

## **Agrarian Transition and Migration in a Village of Bihar**

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### **Introduction**

This paper tries to understand the relation between agrarian transition and migration in rural areas of Bihar by collecting and analysing data from a village. The basic research questions are: What is the status of small peasant proprietor holdings and growth of capitalism in agriculture? To what extent has the free wage labour market grown? What is the impact of migration on the growth of capitalism in agriculture? The paper is divided into five sections. In the first section I briefly discuss how agrarian transition has been conceptualised in Marxist literature and challenges posed to this conceptualisation by actual developments. In the next two sections I present some empirical material from my own fieldwork to illustrate the conceptual arguments about the relation between emerging property ownership patterns and the characteristics of migration. In section two, I give a description of the village setting focusing on land ownership pattern and local labour market. In the third section, I present key characteristics of migration from the village by using quantitative data collected in the village. In doing so, I have specifically made inquiries into the circular migration of workers because circular migrants maintain strong links with the village and continue to be part of its labour force. I have attempted to assess the magnitude of labour migration, the socioeconomic and demographic background of migrant workers, and the occupational mobility made possible by migration. I have also tried to investigate the remittances of the migrating workers and whether migrants are able to produce a flow of investible surplus. And finally, and most importantly, I have looked into the specific impact of labour migration on labour relations in the village? Since caste is deeply embedded in the socio-economic structure of the village, wherever needed, I have provided caste data along with land and other variables. In the fourth section, I return to the main research questions related to agrarian transition and migration. Finally, in the concluding section, I have highlighted the need for a new conceptual tool to theorise the emerging relationship between land, labour and migration.

The paper is based on fieldwork in village Jitwarpur, in Sadar block of Araria district in Bihar, which uses the census approach.

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### Section I: The Problematique of Agrarian Transition

I begin by asking the oft-repeated question: why has peasantry persisted in the countries of the South? Unlike the Anglo-Saxon classical path of development of capitalism in Agriculture, which is characterised by disappearance of peasantry, three regions of the globe—Sub-Saharan Africa, South and continental South East Asia, and China—continue to be essentially dominated by their villages and small peasant holdings and comprised half the world's population in the 1990s (Bernstein 2001). These regions are separated from other regions by a massive gap in labour productivity in farming. The regions and countries where large-scale capitalist and 'peasant' farming are concentrated, though accounting for only 15 per cent of the world's population and just 4 per cent of the world's agricultural labour force, trade 62 per cent of exports (by value) of agricultural commodities worldwide (Weis 2007).

Marx considered smallholding agriculture as inherently incapable of 'the development of the productive powers of social labour, the social concentration of capitals, stock-raising on a large scale or the progressive application of science' (1991, 943). He explained how the competition coming from an agriculture managed by capital was crushing peasant proprietorship and continually furnishing new recruits to the class of wage labourers (1982, 862). Proprietorship of small land parcels, he argued, would decline and ultimately be destroyed for the following reasons:

the destruction of rural domestic industry, its normal complement, by the development of large-scale industry; the gradual impoverishment and exhaustion of the soil which has been subjected to this form of cultivation; the usurpation of communal property by large landowners, this communal property always forming a second complement to the smallholding economy and being the only thing which makes possible the upkeep of livestock; the competition of large-scale agriculture, whether in the form of plantations or the capitalist form (Marx 1991, 943).

As the facts from the study village will show in the paper, the reality does not support Marx's optimism about agrarian transition. In advanced capitalist countries, capitalism did transform feudal rural relations and mould agriculture on the lines of capitalist production, involving land concentration, proletarianisation of small landowners, economies of scale, the multiplication of large-scale enterprises, use of modern technology, free wage labour and so on. The classical path of this transition was reproduction of capital from agriculture for investment outside agriculture. This transition depended on separating the predominant means of production—land—from the small landholders, and the emergence of large landholdings managed by capitalist farmers through hired labour and the use of labour-minimising technologies.

In the 1960s and 70s, worldwide emphasis on the Green Revolution gave birth to a new debate regarding the scale and nature of transition of feudal or semi-feudal agriculture into capitalist agriculture and the emerging class differentiation. The question of capitalist transition of agriculture was widely termed the classical agrarian question. In India, this debate is well known as the 'mode of production debate', particularly in the 1970s and early 80s. However, the persistence of small peasantry in many parts of India, even after globalisation, has compelled us to have a fresh look at the process of subsumption of subsistence agriculture and its labour by capital. The question is: why did capitalist development in India not alter the technical relations of production in large parts of the country?

According to Cristóbal Kay:

the persistence of the subsistence sector was a result of the process of dependent capitalist development which, in turn, required continual reproduction of the former ... Through the internationalisation of capital, the industrialisation process in dependent countries resulted in distorted production and consumption patterns and in the adoption of inappropriate technologies. Such an industrialisation process created insufficient employment opportunities, making it impossible for many small-scale producers to abandon subsistence production. Thus, a large reservoir of surplus population was continually reproduced in the subsistence sector, keeping wages in the industrial sector well below increases in productivity ... Small proprietors can work for simple reproduction and subsistence and not for profit (Kay 1982, 52).

Small peasant enterprises produce mainly use values rather than exchange values. Simple commodity production does not allow substantive surplus for the market, hence little accumulation takes place (Kay 1982, 36). In case of low absorption of labour outside agriculture, 'the penetration of capitalist relations into subsistence agriculture in dependent countries does not dissolve the old links of the worker with the land thereby maintaining and even recreating the subsistence economies' (Jose Nun, Miguel Murmis and J.C. Marin as cited in Kay 1982, 35). Hence, even if land does not contribute significantly in the livelihoods of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers, they maintain their links with land. This causes under-formation of local labour markets (Bharadwaj 1994, 333). The large majority of population owns a small proportion of land and continues to subsist precariously on cultivation as a means of livelihoods. Adding to the under-formation of labour market is the presence of a large proportion of labour as family labour. The under-formation of labour market is associated with the prevalence of various kinds of labour systems in the village economy – segmentation of 'work', of 'workers', of 'wage systems' and exchange contracts and a mix of labour processes instituted in diverse social forms (Bharadwaj 1994, 335-336). According to her, the under-formation of local labour markets is compensated by the expansion of external labour markets through opportunities to migrate (336).

The intensification of capital intensive agriculture in certain regions (for instance, Punjab) has led the small landholders and labourers from non-Green Revolution areas to migrate to seek seasonal wage employment in areas of Green Revolution and plantation. Similar is the case of migration to the towns and cities to work in industry and service sector. This is referred to as external proletarianisation by Kay (1982, 37). With agricultural incomes insufficient to provide for the needs of most rural working people and extremely slow growth of regular employment (Bhaduri 2009), most people are being pushed to work in the unregulated informal and unorganised sector which has almost no labour protection but accounts for 93 per cent of the Indian workforce (Harriss-White 2004). Casualisation of labour at destination with lower labour absorption too does not allow large scale permanent transfer of labour from rural areas. Multiple livelihood options are necessary for the reproduction of rural households. Small peasant proprietors migrate as seasonal wage labour—a partial proletarianisation—while clinging with their small plots of land. They also serve as a cheap labour reserve for capitalist entrepreneurs. These different types of proletarianisation have led to different types and degrees of migration.

