search mechanism because of low search cost and short duration of search. Moreover, the labour market information provided by personal contacts is favourable in seeking job opportunities. Quite importantly, job searchers would rather choose informal methods because it is highly structured (Reid 1972). In addition, the dissemination of job related information through personal contacts takes place much faster than that of formal search methods (Lee 1969). Unlike informal methods, formal methods are likely to disseminate redundant information about jobs offers and working conditions. Besides being used by job searchers, informal methods are frequently applied by firms as well. The majority of firms would rather use informal recruitment practices such as employee referrals partly because of its ability to screen employees' inherent skills and knowledge and, more importantly, low cost of hiring (Rees 1966). Within the narrowly defined spectrum of informal methods, personal contacts and family members are the most frequently used methods in job search, irrespective of employers or employees (Holzer 1988). By comparison, the application of formal methods in job search generally accounts for less than 20 per cent (Granovetter 1973). Interestingly, the proportion of formal methods reported in the present study, which accounts for roughly 10 per cent, appears to conform to the Granovetter's result, albeit varying in magnitude.

**Table 1: Association between job search method and age ( per cent)**

Job search method used in present job	Age groups		Total
	15-34	35-70	
Formal methods	9.7	6.9	9.3
Family members	28.2	44.8	30.8
Personal contacts	38.2	29.3	36.8
Directly to firm	23.9	19.0	23.2
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .094$ )

### Personal characteristics and job search methods

The role of personal contacts in job search has invariably been a thorny issue in the job search literature. As we indicated in the previous session, one of the major aims of this study is to portrait the link between workers' personal characteristics such as age, educational attainment, social groups, and job satisfaction. An analysis of age and search methods indicates that the majority of workers in the age group of 15-34 years would rather use personal contacts (Table 1). Presumably, as shown by Reynolds (1951), there is a greater degree of natural inclination to form a strong networking among youths in the early stages of career development. Essentially, workers have an inclination for personal contacts because it provides not only better job offers, but favourable working conditions (Granovetter 1995). Moreover, Sheppard and Belitsky (1966) underlined that the likelihood of accepting jobs through personal contacts is higher than that of other means of search. Firms would rather apply informal means of job search as workers who get access through personal contacts appear to be 'stayers'. It is important to note that those who are in the age group of 35 years and above are inclined to take the help of family members.

The next line of enquiry is to examine whether social stratification such as caste influences the choice of different job search methods. For the purpose of analysis, the sample workers are grouped into six groups: Forward caste, Vokkaliga, Lingayat, Scheduled caste (SC), Scheduled tribe (ST), and other/unspecified. The test measure indicates that social groups and search methods are associated, implying that social identities are likely to influence the choice of search methods (Table A-1, Appendix). The survey reveals that half of the workers, except scheduled castes, informally gained access to job markets. An analysis of search through personal contacts by social groups shows that forward castes account for the highest proportion. While slightly above 75 per cent of the forward castes find their jobs through personal contacts and family members, the deprived social groups -SCs and STs in particular- predominantly depend on the information displayed at firms' gate or from firm directly, which commonly referred to as 'direct application'. What with low wage rates, longer hours of work, lack of social security, delay in receiving payments, the majority of workers who found their jobs in a direct way tend to look for another job. In other words, the access to the labour market through direct application, coupled with high degree of on-the-job search,

clearly reflects the prerogatives of networking. Within the dominant social groups, the proportion of workers using informal methods varies.

Does the choice of search methods influence the level of job satisfaction? Although job satisfaction is primarily a function of wages, economic activities, work environment, and labour mobility, the study shows that the association between job satisfaction and search methods seems to be robust, implying that job satisfaction is also determined by the different means of job search. The workers who found their jobs through formal means of search relative to that of informal methods, particularly direct applications, are likely to report a high degree of job satisfaction (Table A-6, Appendix). Similarly, departing from Granovetter's (1995) viewpoint that educational attainment is impervious to the choice of search methods, the study, however, finds evidence that job finding-methods and investment in various levels of education are associated. It should be noted that higher the levels of education, greater the chance of using family members (Table A-2, Appendix). Based on the place of origin, the workers sampled are classified into two: urban natives and migrants. While family members are instrumental in gathering the availability of job opportunities among urban natives, migrants largely make use of personal contacts to gain access to the labour market (Table A-3, Appendix).

### **Labour market outcomes: role of search methods**

A plethora of empirical studies suggests that access to the labour market through personal contacts paves the way for positive effects on the labour market outcomes such as wages and social security benefits (Holzer 1987a; Simon and Warner 1992, Addison and Portugal 2002). Bentolila *et al* (2004), however, underlined that the entry into the labour market through personal contacts does not necessarily bring about a positive impact on wages and other outcomes. In fact, the present study throws light on the extent to which job search methods account for the various segments of the labour market by taking income and occupational division as proxy indicators. Considering income, slightly more than half of the respondents under the category of informal methods report the wages of less than Rs 8000 per month, while the corresponding figure for direct application is about 60 per cent and for formal methods, it is slightly over 35 per cent (Table A-4, Appendix). By way of classifying informal methods into personal contacts and family relatives, it is clear that about one-fifth of those who gained access to job market through family members earn more than Rs 16,000 per month, whereas the corresponding figure for personal contacts is marginal. Similarly, to examine the possible effects of the different search methods, the various types of occupations are classified according NCO 2004<sup>2</sup> one-digit classification: Managerial, Professional, Plant and machine operators and assemblers, Craft and related trade workers. It is striking that highly-skilled occupations such as managerial and professional occupations are more likely to be accessed through family members (Table A-5, Appendix). On the contrary, low-skilled and semi-skilled workers such as plant and machine operators predominantly depend on personal contacts. Interestingly, approaching firms directly account for one-third of the workers employed in the craft and related occupations, and majority of them are engaged in on-the-job search (Table A-6, Appendix).

<sup>2</sup> National Classification of Occupation



## **Network of personal contacts**

Although the role of personal contacts in the job search has been acknowledged widely, there is a little empirical evidence to pinpoint its implications in the job market. In his pioneering paper, Granovetter (1973), based on 100 personal interviews and 182 mail surveys among the male workers, shows that more than 50 per cent of workers (about 56 per cent) applied personal contacts to seek out jobs. An imperative aspect that needs to be explored in great detail is the rationale for searchers to seek out jobs through personal contacts. In other words, why do searchers, in general, would rather use personal contacts? Available evidences points to four reasons behind the widespread application of personal contacts in job search. First, job information through personal contacts are not only productive in generating suitable job offers, but cost-effective. Second, the network of personal contacts weakens the forces inhibiting the access to the labour market (Granovetter 1995).

More specifically, personal contacts provide additional information about a range of labour market characteristics such as work environment, working conditions, wages, availability of social security benefits, and so on. Third, the degree of job satisfaction and wages among workers seeking jobs through personal contacts is high relative to the workers finding jobs through other forms of search methods. Note that workers with prolonged labour market experience would capable of expanding the networks of personal contacts with ease. Our analysis suggests that gaining access to the labour markets through family members is more efficient than that of personal contacts. Considering the labour market features of workers employed through family members, it is quite clear that family members also facilitate search process by providing access to gainful employment and favourable working conditions. Whether a successful job can only be found through personal contacts or family members is merely a question of debate. But, how does being part of a large system of social network help job seekers to gain access to the labour market? To answer this question, one has to take into account the following three major aspects: nature of relationship, the number of intermediaries between workers' job informants and employer, and the tie strength between workers and their personal contacts.

**Nature of relationship:** To examine the nature of relationship, the workers sampled were asked the following question: how did they happen to know their personal contacts? By examining the nature of relationship between the workers and their personal contacts, it is possible to trace the dissemination of job information through various categories of personal contacts in the course of job search. The following categories were adopted for the present study: studied at same college/school, neighbour/hometown, through contacts, during travelling/social events, previous employment, through internet/social media. As is evident in table 2, 40 per cent of the sampled workers' personal contacts are neighbours, whereas slightly over 20 per cent of them are school or college mates, implying that they had made the acquaintance of their personal contacts before being employed in the job. With the increasing pace of technological advancement, the application of internet as a method of job search seems to have gained momentum, albeit at a snail's gallop.



