CHAPTER VI

The Migration and the Work Campaign in the Konkan.

The preceding two chapters have given the ecological and social setting of the Lemans in Manikdaundi village of Ahmednagar district. Both the geoclimatic features and the agrarian social structure of the area point to a severely depressed hinterland region that holds out little promise of any amelioration in the agricultural situation or, indeed, any prospect of non-agricultural development.

Our study of the socio-economic circumstance of the Lemans in their Home Tandas was undertaken with a view to analyse the "push" factors that could possibly explain their seasonal migration. In this chapter, we describe the actual migration and the work campaign in the Konkan in order to highlight the possible "pull" factors. If, in the end, the pull factors do not appear to be as significant as the push factors in determining the migration, this underscores the main thesis of this study, and enables us to undertake, towards the end of the chapter, a discussion on the "costs" of migration.

One indication that the reasons for migration have mainly to do with the depressed and drought-prone economy of the home region, is the fact that significant out migration occurs from this area, not only of the Lemans but also of other segments of the population, such as the landless and marginal holders among the Maratha and other castes. In Pethardi taluka, despite the fact that it is categorised as a
fifty percent kharif and fifty percent rabi taluka, considerable shifts of the population out of the taluka are noticed straight after the kharif harvest. This means that although it is not entirely a kharif taluka, the rabi agricultural season is not able to generate employment sufficient to match/absorb the labour released after the kharif harvest. Nor is any alternative non-agricultural employment available in the taluka in the post-kharif period, thus making migration the only reasonable proposition for large number of the population. Information regarding this phenomenon was collected through the local Revenue Department officials and is presented in Table VI.1 below:

**Table VI.1**

**Extent of the Seasonal Migration from Pathardi Taluka (year: 1978)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Revenue Circle</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Migration to Sugar factories</th>
<th>Migration to the Konkan area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of families affected</td>
<td>No. of migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Takli</td>
<td>51,940</td>
<td>2321</td>
<td>14294 (27%)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Karanj</td>
<td>39,730</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>1682 (4%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pathardi</td>
<td>46,920</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>2981 (6%)</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong> Pathardi taluka</td>
<td>1,32,590</td>
<td>3507</td>
<td>15757 (14%)</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Tahsildar Pathardi, through the Circle Inspector.*

It is seen that about 14% of the population migrates away from the taluka annually, the percentage becoming as high as 27% in the hilly eastern circle of Takli. It is also noted
that where as the bulk of this movement is to the areas of operation of the sugar factories within Ahmednagar and in the neighbouring districts, the migration to the Konkan region is only from Karanjí and Pathardi circles where the Lamsans are settled.

It is interesting to note the pattern of this migration in that the choice of destinations seems to be community specific. The Marathas and other local agricultural castes migrate, in the main, to the sugar factories to work as cane cutters, while the Lamsans mainly migrate to the Konkan to utilize their pack animals in the transportation of charcoal. On first scrutiny, the reasons for this division appear to be based in cultural or traditional skills and preferences. But it has to be remembered that the sugar factory employment is a relatively recent opportunity, dating back barely 30-40 years, and that prior to that, the agricultural population in the dārayat areas had no specialised skills in cane cutting. Similarly, there is no intrinsic logic in the Lamsans continuing a traditional profession that has been giving diminishing returns when alternate seasonal employment is available closer at hand. Deeper examination revealed that this division is based on complex factors of caste bias and, in the case of Lamsans, ethnic as well as economic differences.

We were told, by our respondents, that the market for securing employment in sugar factories was extremely competitive, that not only were the sugar factory managements controlled by the well-to-do Maratha bāsaïdāras, but their recruiting agents also were Marathas who preferred to recruit from among their own castes. Moreover, the sugar factory employment turned out
be attractive not so much for the cutters of cane as such but for those of them who could also transport the cane, from the fields to the factories, in their own bullock-carts. The Lamas rarely owned bullock-carts and could not raise the capital to invest in them. Few could, therefore, break into the sugar factory field of employment and the majority were, in any case, already indebted over several years or generations to offer their services to the lumber contractors of the Konkan. Thus, from Pathardi taluka as a whole, the volume of migration to the sugar factories is larger than the flow into the Konkan, but among the Lamas of Pathardi, it is the latter flow which alone is significant. While some studies have been done on the seasonal migration of labour to the sugar factories, this study was particularly undertaken because of the absence of any systematic analysis of the migration of Lamas from this area to the Konkan — of the mode of their recruitment, the journey, the categories of jobs and the structure of wages and modes of payment. These are examined in some detail below:

**Job Opportunities in the Konkan:**

The charcoal industry in the Konkan offers a number of varied job opportunities for seasonal employment. From the point of view of labour input, the several tasks to be performed in the manufacture of charcoal and the organisation of the work campaign can be categorized as:

1) Falling wood, stacking and firing the kilns;

2) Transporting the prepared charcoal from the forest slopes to the roadheads;
iii) Working as a sub-agent for a recruiting Contractor, as a supervisor/mukadam of the labour engaged in (i) and (ii) above;

iv) Working as an accounts clerk or salarised diwanji with a major contractor or coal merchant.

