

Role of Caste in Migration: Some Observations from Beed District, Maharashtra

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Abstract

In case of migration studies in India, the role of caste has been largely ignored. But it plays a role in facilitating, barring migration and in creation or perpetuation of migration patterns. Social networks and capital which enable and encourage migration are caste based networks. Hence, certain migration streams may be easily accessible to migrants while others will be closed. Migration patterns differ across caste groups. For the erstwhile lower castes, migration offers an opportunity to escape oppressive caste practices, while for the dominant castes it is a way of consolidating power in the spaces that they inhabit. Economic and 'social' remittances of migrants play a role in shaping caste practices and also in weakening or strengthening the power of certain caste groups. This paper looks at the differing migration outcomes and examines the role that caste plays in determining them. It explores the relationship of caste and migration based on primary data collected in Beed district of Maharashtra.

Key words: Caste, migration, Maharashtra

I. Introduction: Caste in migration studies in India

Caste as an institution remains strong in both urban and rural areas in contemporary India, affecting almost all aspects of life. Until recently caste was understood as a relic of the past. It was assumed that with modernization, caste will become redundant and would have no place in the society. Caste was associated with rural, traditional societies and not with urban, modern societies. Migration, on the other hand, was associated with modernization and urbanization. Earlier studies on migration see it as an inevitable result of these processes. It is seen as 'central to the production of modern citizens' (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003, p. 364). Moreover, the emphasis of most research is on rural-urban migration in which the migrant is seen to leave the rural to become a part of the urban setting. However, rural to rural migration is much more than that to urban areas (de Haan, 2007), and even in case of rural-urban migration, migrants do not 'leave' the rural area and migration is circular (Breman, 2010; Deshingkar, 2006).

The artificial separation of spaces of operation gives the impression that caste and migration have nothing to do with each other. Hence, there are extensive studies on caste and migration in India. Studies on caste make passing references to migration and vice versa. Studies in migration either look at the migration of one particular caste, or those which look at migration across castes do not provide critical insights or comparability. They see caste as a fixed category, only as a part of identity or social profile of the respondents. The interplay of caste and migration is not studied. Caste is not seen as a dynamic in migration.

This paper tries to understand the interplay of caste and migration as two important processes, affecting each other, sometimes colluding and strengthening, while at other times, weakening each other. It is based on data collected across castes in a village in Beed district in the distress-prone region of Marathwada in Maharashtra. It tries to look at migration trajectories in

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different caste groups. By looking at caste groups located in the same physical space, it seeks to provide a picture of migration and caste dynamics. It is based on 30 interviews done. It is found that family as an institution plays an important role in the decision to migrate, providing support at source as well as destination, but it is caste and land which emerge as the key factors in differences in migration patterns and impacts.

II. Caste in literature on voluntary internal migration in India

As noted earlier, there is not much research on caste and migration. Abraham and Subramanian (1974) look at patterns of social mobility and migration across all castes in five villages in South India. They note that people of all castes including those who are landless are willing to move out in case of better opportunities. Apart from this, and predicting an increase in migration across castes, the authors do not write anything else.

Gupta et al. (2005) look at the seasonal migration of Bhil tribal as labour in construction industry in cities. Vijay (2005) notes labour migration dynamics in the industrial town of Kothur in Andhra Pradesh. The study notes that of the total SC migrants, 81 per cent are in precarious employment. It shows that labour markets are segmented along caste and ethnic lines. In both these research, caste is only seen as a marker to identify the migrant. De Haan (2007) notes that migration is not an option available to all, is highly segmented and reinforces societal segmentations. Migration is segmented along class and area lines. But there is no mention of caste.

Fuller and Narasimhan (2008) have done an ethnographical study of urbanization and migration among Tamil brahmans. They note that Tamil brahmans are an urbanized community, that is, with higher levels of migration and move to urban areas as well as abroad. The authors note that brahmans moved out of the countryside as they were pushed by indebtedness, land sales and loss of local dominance while 'pulled' to cities by new opportunities in education, salaried employment, or in some cases business. This is a good study on the migration trajectory of Tamil brahmans and also shows how they have used their caste as capital to forge their way ahead. But it does not tell us much about the other castes and their migration in Tamil Nadu or overall caste and migration dynamics.

GIPE and Janarth (2010) study the caste groups of seasonal migrants in Maharashtra. Kesri and Bhagat (2012) note that in the case of seasonal migration, Scheduled Tribes (STs) were twice likely to migrate seasonally compared with Scheduled Castes (SCs) and other groups, while Muslims were more likely to migrate than Hindus. In this study, caste is taken as one of the variables in quantitative examination of migration. The only reference to caste in Majumder's study (2015) on forced migration to brick kilns is 'homogeneity of caste' as an economic determinant in brick kilns workers' seasonal migration (p 22). Studies mentioned here illustrate that works on caste and migration either see migration *vis-a-vis* one caste group or caste is seen only as a part of identity of the migrant.