## **Section II: Ecological Setting of the Village**

Jitwarpur village is located in Kismat-Khawaspur Panchayat of Araria Sadar block in Araria district. It is a remote village considering its distance from the district headquarters and also the fact that Araria is a new district carved out from Purnea which is about 40 km away. Araria town still looks like a typical block or, at the most, a subdivisional town in Bihar. Jitwarpur is well linked by a metallic road with the district headquarters (22 km) and the Indo-Nepal border at Kursa Kanta (18 km). The village is prone to floods. River Bhalua passes through the village on the eastern side.

Jitwarpur is a large village with a population of 5,600 and is spread over 2 km from north to south. The village comprises 10 *tolas* (hamlets). These *tolas* are based on caste and religion. The main village is known as Palasi which is inhabited mainly by Brahmins. Other *tolas* are Puraini, Jhaua, Yadav, Musahari, Kewat, Mansoori, Godhi, Tegachhia Brahmin and Nonia.

According to our field survey, the total number of households (HHs) in the village is 950. Out of these, 847 HHs are Hindu and 103 are Muslim. Habitations separated by caste and religion reflect the old power structure and social segregation. Out of 103 Muslim HHs, 101 belong to the Dhuniya (Momin) community and two belong to the Ansari community. Within Hindus, there are twelve castes in the village: Brahmin, Nonia, Godhi, Kewat, Yadav, Sudhi, Chamar, Baniya, Musahar, Badhai, Nai and Halwai. Brahmins, the single largest caste in the village, constitute 31 per cent of the population; other castes found in relatively larger numbers are Nonia (19.58 per cent), Godhi (13.26 per cent), Kewat (12.53 per cent), Musahar (3.89 per cent) and Yadavs (3.05 per cent). In addition to these, there are twenty-three (2.42 per cent) Santhal HHs in the village

which belong to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category. In terms of caste groups, Other Backward Classes (OBC)-I constitutes the largest caste group, with a population share of 45.9 per cent; General castes constitute 30.95 per cent, OBC-II 5.26 per cent and Scheduled Castes (SCs) 4.63 per cent.

In the village, 46 per cent of the HHs have Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards and 12 per cent have Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Annapurna Yojana (AY) cards. About 19 per cent of the HHs have no cards as they were left out at the time of BPL survey, or they are new HHs because of separation in the family after the BPL survey, or their card is under review.

### Land Utilisation Pattern

As per official revenue records, the total area of the village is 1,484.8 acres. This includes land belonging to the Government of Bihar as well as private lands. Around 45.6 acres of land have been classified as *gair majarua khas*, out of which some land has been given to the landless and some are in the river belly. Nearly 42.14 acres of land have been classified as *gair majarua aam*, which are under public use and cannot be distributed. The record shows 7.54 acres of land belong to the old district board. Part of the land is under common use but the rest is under encroachment by different HHs. Under the land ceiling programme, 28.35 acres of land were declared ceiling surplus. As per the official records, all these lands have been distributed among eligible beneficiaries. As of now, there are 1,754 survey *khatas*<sup>1</sup> and the total number of plots is 3,390.

The total land reported under ownership of HHs is 886 acres. This includes land used for cultivation and homestead, land under kitchen gardens, orchards, current and permanent fallows, and land used for other purposes. Land under operational holding amounts to 1,134 acres, which is much more than ownership holding. The gap between ownership and operational holding can be attributed to the well-recognised technical hazard of field survey where some households tend to conceal information regarding ownership in general and leased-out land in particular.

Out of total owned land, 53 per cent is under self-cultivation. However, in the case of operated land, cultivated area is about 80 per cent. This shows that land lease and mortgage are important sources of augmenting landholding for cultivation. If we consider leased-in land as a proportion of owned land, it is close to 45 per cent.

Paddy, wheat and jute are the main crops in the village. Together they account for approximately 94 per cent of the total cultivated area. Minor crops include moong, masoor, *khandsari*, *tisi*, mustard, chana, potato and green vegetables. Overall, agricultural productivity is low in the village. Further, productivity in leased-in land is significantly

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1. A record of cultivators' rights including the identity, extent, quality and possession of land.

low compared to that of owned-cum-self-cultivated land. While the difference is less in the case of wheat, it is very high in the case of paddy and jute. The Green Revolution have gradually penetrated the village, but it is still trapped in the low investment and low output cycle. Modernisation of agriculture is limited to the widespread use of tractor and threshers. Draught animals are gradually disappearing. In the absence of any public irrigation system, cultivators tend to minimise the cost of irrigation by compromising the frequency and adequacy of irrigation.

However, it is important to note that in recent periods, a small section of enterprising cultivators has emerged. A few families belonging to the Kewat, Nonia and Brahmin castes have reported impressive productivity in their field. But in the case of all such families, we found that they had multiple sources of income which included politics, regular jobs, a Public Distribution System (PDS) shop or a tractor, and so on.

Agriculture has remained subsistence based. Most of the cultivators including the tenants hardly produce any surplus grain for the market. However, due to the requirement of cash to meet various expenses related to consumption and agriculture, they are compelled to sell a part of their produce immediately after the harvest. Once they exhaust their grain stock, they have no choice but to buy grain from the market to meet consumption needs. In the village grocery shops, exchange of goods in kind is also prevalent, particularly immediately after the harvest. There are a few grain traders in the village. These are small-time traders as their role is basically to purchase grain directly from the villagers and then sell it to large traders who send their trucks for the purpose.

### **Land Ownership Pattern**

The village has a high percentage of landlessness: 399 HHs out of 950, that is, 42 per cent of the HHs reported no ownership of land for cultivation at the time of the survey (see Table 1). This explains the presence of a large proportion of labourers among the adult population in the village. Further, seventy-four HHs (8 per cent) are without their own homestead land. They continue to reside on *sikkmi* land (land owned by the superior tenant). Jitwarpur is predominantly a village of the landless and small landholders. The survey data shows that there are only six families who own more than 10 acres of land, out of which only one family owns more than 20 acres. The largest landholder family owns 39 acres of land, which is equal to approximately 94 bighas in local measurement. While analysing the landholding pattern, we have to keep in mind that 31 per cent of the HHs are under a joint or extended family set-up. Some of the large landholders live in joint families. Another complication in analysing land ownership was when members of a joint family were absent from the village, in some cases as permanent migrants, but their land remained under joint ownership. The family residing in the village cultivates the land and in most cases the absentee family does not take any share of the produce if it does not share the cost of cultivation. Thus, while the family jointly owns a relatively large amount of land, the actual share of each adult member of the family is small. This also implies that landholdings of HHs are not strictly comparable without adjusting for co-sharers in the land across HHs.