In the main, the work of felling the trees, stacking the wood and firing the kilns to prepare the charcoal, all of which is a specialised task, is entrusted to hired seasonal labour from the Katkari tribe. We were given to understand by the contractors - although it has not been possible to verify and independently establish this - that the charcoal manufacturing industry has shifted from the Navel talukas of Poona district to Thane and Kolaba districts, and after depletion of those forested areas, has now moved further south along the west coast into Ratnagiri district. Although there are local Katkaris in Ratnagiri district, they are not used to this job of preparing charcoal and hence the majority of the woodcutters are Katkaris brought as migrants from the Pan and Panvel region of Kolaba and Thane districts. While the stacking and firing of kilns does require specialized knowledge, skill and practice, the felling of wood is less specialised. Some of the Lamans, with their long association with the industry, have, therefore, managed to hire their labour as wood cutters, and a very few have acquired the skills of manufacture as well.

The kilns are prepared in the upper reaches of the slopes of the western Ghats, in clearings in the forest, where the trees are cut. By a slow process of combustion, the charcoal is fired, over twenty or twenty-fve days, inside the kilns.
Then arises the need to transport the prepared charcoal through the forest paths down to the roadheads, from where it can be picked up in truck loads. The majority of the Lamsans are employed in hiring their bullocks as carriers of the sacks of charcoal to be fetched from the inner forests to the truckable routes. Although the Lamsans are themselves engaged in driving the bullocks, the payment is not fixed in terms of wages for the individual, but as payment of a fixed rate per trip per bullock.

Obviously, both the skilled groups of woodcutters and manufacturers of coal as well as the transporters, brought in seasonally for the work campaign in Ratnagiri district, have to be recruited from their home regions. And, once the campaign gets under way, considerable coordination is required between the cutting teams and the transporters thus calling for supervision over both the groups to maintain the daily records of production and movement. These jobs are usually handled by the recruiting agents and mukadams appointed, often from among their own caste and circle of acquaintances, by the Marwari/North Indian coal merchants who control this industry. However, as explained a little further below, there are also sub-agents and sub-contractors who take over a part of the responsibilities of recruitment and supervision handled by the big agents and contractors. Some of the Lamsans have been able to find employment as sub-agents or sub-contractors.

Finally, the business of coal manufacturing, dependent, as it is, on a large number of oral contracts, advances and loans, payments of wages in kind as well as in cash, etc., has
need for meticulous and trusted accounts clerks who work as salaried servants of the big merchants. These divanjis again are mainly drawn from the native village or extended family of the merchants; but a scattering of Lamans have worked themselves into these positions of household servants to the coal merchants.

Of the thirty one Laman households migrating to the Konkan who were interviewed in depth for this study, the proportion of employment in each of these categories of jobs was as below:

Table VI. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Category of work</th>
<th>Number of families</th>
<th>Percentage to total sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Wood cutters</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Transporters</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>61.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Contractors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discussions held in-depth with the large groups of Lamans confirmed the impression that the proportion of actual employment in these categories of jobs was indeed as that brought out in the sample above.

Among the Lamans, the choice of employment or rather the selection into one or the other of these job opportunities
in the Konkan appears to be very closely related to the individual's economic status in the home tendas. There is a status hierarchy attached to these jobs with charcoal makers being considered the lowest and the status of a contractor or diwanji being highly regarded. This derives no doubt from the diminishing manual labour required from the first to the fourth category, and the better returns attaching to the latter jobs. But this hierarchy is seen reflected in the economic status of the individual families in their native tendas.

The first category of the woodcutters and makers of charcoal are drawn from among the poorest strata, from those who are either completely landless or have only marginal holdings, but do not possess any head of cattle. The transporters of coal must necessarily have some pack animals to undertake the job and were also somewhat better-off in terms of land and assets than those in the first category. Those working as petty contractors and sub-agents must not only have some of their own capital to invest in the business of recruiting and supervision, by way of advances and loans to the recruited labour; they must also be more educated than the others, to be able to write out accounts and handle large sums of money.

There is, of course, limited mobility between these categories. Our investigation into the history of individual job patterns revealed that, occasionally after exhibiting years of diligence and trustworthiness, an enterprising person from the second category (transporters) would be able to secure a small advance
from his contractor to himself recruit a few gangs of cattle owners for the next season. If he is successful in the venture, he could make a beginning as a petty contractor himself. But in each such case reported, the initial help came in the form of a cash loan from the superior contractor and chance was seen to play a major role in the venture. The instances of fair chance were rare and there were many more examples of failure rather than success at jumping these categories of job-status, as described further below.

The time of departure from the home village varies for each of these sub-groups. Those migrating to the sugar factories leave just after Jussorah as the crushing of sugar in Maharashtra generally commences in the later half of October. Those working as contractors, usually make several trips to the Konkan, even during the monsoons in order to buy forest lots and to take advance from the bigger contractors etc. However, the majority of the Lamanas who migrate as labourers of the first and second categories to the Konkan leave sometime in the three weeks following Diwali. The harvesting of the bajra crop is completed by late October, then follows a brief period of settling accounts, celebrating marriages, fixing up the following year's contracts and making other preparations to leave.

The Recruitment:

The manufacturer of charcoal in the Konkan and its marketing in Bombay, Poona and elsewhere is an industry entirely in the hands of private entrepreneurs. As described above, the industry entails a number of individual activities: the purchase
forest lots from private owners, the engaging of Katkari tribes to fell the wood and manufacture charcoal, the employment of pack bullocks to transport the prepared charcoal up to the roadhead, and its further transport by truck to the large market centres in and outside the Konkan.