III. Profile of the village

The village studied is located in Kaij tehsil of Beed District, Marathwada, Maharashtra. Marathwada was chosen because it has a huge developmental lag, high agrarian distress and large number of farmers' suicides. Beed district was chosen because it is known for seasonal migration of sugarcane cutters. The village is 12 kms from Kaij town and 28 kms from Ambejogai town. Kaij tehsil is mainly rural with limited urban opportunities. According to 2011 Census, the number of households in the village was 318 while the total population of the village was 1438. Medical facilities are absent and electricity supply is erratic. There is around 8 hours of power cut every day. Water supply for drinking and daily chores is not separate. Water comes from Majalgaon dam. There are a few bore wells in the village water from which is used for agriculture. Because of low rainfall in recent times, they are getting dry. Water is sufficient for the rainy season, but during the rest of the year, it is a problem. There is one primary school till seventh standard. From eight to

tenth standard, children go to another school in the nearby village. Thereafter children go to Kaij which has colleges till graduation and Ambejogai which has post-graduation as well. In the recent years, some families have started putting their children in a private English school in Hoal which is around 7 kms from the village.

Roads are the only mode of transport. People take the bus or auto rickshaws (six-seaters) to the village. If one wants to take a bus these days, one has to walk for 3 kms till the highway as no bus comes till the village. To avoid walking till the highway, one can hitch a shared ride in a six-seater which costs 10 rupees. Such rides are common. A six-seater ride from the village to Kaij or Ambejogai costs 20 rupees. These rides are affordable and easy to take because of their frequency. Between 1992 and 2010, the State Transport bus came till the village. However, this service stopped in 2010 as the number of six-seaters in the village went up. The daily travel of villagers is till the highway, Kaij or Ambejogai. With an increase in the number of six-seaters, the use of bus service declined and eventually it was terminated. Now the bus does not come till the village. Better private transport facilities and improved quality of roads have facilitated mobility of the villagers. Thirty years ago coming to Pune was a 24 hours' journey and it was not feasible. Now it takes eight hours by bus. Every household in the village now owns a television set with a cable connection and at least one mobile phone. Postal communication of migrants has been replaced by daily conversations over the mobile phone.

Sources of irrigation are borewells, sprinklers and small water catchments constructed under government scheme for horticulture. Crops grown in the village are cotton, pomegranates, soyabean, garlic, ginger, pulses and sugarcane. Smaller landholders don't have irrigation facilities, whereas medium or big landholders have some form of irrigation facility. There are mostly small farmers in the village with land less than five acres of land. Most farmers plant one crop every year. Many of those with less land seasonally migrate to work on sugarcane farms. Those labouring on the fields are not employed throughout the year, but only seasonally. In-migrants in the village do construction work or other heavier activities. Crops grown vary with landholding size and irrigation. Horticulture, cotton and sugarcane are grown by those who have assured water supply. Sugarcane fetches good prices in sugar producing areas in the state. It is a crop associated with affluent farmers. In addition to good price, sugarcane needs fewer efforts. To reduce risk, most farmers grow two-three different crops simultaneously. Farmers lament the lack of incentives in agriculture and inadequate compensation in case of loss. Risks are high, especially in Marathwada which is a backward region. Agricultural uncertainty is aggravated by lack of irrigation, and lack of other viable allied activities. Farmers suicides are frequent in Marathwada, but they haven't taken place in the village. Indebtedness is also not high. There is significant Rural Non-Farm Employment (RNFE). Households which had diversified livelihoods by engaging in RNFE were relatively better off than the households who hadn't. Rich farmers owned tractors, automobiles, etc., and engaged in agribusiness. No work is done under NREGA, although several villagers are on the list.

IV. Methodology

The methodology for this study is qualitative. Thirty respondents were chosen for interviews about their family histories of migration. They were chosen to have maximum diversity in their profile and migration experiences. They belonged to all castes found in the village. There were 16 women and 14 men who were interviewed. Interviews were conducted in Marathi and later translated into English. Names of respondents have been changed to protect identity. Genealogies are represented pictorially in the form of family trees. Interviews were followed by drawing family trees of the people which helped understand who the first migrant in the family was and in which generation, what work people did across generations and whether there were changes in labour and migration patterns, if any. Family trees helped understand micro histories of families. Educational levels of family members, age, land and other asset holding, nature of migration and circumstances under which migration was undertaken were noted. Observations done in the village were also recorded, along with a field diary.

III. Migration – A caste based strategy

Caste composition

The village studied is multi-caste, the caste groups are Dalits, Hatkar-Dhangars, Banjaras, Wadars, Brahmins, Vanjaris, Marathas and a few Muslim households. There is no potter, blacksmith and gardener castes. Marathas have most of the land, capital, agriculture and allied activities as well as power. They control the village panchayat and play an important role in local elections. The patterns of migration found in the village are seasonal migration (sugarcane cutters), in migration, semi-permanent and permanent migration, return migration and commuting. One finds variations in these patterns according to castes. Even in the case of seasonal migration (sugarcane cutters) in which all castes except Brahmins participate, number of years of migration, reasons and outcomes differ among castes.