**Table 1: Landownership Pattern with respect to Owned Cultivated Land**

Size of Holding (in acres)	No. of HHs	Percentage	Area*	Percentage
Landless	399	42.00	0	0.00
< 1	336	35.37	145.51	18.95
1.00 - 2.50	140	14.74	222.03	28.92
2.50 - 5.00	49	5.16	166.90	21.74
5.00 - 10.00	20	2.11	125.30	16.32
10.00 - 20.00	5	0.53	69.42	9.04
> 20	1	0.11	38.58	5.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>767.74</b>	<b>100.00</b>

(\* The area of homestead land has not been included in the total land area)

Caste-wise landholding is expectedly on the lines of traditional socioeconomic hierarchy. An average landholding size of General castes (only Brahmin in Jitwarpur) is the highest, followed by OBC-II, OBC-I (ST and Muslims come in between) and SCs. Similarly, landlessness is lowest among the Brahmins followed by other caste groups in the same order as above (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Caste Category and Community-wise Landlessness and Average Holding Size**

Caste/Community Category	Landless Hhs (%)	Average Holding Size (in acre)	Landownership (%)	Households (%)
General	19.0	1.71	56.6	31.0
OBC – II	36.0	1.02	5.9	5.5
OBC – I	47.7	0.62	30.4	45.7
SC	75.0	0.32	1.6	4.6
ST	43.3	0.42	1.1	2.4
Muslims	17.6	0.37	4.4	10.8
Total	42.0	0.93	100.0	100.0

Table 3 shows that only 19 per cent of the Brahmin HHs are landless. Out of six landholders owning more than 10 acres of land, five belong to the Brahmin caste and one to OBC-I. Among the major castes, after Brahmins, Nonias (28 per cent) and Yadavs (31 per cent) have a lower proportion of landless HHs. On the contrary, landlessness is very high among Musahars (78 per cent), Godhis (71 per cent), Chamars (57 per cent) and Kewats (54 per cent). Overall, 75 per cent of SC HHs are landless.



**Table 3: Average Holding Size of HHs (including homestead land)**

Castes/ Community	Landowner- Ship (in acres)	Percentage	Total No. of HHs	Percentage	Average Holding
Brahmin	501.52	56.6	294	30.95	1.71
Ansari	3.07	0.3	2	0.21	1.54
Yadav	42.96	4.8	29	3.05	1.48
Kewat	95.9	10.8	119	12.53	0.81
Nonia	147.3	16.6	186	19.58	0.79
Sudhi	1.05	0.1	2	0.21	0.53
Santhal	9.72	1.1	23	2.42	0.42
Baniya	5.53	0.6	14	1.47	0.40
Dhuniya/Momin	35.95	4.1	101	10.63	0.36
Barhai	2.46	0.3	7	0.74	0.35
Musahar	12.25	1.4	37	3.89	0.33
Chamar	1.96	0.2	7	0.74	0.28
Godhi	26.01	2.9	126	13.26	0.21
Nai	0.2	0.0	1	0.11	0.20
Halwai	0.12	0.0	2	0.21	0.06
<b>Total Land</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.81</b>

Landlessness is very high among the Muslims too, among whom 71 per cent of the HHs are landless. In comparison, 38 per cent of the Hindu HHs are landless. Low landownership is a pattern across size-class in the case of Muslims: more than 91 per cent of the HHs are either landless or own less than 1 acre of land.

According to Table 3, there are actually three castes—Brahmins, Nonias and Kewats—accounting for 63 per cent of the HHs who own 84 per cent of the total land. Brahmins alone own 57 per cent of the total land of the village although their share in the total HHs is 31 per cent. In fact, their actual ownership of land could be more if their concealed land and land controlled by them are also investigated and taken into consideration.

### Local Labour Market

Agriculture is the main employment provider in the village as non-agricultural labour market is limited. Altogether out of 580 HHs engaged in cultivation, an overwhelming



522 HHs (90 per cent) uses a combination of family labour and hired labour. Only 35 HHs (6 per cent) refrain from engaging in labour process. 23 HHs (4 per cent) use only family labour. As far as hiring out of labour is concerned, members of 420 HHs work as daily casual workers on fixed wages, while members of 383 HHs work in contract-based wage work. Members of 27 HHs work as attached labour. Of total 72,550 person-days generated in agriculture in a year, the contribution of casual work on fixed wages is 37.7 per cent, (non-wage) family labour 34.4 per cent, contract-based wage work 20.3 per cent and attached labour 7.6 per cent. Average employment generated in agriculture in the village is 134 days per labouring HH that engage in agriculture. Though the average casual wage employment in agriculture generated per labouring HH is 66 days in a year, inter-group variation is significant – for example, 36 days for Brahmin HHs and 149 days for Musahar HHs. Use of technology has reduced employment in various activities, except in harvesting which constitutes 84 per cent of all contract employment and also a significant proportion of overall employment generated in agriculture.

Non-agricultural employment in the village involves petty business, livestock rearing, fishing, processing of agricultural products, artisanship, services, etc. in the village and its vicinity. Non-agricultural employment is mainly in the form of self-employment. It generates a meagre 24 days of employment in a year for those HHs that engage in any form of non-agricultural work. However, the variation across caste and class groups is very high. Other than domestic work carried out by women, which largely goes unpaid, women's participation in non-agricultural labour market is very low. Extra-economic coercion, particularly in the form of *begaar* (free labour) is still prevalent though this practice has considerably reduced in comparison to a few decades back.

### Section III: Characteristics of Migration from the Village

#### Magnitude and Demographic Characteristics of Migration

Overall, the majority of the villagers are permanent residents of Jitwaripur as 82.6 per cent of them stay in the village (see Table 4). Commuters—mainly salaried persons and students—are less than 1 per cent. Roughly 17 per cent population are either temporary or long-term migrants. These migrants include labourers, students, and salaried job holders and their family members. Out of the total population of 5,604, those who migrated at least once during the last year numbered 942. However, simple statistics does not reveal either the true magnitude of migration, or the complexity and diversity of residential status in the village. This requires disaggregation of data along gender, age, marital status, educational status, caste, landholding, occupation and duration of stay outside the village.

**Table 4: Residential Status of the Population, Sex-wise**

Residential Status	Male (Column %)	Female (Column %)	Total (Column %)
Resident (Row %)	2083 (70.8) (44.3)	2614 (98.2) (55.7)	4630 (83.8) (100.0)
Commuter (Row %)	56 (1.9) (84.8)	10 (0.4) (15.2)	32 (1.2) (100.0)
Temporary Migrant (Row %)	647 (22.0) (98.5)	10 (0.4) (1.5)	695 (11.7) (100.0)
Long Term Migrant (Row %)	156 (5.3) (84.8)	28 (1.1) (15.2)	247 (3.3) (100.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2942 (100.0)</b> <b>(52.5)</b>	<b>2662 (100.0)</b> <b>(47.5)</b>	<b>5604 (100.0)</b> <b>(100.0)</b>

Clearly, short-term migration—close to three-fourth of all migration—is much higher than long-term migration. In terms of numbers, 695 persons are short-term migrants and 247 are long-term migrants out of the total population of 5,604. Of the total 942 migrants, 841 (89.2 per cent) are part of the labour force while the rest 101 are either students or non-working dependents. Short-term migrants are mostly workers, non-workers constituting only 6.2 per cent of them. However, long-term migrants include 23 per cent non-workers: students and dependents.