**Table 2: The nature of relationship between respondent and their personal contacts**

Relation with personal contacts	Frequency	Per cent
Studied at same school or college	31	23
Neighbour/hometown	54	40
Through another contact	12	8.9
During travelling/social events (marriage, festival, party campaign etc)	14	10.3
Previous employment	23	17
Internet/social media (Facebook, Orkut)	1	0.7
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

### **Role of Intermediaries:**

As often as not, job search by the unemployed induce their personal contacts and family members to carry out a parallel job search. An interesting aspect that has not been dealt with much in the search literature is to examine whether the sampled workers' personal contacts and family members possessed the job information through intermediaries or not. In fact, the number of intermediaries involved in job search is one of the crucial determinants of the efficacy of personal contacts and family members (Granovetter 1995). As shown by Reynolds (1951), when the number of intermediaries between the job informants and the employer increases, the quality of job information gets deteriorated, decreasing the likelihood of receiving gainful job offers.

Against this backdrop, we assess the effectiveness of informal job search methods, particularly family members and personal contacts, by taking into account the number of intermediaries as a proxy variable. Our results suggest that a typical contact is connected to an employer, on average, with 0.52 intermediaries (table 3). As is evident in table 3, more than half of the informal contacts -be it personal or family- happened to know about the sampled workers' present jobs from the employer directly. The classification of informal methods into family members and personal contacts shows that while the majority of the family members obtain job information from the employer directly, personal contacts possess job information mostly through intermediaries. More aptly, three-fourth of the family members obtains information about present job from the prospective employer directly, whereas the corresponding figure for personal contacts is just one-third. Presumably, due to this reason, the sampled workers who found jobs through personal contacts are more likely to look for jobs while employed.

**Table 3: Number of intermediaries between the employer and the respondent's contacts**

Definition	Family / Relatives	Personal contacts	Informal contacts
Directly from the employer	76.10	31.85	52.01
One intermediary between the contact and the employer	20.35	48.14	35.4
Two intermediaries between the contact and the employer	03.5	16.29	10.5
Three or more than three intermediaries between the contact and the employer	Nil	3.7	2.01
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>248</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

### Are ties strong or weak?

By tie strength, we mean how often the agents interacted with each other in a group. The ability of social networks, to a great extent, is influenced by the intensity of interaction between the two agents. It should be noted that greater the degree of interaction, higher the likelihood of gaining access to the labour market.. Figure 1 represents 50 agents and 37 ties between them. Each agent marked in green colour represents participants and the tie between two agents indicates interaction between them. In a typical labour market, workers, unemployed people, firms, and unions generally constitute the agents. For the purpose of analysis, it is assumed that the interaction is undirected. Suppose, if two agents are connected by a line, it signifies the interactive relationship between them, otherwise not. One of the salient features of the interaction is that it does not necessarily take place among all the agents.

A careful analysis of Figure 2 shows that it is constituted by sub-graphs or components and isolated agents that are not connected to the rest of the agents in the graph. Each agent, on average, accounts for 1.5 degrees or contacts. Agents who are marked in red colour have the highest number of degrees. Intuitively speaking, the probability of getting gainful job offers tends to increase as the magnitude of personal contacts increases. At this juncture, we introduce a network concept called 'structural hole', which refers to a disconnected network structure in which there is an absence of the direct line between two agents. In other words, the interaction between two agents is led by a strategically positioned agent (Burt, 1992). Because of this strategic position, the agent has many advantages, including the availability of job information from different sources.

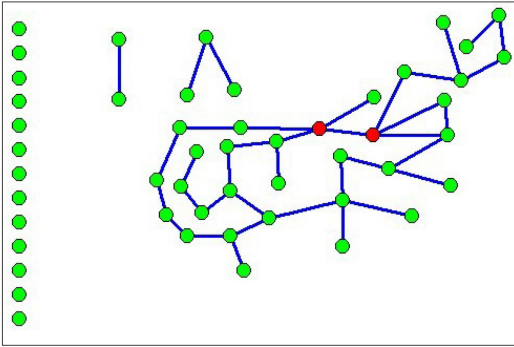


Figure 1: Social interaction in a typical labour market

Taking cue from Granovetter (1973), the tie strength is measured using the frequency of interaction. More specifically, the respondents were asked the following question: how often did the workers interact with their personal contacts around the time of accepting the job offer. The tie strength may be classified as either strong or weak depending upon the frequency of interaction. In fact, Granovetter (1973)<sup>3</sup>, based on male workers from a Boston suburb, classified the frequency of interaction between workers and their contacts into three categories: *often*, *occasionally*, and *rarely*. Often refers to at least twice a week, occasionally refers to more than once a year but less than twice a week, and rarely refers to once a year or less. Quite interestingly, while 17 per cent of the workers in the Granovetter’s study report *often*, the other two categories, occasionally and rarely, account for 58 per cent and 28 per cent respectively. Considering the category of rarely, the figure presented appears to be striking. This finding led Granovetter to conclude that job searchers obtain information about the availability of job offers from distant contacts with whom they interact rarely. Put it in a slightly simple way, weak ties are the major source of diffusing labour market information, commonly referred to as *‘strength-of-weak-ties*.

<sup>3</sup> Granovetter used mail survey targeting 100 personal interviews and 182 mail surveys. The study covers workers who have changed their jobs within last five years, excluding the occupational mobility internal to the firm.

Unlike Granovetter’s ‘strength of weak ties’, the present study shows that the tie between the workers sampled and their personal contacts appears to be quite strong and the interaction between them takes place quite often. In fact, the survey reveals that nearly two-third of the sample respondents frequently interacted with their contacts before being employed in the present job. Those who found their jobs through ‘weak ties’ constitute marginal share (Table 4)

**Table 4: Strength of Weak Ties vs. Strength of Strong Ties**

Category	Granovetter (1973)*	Present study(2012)+
<b>Often</b> At least twice a week	16.7	62.12
<b>Occasionally</b> More than once a year but less than twice a week	55.6	34.85
<b>Rarely</b> Once a year or less	27.8	3.03
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>135</b>

\*Granovetter (1973), ‘The strength of weak ties’, *American Journal of Sociology* Vol.78, No.6

+ Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

## Discussion and Conclusion

The major purpose of this paper was to examine the search behaviour of workers in the labour market, with special reference to the workers employed at an industrial area in Bangalore, Karnataka. Interestingly, the paper provides ample evidences to conclude that job searchers’ personal and household identities account for the choice of job search methods, which, in turn, have implications for the labour market outcomes. What is striking is that only a marginal proportion of the workers sampled made use of the formal search methods. But, as is evident from the field survey, the workers who found jobs through formal methods reported to have more satisfied than workers who found jobs through other forms of search.

In India, employment exchanges are perceived to have been used frequently in the job search. In accordance with the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act in 1959, the employment exchange system was set up in 1960 under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Employment to facilitate the search process in the labour market. Essentially, the employment exchanges in India function as an intermediary between job providers and job seekers by disseminating information about the job vacancies. As per this act, it is compulsory for the all the private and public firms employing 25 or more to register job vacancies with the employment exchanges in India (Telang 2013). It is worth mentioning that the Act does not cover certain economic activities such as agriculture and horticulture. While reporting the job vacancies to the employment exchanges, firms are mandatorily required to submit the completed details of vacancies including the wages and job tenure in writing. It is assumed that such institutional procedure would attenuate the labour market distortions resulting from the skewed job information.

Notwithstanding their impressive labour market outcomes, the formal search methods, employment exchanges particular, are not very successful in providing the job placement. Although the employment exchanges are widespread across the states in India, the fact is that they have become dormant for the last three decades. More specifically, while the major online job portals report, on average, 15 per cent placements per month, the corresponding figure for the employment exchange is just below 0.5 per cent (Aarti 2013). Addison and Portugal (2002), based on the Portugal labour force surveys, put forward a viewpoint similar to that. Unequivocally, empirical evidences presented in the paper clearly point to a pressing need for revamping the prevailing institutional structure of employment exchanges by adopting seemly technology and incentive mechanisms.