Migration as a strategy is also reflected in land holdings and changes in them over the years. Land is the most important asset in rural India. Land ownership reflects the social position of the owner in the village, as well as capital and networks. Land has a positive co- relation with position in the caste hierarchy, except in the case of the Brahmins. In present times in the village, cash and land emerge as the two most important components governing subsistence and power. Activities including migration revolve around them. Historical inequalities persist but land ownership patterns are not static. Some castes, mainly the Marathas, have accumulated land. Brahmin families with substantial land in the past now possess a few acres only, while certain families have consistently bought and consolidated their lands. The size of landholdings by other castes remains marginal. Land prices have risen astronomically over the years, making it difficult to purchase land.

The following section tries to see migration vis-a vis each caste group, its history, pattern, specific trajectory, what it has meant for the socio-economic situation of that caste group and the contemporary condition. The following section also tries to understand migration as a 'strategy' employed for specific gains by caste groups. It also tries to understand to what extent is this strategy successful and what are the variegated outcomes of migrations undertaken for different castes.

Brahmins

Initially most of the land in the village was owned by Brahmin and Marwadi families. Now there is not a single Marawadi family in the village. Dominance in ownership of land has passed from Brahmins and Marwadis to Marathas. Some persons said that there were about 10 Brahmin families in the 1950s and 1960s. But the Brahmins say that there were only seven out of which now only three families remain. These Brahmins and Marwadis, came from other towns such as Dharul and Mazalgaon in Beed district.

The Marwadis bought the land from the Brahmins who for some unknown reason left the village. It is said that the Marwadis owned land of 4 villages. From the Marwadis land was bought by a brahmin named Komte and later Dube from Dharul. Komte and Dube were Brahmins. They never came and settled in the village but only bought and sold land and made money. When the land ceiling and land tenancy laws were enacted, they sold the land and left. About 50 years ago, Vanjaris from nearby villages came and bought 60 acres of land from the Komtes. There was a time in the village when moneylenders from Dharul came and gave people jowar to eat. People in return used to work in their fields. Narrations have slightly differing sequence of land ownership, but the overall account is the same. The general consensus is that Brahmins and Marwadis dominated the village as well as controlled most of the land. Marwadis left permanently, while Brahmin households declined in number and over the years also in their power.

Brahmin households remaining have very little land. They owned land but sold it over the years to meet their expenses. The Brahmins have sold land mainly for marriage and education of children since they sought to leave the village permanently. Lack of diversification in sources of livelihood and entrepreneurial spirit culminated in selling off land – a sign of total withdrawal from agriculture and the village.

It is mainly the old persons staying in the village. The young have left for Ambejogai, Pune or Aurangabad. There are two families of Rigvedi Brahmins and one family of Irudaya Brahmins still left in the village. The person who indicated the way for the Brahmin houses, described the situation of the Brahmins as '*kadhtapaay*', i.e., those who were left in the village was also on the verge of leaving.

Diminishing status: A Contemporary reason for migration

In the village, Brahmins in spite of their superiority in the caste hierarchy have neither economic nor social importance. Alok Divekar, a middle aged Brahmin male respondent, laments the gradual loss of social and religious status of the Brahmins.

Diwekar: I am thinking of taking up some work in Parbhani. My brother lives there.

Author: Why?

Diwekar: *June sanskarudaleahet, adhi puja, bhikshukihoti, dandharmahota, teatanahi* [The previous traditions have eroded, earlier puja, bhikshuki and charity were important. It is not so now].

Author: So do you not get along well? Do you have fights with the people in the village?

Diwekar: *Cheche, taslakahinahi. Brahmin atasarkhachzalaaha, tohsamanyazalaaha, tyatanimajuratkahifaraknahiata, tohmaan, pratishtanahi.* [No, no. Nothing like that. The Brahmin is now a common man, there is no difference between a Brahmin and a labourer]. The privileges of being a Brahmin are not there anymore. Now the Brahmins are important neither socially nor politically. Hence, they are ignored.

His mother, Gangabai Diwekar, who is around 60 years old, laments in a similar vein. "*Amhala kai bhetatnahi, gharnahikuthlich scheme nahi, pension pan nahi, bakichyannabhetatay*" [We don't get anything, no house, no benefits under any scheme, no pension, which others get]. Her neighbour is an elderly Maratha woman who gets pension under a scheme for widowed women. Gangabai in spite of applying several times has not been able to get it. According to her, her neighbour has *vashila*, some contact in the administration who has managed to do the work for her. She laments the lack of services and facilities for Brahmins.