The magnitude of migration can be understood by considering the following four facts. First, out of the total 950 HHs, 636 HHs (67 per cent) reported at least one HH member as migrant during the last one year. Second, if gender-disaggregated data for male migrants is used, male migrant workers account for 52 per cent of the total male labour force (see Table 5) in the village. Third, in terms of caste, migrant workers constitute 40 per cent of the labour force in case of SC workers and 30 per cent of the relatively poorer OBC-I (see Table 6). And fourth, in terms of landholding size-class, 62 per cent male migrant workers belong to landless HHs and another 52 per cent to those HHs owning less than 1 acre of agricultural land (see Table 7). Thus, the importance of migration for the labour force as well as for the local labour market cannot be overemphasised.

As Table 5 shows, migration from the village is basically a male phenomenon. Female migrant workers are just 2.6 per cent of total women workers. Out of 1,467 women workers, domestic work is principal occupation of 1,208 women (82 per cent). More than half of total women migrant workers and all long-term women migrant workers belonged to the Brahmin caste and are mainly part of their family migration.

**Table 5: Sex-wise Distribution of Migrant and Total Workers**

Male/Female	No.	%
<i>Male</i>		
Migrant Male Workers	803	51.7
Total Male Workers	1,554	100
<i>Female</i>		
Migrant Female Workers	38	2.6
Total Female Workers	1,467	100
<i>All Workers</i>		
Male Migrant Workers	803	95.5
Female Migrant Workers	38	4.5
Total Migrant Workers	841	100

Table 6 shows the differential pattern of age distribution among migrants and residents workers. Migrant workers mostly start migrating at the young age of 17 or 18 years, and the majority of them work up to the age of 50 years. Of all migrant workers, those in the age group of 15–39 years constitute 78.3 per cent whereas there are only 50.4 per cent resident workers in this age group. In the age group above 50 years, just 6.5 per cent of migrant workers are engaged in the labour force, while among resident workers, 27.5 per cent belong to this age group. This shows that migrating workers are relatively young. Work and living conditions at destination and the to-and-fro journey to the destination demand high body capital. With age or disease-related degradation of body, the worker returns to the native place. Another important feature is the almost total absence of a very young population among migrants whereas children below the age of 18 and as young as 9–10 years were found working among the residents.

**Table 6: Age Distribution of Migrant Workers**

Age Group (in Yrs.)	Resident Workers (incl. Commuters)		Migrants (Temp.+ Long-term)		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
5 - 14	19	0.9	1	0.1	20	0.7
15 - 19	114	5.2	93	11.1	207	6.9
20 - 39	985	45.1	565	67.1	1550	51.3
40 - 49	382	17.5	126	15.0	508	16.8
50 & above	600	27.5	55	6.5	655	21.7
<b>All Age Groups</b>	<b>2180</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3021</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of relationship between education and migration, residents have better educational attainments than migrants (see Table 7). Educational attainments are highest among the commuters followed by long-term migrants. Within migrants, long-term migrants have better educational profile than short-term migrants. This explains why more long-term migrant workers are in regular jobs, even if in informal sector. Many of them, particularly those belonging to the upper castes (Brahmin) work in a supervisory capacity.

**Table 7: Educational Status of Working Population by Sex and Residential Status**

Educational Status	Resident & Commuters			Temporary & Long-term Migrants			Total
	Male	Female	Total(%)	Male	Female	Total (%)	
Illiterate	267 (35.6)	1,042 (72.9)	60	326 (40.6)	18 (47.4)	40.9	1,653 (54.7)
Below Primary	136 (18.1)	179 (12.5)	14.4	181 (22.5)	5 (13.2)	22.1	501 (16.6)
Primary	47 (6.3)	56 (3.9)	4.7	85 (10.6)	2 (5.3)	10.3	190 (6.3)
Middle	82 (10.9)	54 (3.8)	6.2	92 (11.5)	1 (2.6)	11.1	229 (7.6)
Secondary	76 (10.1)	42 (2.9)	5.4	43 (5.4)	3 (7.9)	5.5	164 (5.4)
Higher Secondary	58 (7.7)	40 (2.8)	4.5	42 (5.2)	3 (7.9)	5.4	143 (4.7)
Graduate	57 (7.6)	11 (0.8)	3.1	18 (2.2)	6 (15.8)	2.9	92 (3.0)
Post Graduate	28 (3.7)	2 (0.1)	1.4	10 (1.2)	0 (0.0)	1.2	40 (1.3)
Others	0 (0.0)	3 (0.2)	0.1	6 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	0.7	9 (0.3)
Total	751 (100.0)	1,429 100	100	803 100	38 100	100	3021 100

Table 8 shows that those belonging to the General category (Brahmins) migrate less than their share in the working population. The same is the case with OBC-II (the upper OBC group) and also the STs. Those who migrate more than their proportion in the working population belong to OBC-I (the lower OBC group) and the SCs. Migrant workers from OBC-I and SCs together constitute more than 70 per cent of the total migrant workers in the village. Similarly, among Muslims, the percentage of migrant workers out of the total Muslim workers is 32, which is quite high. The highest percentage of migrant workers of the total workers belongs to the SCs.

In terms of individual castes, Musahars have the highest proportion of migrant workers to total workers in the same caste group. This is followed by Chamars, Baniyas, Nonias, Nais and Muslims. The lowest migration is from the Barhais (carpenter), an artisanal caste which seems to get full opportunities for local employment. They are followed by Brahmins which is a landowning caste, and Yadavs who have landholdings as well as dairy businesses. However, a different pattern emerges if migrant workers are divided into temporary and long-term migrants. Brahmins—whose educational attainments are much higher, who have a better social network and enjoy a higher position social position—account for a higher proportion of salaried jobs and are also into trade and business; they account for a much higher proportion (44 per cent) of long-term migrants.

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Around 17 per cent of the migrants among upper OBCs and Muslims are long-term migrants. For the rest of the caste groups, long-term migrants constitute less than 10 per cent.