## Appendix

**Table A1: Association between job search method and social groups (per cent)**

<i>Job-search method used in present job</i>	<i>Types of social groups</i>						Total
	Forward caste	Vokkaliga	Lingayat	SC	ST	Others/ unspecified	
Formal methods	7.9	11.0	11.8	5.9	13.9	5.1	9.3
Family members	26.3	29.4	23.5	29.4	27.8	40.4	30.8
Personal contacts	52.6	38.5	33.8	17.6	27.8	37.4	36.8
Directly to firm	13.2	21.1	30.9	47.1	30.6	17.2	23.2
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .067$ )

**Table A2: Association between job search methods and level of educational attainment (in per cent)**

<i>Job-search method used in present job</i>	<i>Level of education attainment</i>						Total
	Up to Secondary	ITI	Higher secondary	Diploma	Graduate-General	Graduate-Technical	
Formal	2.9	9.5	2.2	22.2	12.7	27.3	9.3
Family members	26.3	22.2	31.1	44.4	32.7	50.0	30.8
Personal contacts	43.1	46.0	33.3	22.2	36.4	9.1	36.8
Directly to firm	27.7	22.2	33.3	11.1	18.2	13.6	23.2
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .000$ )

**Table A3: Association between job search method and place of origin (per cent)**

<i>Job-search method used in present job</i>	<i>Respondent's place of origin</i>		Total
	Urban natives	Migrants	
Formal methods	9.6	9.2	9.3
Family members	38.4	28.9	30.8
Personal contacts	28.8	38.8	36.8
Directly to firm	23.3	23.1	23.2
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test = .34

**Table A4: Association between monthly wages and search methods (per cent)**

Monthly wage earnings in present job (in Rs)	<i>Job search method used in present job</i>				Total
	Formal	Family members	Personal Contacts	Direct Application	
Less than 4000	2.9	6.2	10.4	14.1	9.3
4001-8000	35.3	47.8	48.9	61.2	50.1
8001-12000	26.5	15.9	25.9	15.3	20.4
12001-16000	17.6	10.6	8.1	3.5	8.7
16001 and above	17.6	19.5	6.7	5.9	11.4
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .001$ )

**Table A5: Association between job search method and type of occupation (per cent)**

Job-search method used in present job	<i>Present occupation (NCO 2004-one digit)</i>				Total
	Managerial	Professional	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Craft and related trade workers	
Formal methods	8.3	20.8	6.6	5.4	9.3
Family members	60.4	31.9	26.5	22.5	30.8
Personal contacts	20.8	30.6	44.9	37.8	36.8
Directly to firm	10.4	16.7	22.1	34.2	23.2
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .000$ )

**Table A6: Association between levels of job satisfaction and job search methods (per cent)**

Level of job satisfaction	<i>Job-search method used in present job</i>				Total
	Formal methods	Family members	Personal contacts	Directly to firm	
Satisfied	47.1	41.6	35.6	17.6	34.3
Not satisfied	52.9	58.4	64.4	82.4	65.7
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .001$ )

**Table A7: Association between job search methods and social security benefits (per cent)**

Social security	<i>Job search method used in present job</i>				Total
	Formal	Family/ Relatives	Personal contacts/ friends	Directly to firm	
Yes	76.5	59.3	58.5	47.1	57.8
No	23.5	40.7	41.5	52.9	42.2
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .029$ )

**Table A8: Association between job search method and on-the-job search (per cent)**

On-the-job search	<i>Job-search method used in present job</i>				Total
	Formal methods	Family members	Personal contacts	Directly to firm	
Yes	52.9%	58.4%	61.5%	76.5%	63.2%
No	47.1%	41.6%	38.5%	23.5%	36.8%
<b>Sample size (n)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>367</b>

Source: Field Survey, Peenya Industrial Area, Bangalore, Karnataka, 2011-2012

Significance level by chi-square test ( $p = .03$ )

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# Negotiating the Intimate Space Home and Sense of Belonging Among Migrant Women Domestic Workers

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*Women migrants from Kerala to the Gulf countries are embedded in a complex network. On the one hand the state imposes restrictions on their migration ostensibly to protect their interests, on the other it denies young women the opportunity to earn a livelihood. The manner in which the state differentiates on the basis of work is seen by the differential treatment of nurses and domestic workers. This essay, drawing from extensive field work focuses on the difficult situation of migrant domestic workers who negotiate a complex terrain of reconstituting temporarily the notion of 'home' in their employment even while longing for their own homes..*

The demand for women migrant domestic workers has increased in the last few decades with the change in the globalised market. Along with other South Asian countries, India has emerged as one of the strong labour sending countries. This visibility of women across the border has prompted both India and the UAE to evolve regulations on the labour mobility of women. For example, in India, migrant women domestic workers below the age of 30 are banned from emigrating for work.

This ban on emigration of women 'unskilled' workers, particularly domestic workers is framed as a measure to protect 'vulnerable' women crossing borders. This ban is a 'symbolic regulation' that presents a concerned Indian and Emirati public with impression that the state is acting and taking their concerns seriously. Defining migrant domestic workers as powerless victims of their Arab employers or of unscrupulous men who try to traffic them into sex trade label these women as a category 'at risk'. As a result, rumours and doubts about the sexual morality of migrant domestic workers circulate more widely and become cemented in the ways in which they are perceived, also in their own social circle (Pattadath and Moors 2012).

Domestic workers as transnational migrants bring the debate on transnationalism from below, mobility and the relationship with the nation-state ((Anderson 2000; Ehrenreich 2002; Moors 2003; de Regt 2006). Compared to other kinds of transnational migrants, women migrant domestic workers' mobility is highly restricted at the site of their

employment. As we know a large majority of migrant domestic workers are women and it has resulted in feminisation of transnational migration. Growing economic inequalities in a global scale, shift in family pattern and relationship, evaluation of women's employment and unpaid domestic labour, etc. has drawn more women in the paid domestic sector. Over the years women's transnational migration as domestic workers has significantly increased. For instance, from Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Philippines, the proportion of women international migrants has increased from 15per cent in the 1970s to 60-80per cent in the 1990s.

Kerala women's migration to Persian Gulf is assumed to be connected to the long historical link between the coast of Kerala to that of the many Persian Gulf countries including the United Arab Emirates. This essay attempts to understand the concept of home and the sense of belonging in the lives of migrant women domestic workers who have travelled from Kerala to Dubai as domestic workers. The essay is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted among migrant women domestic workers who have travelled from Kerala to United Arab Emirates. Fieldwork for this research was conducted in Dubai and Sharjah (two prominent emirates in UAE) and in Kerala during the year 2007 and 2008<sup>1</sup>.

In the course of their multiple migrations, the notion of 'home' travels along and it produces multiple meaning in many of these locations. Various relationships and sentiments are produced, altered and reproduced within it and it also produces different il/licit and legal discourses as women as migrant domestic workers. This chapter is built based on three acts related to 'home- leaving, engaging and making 'home' at various points of their labour trajectory'. The attempt here is to bring out the ways in which home gets reconfigured in the lives of women domestic workers.

## **Background**

Normative gendered perception about women who leave their families and children back home as women who do not fit into the socially accepted gendered role evokes a sense of illicitness around their work. This production of illicitness which is termed here as a 'moral panic', is created by this dominant perception. This moral panic is produced through the construction and imagination of unsafe and dangerous 'other'. Here women's safety is determined by the boundary of the home and often this is defined and maintained by the sentiments produced around home. At times this boundary of home extends to an imagined boundary of nation-state. Then the sentiments of home translate into nationalistic sentiments.

The differentiating boundary between workplace and private domain becomes very thin and almost absent in the case of many women domestic workers; and especially in the case of live-in domestic workers it is almost absent. Domestic work is usually considered an extension of other routine gendered housework and much of this housework is entangled

with emotions, sentiments and intimacies. Domesticity is re-articulated and re-shaped when women domestic workers engage with a new family within this worksite/home sphere. Women domestic workers based on their particular social and cultural location do not fit into the dominant gendered assumptions about domesticity. This hierarchical domesticity performed by women domestic workers comes into conflict with the dominant domesticity of their female employers. This is more so when the employers also belong to the similar racial and regional background. Hence women have to deal with various complexities of this diverse and multiple domesticities of their worksite, sometimes by integrating into it and sometimes by refuting it. As Gamburd points out domestic workers are ‘the intimate outsiders and marginal insiders’ (Gamburd 2000). Here we look at different sentiments women carry on and about home. What are these sentiments and how do they allow women to deal with various il/licit discourses and legal interventions in their labour trajectories? What are the ways in which women understand home? Do they carry the sentiments when they leave their work?

### **The Dubai**

The movement of people and goods between Kerala and Dubai has a long history. The port of Dubai has always attracted traders and immigrants from India, while Arab traders established themselves on the coast of Kerala, with persons and goods moving across Arabian sea. The long history of interaction between Arabs and Mappila Muslims—in part descending from Arab traders—has been the impetus for the latter’s migration (Kurien 2002). Kuttichira, a small coastal village in Kozhikkode district, North Kerala, had trade links with Arab countries turning back to early 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. Traders from various Arab countries (UAE was not established as a single administrative territory then) used to come in large ships. There were instances of marriages between local women and Arab traders. A practice, which is popularly known as ‘*arabikalyanam*’ existed in this area. Many women entered into conjugal relationship with Arab traders and it was considered as an elevated social status. But most of these alliances were short lived and provided a few women social and material mobility.