Stark and Bloom (1985) argue that it is relative deprivation than absolute deprivation which propels migration. This is true in the case of Brahmins who perceive themselves as relatively deprived vis-a-vis their status in the past and their contemporary status vis-a-vis the Marathas in the village. Loss of prestige and respect in the village, decline in economic gains from traditional occupations, disinterest in agriculture, and lack of entrepreneurial activities along with perceived deprivation are reasons for seeking opportunities elsewhere.

Migration an 'outward looking' strategy

Migration is a strategy used by all caste groups in the village but used differently. In the case of Brahmins, migration is an 'out-ward looking' strategy. It is the last weapon employed. In one sense it is fleeing from the village. The trajectory so far is to sell off land, either all at once as in previous cases or slowly over a period of time, followed by sale of other assets and the house. Migration is the last act in this strategy, the final break.

Outward looking strategy develops because of loss of social status and prestige. Changes in the nature and functioning of caste system have not taken place in their favour. In terms of numbers, they are a minority. They seem to have better opportunities elsewhere. They do not want

to do farming anymore. Working as labourers is seen as belittling for their status, as there is no social distinction among labourers.

Fuller and Narasimhan (2008) note in the case of Tamil Nadu:

‘Non-Brahmins are more likely to keep family land, to which they may have a strong emotional attachment, and more likely to sell only if their farms are small and unprofitable. Particularly, compared with non-Brahman peasant cultivators, therefore, the Brahmins’ detached or even disdainful outlook enabled them to quit their lands and rural life relatively easily’ (p. 181).

Jan Breman (2007) notes in the case of anavil brahmins in Gujarat: ‘If they [brahmins] have decided to take less interest in farming, they do so with another strategy in mind: the desire to live and work in the urban milieu’ (p 29). He further notes that ‘obtaining an urban identity is more important than the nature of the occupation they practise to achieve it’ (*ibid.*, p. 31).

Marathas

Maratha families share stories of coming from somewhere else and then settling in the village. Those who came the first were able to occupy a lot of land since land was easily available while those who came later only occupied what they could. Families that arrived later came through the already settled families in the village. They too have strengthened their standing in the village. There are no material differences between those who came first and those who arrived later.

As seen in other parts of the country, those who owned land had an inkling of the land reforms before their actual implementation. Families owning land above the land ceiling such as the Brahmins and Marathas transferred it in the names of family members, while others like Marwadis sold off the land. Still others had it distributed under land ceiling laws. Marathas in the village have gained from the implementation of Land Ceilings and Holdings Act. The Brahmins’ decline in power is replaced by the ascendancy of Marathas. Marathas families have acquired land, expanded agricultural activities and diversified into non-agricultural activities such as shops, transport services, etc. They are connected with members of their caste outside the village as well as have expanded economically and politically. In the process they have become politically stronger as well. Their strong position in the village reflects their overall strong position in Marathwada.

During the famine of 1972, which was the first time when mass migration happened, no Maratha families migrated. Maratha families suffered, but since they had adequate resources to survive, they did not migrate elsewhere in search of work. Even in Maratha families with joint households who had many members to feed, there were no cases of migration. Migration occurred either because of some shock which the household could not bear, or because of better opportunities outside. Appa Naik, who is Maratha, said that the family suffered during the famine, but there was no migration. It had one buffalo which gave five litres milk. His mother made khava and sold it in Dharul. His mother’s younger brother, Kishen Patil stayed with them and helped in making and selling khava. During the time of the famine, Naik’s father slipped and fell in the well and fractured his leg. Because of his injury, he could not work. Naik’s father and uncle (Chiman Naik) parted ways during the famine, each one cultivating his own land. Hardships increased but there was no migration. It was not till 1984 that Kishen Patil left for Mumbai in search of work, when the khava business was not running that well.

Migration an ‘Inward looking’ strategy

Migration for Marathas, who over a period of time have emerged as the dominant caste, is an ‘inward looking’ strategy. Migration is not the final act or break with the village; rather it is

done in order to strengthen the hold over the village. Migration has enabled them to buy more land, diversify in allied activities and strengthen their position in the village. This is not to say that Marathas are not engaged in urban areas at all. Some rich families like the Naiks have consolidated their position in cities as well by buying flats or keeping children there for educational purposes. However, their position in the village has strengthened.

Inward looking strategy of Marathas is to dominate the village economically, socially and politically. This is followed by buying more land, diversifying by starting new enterprises and consolidating power by getting involved in local politics and contesting for posts. Migration enables this by bringing capital, skills, awareness and experience of the outside world. Some Maratha farmers also take government contracts, and hire either outside labour or labour from the village itself to fulfil these contracts. Where the State fails to create adequate employment opportunities, these contractors are seen as employers or job providers by others in the village. This raises their status further.