Financially, the industry is controlled by the tradesmen/coal merchants in Bombay and Pune. Depending on the volume of their business, these tradesmen contract with one or several agents to recruit labour on their behalf, to supervise the manufacturing in the Konkan, and to arrange for the truck transport out of Ratnagiri district. Often, the merchants make payments of an advance lumpsum to the contractors to enable them to manufacture the coal and undertake to buy the finished product at a prefixed price. Sometimes, the recruiting of labour is entrusted to one contractor, while the truck transport is arranged through another. A contractor who has undertaken to supply 500 bullocks may in turn contract with his sub-agents to provide 100/200 bullocks each. The structure is thus based on a series of contractual and sub-contractual relationships with intricately linked flows of capital investment. At the start of the work season, each level of entrepreneurship takes advances from the next higher one and disburse a part of this amount as advances to those it recruits/engages; and the final settlement of accounts is done only at the end of the work campaign in that season.

In the majority of cases, a sub-agent of a main contractor usually visits Manikdaundi several weeks before Lussaran to book
the bullocks for the following season. Quite frequently he would contact those Lamanas he had engaged in previous years, but whether he takes the same number of bullocks this time, or decides to take more or less, depends on the scale of his operations and the contracts he has already struck with his superior agents this year.

At this time, the sub-agent also offers a certain amount as advance payment to those whom he engages. The average amount at the time is approximately Rs. 100/- per head of pack animal; but the actual rate is dependent on a number of considerations and is the outcome of considerable negotiations between the agent and the Lamanas. One of the determining factors is the outcome of the last season's contract. If in the previous year, the Laman came away indebted to the contractor, the former's creditworthiness for the ensuing season would suffer. If in the previous season, the Laman had proved his deligence without too many liabilities or demands, he may get a higher rate. At times, the contractors give advances not only for the per head of cattle already owned but also a lumpsum for purchasing additional bullocks. This depends on the individual Laman's standing with the contractors. And of course, the rates of advances in a particular year are dependent on the general forecast for the business, which in turn is based on other variables such as the likely prices of coal, the pattern of the monsoons, the truck transport costs etc.

Not the least important part of these negotiations is the number of family members the contractor allows the Laman to
bring along to the Konkan. As mentioned above, the advances
given at the time of initially booking the labour for the
coming season is fixed on a per animal basis. Later, that is,
during the season also, for the majority of the Laman migrants
who are engaged only to drive the bullocks, the wages are computed
per bag of charcoal transported. It is thus the pack animals
rather than their owners who are the real wage earners. Naturally,
the contractors are interested in seeing that only a limited
number of humans accompany the bulls. In the majority of cases,
one able bodied labourer is considered necessary to drive 8 to
10 bullocks. With him are generally allowed his wife, to
cook the meals, one or two other young hands, to tether or
graze the bulls, fetch things, act as relief etc., and then only
the very small children who have to accompany the parents. It
is thus, that, whereas entire families appear to be going down
to the western ghats, in fact, the number of persons allowed
to accompany on the trail is strictly regulated by the contractors
and limited to able bodied or economically active persons only.
The very old as well as the infirm get left behind. We met
several persons who rued the fact that the contractors had
refused to take them that year, and it was obvious that many
got left behind in the Hose Tandles without anyone to look after
them. This is analysed further in the section on the actual
work campaign while discussing the formation of the working teams.

One significant characteristic of the agreement thus
reached between the contractors and the Laman is that it is
only oral. No papers are exchanged. The contractor or his
agent may keep a record of the advances made, especially when he is engaging a large number of bullocks. But the Lamans keep no written record nor are they required to sign any receipts for the advances received, even when these amounts may be as high as Rs. 1,500 or Rs. 2,000/- per person.

Another feature of the recruitment which is worth noting is that the contract, in principle is made for only one year at a time; both sides are free to choose different parties for the next season. In practice, however, this choice is hedged in by a number of considerations. The agents prefer to recruit amongst people they are well acquainted with so that they are certain about the labourer's capacity to work, their creditworthiness, their allegiance and dependability and one may daresay - even their vulnerabilities, which, at times, come in quite handy for the contractors. In the other side, the Lamans, though not actually bound by the debts of the previous years to work for the same contractors, prefer to work with known contractors. In a situation where all contracts were verbal, and the work sites are miles away from the home village, the Lamans are entirely dependent on the contractors for everything from grain and wages to assistance in times of emergencies.

In our sample, about 80 percent of the Lamans reported having worked for the same contractor for long periods of ten to twenty years, and in some cases, ever since the previous generation. In the few cases where the Lamans had changed contractors, the reasons were more out of necessity and compulsion rather than free choice; for example (i) the contractor
did not require them because he had stopped recruiting or had fulfilled his quota or had recruited from another area or (ii) the contractor was ill or otherwise unable to come and make a timely advance payment and so it was not possible to hold out for him, etc. Only in one case was it reported that the Laman had changed his contractor because the latter had not paid him well: the Laman had, therefore, utilized the advance taken from a new contractor to settle his debts with the former one in the hope of making a new beginning this year.

The preponderant pattern of recruitment is thus that fresh contracts are made, year after year, between the same parties. While there is some logic in this, as explained above, since both sides require to develop trust and confidence in each other, there are other compulsions at work as well. In fact, the objective situation is such that one may well wonder at the Laman's "allegiance" to their contractors, even though the contract is only a verbal agreement, when no receipt is given for the advances taken and, above all, when the exploitation by the contractors is so manifest. Yet few Lamas changed their contractors.