### **Gender and Migration: Understanding the Interlinkages**

Gender plays an important role in the decision to migrate. Most of the studies on gender and migration in the context of Kerala are against the background of male migration (Prakash 1978, 1998, 2000; Gulati 1993; Zacharia et al 2001, 2002, 2004). For example, the study by Leela Gulati (1993) argues that male migration gives more agency to wives living back home. Feminisation of migration allows us to look at the process of globalisation with a gendered lens. Women’s economic upward mobility brings changes to the local environment. The remittances they send back home are a significant contribution to the upward mobility of many families. Research on gender and migration

shows that, women domestic workers have unusually high saving rates (86per cent) and remit a high proportion of their salary (64per cent) (Willoughby 2005). Women working as domestic workers usually belong to families of lower socio-economic status in the society. They bring changes to the social environment of the family, and to the society to an extent, though their identities at the site of employment move between legal/illegal and licit/illicit continuum.

Indian migrants working in the Gulf today are estimated to be around four million (Zacharia et al 2002). Nearly half of the migrants are from Kerala. The migration flow from Kerala to UAE has taken different turns at different point of time. Earlier migration was seen predominantly as a male affair where men move from one place to another for livelihood. Women were considered as passive agents either staying back at home or following their husbands at the workplace. Women's predominant role in migration was largely overlooked for a long time. In Kerala gender in migration study was mainly focused on the impact of migration among women who stayed back in Kerala. Most of the studies which focusing on 'Gulf Wives'<sup>3</sup>were looking at women's role from a different angle, a more immobile angle (Zacharia et al 2001; Gulati 1993). Several qualitative and ethnographic studies have come out later especially on women migrants belonging to particular employment categories. Women's active role in migration has been focused later by various scholars especially the study on women nurses to the gulf (Percot 2006) to US (George 2005) and to Italy (Gallo 2005). Women migrating to the Gulf see migration as a passport to escape from the traditional restrictive familial and social structures and also an initial entry-point in the travel plan to the west (Percot 2006). Women migrating to UAE consist of various categories such as nurses, women following their husbands after marriage, other professionals, domestic workers, etc. The categories of domestic workers make an interesting group to study the channels of migration because of the way government addresses the issue of women's mobility. In fact women nurses were a large group of women migrants from Kerala who have changed the dynamics of migration altogether. Domestic workers are another significant group of female migrants who changed the gender dimension of migration. State response to these two groups of migrants is entirely different. Earlier studies on Gulf migration show that there is a shift from men to women in the flow of domestic workers to UAE.

### **Categories of Domestic workers**

Based on living arrangements, women domestic workers can be classified broadly into Live-in and Live-out. Live-in domestic workers usually stay with the employers whereas live-out domestic workers live outside the employers' household. Even though these are the large categories of domestic workers, the nature of work depends more on the channels through which they migrate to UAE.

Domestic workers also can be classified based on the sponsorship system. Most of

the live-in domestic workers are the sponsored by a national for working in a national household. Live-in domestic workers sponsored by non-national sponsors are another category. Most of my respondents in this category were from Indian households. In Indian household, the facilities are relatively lesser and they get a less payment compared to national households. The complicated and expensive procedure of getting a domestic worker make many of the middle-class Indian family to go for paying a less salary to women or curtail other facilities which is supposed to provide for their domestic worker. Another major category of women domestic workers are women coming through private visa. Even though the concept of private visa is considered as illegal, many women cross borders by buying visa from agents. In such cases women are not bound to the sponsors and they get the freedom to work anywhere. Usually there will be a middle agent in the process. Large network of visa traders operate in this recruitment. Sometimes they get a single employer and can be a live-in. Mostly, the cases are live-out and part time. In the case of part-timers, they will have to look for accommodation outside which is very expensive. The notion about women sharing bed spaces in villas as illicit and illegal is quite prominent in UAE. Raids by CID and police are common in such villas. They also face harassment from landowners. Coming through private visa adds to the financial burden to many women because they end up paying huge sum to the agents as well as a huge amount every time visa needs to be renewed. So women prefer to work as part timers and make more money. Private visa gives relative freedom and bargaining power to many women but usually at the cost of various other complicated realities such as harassments by agents, sponsors and surveillance by CIDs. Especially at the time of visa renewal women go through all sorts of harassments from middle persons and agents.

There are also cases of women coming with a dependent visa (mostly through husband) and do work as domestics. Many women chose it as an additional income to deal with the increasing cost of living in UAE. Though they operate illegally their status is considered as legal compared to other women domestic workers. In some cases women come with various other kinds of visa and end up in domestic work.

During my fieldwork among domestic workers in UAE, cases of runaways are found among many. In such cases women enter UAE legally and later run away from their sponsors. There are also cases of women coming with private visa. Such domestic workers usually are re-employed to a middle-class non-national employer, usually an employer who doesnot want to go through the complicated process of sponsoring a domestic worker. These women get employment usually through an advertisement in the newspaper. The narratives vary significantly according to their illegal status as well as the nature of the household they are live-in. The trend of reemploying a runaway domestic worker is more among the middle class expatriate employers who cannot often afford the complicated procedures of sponsoring domestic workers. The large numbers

of visa traders sell visa to a local agent, usually an Indian and he/she recruits women to Dubai after taking a large sum of 1,50,000 Indian rupees (around 3600 USD). Many women aspiring to be domestic workers cannot afford this because of their family situation back at home. Even then, they try to arrange that much money through various means either by selling off the property or by taking loans from the local money lenders with the hope that reaching the gulf will help them to get away with poverty, dowry harassments and other poor living conditions in which they are subjected to. Even if they end up in a bad working condition, many women prefer to stay back until they make money they have invested for their travel.

### **Production of Moral Panic**

Leaving home brings a moral panic. This moral panic coupled with various other factors contributes to an illicit discourse around the mobility of women. In this section the various factors contributing to the 'moral panic' around women domestic workers has been discussed. Women, while leaving home, break the gendered notion about women and work. Contrary to the masculine notion about migration where men become economic provider and women as emotional provider, the life and work of migrant domestic workers breaks the gendered stereotypes to become the main economic provider and not always the emotional provider. Though women provide a strong support to the everyday survival of family, the role of women in the migration process are overlooked by emphasising at other 'vulnerable' aspects along the trajectories of their migration. This places them as somebody leaving the 'safety' of home for a more vulnerable and risky terrain of a foreign country. The association of women's mobility with her gendered sexuality as somebody easily vulnerable to sexual harassment also contributes to this moral panic. This moral panic builds a national sentiment about women leaving home. Various legal discourses are created along those sentiments. This makes the life and work of women domestic workers moving between the narrow boundaries of il/licitness and il/legality.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the vulnerability framework does not provide an adequate explanation to understand the complex relationships of state, migrants, and labour. It is pertinent to move beyond the classic vulnerability framework to understand the precarious nature of their work. When we say vulnerable, we do not address the structural violence that is institutionalized through various frameworks.

Interestingly women who were interviewed for the survey were unfazed by this moral panic. Women who decided to leave as domestic workers always wanted to go and the moral panic was seen as something beyond their everyday discourse and it was not practical enough for them to fall on that. Even though there is a moral panic produced around women's mobility, women domestic workers try to refute this or trivialise it with their non-conventional trajectories of labour. During my long interactions with many

women domestic workers in Kerala and in UAE, they reason out the necessity of leaving home. This rationalisation about their labour trajectories is often devoid of any over-production of emotions or sentiments associated with home. For many women domestic workers leaving home was important and necessary for their survival. The attempt here is not to reduce women's sentiments regarding home but those sentiments are often beyond the logic of a moral panic constructed by dominant discourse, supported by state's logic of protecting vulnerable women.