Dalits

The Dalit and Muslim families have neither gained land nor have any such family stories of experience of land gain. Their holdings were and continue to be small, almost negligible. Ownership of land remains a key factor in determining the quality and way of life in rural India. At present the cultivation of the common grazing land by the Dalits in Beed district is a point of conflict at the village level and also a larger political tussle of the region. Over the years, organizations such as the Manavi Hakk Abhiyaan (MHA) have been able to legally regularize some of these lands while the Marathas have launched campaigns to reclaim grazing land that the Dalits had encroached for cultivation under various movements (Waghmore, 2013).

One such issue is that of cultivation of 10-15 acres of temple land by Narvises, one dalit family who is cultivating it for three generations. A court case has been going on since the last 15 years. The High Court gave the decision in favour of the family, but now the case is in the Supreme Court. This court case has tightened the situation of the family and it has lost a lot of money in it. Paradoxically, to save this land, it even had to sell one or two acres of land and their buffalo. Remittances from family members working in Pune was also put in the court case. These migrants who have been working in the city for more than two decades are deeply interested in retaining the land and continuing agriculture in it. They send money for fertilizers, seeds and for fighting the court case. Datta Narvise tells how his brothers in Pune directed him to plant sugarcane as it is a profitable crop. For the Narvises the loss of land would mean a loss of a major source of livelihood, and the expenditure incurred so far would be futile. The loss of land would perhaps make the family members rural wage labourers or footloose migrants to the city.

Famine of 1972: A big push for migration

This famine was the first instance of distress migration when people in large numbers left the village. The Dalits were the most affected and they moved out of distress, lack of livelihood options, and substantial payments to be made elsewhere. This was the starting point of the trajectory of Dalit migration from the village.

Census data reflects movement of the people. Outmigration from Beed district was the highest in 1971-81. Rural areas in Beed district experienced a large exodus. The rural population grew at the rate of about 25 per cent during 1961-71 and 1981-91 and only at a rate of 10 per cent during 1971-81 (Mulay, 1998). Men migrated alone as there was an inability to shift entire families and maintained the possibility of returning to the village (*ibid*).

Migration during the famine can be categorized as 'a wave' while later migrations were chain or trickle down. One-time mass migration was followed by a steady rate of migration. In case of poorer households, mainly the SC families, migration rate was higher, as the resources available

to fall back on (advance from employers, work, land, livestock and stored grains) were limited. In most Dalit families on the other hand, there is someone who migrated during the famine, found work and supported the family. It is usually young men, mostly the eldest son who migrated in search of work. Other families too faced hardships. However, families with sufficient land and livestock did not go hungry and were able to manage.

The preferred destinations were the cities, mainly Pune followed by Aurangabad and Mumbai. Migration to the city also requires some basic assets: either networks in the city that could support and find work or enough money to take risk, travel on their own and find work. Those who could not migrate to cities migrated to other rural areas. For example, Bappa Narvise's parents went to another village in a neighbouring taluka and laboured in the fields there. However, most migration occurred to the cities which were relatively unaffected by the famine and had employment opportunities.

Resistance a reason?

Using James Scott's framework of understanding everyday resistances, migration can be seen as an act of resistance (Scott 1976, 1985). Scott identifies short term forms of migration as 'makeshift migration' and 'circummuting'. Circummuting allows villagers to gain extra without outright migration and full absorption into the modern sector. Makeshift migration ties the economic as well as political fortunes of the village to the urban economy (Scott, 1976, p. 215). Migration becomes a covert form of resistance. The dominant castes are not challenged outright. But the space to get away from their control is explored and taken advantage of. A migrant when in the place of destination is largely outside the purview of traditions, norms, etc. exercised by the powerful people in the village. For the lower castes migration provides a choice of employer, type of employment, and escape from unfair humiliation and unfair labour practices. Hearing experiences of elderly Dalits in the village with caste based work, one learns that migration has brought a qualitative change. Dalits can now refuse to work gratis and on terms not acceptable to them. Employers know that previous forms of coercion cannot be used or employment will be found outside the village. In this sense, migration is a form of resistance or a 'weapon of the weak'. Additionally, with migration to the city, urbane elements such as changes in the use of language, clothes, etc., also show resistance.

One of the key informants said, "Earlier, people (Dalits) migrated because of casteism and caste violence. Cities are freer and offered more opportunities and better living. Now reasons are more economic in nature.... Scheduled Castes don't own land or have very little land. Rarely will you find a family with more than five acres of land". Caste violence, untouchability, lack of choice and economic activities, along with landlessness could have been the main reasons for outmigration of Dalits.

Migration is an individual rather than a collective route to protection and security (Scott, 1976, p. 215). Deshingkar (2006) describes that labourers often describe migration as a means to escape exploitative caste dynamics at the source. Carswell and De Neve (2014) also note how migration is a way sought to get away from caste based restrictions and humiliations. However, the people interviewed for this study did not express resistance as a reason for migration. Resistance is not independent of opportunity. Most migrations are not done to resist. Resistance is not premediated; whether individually nor collectively. But resistance is generated by the act of migration.

Tribes

Three of the denotified and nomadic tribes, i.e., Banjaras, Wadars and Vanjaris are found in the village.