Without prejudging the account of the work campaign in the Konkan which follows below, one may, here, give just one example to show the nature of sanctions that underlie this system of recruitment. One of our respondents reported that being dissatisfied with the final settlement of the previous year's accounts by which he had been shown as indebted to the contractor, and also at having been given only a part of the
advance payment he had been initially promised for this season, he decided to work for another contractor. He had planned to return his dues to the first contractor out of the current season's earnings. However, on reaching his new place of work, he was accosted by some agents of the former contractor who came to demand his services. When refused to go with them, they threatened to and actually did bring him before the Tahsildar and he was made to stand in the Tahsil office for four days consecutively. In the mean while, his bulls had been confiscated by the former contractor's men. His new employer refused to help him on the ground that if he was the type of Laman to break his agreement with the earlier contractor, he may do the same with him this year. No contractor would like to encourage bargain breakers and "those who expected too much." Finally, after four days of holding out, he decided to return to his former employer because, as he reasoned, although he could have gone without wages for a few more days, his bulls were starving and he could not afford to lose them.

One last observation about the pattern of recruitment needs to be mentioned. We have stated that some of the Lamanas were themselves agents or sub-agents of the contractors. However, it was noticed that the Laman agents did not recruit from among their own family members, or even from their own tandas. It was also observed that where two or three brothers from the same family were going along for the work campaign, they often offered themselves to different contractors and did not seek to work together under one contractor. Although the
migrants could not clearly articulate the reasons for this pattern, there appears to be an element of risk - diffusion in this tradition. In case adversity befalls a particular group or it is let down by a particular contractor, at least the other members of the extended family can have a chance of a fair season.

The Journey:

The local festival of "Sat" occurs some fortnight or three weeks after the major Hindu festival of Diwali and the migration of the Laman labourers begins thereafter. The first ones to leave the region are, of course, those who have been recruited to fell the wood or manufacture the charcoal and these usually undertake the journey by bus. The agents keep a close supervision on the dates of departure of the various teams, so that adequate charcoal is manufactured and ready for transport by the time the teams with the bullocks reach the work-sites.

Thus all through November and December one sees the trail of migrant Lamas and their animals along the Pathardi-Ahmednagar-Ferozepur road, wending their way towards the coast. The entire route down to Ratnagiri district is approximately four hundred kilo metres of highway. From Manikdaundi, the migrants first descend to Pathardi (the tahsil town) for the first night's halt. Generally, the trek is so planned that a long day's march is alternated with a shorter stretch the next day. The route followed is Pathardi, Ahmednagar-Ferozepur Ehor and down the Fergusson ghat into the coastal district - a
6. **Setting up camp on a bit of wasteland.**

*

7. **A typical Laman camp in the Konkan.**
journey of 20 - 25 days.

The teams often move together, but some make better progress, others fall back owing to purchases to be made or to sickness of man or animal. Night after night, the migrants camp out on pieces of wasteland in the villages along the highway. No shelter is erected and they sleep outdoors, although the night temperatures in these parts in December and January can be as low as 5°C or 7°C. The animals are tethered together and the men camp within.

Occasionally, on the trail, small children may be seen sitting on the animals, but generally, all the men, women and children walk down, the infants being tied on the mother's backs. There is a reason for this; the animals are already laden with the provisions for the 25 day trek, the pots and pans required to cook the meal and other articles necessary for camping out. Moreover, there is every inducement not to burden the animals but to keep them as fresh as possible, after the long journey, for the gruelling work season ahead. It is not unusual to hear of pregnant women delivering while on the trek, and of casualties among children and animals.

The agents maintain a constant liaison between the work sites and the groups on the trail so that the movement is well controlled and the animals arrive in optimum numbers at the proper time, so that there is no idle labour on the hands of the contractor who must arrange for grain and fodder from the day they arrive at the work-sites.
8. **Bulls laden with bags of charcoal.**

9. **Unloading at the coal depot...**
The Work Campaign:

As mentioned earlier, the duration of the work campaign in the Konkan varies according to the different categories of work in the charcoal manufacturing industry. Those working as petty contractors and mukadams, including the Lamans among them, make several trips to and fro, by bus, coordinating the preparations at the work sites with the movement of the other seasonal migrant labour. The season begins with the arrival of the first migrants, recruited to cut the trees and start the manufacture of charcoal. This labour, whether from the Katkaris of Thane and Kolaba districts or the Lamans of Ahmednagar, is brought in sometime between early November and end of December, depending on the cessation of the previous monsoon, and allowing some weeks for the forests to become accessible. The Lamans undertaking this work, also generally make the journey to the Konkan, by bus, in approximately two to three days depending on the exact location of the work sites.

However, the main campaign really gets underway with the arrival of the bull Lamans, from about the end of December to the middle of January. The large, loose convoy of these migrants, walking down with their pack animals, begins to break up, once it reaches the coastal districts below the ghats, as smaller groups go their separate way, some towards Khed, others in the direction of Mahad, Chiplun, Sangameshwar or Lanja (see map). When the migrants finally reach the last village indicated to them by their recruiting agents, they are met there by the
agents or *mukadama* who direct them to the actual work sites which are in the foot-hills of the forested ghats. There, on a piece of open wasteland, often at a fair distance from the local village, the migrants set up their camps, a sort of temporary tanda, though without huts, which is to serve as their home for the next five to seven months of the working season.