Reena, an undocumented domestic worker, who was interviewed both in UAE and in Kerala commented about the age ban on women:

“What do they (government) think? As an ordinary Malayali woman I am bound to get all kind of illness by the time I am 30 years. Nobody will take me for employment at that age. I need to work now. My family needs my economic support” Satidevi, a domestic worker living out in a bedspace<sup>4</sup> in UAE, discussed her travel trajectory:

“I always wanted to travel outside to make more money. I had seen men and women in the neighbourhood when they come back from the Gulf. They were prosperous. I had realised it is difficult to manage. My husband did not have any proper income and I was taking care of home through the daily wage labour. My husband also did an unsuccessful Gulf visit. He went with a visiting visa and came back without finding any job. We also spent lots of money for his travel. My leaving home was never in his or in my family members agenda. But I always wanted to do that. When I saw some of my women neighbours became prosperous I asked myself ‘why can't I try once’? So I decided to start everything. There was no passport. I did not tell anybody at home. including my husband. I approached a travel agent whom I know and started the procedure. My family came to know only during the police verification time. I knew they would not allow me to apply for a passport. But once the passport is in my hand it is easier to negotiate. So I did it exactly that way. There was initial objection from my husband. Later he also realized it is better considering our financial situation”

Sati reached UAE and worked as a domestic worker in an Emirati household for two years. After two years she cancelled her visa and went back home. She came back procuring a private visa (from a visa trader), which allowed her to work outside the surveillance of her sponsor. She started working as a part-time domestic worker. Sati made contacts with agents in UAE and also started playing a crucial role as a middle person in the visa trading industry in UAE.

From a ‘rational’ framework the production of such moral panic is to sensitise the public to the issue. But the rationality of the state and other dominant discourses often conflict with the more practical needs of women domestic workers. This moral panic also contributes to a trafficking discourse and which in turn seeks legal intervention. And these are moments where the way women see their act of leaving home comes into conflict with larger and dominant version about gendered concept of home. Women's



work as domestic worker is not considered problematic as long as they work in India. It becomes an issue of moral panic when they cross the boundaries of house and Nation-state. This is yet another example where women are considered as the one embodying the Nation and men as the real citizens. Crossing the border transgresses not only the conventional femininity, but also questions the conventional wisdoms of morality, motherhood and sexuality.

### **Re-articulating Domesticity: Engaging a 'New' Home**

The normative notion about women domestic workers as the one breaking the gender stereotypes is widely prevalent in the popular discourse. It falls into the trap of assuming domesticity and gendered articulation as a homogenous process and refuse to see the different ways in which women perform their domesticity. Life stories from women suggest diverse ways in which women articulate their domesticity even in their pre-migration phase. That is one of the reasons leaving home becomes not too much an emotional burden for many women. During fieldwork in Kuttichira, it was revealed that many women leave as migrant workers from this small fishing hamlet compared to men. It breaks the dominant notion about men travel first and then women follow. It was realised that due to the presence of a strong labour market coupled with less cumbersome travel path, make the journey relatively easier for women. Domestic work, which is considered as 'unskilled' labour, also makes the process of travel easier for women.

Sofia an ex-domestic worker who was interviewed in Kerala along with her husband told me that her husband never thought about leaving abroad for work. "If he has to travel we should pay more whereas it was easier for me to pay". Sofia's husband who works as a private security guard in Kerala managed the home when Sofia was away. "*We did not have a proper house until she left. We made this house after she started remitting money*".

Do women domestic workers try to integrate into the 'new' home? It is also becomes a new adopted home. The specificity of domestic labour makes distinction between worksite and the place of living very blurred and often absent. Somebody's intimate space-home-becomes a public workspace for these women. It makes it difficult for women to distinguish paid work and general extension of household tasks. As workers insider the home, women domestic workers get entangled into the gendered articulations of domesticity and its various complexities. During my initial conversations with employers to get details of their domestic workers many responses went like this, "Oh we don't consider her as a 'servant'. She is part of our family". This assumed generosity from the employers makes it difficult to see domestic work like any other paid work. That also gives less opportunity for women to verbalize or express the inequality. Rather they tend to say often that 'such things are common in a family. We should tolerate'.

Here the paid worker gets integrated into the family and the hierarchy often hides from immediate visibility. This partial integration also comes with its own share of tensions and anxieties among some women domestic workers as well as employers.

The integration into the family of the employers is a complex one. For instance, Thankamma, a domestic worker, who has been working for eight years in Dubai, integration was never a convenient and easy process. Her son and daughter deserted her after taking all the money she had saved, during the years of employment in the Gulf. She used to send money to her children with an expectation that they would save that adequately so that she could buy a house. Upon return Thankamma realised that she was unwanted in the house and there was no increase in her salary. She was drawing salary of 500 Dirham, which she was receiving ever since she started the work.

“They are treating me well. My Madam’s daughter considers me like her grandmother. She is very nice and loving. I didn’t get that kind of love and affection from my own children. Even though the salary is less I am ready to adjust. They at least consider me as a family member.”

This integration into the ‘family’ was short lived. Thing started changing when Thankamma’s employer’s mother visited from India. Thankamma’s employer’s daughter could not accept the way Thankamma interacted with her grandchild.

“That woman shouts at me. She does not like me interacting with the little child. But the little daughter has all love towards me more than her grandmother. She was asking my madam to remove me and appoint somebody young. She (madam’s mother) thinks I am not efficient”.

Towards the end of the fieldwork I learnt that the employer had cancelled Thankamma’s visa and sent her back to Kerala. These are situations where we see domestic work crosses the boundary of work and intimacy and make it complicated to deal with.

Annamma, another domestic worker who worked for an Indian family also dealt with this problem of intimacy and tension at her employer’s house. Annamma’s employer’s daughter used to get angry whenever she tried to show intimacy towards her.

“My daughter doesn’t like her (Annamma). She (daughter) usually complains that she (Annamma) behaves like me”, Annamma’s employer told me. For an upwardly mobile class-conscious Indian family a domestic worker crossing the boundaries of degree of intimacy was enough reason to bring tension. Annamma also had to deal with the employer accusing her of trying to be like her (employer) by imitating their lifestyle. This tension came out very obviously in Indian households. In the national households it was easier to deal with since the already laid boundaries are much more clear and difficult to break. Live-in and live-out domestic sense of belonging differ, when it comes to the matter of home. In the case of live-in domestic workers workspace and personal space are always at the same place. But in the case of live-out things are much different. Women who live outside the surveillance of their employers get a demarcated living and working space.

Many of these women, who live outside, in the bed spaces, carry the notion of belonging with them wherever they move. The tension and anxiety they share with the employers are very less compared to women live-in.

The notion of home get altered for women depending on the types of houses in which they work. In Indian family life-work distinction is not much clear as compared to Emirati household. The spatial structure (with large area with separate living quarters) of the house also provides the personal sphere for women domestic workers in Emirati houses, which help them to demarcate their life and personal sphere differently.

Shameema, an undocumented runaway domestic worker described her life story. Shameema came to UAE, three years ago with a visa arranged by her sister-in-law. Upon arrival she has been picked up from the airport by her sponsor's relative for whom she was supposed to work. Shameema says, "It was a one room house where an old Omani man, his third wife and three children were staying. My sponsor was that man's relative. He was old and sick and my duty was to take care of him. But I ended up doing all odd jobs in that house"

Shameema said her working hours were not fixed. She ended up working from dawn to dusk along with looking after the person she was assigned to. The family where she worked was not economically well off. They did not pay her always. Food was limited. Shameema says, "They did not have proper food. Then how can they feed me?" Shameema was often asked to get food from the neighbouring house. There were not many houses. House seen around were all 'Arab' houses. She had no contact with her sponsor either. Her passport was with the sponsor. Shameema managed to live in that house for three weeks. One night the person she was taking care of tried to assault her sexually. Shameema left that house the next day and called up her sister in law. She went and stayed with her sister-in-law and later managed to get work in an Indian family.

During their long trajectories of travel women domestic workers go through different and varied notions of domesticity. At times they make alternate relationship and temporary homes within the temporary phase of migrations. 'Boyfriends' play a crucial role in the lives of many domestic workers. Set-up (a term used in UAE for men and women living together out of wedlock) or the temporary arrangement of family was one of the ways of living for many women who live outside the employer's household. Set-up helps women and also men to deal with various practical problems they encounter in the worksite. In the case of run-away domestic workers, living with somebody as a 'family' help to get a legitimising discourse to deal with the surveillance of police. Some relationships move from a set-up to more permanent relationships where women try to make a new family in the UAE.

Hussaiba, a part-time live-out domestic worker discussed her long and interesting life trajectory during the survey in UAE.