Vanjaris

Vanjaris, a denotified tribe in Maharashtra, have given up constant movement and chosen to settle down. They are not a marginal group anymore. Vanjaris and Marathas are the two strong groups in Marathwada, and this is reflected in the regional politics as well. The position of the Vanjaris in the village is somewhat mixed. The Vanjaris are the most recent settlers. They came from a neighbouring taluka to the village some 30-35 years ago. They live in Vanjarwadi which is slightly away from the village. Their houses are close to their fields. Many of them go as seasonal migrants for sugarcane cutting. A couple of men are *mukadams* (contractors or agents who work as intermediaries, recruit labour on behalf of the sugarcane factories) while some others work as farmers. The Vanjaris are also active in village politics. But those of them who go for sugarcane cutting possess very little land and are caught in the vicious cycle of seasonal migration.

Banjaras and Wadars: Always on the move: a reason for migration?

Certain castes and tribes such as the Banjaras and Lamans have been more mobile than others and for them movement is a socio-cultural and historical practice. Movement was criminalized during the colonial rule. People on the move were seen with suspicion. The Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 categorized tribes as criminal communities, engaged in thefts and other crimes. Tribes which were listed under this Act were under surveillance, punished and imprisoned on the basis of suspicion.

It is important to note that in spite of the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1891, and giving equal rights and status to nomadic tribes constitutionally, not much has changed for them. The opportunities accessible to them are more or less the same. The State is apathetic towards them. The stigma attached to them continues and they are looked at with suspicion. In spite of working in the same village for several years, they are not accepted as its part, nor is there any interaction with the other villagers. They continue to remain in the margin- physically, spatially, economically and socially. The past thus flows into the present. Because they have always been on the move, they have always been marginal and they continue being relegated to that status even in the present.

These tribes are diverse in culture, tradition, language and occupation. Most of them continue their earlier pattern of subsistence through migration. It is sometimes seasonal, i.e., according to the agricultural cycles or seasonal according to the industry, viz., construction or brick kilns. It may also be irregular, depending on the availability of work. Keshri and Bhagat (2012) note that socio-economically deprived groups such as adivasis and lower castes have a greater propensity to migrate seasonally.

The mobile groups can be seen moving through the villages in Maharashtra, seeking work, earning livelihoods by buying and selling animals, entertaining people with traditional arts, fortune telling, godmen begging for alms and surviving on charity among others (Chavan, 1998). They consist of the most marginalized sections of the society and live a precarious hand to mouth existence. They are neither an integrated part of neither an urban nor rural setup. Even in villages, these mobile groups are looked upon with mistrust and they live separately from other the villagers, usually just outside the village. Some of them like the Banjaras are found all over Maharashtra. Their men, women and children work as labourers in construction work, and move from one site to another. Once work is over, their stay in that place ends and they move to other construction sites. Wadars, who are said to have come from Andhra Pradesh, mainly work in stone quarries, road and dam constructions and brick making. A majority of them are on the move, although there are groups of settled Wadars as well (Chavan, 1998).

The first group of in-migrants to the village are a group of 15-20 labourers who are Banjaras. These labourers come from districts in Vidarbha with their families. They are brought by a contractor. They live for around 10 months on the fringes of the village in makeshift huts. They

have no interaction with the villagers as they are looked with suspicion. The second group of migrants is of the Wadar community who do stone quarrying. They have been in the village continuously for the last seven to eight years living in tin sheds. Their native village is in another tehsil of Beed district which they visit for 15 days in a year.

In the case of migrants, both Banjaras and Wadars are from the most marginalized sections of the society; and migration neither frees them from their marginalized and stigmatized status, nor does it alleviate their economic position. What it does is to reproduce their existing condition, perhaps making it more exploitative.

Migration as a 'Survival' Strategy

Migration for SC and ST groups such as the Dalits, Muslims, Vanjaris and Hatkar-Dhangars is a 'survival strategy'. It has enabled them to cope up with the uncertainties of agricultural income. In net terms, their position has improved. They own more assets and quality of life seems to have gone up. However, the improvement or change in their position is not equal or more than that of the Marathas. Their accumulation of wealth is meagre as compared with the Marathas. So in spite of improvement in their conditions in the village, the economic hierarchy of castes in the village continues.

In case of the SCs and STs who are mainly poor migrants, the line between survival and accumulation is very thin. Even for those migrant families which seem to be doing well, accumulating and building assets, reversal can take place in their situation at the slightest change or shock. For example, a sudden health problem, unexpected death, or crop failure can wipe their savings. Different migrants who have similar capital and networks have different experiences in terms of accumulation or survival based on a slight change in their situation. For example, in the case of Rukhma and Kishen Shinde's family members, who are Hatkar-Dhangars involved in sugarcane cutting and are daily wage labour could do accumulation. Initially they owned two acres of land and able to buy another three acres. Compared with this, Vitthal and Savitri Narvise have accumulated debts because of their court case and other expenses. What may be seen as accumulation or savings may not be necessarily sufficient to create a shock absorbing or resistant capacity.