**Table 8: Caste/Community Category-wise Distribution of Migrant Workers**

Caste / Community Category	Total Workers (No.)	Distribution of Total Workers (%)	Total Migrant Workers (No.)	Distribution of Total Migrant Workers (%)	% of Migrant Workers to Total Workers
General	952	35.5	204	27.9	21.4
OBC II	171	6.4	45	6.1	26.3
OBC I	1331	49.6	404	55.2	30.4
SC	159	5.9	64	8.7	40.3
ST	68	2.5	15	2.0	22.1
All Castes	2681	100.0	732	100.0	27.3
Muslims	340	-	109	13.9	32.1

**Table 9: Caste/Community-wise Migrant Workers**

Caste / Community	Total Workers	Migrant Workers	% of Migrant Workers to Total Workers
Brahmin	952	204	21.4
Nonia	576	203	35.2
Godhi	384	98	25.5
Kewat	364	101	27.7
Baniya	52	19	36.5
Sudhi	11	3	27.3
Chamar	29	11	37.9
Nai	3	1	33.3
Barhai	19	3	15.8
Yadav	89	20	22.5
Santhal	68	15	22.1
Musahar	130	53	40.8
Halwai	4	1	25.0
Muslims	340	109	32.1

**Table 10: Temporary and Long-term Migrant Workers, Caste/Community-wise**

Caste / Community Category	Temporary Migrant Workers		Long Term Migrant Workers		Total	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
General	114	55.9	90	44.1	204	100.0
OBC-I	334	82.7	70	17.3	404	100.0
OBC-II	41	91.1	4	8.9	45	100.0
SC	58	90.6	6	9.4	64	100.0
ST	14	93.3	1	6.7	15	100.0
Muslim	91	83.5	18	16.5	109	100.0

**Migrants by Landholding Size-class**

The highest proportion of migrant workers belongs to the landless group. They form half of the migrant workers. Together with those holding less than one acre of land, they constitute 83 per cent of total migrant workers. Table 11 shows that among the landless and lower landholding size-classes, migrant workers are overwhelmingly temporary migrants. As one moves to higher landholding size-classes, the proportion of temporary migrant workers decreases and that of long-term migrants increases. The proportion of residents goes up with the rise in the size-classes of landholding whereas in the case of migrant male workers a reverse relationship applies.

**Table 11: Male Workers According to Residential Status and Landholding Size**

Land-holding Size (in acres)	Male Workers									
	Resident		Commuter		Temporary Migrant		Long Term Migrant		Total	
	No.	Row %	No.	Row %	No.	Row %	No.	Row %	No.	Column %
Landless	247	37.1	4	0.6	349	52.5	65	9.8	665	42.8
< 1	230	46.0	10	2.0	200	40.0	60	12.0	500	32.2
1.0 - 2.5	137	59.8	4	1.7	68	29.7	20	8.7	229	14.7
2.5 - 5.0	70	71.4	4	4.1	16	16.3	8	8.2	98	6.3
5.0 - 10.0	33	73.3	1	2.2	5	11.1	6	13.3	45	2.9
10.0 - 20.0	8	50.0	2	12.5	0	0.0	6	37.5	16	1.0
> 20	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1
Total	726	46.7	25	1.6	638	41.1	165	10.6	1554	100.0

**Migrant Workers by Main Occupation**

Table 12 shows the differential pattern of occupation among migrants and residents and also with among short-term and long-term migrants. Of 841 migrant workers, the highest percentage of workers is engaged in non-agricultural work (48.5 per cent), followed by agricultural work (31.5 per cent). These two categories account for 80 per cent of all migrant workers. These are by and large manual workers. Fewer long-term migrants are involved in agricultural work; they are mostly engaged in non-agricultural work and salaried jobs. 50 per cent of short-term migrants are engaged in non-agricultural work and 38 per cent in agriculture. In contrast to long-term migrants whose 32 per cent have salaried job, only four per cent of short-term migrants hold a salaried job. The salaried jobs are often in informal sector.

**Table 12: Occupational Status of Migrants and All Workers**

Main Occupation	Temporary Migrant		Long term Migrant		Total Migrant Workers		Resident & Commuter Workers		Total Workers
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Self-employed	34	5.2	4	2.1	38	4.5	216	9.9	254
Domestic Work	9	1.4	21	11.1	30	3.6	1,179	54.1	1,209
Agricultural Work	250	38.3	15	7.9	265	31.5	623	28.6	888
Non-agricultural Work	326	50	82	43.4	408	48.5	30	1.4	438
Salaried	29	4.4	61	32.3	90	10.7	85	3.9	175
Others	4	0.6	6	3.2	10	1.2	47	2.2	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,180</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,021</b>

Since migration is a male phenomenon, as stated earlier, a better picture regarding the occupational profile of the labour force can be obtained by analysing only the data for male workers. Table 13 clearly shows that for male residents and commuters, agriculture and allied activities, both as casual labour and self-employed, are the main occupations engaging almost 73 per cent of the labour force. Non-agricultural wage work engages just 3.7 per cent of male labour. On the other hand, agriculture and allied activities engage just 8.5 per cent of long-term male migrant workers and 42 per cent of temporary male migrant workers. For long-term male migrant workers, non-agricultural work and salaried work are the main occupations, and for temporary male migrant workers, non-agricultural work and agricultural work are main occupations.



**Table 13: Occupations According to Residential Status of Male Workers**

Occupations	Temporary Migrants		Long-term Migrants		Residents & Commuters		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Self-employed in Agriculture & Allied Activities	64	10	2	1.2	320	42.6	386	24.8
Agricultural Labour	205	32.1	12	7.3	226	30.1	443	28.5
Self-employed in Non-agricultural Activities	10	1.6	1	0.6	55	7.3	66	4.2
Non-agricultural Labour	324	50.8	82	49.7	28	3.7	434	27.9
Business, Trade & Contract	2	0.3	3	1.8	20	2.7	25	1.6
Salaried	29	4.5	59	35.8	64	8.5	152	9.8
Others	4	0.6	6	3.6	38	5.1	48	3.1
All Occupations	638	100	165	100	751	100	1,554	100

In terms of caste and community, there is a definite occupational pattern that follows the traditional caste and class hierarchy (see Table 14). There are fewer agricultural workers from among the General (Brahmin) caste. They are into non-agricultural work, with a considerable number of them in salaried jobs. Some of them do business and/or take up construction-related contracts in government projects. Within the upper OBC (OBC-II), there are more people in allied activities of agriculture, such as livestock rearing and dairy, and also small trade and business. Lower OBCs are mainly in manual labour but half of them work in the non-agricultural sector. SCs and STs are overwhelmingly agricultural workers and Muslims non-agricultural workers.

**Table 14: Caste/Community Category-wise Main Occupations of Migrant Workers**

Caste / Community Category	Occupation of Migrant Workers				
	Agricultural Worker	Non-Agricultural Worker	Salaried	Others	Total
General	12 (5.9)	90 (44.1)	59 (28.9)	43 (21.1)	204 (100.0)
OBC II	14 (31.1)	16 (35.6)	6 (13.3)	9 (20.0)	45 (100.0)
OBC I	125 (30.9)	206 (51.0)	17 (4.2)	56 (13.9)	404 (100.0)
SC	48 (75.0)	10 (15.6)	0 (0.0)	6 (9.4)	64 (100.0)
ST	10 (66.7)	4 (26.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.7)	15 (100.0)
Muslims	11 (10.1)	82 (75.2)	8 (7.3)	8 (7.3)	109 (100.0)

## Agrarian Transition and Migration in a Village of Bihar

There are some variations within the OBC-II and OBC-I caste groups. Table 15 shows, within OBC-I, for the majority of Nonias, non-agricultural work is their main occupation; for Kewats it is agricultural work. The same is the case within SCs where 89 per cent of Musahars work as agricultural workers while 82 per cent of Chamars work as non-agricultural workers. Within OBC-II, Yadavs mostly work in self-cultivation and dairy whereas Baniyas do not engage in agricultural work at all; their main occupation is non-agricultural work.