"I got married when I was just 13 years old. My husband left for Saudi Arabia when I

was pregnant and came back after the child was born. He arranged a visa for me and took me to Saudi Arabia. I was 15 years old then. My child was with my mother. We returned from Saudi when my son was 4 years old. So my mother was the one who actually looked after my son. I came back and we built a house with whatever saving we had but my husband sold that house and he also took all the money and gold I had. He told me he wanted to arrange money to get a private visa. We shifted to a rented house. He left and never returned. I had to pay the rent and there was no money. I started working as a domestic in neighbouring houses. One of the families where I worked arranged a visa for me. I left my son with my mother again. I did not tell her where I was going. I did not tell this to any one of my family members. I started working in an Emirati family. There was full of hardship. I had to get up early morning to wash the car, gardening, cooking. It was a huge house. I did not get sufficient food to eat. I used to cry everyday. A Malayali man who used to work in the neighbourhood saw my hardship and told me that he could help me to get better employment somewhere else. This was the time my employers were thinking of cancelling my visa. So I had no choice. Going home was not an option. There was nothing for me to survive. With the help of this man I ran away from that house. Then onwards I started working in various houses as a part-time domestic without any documents. (Her passport was confiscated by the previous employer) The man who befriended me gave support throughout this period. After three years of working like this (as an undocumented worker) I was caught by the police. They sent me to women's jail and after 45 days deported back to India.

Hussaiba stayed in India barely for a month and managed to procure another passport and she came back to UAE. Hussaiba started working again and she married her boyfriend. She also brought her son from Kerala.

Hussaiba's life shows the trajectories in which migrant domestic workers pass through. When poverty and other difficult situations pushed her to a corner, Hussaiba took difficult choices, rather unconventional choices in life. Leaving her small baby boy back home was one such choice. Though there was an unconventional domesticity in play in the case of Hussaiba, as it is the case with many other women migrant domestic workers, it usually becomes a temporary period. It is rather reserved for a future domesticity, as we see here. As we have seen in the example of Hussaiba, now staying in UAE with her son and second husband Hussaiba tries to play the domesticity denied/not available to her earlier.

As described earlier, women chose to leave for varieties of reasons. At times it is a painful departure of leaving intimate family members and at times it is a relief from situations from which they wanted to get some relief. In the case of women domestic workers there is a strong labour market for them in UAE. Those forces many women to leave home and travel as migrant domestic workers and women found it relatively easier compared to men.

Women migration is a constant source of economic support for this many poor household in Kerala. As my data indicates, the traditional occupations such as fishing has given way to the bigger privatised machine fishing (trolling) where traditional fisher folk lose their daily subsistence. Migrating to the Gulf is one of the ways to overcome poverty and upscale unemployment. Men find it extremely difficult to migrate abroad due to lack of money to pay for visa and airfare. In the case of women, migrating is relatively cheaper where the agent usually asks for half the amount they ask from men. They will have to pay an amount of 50,000 to 1,00,000 Indian Rupees where as men have to pay an amount of 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 Indian Rupees. Going to the gulf countries as a domestic worker is a temporary phase for many women where they work and make money. After acquiring enough money they send their men folk in the gulf and take care of the family. There are cases where women arrange visa for their men folk. It was observed in Kuttichira that women's remittance become one of the determining economy in this area. For women migration to the gulf is not only to overcome unemployment and poverty but also for the survival of the entire family members. A standard practice of acquiring money was through mortgaging property; here in the case of women domestic workers usually it is home since many of them do not have any other property to mortgage. Here we can see that home is stretching far away from the sentiments of one's own place of belonging. Women mortgage her home in anticipation to make a better home upon their arrival. Here the notion of home brings far-reaching meaning. Life situation also urges many women to down play their sentiments at least temporarily.

Most women domestic workers interviewed showed the fact that leaving home was not really a difficult moment for them. They wanted to leave because the situation demanded them to leave. While leaving they break the various laid assumptions about domesticity. Family arrangement gets reshaped as women move.

After returning home, they realise that it is not the same as the way they left it. Some get into a more 'better' home what they anticipated but for many others it also brings a sense of homelessness. Years of living in the gulf estrange certain relationships and women often go back to place where they do not feel any sense of belonging. I had described the life of Thankamma earlier where she was disowned by her own children and she realised there is no home for her to go back to. This forced her to go back to a life of migrant domestic worker again. This anxiety of going back to a void where they do not feel a sense of belonging was verbalised by many women during my interaction with them. Years of living only as an economic provider change certain relations, if not all. Leaving home was an act of joy and relief for MariyamBeevi. "I ran away from that house due to extreme violence". There was sign of relief when Mariyam Beevi described her life.

Mariyam Beevi, as a Muslim woman married to a Hindu Man was enough reason for facing problems from both families. But soon after the marriage she started facing violence from her husband. Leaving for UAE with the help of an agent was a crucial

decision she made to leave the abusive home environment to regain her lost self-esteem. During the interview, Mariyam Beevi in Dubai, she was in a status of an undocumented worker. She had run away from her original sponsor. Mariyam Beevi said;

“I have only one grief that I could not make a house of my own. When I came here I sent money to my family hoping that they would forget everything and welcome me in the family. But I forgot to invest something for myself. There is no home for me when I go back now”

Mariyam Beevi's attempted to deal with the estranged relationship with her family members. But she fears that her family would disown her again when they realize she is no longer the economic provider. Her undocumented status and the fear that she may be deported anytime showed her insecurity of not having a home of her own.

Leaving home for making a new and better home is how many women describe their decision to migrate in search of work. Sofia narrates, “We used to live in the ‘Bangladesh colony’ in a shanty house. We wanted to leave that area since it was not ‘safe’ and we did not have a proper house.” As soon as Sofia started sending money from the Gulf, her husband along with two children moved from Bangladesh colony to a more ‘safe’ location in Kozhikkode in a rented house. They bought some land and constructed a house. By the time Sofia came back her house construction was almost over and she could move into the new house along with her husband and children.

Rubi, is another woman surveyed who worked as a domestic worker for a long time and is now running a successful business in UAE. Making a stable home and a better future for her children was her ambition when she left for working as a domestic worker. She left her two daughters with the custody of her sister and came to UAE to work in an Emirati household as a live-in domestic worker. Eventually Rubi could manage to move up to the economic ladder. Now she is running a business with the help of her previous Emirati sponsor. This upward mobility did not give the anticipated stability at her home front. She was estranged from her own daughters and sister (they disowned her). Now living with her boyfriend after converting to Islam, Rubi wants to make a new home with the new family that she has adopted.

In the case of many of these women, home comes in their life narratives either as a broken home, lost home or as a commodity to exchange for her travel. Home also deals with a variety of sentiments, which are very different from a dominant notion about moral panic associated with their travel. As we have seen from the examples above, home transforms as a commodity to exchange for getting visa and travel documents. But many return migrant stories show the way home travels along the travel paths of women domestic workers and gives new and different meaning to it. Thus home plays varied roles in the lives of women migrant domestic workers and sometimes it brings them to a conformist and conventional role from a long and non-conventional life trajectory of the migrant domestic worker.

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## Brief Glossary

**Agricultural Productivity** - Agricultural productivity is measured as the ratio of agricultural outputs to agricultural inputs. While individual products are usually measured by weight, their varying densities make measuring overall agricultural output difficult. Therefore, output is usually measured as the market value of final output, which excludes intermediate products such as corn feed used in the meat industry. This output value may be compared to many different types of inputs such as labour and land (yield). These are called partial measures of productivity.

**Arid tropical climate** - is a climate that does not meet the criteria to be classified as a polar climate, and in which precipitation is too low to sustain any vegetation at all, or at most a very scanty scrub. An area that features this climate usually experiences less than 250 mm (10 inches) per year of precipitation.

In India, the region towards the east of the tropical desert running from Punjab and Haryana to Kathiawar experiences this climate type. This climate is a transitional climate falling between tropical desert and humid sub-tropical, with temperatures which are less extreme than the desert climate. The annual rainfall is between 30 to 65 cms but is very unreliable and happens mostly during the summer monsoon season.

**Agricultural Intensification** - Intensive farming or intensive agriculture is an agricultural production system characterized by a low degree of crop rotation and the high use of inputs such as capital, labour, or heavy use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers relative to land area.

**BRICS** - A label for a select group of four developing countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) that are believed to have promising emerging markets and economies. The grouping was originally known as “BRIC” before the inclusion of South Africa in 2010. The BRICS members are all developing or newly industrialised countries, but they are distinguished by their large, fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional and global affairs; all five are G-20 members. As of 2013, the five BRICS countries represent almost 3 billion people, with a combined nominal GDP of US\$16.039 trillion, and an estimated US\$4 trillion in combined foreign reserves. Presently, South Africa holds the chair of the BRICS group, having hosted the group’s fifth summit in 2013.