These camp sites suddenly seem to spring up all over the ghats as small groups of two to four families of Lamsans set up their campfires and unload the bullocks of the pots and pans and their belongings. The animals are tethered together some distance away, and the family clears a bit of area for itself to put up hammocks for its babies, deposit its half-sack of provisions and personal clothing and start the cooking for the next meal. Water has often to be fetched from some distance away, from a stream or nalla, as the local villagers rarely allow the Lamsans to use the village wells.

Once the camps get underway, a main agent generally visit all the groups to personally check that all preparations have been duly made. He asks after the migrant's health and journey and generally how they have fared in the intervening monsoon months. The migrants are distributed their rations for the first fortnight, an average of twenty-five kilos of grain per family, besides fodder and oil cake for the animals.

The first day of the actual work campaign is preceded, the night before, by a feast arranged for the migrants by the contractor. The contractor buys a goat and country liquor for
the Lemans and there is said to be a night of revelry which the contractors describe as a customary, though somewhat pagan, ritual.

An account of the actual work campaign in the Konkan needs to be based on a fuller discussion of how the working teams are formed and the division of work among the different members of the family. It is true that this seasonal migration is seen, by the Lemans, as a means of surviving the long agricultural off-season in their home region and, therefore, entire families appear to be migrating. However, as pointed out above, in the section on recruitment, beneath this apparent movement of entire families, lies a certain indirect restriction on the number and category of persons allowed to accompany on the trail.

The thirty-one migrating households which were studied in detail, showed a total of 139 family members who came to the Konkan as against 117 members of the same families who stayed behind in Manikdaundi. Among the wood-cutting Lemans, the number of family members in the campaign were exactly equal to the number left behind, in respect of mukadams many more were left behind than were brought to the Konkan, only among the transporters, was the number of migrating members more than the family members left behind (See Table VI-3).

Table VI.3
on next page.
This indicates that, despite the fact that men, women and children are seen migrating to the Konkan, the migration is selective, as not all members of the family find a role in the work campaign. The pattern of family relationships among the migrants, therefore, assumes significance. It is seen that the working units in the Konkan are normally formed with one head of the family of thirty or thirty-five years of age and one or two sides: daughters or sons between twelve and twenty years. Often, it is the head of the family with a younger brother and his wife, or a son and daughter-in-law, and their young children; while the head of the family leaves behind his own wife to look after five or six other children and old parents in the home tanda. There is thus some flexibility in the way that the working units in the Konkan are composed: either a father and daughter team, or a husband and wife with their minor children; but in all combinations, there appear to be some basic considerations.
the main working hand requires a team-mate to cook and
fetch ii) although the unit can include children where this
is inevitable, it should, as far as possible, be restricted
to economically active members iii) therefore, the old members,
above, say sixty, are invariably excluded.

Table VI.4 below gives the age and sex selectivity of
the migrants of different categories.

Table VI.4
Age and Sex Selectivity among the Migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Under 10 yrs.</th>
<th>11-20 yrs.</th>
<th>21-45 yrs.</th>
<th>45-55 yrs.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodcutters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 6 families</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transporters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 19 families</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukadams &amp; Diwanji</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 6 families</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen that the jobs of mukadam and woodcutter are
more selective than that of bull Laman migrant. In other words,
the restriction on the number and the age group of family members
migrating to the Konkan appears to be more severe among the wood-
cutters than among those engaged in transporting the charcoal
on pack animals. Among the woodcutters the number of children
under ten years of age worked out to approximately one per family,
whereas for the transporters this averaged to around two.
among the woodcutters, the proportion of those forty-five years of age fell steeply, whereas, among the transporters, these were still significant. Among the Mukadams, especially, the number of children or even other supporting hands, were the least among the three groups.

This is entirely understandable as the work campaign is organised on a specific division of labour among the members of the migrant units. For the Laman wood-cutters, the task of felling the trees is an extremely demanding labour, as is the manufacture of charcoal a somewhat skilled occupation. Their camps are in the upper reaches of the forest slopes, and they have need for a team-mate to saw the wood and cook the meals; but there is very little role for children or other spare hands to play in this exacting job.

For the mukadams, the work campaign involves travelling over a fairly wide area, to keep in constant touch with the principal agents, the owners of the private forests, and the seasonal migrants. Daily they enter into their notebooks the progress of the manufacture, the pack loads transported and the time-tables of the trucks that are hired to carry the produce to the markets. The work of daily co-ordination and supervision, and especially the tallying of accounts is quite intricate for it has to remain sensitive to a very competitive market and involves investments at several levels, as explained more fully in the next section. None of these tasks can be shared by other members of the family and, therefore, the mukadams, are, for the most part, alone in the Konkan. However,
During the actual working season, some of them arrange for one or a very limited number of the immediate family to come along and handle the cooking.

It is for the bullock Lamas that the work campaign in the Konkan offers the widest latitude to engage or carry along a family large number of what may be called camp-followers. Their work day begins very early; at 4 or 5 a.m. in the winters, an hour earlier in the summers, when the men, leaving without any food or even a cup of tea, walk up the hills with the bulls to the charcoal kilns. The western ghats rise here to an average height of 500 feet and the distance from the camp up to the forest clearing where the charcoal is prepared usually eight to ten kilometres. At the kiln, each bull is loaded with one bag of coal and one Laman worker can generally drive eight to twelve bulls down to the coal depot at the bottom of the hill. They would reach around 9 or 10 a.m., when the men have their first meal of the day, and the bulls are also rested a while. The second trip is similarly made between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and, in many cases, if the bulls are fit, a third trip is undertaken which ends at 7 p.m. After that, the animals are left to graze and the men have their evening meal.