**Table 15: Caste/Community-wise Main Occupations of Migrant Workers**

Caste/ Community	Agricultural Workers	Non-agricultural Workers	Salaried	Others	Total
Brahmin	12 (5.9)	90 (44.1)	59 (28.9)	43 (21.1)	204 (100.0)
Nonia	46 (22.7)	132 (65.0)	6 (3.0)	19 (9.4)	203 (100.0)
Godhi	17 (17.3)	52 (53.1)	7 (7.1)	22 (22.4)	98 (100.0)
Kewat	62 (61.4)	21 (20.8)	4 (4.0)	14 (13.9)	101 (100.0)
Baniya	0 (0.0)	13 (68.4)	4 (21.1)	2 (10.5)	19 (100.0)
Sudhi	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (66.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (100.0)
Chamar	1 (9.1)	9 (81.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (9.1)	11 (100.0)
Nai	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)
Barhai	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (100.0)
Yadav	12 (60.0)	1 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (35.0)	20 (100.0)
Santhal	10 (66.7)	4 (26.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.7)	15 (100.0)
Musahar	47 (88.7)	1 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	5 (9.4)	53 (100.0)
Halwai	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)
Muslims	11 (10.1)	82 (75.2)	8 (7.3)	8 (7.3)	109 (100.0)

Landholding-wise, migrants who hold more than 2.5 acres of land do not work as agricultural workers at destination. The occupational pattern of migrant workers, who are landless or who own up to 2.5 acres of land, is the same as the general distribution of occupational activities among the total migrant workers. However, those migrants who own five acres of land or more, do not engage in manual labour at destination.

**Table 16: Occupation of Migrant Workers According to their Landholding Size**

Land Holding Size (in acres)	Agricultural		Non-agricultural		Salaried		Domestic Work		Others		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Landless	138	32.5	221	52.1	29	6.8	6	1.4	30	7.1	424	100
< 1	60	22	140	51.3	26	9.5	10	3.7	37	13.6	273	100
1–2.5	22	23.7	37	39.8	15	16.1	5	5.4	14	15.1	93	100
2.5–5	0	0	10	37	8	29.6	3	11.1	6	22.2	27	100
5–10	0	0	0	0	5	33.3	4	26.7	6	40	15	100
10–20	0	0	0	0	7	77.8	2	22.2	0	0	9	100
> 20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All Size-classes	220	26.2	408	48.5	90	10.7	30	3.6	93	11.1	841	100

### Temporary Migrants' Destinations

The survey enumerated 650 temporary migrants from the village. Migration from the village to urban centres accounts for more than 60 per cent of all temporary migration during the last one year while migration to rural areas is little more than one-third of all such migration. A handful of migrants reported working in both areas (see Table 17).

**Table 17: Migrants' Destination According to Rural and Urban**

Rural/Urban	No.	%
Rural	244	37.5
Urban	402	61.8
Rural & Urban Both	4	0.6
Total	650	100.0

Table 18 shows that Punjab was the destination for little more than one-third of all migrant workers, followed by Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. A few workers also migrate to West Bengal, Uttrakhand, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Nepal and other places within Bihar. Two-thirds of those migrating to Punjab work in agricultural fields. In fact, Punjab was the only destination where the majority of workers migrated to work in agriculture. In case of Haryana, Himachal, UP and Delhi, migrants mostly engage in non-agricultural labour. Two migrating workers to Delhi work in vegetable cultivation. Petty business is fairly distributed across all these states. Some of the workers who migrated to UP actually work in the National Capital Region (NCR), adjoining Delhi city. Himachal was a surprise destination for us as the state is hardly known in Bihar as a receiving state and that too for non-agricultural work.

**Table 18: Migration Destinations According to Occupation**

State	Labourers in Agriculture	Labourers in Non-agriculture	Petty Business	Others	Total
Punjab	154	50	14	10	228
Haryana	37	79	13	2	131
Himachal	27	81	13	0	121
UP	0	66	17	5	88
Delhi	2	42	12	3	59
Others	3	11	4	5	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>650</b>
<b>Row %</b>					
Punjab	67.5	21.9	6.1	4.4	100
Haryana	28.2	60.3	9.9	1.5	100
Himachal	22.3	66.9	10.7	0	100
UP	0	75	19.3	5.7	100
Delhi	3.4	71.2	20.3	5.1	100
Others	13	47.8	17.4	21.7	100
<b>Column %</b>					
Punjab	69.1	15.2	19.2	40	35.1
Haryana	16.6	24	17.8	8	20.2
Himachal	12.1	24.6	17.8	0	18.6
UP	0	20.1	23.3	20	13.5
Delhi	0.9	12.8	16.4	12	9.1
Others	1.3	3.3	5.5	20	3.5
<b>All</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Caste-wise, there seems to be a pattern in the selection of destinations (see Table 19). For Musahars and Godhis, Punjab and Haryana are the main destinations while Punjab is the main destination for Yadavs and Santhals. For Nonias and Kewats, Himachal is a prominent destination along with Punjab and Haryana. Delhi is the top destination for Baniyas and Dhuniyas who engage only in non-agricultural work. For Brahmins, UP is also a destination along with Punjab and Haryana.

**Table 19: Main Destination of Migrants**

Caste	Main Destinations
Brahmin	Punjab, Haryana and UP
Nonia	Himachal, Haryana and Punjab
Godhi	Haryana and Punjab
Kewat	Punjab and Himachal
Dhuniya	UP and Delhi
Baniya	Delhi
Santhals	Punjab
Yadav	Punjab
Musahar	Punjab and Haryana

Table 20 gives a further break-up of occupations at destination for migrants belonging to different castes. Only in the case of Musahar and Kewat migrants is agricultural labour the occupation of more than 90 per cent workers. For migrants belonging to other castes, non-agricultural work is the predominant occupation. Baniyas do not engage in agricultural labour at all. Brahmin, Nonia, Godhi and Dhuniya migrant workers also do petty business at the destination.