IV. Caste based social networks, capital and migration

Migrants who migrated during the famine and chose to stay back in place of destination helped move their families or other migrants from the village. The beginning of chain migration was thus established. Families who settled in Pune came during the famine of 1972.

Vanneman et al. (2006) found that compared with rural areas, in urban areas extensive networks among SCs and STs exist. They credit the policy of affirmative action for this. However, one plausible reason for it can be that networks are used and strengthened when people migrate from rural areas to urban areas. When people migrate, they tend to come through contacts and stay close by. This is especially true of groups with low socio-economic status, who have limited social and economic capital to fall back upon.

Caste networks are seen in places of destination where people of the same caste usually live together. Working class settlements such as those of LaxmiVasahat and Gosavi Vasahat in Kothrud in Pune have a concentration of SC families mostly from Marathwada. Many of the families from the village who migrated during the famine also stay here. Some of the families who lived earlier in these settlements have moved out now, but still own houses and rent them to migrants belonging to their caste or village.

One sees caste based concentration in work found at destinations. Many Dalits who migrated after the famine of 1972 found work in the construction sector in Pune. Vaman Narvise

and Dagdu Athawale started as construction workers but ended up becoming watchmen for builders in Pune. Others who came through them also started working under the same builders. Now their children also work as watchmen with them. Caste based concentration in work happens because of the caste-based networks.

V. Networks across castes

Migration through wandering or absolutely no contacts is rare. Contacts are mainly caste and family based. It is rare to see networks among different castes. Manish Khule, who is from Maratha caste, came to Pune through the Narvises who are Dalits. He stayed in Pune with their family and tried to find work. He knew about Dagdu who is a watchman in Pune, and the different sites their household members worked and lived. In our meeting, he said, *mi jari Maratha also, tari mi hyanchyat (Dalits) asto* [Although I am a Maratha, I am with these people]. Because of they belong to the same village and their friendship with each other, he could make use of their network to explore migration possibilities. However, it is interesting to note that Manish Khule did not migrate. He is a successful entrepreneur today in the village which can be because of his personal qualities also but mainly because of the land and resources that he possesses. It is his caste which made a difference from his Dalit friends in terms of physical as well as social capital owned by him. Although different caste groups interact perhaps amiably in the village, using other castes' capital or networks is not practised there.

Networks elsewhere are found to operate on a village level (Hampshire, 2002). In the case of India, networks may not necessarily be organized around village lines but are more around caste lines. Caste based networks are stronger than family or village networks. In fact, family networks can be seen as subsumed under caste networks as there are hardly any cases of accepted inter-caste marriages. Different castes have different kinds of social networks and thus can take advantage of certain kinds of opportunities. These differences lead to differences in opportunities, perpetuate somewhat caste based congealed patterns. Caste based social networks and capital are some of the ways in which caste based work patterns are formed in place of destination, reproducing caste based hierarchies in occupations.

Although caste based capital and networks provide the support required at destinations, they can be regressive and curtailing as well. Networks also ensure conformity with traditions and customs of the place of origin. This is especially true for women migrants. People keep an eye on one another and report back to the place of origin in the form of gossip (De haan & Rogaly, 2002, p.9). This was expressed by deserted and widowed women living in Pune. They continued to follow traditions and roles that were expected of them. There was fear of backlash or rebuke from village members. During fieldwork it was observed people in the village were updated about those in the city. Every household possessed at least one cell phone and there was frequent communication with those in the city. Apart from networks being regressive, networks create path dependency. Information shared through networks is incomplete and limited. Migration through networks thus limits a migrant's access to select industries and geographies (Kulkarni, 2014).

Migration is a window of opportunity, presenting the possibility of upward economic mobility, choice of work and freedom from existing norms which induce them to behave in a certain way, while social networks are enablers to access this window. However, the very enablers also act as limiting forces.

VI. Impact of migration

Until recently, migration was seen negatively in academic and policy realms. One of the reasons for this was that the impact of migration was understood more negatively than positively at different levels. Skilled migrants are seen as a brain drain while in the case of unskilled and semi-skilled migrants it was largely understood as the results of exploitation and distress. The debate on

whether migration leads to ‘coping,’ i.e., meeting day to day subsistence needs or ‘accumulation,’ i.e., for building and strengthening assets, savings and investment is ongoing.

Contemporary researchers such as Deshingkar et al. (Deshingkar & Grimm, 2004; Deshingkar 2006; Deshingkar & Farrington 2009) argue that voluntary migration is undertaken for accumulation. Migration is a driver of growth and important route out of poverty with a significant positive impact on people’s livelihoods and wellbeing in spite of costs being *accumulative* [emphasis added] (Deshingkar & Grimm, 2004). According to them, migration not only reduces poverty but also inequality (*ibid*). In a similar vein, the *World Development Report 2009*, puts forth that migration will eventually lead to evenness in opportunities that differ across geographies.