The number of trips made each day depends on the distance between the coal depot and the kiln. Some respondents stated that they left the depot at 4 a.m. and returned from the kiln at noon or 2 p.m., had their meal and made one more similar
trip in the afternoon. Others stated they began at 3 a.m. and finished the first trip at 9 a.m., then made a second trip between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., and occasionally, a third one. It is for such trips that relief hands can be used. It is seen that in order to maximise the number of trips, it is generally so arranged that the animals make one long trip to a distant kiln, and later, a shorter one to a nearby kiln just before nightfall. But the average distance between the 8 kilometres and, therefore, an average of two trips a day involves covering more than thirty kilometres per day. The working day thus stretches from sun rise to nightfall, an average of fourteen to fifteen hours of labour.

The others, the women and young children, who do not drive the bullocks up to the kilns and back, have no less a tiring day. Firewood has to be collected and the family meal cooked patiently over a woodfire. To fetch water or scour the utensils and wash clothes, involves a long search and track to a source of water. When the men return, the animals have to be watered, fed and tethered. Sometimes, they are allowed to graze and small children can be put to this work.

Although the daily schedule of work varies the migrant workers generally have two meals in the day - one around noon and the other in the evening. This consists of thick leaves of millet bread (bhakri) with either a spicy curry of some vegetable, or just raw onion, garlic, salt and red chillies. In the beginning of the season, most families use up the small quantity of pearl millet brought along from their home tandas.
Our respondents stated that, in the Konkan, they have to get used to the grain given to them by the contractors, which is generally hybrid jowar or coarse rice, or, more often, milo.

Every two weeks, our respondents stated, the contractors allow one day's rest. It is usually on that day, however, that they have to walk to the main village or milling centre, three to seven kilometres away, to collect their rations for the fortnight as well as feed for the animals. They waste considerable time waiting in line to collect the grain, and to get it milled. The contractors also give Rs. 10 weekly in cash per family (known as "salt and chilli expenses"). With this, the Lamsans make sundry purchase in the village and return to the camp-site by evening. There is thus little chance of actual rest on this fortnightly day off.

It is only around the festival of Shimga, occurring sometime in February - March, that some of the Lamsans take three or four days off to visit their home tandas in Manikdaundi. The festival coincides with the rabi harvest and affords an opportunity to visit those members of the family who have been left behind. Many Lamsans reported that at this time, the contractors gave them cash advances of Rs. 150 or 200 to buy new clothes and also the return fare between the Konkan and Manikdaundi, so as to enable them to complete the trip by bus, in four or five days.

But except for this one intervention, the work campaign continues day after day without break. Nor does the long day's work result in any cash wages. Once a kiln is ready and opened
up for removing the charcoal, the manufacturers make it over to the contractor's agent who notes in his account books. The Lamas who transport the coal on their pack bullocks similarly give a daily tally to the mukadams of the number of trips made by them. The mukadams make note of the daily movements and the daily out-turn of work of each migrant, to facilitate final settlements of accounts. In the meantime, the migrants have to cope with the work and contend themselves with the fact that they are fed, and so at least are the animals.

During the entire five or six months that the migrants spend in the Konkan, there is no medical cover for the workers, nor indeed any veterinary cover for the animals. In case an animal falls sick, the contractors give out of pocket expenses which are, of course, deducted from the final settlements made at the end of the season. It is the same in case of accident or illness among the migrants; the contractors allow some cash advance if asked for, but this is deducted from the wages calculated at the end of the campaign.

The progress of the work campaign puts greater pressure on the seasonal migrants. The long working days begin to tell on the physical condition of the workers and the animals. Added to the hard work and the poor nourishment, the summer heat sets in, taking day temperatures to 100 °F. Drinking water becomes scarce. The mukadams, keeping a constant supervision over the production of charcoal and its movement, prod the migrant workers into turning the season into one of maximum productivity. The speed of work becomes more frantic, to complete manufacturing and transporting the material taken in hand, before the rains break.
As the season draws to a close, the mukadams are in
instant touch with their principals as well as with other
mukadams with whom they compare the overall season and market
trends. There is speculation at several levels of investment
on how long the campaign can be stretched, and how much produce
transported out of the Konkan before the rains come.

If the monsoons are delayed, the work campaign gets
extended into the first half of June. If the rains begin
early, the season is brought to a sudden end, may be in the
first half of May.

The migrants have no defence against such changes in the
work schedules. Although the unpredictability of the season
affects the entire coal manufacturing industry in the Konkan,
the migrants are naturally the most vulnerable. Once the rains
begin in Ratnagiri, the contractors stop operation abruptly,
settle their accounts and wind up the campaign speedily leaving
no work for the Lomans. The Lomans then pick up their belongings
and drive the bullocks up the ghats to return to their home
villages.

On the trek up, frequently troubled by the early rains
that lash the ghats at this time, the migrants often suffer
casualties among their pack animals, already enfeebled by the
work campaign. There is an urgency to complete the return journey
in as short a time as possible, so as to begin tilling the few
acres of land in the home tandas in preparation of the kharif
season. The mood is none too cheerful for, as we shall examine
below, the final settlement of accounts in the Konkan, rarely
allows them any significant amount of cash remuneration to carry
home for all the work put in over the six or seven months of the work campaign.