**Table 20: No. of Temporary Migrants According to Caste and Occupation**

Caste/Community	Occupation	No.	%
Brahmin	Labourer in Agriculture	16	14.8
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	65	60.2
	Petty Business	18	16.7
	Others	9	8.3
	Total	108	100
Nonia	Labourer in Agriculture	26	16.7
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	113	72.4
	Petty Business	16	10.3
	Others	1	0.6
	Total	156	100
Godhi	Labourer in Agriculture	21	25
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	45	53.6
	Petty Business	9	10.7
	Others	9	10.7
	Total	84	100
Kewat	Labourer in Agriculture	85	91.4
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	6	6.5
	Others	2	2.2
	Total	93	100
Dhuniya	Labourer in Agriculture	1	1.1
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	62	67.4
	Petty Business	28	30.4
	Others	1	1.1
	Total	92	100
Baniya	Labourer in Non-agriculture	14	87.5
	Others	2	12.5
	Total	16	100
Yadav	Labourer in Agriculture	13	61.9
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	7	33.3
	Petty Business	1	4.8
	Total	21	100
Musahar	Labourer in agriculture	50	96.2
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	1	1.9
	Petty Business	1	1.9
	Total	52	100
Other Castes	Labourer in Agriculture	12	44.4
	Labourer in Non-agriculture	15	55.6
	Total	27	100

**Temporary Migration and Remittances**

The data shows that migration makes a definite contribution to those HHs which have less land endowments and are in labour work. Except for HHs whose main occupation is self-cultivation by hired labour, all other HHs involved in agriculture and allied activities as their main occupation reported more income than non-migrant HHs in the same categories. Only those non-migrant HHs, in which members are either doing petty business or are in local salaried jobs or are contractors, reported more income than those of migrant HHs. The reason seems to be additional income coming to those (non-migrant) HHs from multiple sources such as agriculture and allied activities.

We found several first-time migrants. However, the mean year of migration was nine. One aged migrant was reported to have been migrating for the last forty years. On an average they travel two times a year although some migrants travel more frequently, up to four times. Some spend as short a time as one month at the destination while some stay up to nine months. The average period of stay at destination is six months. The average remittance sent by individual migrants is Rs 14,000 per annum, with the maximum being Rs 45,000 per annum (see Table 21).

**Table 21: Duration of Migration and Remittances**

Parameters	Mean	Mode	Median	Minimum	Maximum
No. of Years since Migrated First	9	10	7	1	40
No. of Visits to the Destination	2	1	2	1	4
Duration of Migration in One year (in months)	5.7	6	6	1	9
Earning at Destination in a Year	23769	30000	25000	-	60000
Remittances Received	14252	10000	14000	-	45000

Remittances depend on a number of factors: duration of stay, occupation at destination, skill of the migrating person, and wages at destination. Remittances do not differ much across landholding size-classes. Those migrating within the state bring meagre amounts as remittances. This is the case with the Santhals. Urban migrants, those involved in petty business and those holding larger landholdings (5–10 acres) contribute more in terms of remittances. Musahars, Chamars, Nais, Halwais and Santhals are amongst the lowest remittance groups. Those involved in petty business or non-agricultural work tend to invest part of their income rather than bring it all back home. Agricultural workers try to maximise their returns by exerting their own body to the hilt by taking on sowing or harvesting on a contract basis. Table 22 is based on data collected for 632 temporary migrants, belonging to 495 HHs, who had brought/sent remittances.

Table 22: Average Remittances According to Caste/Community and Occupations

Parameters	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
<b>A. Rural/Urban</b>			
Rural	13,308	500	40,000
Urban	15,282	400	45,000
Rural & Urban Both	14,250	6,000	21,000
<b>B. Occupation at Destination</b>			
Labourer in Agriculture	13,138	1,000	32,000
Labourer in Non-agriculture	14,611	400	45,000
Petty Business	19,232	3,000	32,000
Others	11,262	2,000	26,000
<b>C. Landholding Size-class (in acres)</b>			
Landless	15,011	400	45,000
< 1	14,043	500	36,000
1–2.5	13,730	500	40,000
2.5–5	12,688	2,000	22,000
5–10	21,500	18,000	25,000
<b>D. Caste Group/Community</b>			
SC	11,836	1,700	26,000
ST	5,314	500	18,000
OBC-I	14,638	500	45,000
OBC-II	15,846	2,000	33,000
Muslim	16,391	400	40,000
General	14,792	2,000	32,000
<b>E. Caste/Community</b>			
Brahmin	14,792	2,000	32,000
Nonia	15,678	500	45,000
Godhi	13,399	2,000	33,000
Kewat	14,237	1,000	30,000
Dhuniya	16,391	400	40,000
Baniya	11,643	2,000	25,000
Sudhi	15,000	15,000	15,000
Chamar	10,838	1,700	26,000
Nai	4,000	4,000	4,000
Barhai	17,667	9,000	22,000
Yadav	18,429	6,000	33,000
Santhal	5,314	500	18,000
Musahar	11,992	4,000	24,500
Halwai	6,500	6,500	6,500
(N= 632)			



**Duration of Temporary Migration and Availability of Employment**

Table 23 shows that on an average a migrant stays outside the village for 5.7 months (171–173 days) in a year. However, there are significant differences in terms of duration of migration across occupations, castes and communities. Those engaged in agricultural labour work at destination migrate for the lowest period (4.9 months) in a year whereas those in petty business migrate for the highest duration (6.6 months) in a year, followed by non-agricultural workers who migrate for approximately 6 months in a year. SCs work for the lowest duration of 4.9 months whereas Muslims stay at destination for 6.7 months, and OBC II and General castes (Brahmin) stay for 6.1 months and 6 months in a year. STs (Santhals) out-migrate for the lowest average duration of 2.4 months. The total employment made available to 650 temporary migrants for whom we have detailed data is equivalent to 3,676 months. If we assume that a worker gets on an average 20 days of work in a month (including the travel time), then an average temporary migrant would be getting 113 days employment a year through migration.

**Table 23: Availability of Employment**

	Labourers in Agriculture		Labourers in Non-agriculture		Petty Business		Others		All Occupations	
	Duration in months		Duration in months		Duration in months		Duration in months		Duration in months	
	Mean	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Sum
SC	4.9	253	5.6	39	3	3	-	-	4.9	295
ST	2	12	2.9	20	-	-	1	1	2.4	33
OBC-I	4.9	662	5.8	960	6.1	153	5.3	58	5.5	1833
OBC-II	6.1	92	6	137	6	6	7.5	15	6.1	250
Muslim	6	6	6.6	408	6.9	194	8	8	6.7	616
General	4.6	73	6.1	396	7	126	6	54	6	649
All Caste/ Community	4.9	1098	6	1960	6.6	479	5.7	136	5.7	3676

(HHs = 503; Total Migrants = 650)

As regards long-term migrants, an average migrant would be getting employment for 111 days to 122 days in a year. Such migrants include those who are salaried and covered under payment for all days in the year (although not all salaried persons are regular/permanent, as many of them are employed in the informal economy), and also those who are in petty businesses which operate on a day-to-day basis. But Pushpendra and Jha (2015, 319) show that a long-term migrant worker gets a job for eighteen to twenty days a month. This abysmal level of employment and consequently low income explain why there are few females migrating even on a long-term basis. Urban employment and livelihoods do not help meet the total cost of social reproduction of labour. Hence, while males migrate for longer durations, females take care of domestic chores in the

village and those belonging to labouring classes also participate in agriculture either as wage workers or engage in their own agricultural fields. A few of them also engage in non-farm activities. Close to two-thirds of long-term migrants send remittances to family members in the village which are used for subsistence and, in a few cases, for acquiring productive assets. Females migrating on a long-term basis are mostly family members of salaried persons.