**Child Malnutrition** - Malnutrition literally means “bad nutrition” and technically includes both over- and under- nutrition. In the context of developing countries, under-nutrition is generally the main issue of concern. WFP defines malnutrition as “a state in which the physical function of an individual is impaired to the point where he or she can no longer maintain adequate bodily performance process such as growth, pregnancy, lactation, physical work and resisting and recovering from disease.”

Physical growth of children (less than 5 years) is an accepted indicator of the nutritional well-being of the population they represent. For assessment of acute malnutrition, children are more vulnerable to adverse environments and respond rapidly to dietary changes.

To determine a child's nutritional status, you need to compare that child's status with a reference for healthy children. The internationally accepted reference was developed by the CDC and its National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) using data collected from a population of healthy children.

**Compound Annual Growth Rate** - the rate at which an economy, investment, company, etc. grows over a period of years, based on growth over the previous year.

**Collectivism** - Collectivism is any philosophic, political, religious, economic, or social outlook that emphasizes the interdependence of every human. Collectivism is a basic cultural element that exists as the reverse of individualism in human nature (in the same way high context culture exists as the reverse of low context culture). Collectivist orientations stress the importance of cohesion within social groups (such as an "in-group", in what specific context it is defined) and in some cases, the priority of group goals over individual goals. Collectivists often focus on community, society, nation or country.

**Crop Diversification** - In the agricultural context, diversification can be regarded as the re-allocation of some of a farm's productive resources, such as land, capital, farm equipment and paid labour, into new activities. These can be new crops or livestock products, value-adding activities, provision of services to other farmers and, particularly in richer countries, non-farming activities such as restaurants and shops. Factors leading to decisions to diversify are many, but include; reducing risk, responding to changing consumer demands or changing government policy, responding to external shocks and, more recently, as a consequence of climate change.

**Cropping Patterns** - It is the pattern of crops for a given piece of land or cropping pattern means the proportion of area under various crops at a point of time in a unit area or it indicated the yearly sequence and spatial arrangements of crops and follows in an area. These decisions with respect to choice of crops and cropping systems are further narrowed down under influence of several other forces related to infrastructure facilities, socio-economic factors and technological developments, all operating interactively at micro-level. These include infrastructure facilities, socio-economic factors, technological factors, economic motivations.

**De-democratisation** - democratization is a process which can progress or regress (de-democratization). Democracy is a matter of degrees. Democratization is a net movement toward broader, more equal, more protected, and more binding consultation between the state and its citizens.

De-democratization is a net movement away from broader, more equal, more protected, and more binding consultation between the state and its citizens.

**Dependency Ratio** - Ratio of non-working (pension fund supported) segment of a population to the working (pension fund supporter) segment, expressed usually as a percentage. Although dependency ratio is increasing in most countries, it is growing faster in the developed ones, especially Japan. When reversed (number of working population divided by the number of non-working population) it is called support ratio.

**Dry land agriculture** - A type of farming practiced in arid areas without irrigation by planting drought-resistant crops and maintaining a fine surface till or mulch that protects the natural moisture of the soil from evaporation.

**Female trafficking** - Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines Trafficking in Persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

**Feminization of poverty** - Feminization of poverty describes a phenomenon in which women represent disproportionate percentages of the world's poor. UNIFEM describes it as "the burden of poverty borne by women, especially in developing countries". This concept is not only a consequence of lack of income, but is also the result of the deprivation of capabilities and gender biases present in both societies and governments. The term feminization of poverty itself is controversial and has been defined in many different ways. In 1978, Diana Pearce coined the term, "the feminization of poverty" after doing much research and seeing how many women struggled with poverty within the United States, as well as globally.

**Food insecurity** - In 2006, the USDA introduced new language to describe food security and insecurity.

Low food security (formerly known as food insecurity without hunger): Three or more reported indications of food-access problems that resulted in diet quality reduction, but did not substantially affect the quantity of food or their normal eating patterns.

Very low food security (formerly known as food insecurity with hunger): Multiple reported indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake

**Forward caste** - Forward caste is a term used in India to denote groups of people who do not qualify for any of the positive discrimination schemes operated by the government of India. These schemes are known as Reservation Benefits.

Those groups who qualify are listed as Other Backward castes or Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and they can take advantage of defined quotas amongst other benefits for education, tax benefits, special government schemes, government employment and political representation. The lists of Forward, Other Backward and Scheduled castes, and Scheduled tribes are compiled irrespective of religion and are subject to change depending on social, economic and educational factors.

**Globalization** - The worldwide movement toward economic, financial, trade, and communications integration. Globalization implies the opening of local and nationalistic perspectives to a broader outlook of an interconnected and interdependent world with free transfer of capital, goods, and services across national frontiers. However, it does not include unhindered movement of labor and, as suggested by some economists, may hurt smaller or fragile economies if applied indiscriminately.

**Gratuity** - Gratuity is a part of salary that is received by an employee from his/her employer in gratitude for the services offered by the employee in the company. Gratuity is a defined benefit plan and is one of the many retirement benefits offered by the employer to the employee upon leaving his job. As per Sec 10 (10) of Income Tax Act, gratuity is paid when an employee completes 5 or more years of full time service with the employer minimum 240 days a year).

**Gender neutral** - Gender neutrality (adjective form: gender-neutral), also known as gender-neutralism or the gender neutrality movement, describes the idea that policies, language, and other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles according to people's sex or gender, in order to avoid discrimination arising from the impression that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than the other.

**Global production chains** - defined by Sturgeon (2001) as “a set of inter-firm relationships that bind a group of firms into a larger economic unit.

**Green Revolution** - The Green Revolution refers to a series of research, and development, and technology transfer initiatives, occurring between the 1940s and the late 1960s, that increased agriculture production worldwide, particularly in the developing world, beginning most markedly in the late 1960s.[1] The initiatives, led by Norman Borlaug, the “Father of the Green Revolution” credited with saving over a billion people from starvation, involved the development of high-yielding varieties of cereal grains, expansion of irrigation infrastructure, modernization of management techniques, distribution of hybridized seeds, synthetic fertilizers, and pesticides to farmers.

The term “Green Revolution” was first used in 1968 by former United States Agency for International Development (USAID) director William Gaud, who noted the spread of the new technologies: “These and other developments in the field of agriculture contain the makings of a new revolution. It is not a violent Red Revolution like that of the Soviets, nor is it a White Revolution like that of the Shah of Iran. I call it the Green Revolution.

**Human capital** - A measure of the economic value of an employee's skill set. This measure builds on the basic production input of labor measure where all labor is thought to be equal. The concept of human capital recognizes that not all labor is equal and that the quality of employees can be improved by investing in them. The education, experience and abilities of an employee have an economic value for employers and for the economy as a whole.

**ITES** - Information technology enabled services, or ITES, is a form of outsourced service which has emerged due to involvement of IT in various fields such as banking and finance, telecom, insurance, etc. Some of the examples of ITES are medical transcription, back-office accounting, insurance claim, credit card processing and many more. Firms usually from developed countries outsource such services to countries like India, China and Philippines in order to gain from large talent pool and low labor cost.

**Job search** - The act of searching for employment. A job search is performed when an individual is either unemployed or dissatisfied with their current position.

**Labour Market** - the institutions and processes through which employment and wages are determined. In other words, the factors affecting the supply of and demand for labour.

**Labour Force Participation Rates** - The labor force participation rate is the percentage of working-age persons in an economy who:

Are employed

Are unemployed but looking for a job

Typically “working-age persons” is defined as people between the ages of 15-64. People in those age groups who are not counted as participating in the labor force are typically students, homemakers, and persons under the age of 64 who are retired.

**LEGOFTEN** - Edible oil imports into India during the 1981-86 period rose to US\$ 2 billion per year. The Government of India launched a Technology Mission on Oilseeds in 1986 to increase indigenous production of oilseeds and make the country self-sufficient in the edible oil sector. ICRISAT was invited by the government to help in testing, adapting and disseminating improved groundnut production technologies in collaboration with the national research and extension programs in India. The LEGOFTEN Unit at ICRISAT Asia Center was created in 1987 in response to this request from the government (ICRISAT 1993). An initial joint-planning meeting was held to assess the production technologies used by farmers and to formulate an improved technology package with local variation for testing in different agro climates.

**Liberalisation** - Economic liberalization is a very broad term that usually refers to fewer government regulations and restrictions in the economy in exchange for greater participation of private entities; the doctrine is associated with classical liberalism. Thus, liberalisation in short refers to “the removal of controls”, to encourage economic development.