The Wage Structure.

It is difficult to describe the wage structure in the charcoal manufacturing industry in the Konkan, for, as explained above, no cash wages are paid to the workers during the entire working season. Instead, there is a system of payment, in kind, of subsistence rations for the men and animals, as well as of ad hoc advances from time to time to meet particular requirements and emergencies. Only at the end of the campaign are accounts finally settled between the parties, and the dues worked out in monetary terms.

On the Laman side, the season's transactions are not recorded in writing. The contractors and mukadams do keep account books but there are closely guarded and not available for investigation. We were able to discuss, in great detail, with the migrant workers, the rates orally fixed by the contractors, the number of animals put to work, the trips made each day, as well as the amounts received by them either by way of cash advances or in kind per week during the season. From this, an idea of the average output of work in the season and the general condition of remuneration in the industry can be gauged and this is presented below.

However, before this is done, it is necessary to explain the difficulties in analysing the system of wages and payments in this industry. Firstly, the entire business is based on a hierarchy of short-term oral contracts. Some contracts extend
to the financing of the manufacture of a certain quantity of charcoal and buying it back on the spot at a predetermined price. Others, only to the providing of Katkar labour on a commission basis. Coal is sold at one price at the kiln-site, at another rate at the road-head, and yet another rate in the market, the difference hinging not merely on the relative distances alone, but also on the deals the middle-men are able to strike. There is thus no single contractor who manages all the operations from purchase of forest to marketing of the end produce. Instead, there are a number of big agents and small, and middlemen. And it is difficult to follow the chain of costs and profits through this hierarchy of contractors and sub-contractors.

A second problem is that no two accounts of the migrant families are similar. The advances taken from the contractors vary, as does the quantum of grain and fodder drawn per week, which is dependent on the size of the working unit and the number of animals put to work in the campaign. Moreover, the length of the working season itself varies from family to family: some migrants are brought in at the start of the season, others when the campaign has already got underway. There may be other absences or non-working days during the campaign owing to illness or death in the family.

It is thus necessary to examine each migrant household's account separately and to analyse the payments in cash and kind received against the total out-turn of work for the season. This was done and three representative accounts are presented in Table VI – 5.
### Table VI-5

Representative Accounts of Bull-Lassan migrants during the working season 1978.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of the migrant</th>
<th>Total no. of working days</th>
<th>No. of Bulls employed</th>
<th>Total out-turn of work in the season</th>
<th>Advances in cash &amp; kind</th>
<th>Final Settlement</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lobha Damu Rathod</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Bulls employed=6</td>
<td>600 - initial advance 2500 - advances.</td>
<td>He should have owed only Rs. 450 to the contractor at the end of the season. However, he was informed that he owed the contractor Rs. 1150/-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 trips</td>
<td>450 - grain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 trips</td>
<td>900 - oilcake</td>
<td>-2100 - work cut-turn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>per bull</td>
<td>350 - fodder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>per day</td>
<td>160 - misc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>150 - return fare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 2160</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pandu Jesu Chavan</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Bulls employed=10</td>
<td>Rs. 4,500</td>
<td>He should have received Rs. 600 in cash at the end of the season; but was told he owed the contractor Rs. 400.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 trips</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>per bull</td>
<td>500 - fodder</td>
<td>4000 - work done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>per day</td>
<td>240 - grain</td>
<td>3200 - advances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>160 - misc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rama Bhan Rathod</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>Bulls employed=9</td>
<td>Rs 7560</td>
<td>He should have brought home Rs. 500/- but was given only Rs. 200/- at the end of the season.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 trips a day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>980 - grain</td>
<td>3240 - advance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>900 - oilcake</td>
<td>4320</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>160 - misc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rs. 7560</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the case of those migrant labourers engaged in cutting the trees and preparing the charcoal, it is even more difficult to work out similar representative accounts. We were told that the norm was felling two trees per day and the average wages approximate Rs. 5 per couple per day. However, the productivity in manufacture depends on the skill and speed with which a kiln is set up and fired. It was reported that the prepared charcoal could be sold at the kilnsite at anything from Rs. 14 to Rs. 20 per quintal depending on the quality. One respondent reported that the flak (broken bits) were not paid for by the contractor and, therefore, the migrant had suffered a loss of Rs. 1,000 over the season on this account alone.

For the Laman mukadam, the investments vary enormously depending on the scale of their operations. One mukadam stated that he began the season with an advance of Rs. 47,000 taken from his superior agent, and recruited twenty-five Katkari families to transport it to the road-head depots. He purchased felling rights in the private forest at Rs. 12,000 for the season and sold twenty-seven lorries (of eight tons each) of charcoal at Rs. 2,500 per truck. The total turnover of his business in that season was, therefore, Rs. 67,500. However, at the end of the work campaign, he still owed his principal agent Rs. 4,500/- despite the fact that he had sold back the charcoal to the contractor at Rs. 32 per quintal instead of the prevailing rate of Rs. 50, in consideration of the initial loan. The contractor had further sold the charcoal at Rs. 75 per
Another Laman mukadam had borrowed Rs. 20,000 for the season from a Bombay merchant, and engaged thirty units of Kathari to make the charcoal and twenty-five bullocks for transporting it out of the forest. He had purchased the forest at Rs. 10,000, transport had cost him Rs. 20,000 and various administrative expenses Rs. 1,000. For the migrants he had to spend Rs. 40,000 on foodgrains, Rs. 3,000 on their clothes and Rs. 3,000 on feed for the animals. However, it had proved to be a disastrous season because ten kathari units deserted early; he managed to sell twenty-one truck loads of charcoal to his principal at Rs. 50 per quintal, but the campaign had ended putting him in debt for Rs. 15,000 and he had borrowed Rs. 200/- for the return journey.