### Migration and Credit

Migration has an impact on credit relations in the village. As data shows, migrants are gradually emerging as one of the sources of credit. In the majority of the cases, this is within the caste group. However, we found several cases where Brahmins had taken loans from Nonias. A few Nonia migrants who have done well as petty contractors at destination are emerging as creditors. Table 24 also shows that lessors or cultivator-cum-employers are not a major source of credit except for Chamar HHs who borrow mainly from their cultivator-employer.

**Table 24: Sources of Credit**

Caste/ Community	Source of Credit									
	Institution	Migrant Labour	Trader	Money lender	Lessor	Cultivator- cum- employer	Other Cultiva tor	Friend/ Relative	Others	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brahmin	44.5	7.3	4.7	6	0.9	1.3	17.3	13.4	5.4	100
Nonia	26.9	17.8	10.9	2.3	2	5.9	26.1	6.2	2	100
Godhi	7.7	3	6.3	28.9	3.6	20.1	23.5	2.4	4.6	100
Kewat	28.1	6.4	3.5	6.8	0.8	5	42.6	5.8	1.8	100
Dhunia	0.3	5.4	0.5	38.2	2.8	6.1	28.9	0.1	33.4	100
Baniya	37.4	14	9.3	23.4	0	0	0	15.9	0	100
Chamar	0	0	17.8	0	0	66.7	15.6	0	0	100
Yadav	0	1.8	1.8	2.8	0	1.8	90.2	0	1.8	100
Santhal	13.9	0	11.1	0	0	13.9	58.3	2.8	0	100
Musahar	1.1	0	2.2	59.3	18	16.9	0	1.4	1.1	100

### Section IV: Migration Vis-à-vis Agrarian Transition

In this section, I return to the basic research questions raised at the beginning of the paper dealing with the relation between agrarian transition and migration. The following trends are discernible from the data cited in the previous section.

1. Small-scale cultivation is the dominant feature of agriculture in the village. However, the interlocked land, labour and credit relations in agriculture are no

longer at work on a considerable scale. Extra-economic coercion of labour such as *begaar*, agricultural bondage and attached labour have significantly reduced, if not disappeared, because of migration and rising social consciousness and movements. The income from agricultural as well as non-agricultural sources is not sufficient for reproduction of labour for majority of HHs. Hence, adult males migrate out to work both in agriculture and non-agriculture in different states. Most of the jobs the migrants get are in informal sector and casual in nature.

2. The overall prevailing condition in the village is that of decline of big holdings, prevalence of small holdings and tenancy, and high out-migration. The pure proletariat class does not exist on a considerable scale locally as wages earned locally do not constitute the principal part of the means of subsistence for landless workers. However, if we add wages earned as migrant labourers, they can be said to be proletarianised. Because income derived from wage labour then constitutes a larger share in the household earning.
3. The category of households which are neither pure subsistence producers nor pure wage labourers is rising in number. The presence of this category blurs any direct and neat class division and class mobilisation, allowing caste mobilisation to prevail.
4. The rise in self-cultivation and leasing out of agricultural land seem to be occurring simultaneously. Tenancy seems to be becoming a strategy of ensuring supply of labour and creating a special incentive for the migrants to return to their native village. It is, in a way, disguised employment. This model cannot be equated with the classic 'feudal' model because the lessor does not depend completely on rent income. The lessor households are more likely to run on salaries, income from non-agricultural sources, or other sources. As wage labourer, the lessee though gives priority to the field of the lessor, he/she is no longer solely dependent on the leased land, hence is not tied in a coercive relationship with the lessor in any significant manner. The control of local landowners over the labourers has considerably weakened.
5. Local labour market is quite underformed and over-crowded because of high prevalence of landless HHs and small peasants who depend on labour for sustenance. Local employment generation in non-agricultural sector is negligible and low in agriculture. Despite increasing use of technology in agriculture, the phenomenon of small holding has proved to great obstacle in transforming agriculture on capitalist lines. Hence, local non-farm sector is yet to see any significant growth.

6. Field data clearly shows how migration is embedded in the socio-economic structure of the village in which caste, religion, gender, education, land ownership, occupation, labour employment, social and economic hierarchy are important factors. Dalits, OBCs and Muslims constitute the largest group of seasonal casual labour migrants. The upper castes dominate in regular and better paid jobs at destination. Circular migration, particularly rural to rural, does not seem to be preferred by female members of the labouring households. Younger people constitute the overwhelming majority of the migrant workers. Similarly, the outcome of migration is directly associated with the educational status of the migrant, which in turn has a relationship with the caste and landholding of the household. However, landholding has the most striking relationship with migration, both temporary as well as long-term.
7. Even if this migrant labour does not reinvest in agriculture back at home, migration has fostered the increased purchase of clothes, better food, healthcare and schooling, causing fundamental shifts in the agrarian economy. Rodgers and Rodgers' (2001) restudy of villages in Purnea district stresses the fundamental importance of temporary migration on the marketising and monetising of the rural economy, and the decline in the political exactions and social mechanisms of semi-feudalism. Rural areas are being fundamentally transformed through migrant labour.

### **Section V: Conclusion**

Migration is a necessary supplement to subsistence agriculture because the reproduction of the migrant labour force is not possible through the local wage market. The local wage market is under-formed and wage rates are low. The agricultural cycle in the village is adjusted with that of Punjab and Haryana so as to allow the migrant workers to work at the destination first and then in the village upon their return. Since the capital-intensive farming in Punjab is highly time sensitive, they give priority to work at destination. Therefore, the local landowner employers are forced to delay agricultural operations for want of adequate workers during peak seasons. In the village, transplanting of paddy and harvesting of all three crops, paddy, wheat and jute, also post-harvesting processes of jute are the times when the demand for labour peaks. The migrant workers also want to come back to their village to work in agriculture as the wages are seen precious for ensuring food security of the household. The wages earned at destination is mostly used to meet cash requirements of the household.

A combination of migration and tenancy does not allow wage relations to become the principal labour relations in the countryside. At the same time, at destinations, migration does not allow wage relations to convert into class struggles because: (a) the migrants

are temporary; (b) there is over-supply of labour; (c) labourers do not have unity as they come from different places and cannot forge unity in a short period of time; and (d) wages are decided through a bargaining process thereby resulting in differentiated wage structure. All these make migration a complex social form of labour amidst poverty, availability of cheap labour and stagnation in rural areas. The tortuously slow rate of agrarian transition continues despite the growth of advanced form of corporate capital in India. The inter-connectedness of land, labour and migration which is also embedded in the prevailing social structure requires new conceptual tools to understand and explain migration as a phenomenon.

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