**Lingayat** - Lingayathism, Lingayat, Lingavanta is an independent religion, and tradition in India, established by Vishwaguru Basavanna in the 12th Century. It makes several departures from mainstream Hinduism and propounds monotheism through worship centered on Lord Shiva in the form of linga or Ishtalinga. It also rejects the authority of the Vedas, the caste system, and some Hindu beliefs such as reincarnation and karma. The adherents of this faith are known as Lingayats.

**MGNERGA** - The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian law that aims to guarantee the ‘right to work’ and ensure livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Unlike its precursors, the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA guaranteed employment as a legal right.

**Maternity Benefit** - THE MATERNITY BENEFIT ACT, 1961: An Act to regulate the employment of women in certain establishments. For entitlement to maternity benefit, the insured woman should have contributed for not less than seventy days in the immediately preceding two consecutive contribution periods prior to actual or expected date of confinement as the case may be. Hence, to be eligible to maternity benefit, a confinement should either actually occur or should be expected to occur in a benefit period relative to the insured woman. The act provides for 12

weeks wages during maternity as well as paid leave in certain other related contingencies.

**Market liberalization** - market liberalism depicts a political ideology, combining free market economy with personal liberty and human rights, in contrast to social liberalism, which combines personal liberty and human rights along with a mixed economy and welfare state.

**Marketization** - Marketization (or Marketisation) is a restructuring process that enables state enterprises to operate as market-oriented firms by changing the legal environment in which they operate.

**National Pulses Development Program** - Under this Programme, emphasis is given on increasing the coverage as well as the yield per unit of area. The major programme components covered under the NPDP are: 1)Purchase of breeder seed, & certified seed and distribution of certified seed and minikits, 2)Organisation of Block and IPM demonstrations, 3)Distribution of sprinkler sets, 4)Distribution of improved farm implements and plant protection equipment, 5)Distribution of Rhyzobium cultures and micro-nutrients, 6)Training of farmers.

**National Security Scheme for Unorganised Sector Workers** - enacted in 2008, the Act provides for constitution of National Social Security Board at the central level to recommend schemes related with life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits, old age protection and any other benefit for unorganised sector workers.

**On-the-job search** - Searching for other potential employers while currently being employed. Employees try bargain for better job opportunities using a matching framework.

**Perfect information** - A market where information is quickly disclosed to all participants in it and where the matching of buyers and sellers is immediate. Generally speaking, it is any market that adheres to perfect information flow and provides instantly available buyers and sellers.

**Post-Colonialism** - Postcolonialism is the study of the legacy of the era of European, and sometimes American, direct global domination, which ended roughly in the mid-20th century, and the residual political, socio-economic, and psychological effects of that colonial history. Postcolonialism examines the manner in which emerging societies grapple with the challenges of self-determination and how they incorporate or reject the Western norms and conventions, such as legal or political systems, left in place after direct administration by colonial powers ended.

**Provident Fund** - Employee Provident Fund EPF is an employee benefit scheme generally prescribed by a statutory body of the government which provides facilities to the employees of an organization with regard to medical assistance, retirement, education of children, insurance support and housing.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO), under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, has the authority to mandate policies on EPF, pension and insurance schemes. The Employees' Provident Fund Scheme and Miscellaneous provisions Act, 1952 is applicable to every establishment (business/ not-for-profit) employing 20 or more persons (5+ in the case of cinema theatres) in the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir.



**Rate of Unemployment** - Percentage of total workforce which is unemployed and are looking for a paid job. Unemployment rate is one of the most closely watched statistics because a rising rate is seen as a sign of weakening economy that may call for cut in interest rate. A falling rate, similarly, indicates a growing economy which is usually accompanied by higher inflation rate and may call for increase in interest rates.

**Rural non-farm employment** - Rural non- farm sector employment is defined as any form of employment other than farm employment in the type of wage, self, or unpaid family labour.

**Russian Federation** - a federation in northeastern Europe and northern Asia; formerly Soviet Russia; since 1991 an independent state.

**Semi-arid tropical climate** - A semi-arid climate or steppe climate are climatic regions that receive precipitation below potential evapotranspiration, but not extremely. In India, this includes a long stretch of land situated to the south of Tropic of Cancer and east of the Western Ghats and the Cardamom Hills. It includes Karnataka, interior and western Tamil Nadu, western Andhra Pradesh and central Maharashtra. This area receives minimal rainfall due to being situated in the rain-shadow area. This region is a famine prone zone with very unreliable rainfall which varies from 40 to 75 cm annually.

**Simple random sampling** - In statistics, a simple random sample is a subset of individuals (a sample) chosen from a larger set (a population). Each individual is chosen randomly and entirely by chance, such that each individual has the same probability of being chosen at any stage during the sampling process, and each subset of k individuals has the same probability of being chosen for the sample as any other subset of k individuals.[1] This process and technique is known as simple random sampling.

**Social Security Benefit** - Social Security Benefits in India are Need-based i.e. the component of social assistance is more important in the publicly-managed schemes- In the Indian context, Social Security is a comprehensive approach designed to prevent deprivation, assure the individual of a basic minimum income for himself and his dependents and to protect the individual from any uncertainties. The State bears the primary responsibility for developing appropriate system for providing protection and assistance to its workforce. Social Security is increasingly viewed as an integral part of the development process. It helps to create a more positive attitude to the challenge of globalization and the consequent structural and technological changes.

**Social networks**-A social network is a social structure made up of a set of social actors (such as individuals or organizations) and a set of the dyadic ties between these actors. The social network perspective provides a set of methods for analyzing the structure of whole social entities as well as a variety of theories explaining the patterns observed in these structures.

**Socio-economic dualisms** - Social dualism is a theory developed by economist Julius Herman Boeke which characterizes a society in the economic sense by the social spirit, the organisational forms and the technique dominating it. According to Boeke, it is not necessary that a society be

dominated exclusively by one social system. If one social system does prevail, the society in question is a homogeneous society. When, on the contrary two (or more) social systems appear simultaneously, we have a dual society.

**Soil Infertility** - Soil infertility is the result of a physical or chemical problem in the soil that inhibits or prevents the growth of plants. Soil with a poor physical structure can limit your plant's access to oxygen and water, while chemical problems are the result of an imbalance in the naturally occurring elements in your soil.

**Strength of weak ties** - The strength-of-weak-ties theory was defined by American sociologist Mark Granovetter as social relationships characterized by infrequent contact, an absence of emotional closeness, and no history of reciprocal favors.

It might be said that weak-tie contacts are people in your "extended network".

The strength of weak ties explains the sudden membership surge on professional social networking sites at a time when the world is in the grips of a profound economic crisis.

**Subsistence Farming** - Farming that provides for the basic needs of the farmer without surpluses for marketing.

**Sunshine sectors** - A colloquial term for a sector or business that is in its infancy, but is growing at a rapid pace. A sunrise industry is typically characterized by high growth rates, numerous start-ups and an abundance of venture capital funding. Sunrise industries generally have plenty of "buzz" surrounding them as public awareness about the sector increases and investors get attracted to its long-term growth prospects.

**Technology Mission on Pulses** - The original government program called Technology Mission on Oilseeds (TMO), was created in 1980 under the Department of Agriculture Research and Education (DARE). Its mission was to increase the production of oilseeds, reduce the import of oilseeds and achieve self-sufficiency in edible oils. TMO was transferred to the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC) in March, 1990. Keeping in view the success on oilseeds production, pulses were brought under this Technology Mission in 1990. Later oil palm and maize were also brought under the Technology Mission in 1992-93 and 1995-96 respectively, and an integrated scheme called ISOPOM was launched.

**Usual Principal Activity Status** - The usual activity status relates to the activity status of a person during the reference period of 365 days preceding the date of enumeration. The activity status on which a person spent relatively longer time (i.e. major time criterion) during the 365 days preceding the date of enumeration is considered as the usual principal activity status of the person.

**Vokkaliga** - Vokkaliga is an umbrella term for various agricultural, previously endogamous social groups with a martial past, found mainly in the Old Mysore Region of southern Karnataka. The Vokkaligas are primarily agriculturists. They form a politically dominant caste group and were the most populous group until the States Reorganization Act of 1956 which enlarged the erstwhile

State of Mysore by the inclusion of predominantly Canarese districts of the State of Bombay, State of Hyderabad and Coorg.

**Work Participation Rate** - Work participation rate is defined as the percentage of total workers (main and marginal) to total population.

Work participation rate = Total Workers (Main+Marginal)/Total Population\*100

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