The outcomes of migration vary across castes even for the same pattern of migration. A majority of sugarcane cutters are Dalits (Waghmore 2013) or as Janarth (2010) survey claims Vanjaris. In the village, people from all castes except Brahmins migrate for sugarcane cutting. One thing common to them is low land ownership. Sugarcane cutters cut cane in pairs and they are given *uchal* (advance money), or advance money. Uchal is an important reason for seasonal migration. It is a special form of capital which ensures survival of households and continuation of agriculture.

There are subtle differences across castes in outcomes. Some families are locked in cane cutting, while for others it is only a phase. That is, in some families (Dalits, Vanjaris and Muslims) sugarcane cutting is long term and permanent activity undertaken for generations, while for others it is only for a couple of years (mainly Marathas) because of some crisis or need for uchal. Families who do seasonal cane cutting temporarily are better off than those involved in it permanently.

The debate on impact of migration is redundant if we do not specify the migrants that we are talking about. Within unskilled and semi- skilled labour migration, impact of migration will vary significantly across regions, sectors and also caste groups. As seen in the present study, whether migration leads to accumulation or not is also influenced by the caste capital, networks, and land possessed.

VII. Conclusion

It is argued that the interface between caste and migration has not received its due attention. Caste should be seen as an important, dynamic factor rather than a static, ascribed identity of migrants. Looking at caste in a much deeper way will open up several new areas, and questions for migration research leading to richer insights. This paper has attempted to look at the dynamics of caste and migration in one village. Caste continues to be the organizing force, although the nature and form of caste system is not static. Caste consciousness and caste based identity remains sharp. Migration pasts and presents differ. In contemporary times, one sees migration in all castes and the crucial differences are the opportunities that are available to different caste groups and their appropriation. The higher castes, i.e., Brahmins and Marwadis were the first to migrate to cities. Theirs was permanent migration. The exact reasons for migration are not known, but they were clearly not cases of distress migration, but of accumulation.

The first mass migration that took place from the village was during and immediately after the famine of 1972. This was distress migration and most of the migrants were Dalits. This has established streams of migration to cities. Migration of the Dalits was not a final break with the village, but rather a ‘multi-locational’ strategy. It has enabled them to continue living in villages. However, this does not mean that their position has improved substantially. It mostly remains a survival strategy. They occupy the peripheries of the village and of the city. One hardly finds any migration by Maratha and Brahmin families immediately after the famine. This is because although they suffered, they were able to absorb the shock. For the Banjaras and Wadars, migration has historically been a cultural practice. They continue being on the move without any improvement in

their situation. They are seen with suspicion and discriminated against. They are the most vulnerable group and the only means of livelihood available to them is migration. It is a survival strategy for them.

Factors behind the loss of land are different for Brahmins, Muslims and SCs. Although their present land holdings may be in the similar bracket, the processes which have led to this are different. Brahmins were a land owning and dominating caste whose landholdings have steadily declined. Dalits and Muslims, on the other hand, never had land. Their condition in terms of land ownership has not improved. Although land ownership of Brahmins has decreased, their economic status has not. They have accumulated assets elsewhere by investing in children's education and lives. In the case of Dalits and Muslims, their economic status has slightly improved, but they still are the poorest in the village. In case of Dalits it is argued that opportunity to migrate and work outside the village has freed them from previous caste based oppression and exploitation. Physical mobility and possibility of economic mobility seem to loosen the hold of the caste system but does not necessarily mean its disappearance. Increased mobility does not necessarily mean freedom from systemic caste based hierarchies and discrimination. Dalits and tribes continue to be lower in the economic hierarchy in terms of assets that they own, educational level and the opportunities that they have. Migration does not alleviate their status as in the case of other castes. As Breman (2010) notes that labour is 'mobile in a state of immobility'.

For the Brahmins migration has been a route of permanent break from the village. It has enabled them to consolidate their position in cities. Declining presence and share of assets are thus not signs of their failure or diminishing power, but rather of their determined attempts to establish themselves in cities. For the Marathas, migration is a way of consolidating their position in the village. By bringing in skills from outside, bringing capital and investing in land, they seek to strengthen their power in the village. Like the Brahmins, migration has led to accumulation for them, but unlike the Brahmins, they do not choose to leave permanently.

Reasons for migration, migration trajectories and outcomes differ across caste groups; rather they are complicated by caste. This can be attributed to caste based differences in social capital and networks. The question whether migration is accumulative or not is complicated by caste. The specific location of individuals and their families in the caste hierarchy matters. It is also important to see how different castes as groups try to consolidate their positions via migration. Is migration a well thought out strategy or only a result of capital and networks formed? How is migration as a strategy linked to political status and power of caste groups? What are the other dynamics of caste and migration and how do they affect development? What is the role of the State in these processes? These questions need to be analysed further.

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