It is, therefore, seen that the Laman mukadams, although with better resources than those of the other two categories of Laman migrants, still face many more odds in this fluctuating business than their main contractors because principal contractors slice away a large share of profits by imposing a predetermined price per quintal, which is much lower than the actual market price of the coal. The Laman mukadams' advantage, in organizing the campaign, lies in their intimate knowledge of the business and local conditions over twenty or thirty years of experience. However, they reported feeling trapped by a lack of finance and dependence for this on the coal merchants to whom went the major share of the profits in the industry.
An attempt was made to study the value added per bag of charcoal in the process of manufacture and transport. On an average, the cost of the forest lot comes to about Rs. 3.50 to Rs. 4 per bag of charcoal, the wages for felling the wood and making the coal are another Rs. 3.50 to 4; the transport on bullocks to the main road is Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2, and various other administrative expenses, including obtaining government permission etc., add another Rs. 2 or Rs. 3. Thus a bag of charcoal is prepared at Rs. 8.50 to Rs. 12, and is sold locally at around Rs. 10 to Rs. 14. On transport to Bombay, it sells at Rs. 40 that is, at Rs. 80 per quintal. This indicates that the main value added is in the truck transport, and the profits go mainly to those contractors who handle the transportation of the produce by road and its marketing and who also finance the manufacture.

For the Laman migrants as a whole, the chances of the work campaign ending with any cash in hand seem poor. Table VI-6 below sums up the overall outcome of the season for the Lamans at the time of the final settlements.

Table VI-6
The Season’s Outcome for the Migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Profits</th>
<th>Debts</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood-cutters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transporters</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukadams &amp; Bivani</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the thirty-one migrant households whose transactions were probed in detail, only one-third reported to have come away from the Konkan with any cash in hand. Two-thirds had left the Konkan having been informed by the agents that they owed some amounts to the contractors.

Of those families who came away with some profits at the end of the campaign, only one was a wood-cutter. Although categorized as wood-cutter, that being the major occupation, this household happened to be partly in manufacturing and partly in transporting. The head of the household reported that the season had been profitable on the manufacturing side but he had suffered heavy losses on the pack transport front. Of the seven households among those engaged in pack transport who had had a successful season, the amounts they carried home ranged from Rs. 50 to Rs. 1,000, but averaged Rs. 406 per family. Out of the two households, in the third category, only one was a mukadam who had made a net profit of Rs. 900/- and the other was a salarised Diwanji who carried home Rs. 700/-.

On the other side, among those who had had an unsuccessful season, the amounts owed at the end of the work campaign ranged from Rs. 100 to Rs. 15,000, but averaged Rs. 2,019. A fact worth noting is that of these persons, the four most heavily indebted were Leman mukadams who had taken the risk of borrowing capital for the season from the non-Leman contractors but suffered heavy losses resulting in debts of Rs. 3,000 and Rs. 4,000 and, in one case, of Rs. 15,000 owing to their principals.
Many of those who had had a luckless season, reported having lost animals, either during the work campaign or on the way up after the season. One family reported having lost nine bulls in the Konkan during a single campaign. There were also distress sales of the animals at the end of the season. Either in order to raise money for the migrant family's return to Manikdaundi, or out of fear that the enfeebled animals may not survive the long march home, animals were sold off at as low a price as Rs. 75 or Rs. 50 per head. In one case, because the migrant had borrowed initially from the contractor to buy fresh pack animals for the season, and had then been unable to make it a successful season, the contractor retained the Laman's six bullocks with himself.

However, an interesting fact to be noted here is that, even when the migrants finished the season ending up in further debt to the contractors, in all cases, they received, nevertheless some token amount of Rs. 50 or Rs. 100 from the contractors for the return journey and gave promise to work for the same employer in the following season. Indeed, we found that both groups of migrants, irrespective of whether they had ended the season in debt or come away with some modest profit, undertook to return to work for the same contractor should he need them the following season. It is thus that one year's accounts are carried over into the next, and both sides admit that such relationships stretch over more than one generation.
The Costs of Migration.

As the preceding section shows, very few Laman families bring home any cash profit from their six or seven months of migration outside the home region. Except for a few hundred rupees in a good year, the majority of the wood-cutters and coal-transporters return indebted to the contractors, having sold off one or more bulls, their capital asset, and have to turn to their scanty pieces of land to eke out a living during the rainy season, when the coal manufacturing operations cease in the Konkan. Despite this, they return every year to the Konkan because it nevertheless keeps the men and animals engaged during the long off-season and at least affords a subsistence wage to them during this period. They are thus forced out of their home region by the drought-akin agro-climatic conditions and their poor land base at home; and compelled again to leave the Konkan region during the rains as they have neither shelter nor employment there during that season. This annual march to and fro is not without long-term costs both to the group in particular, and to the society as a whole.

The first is the physical toll the migration takes. The annual migration from Pathardi taluka to Ratnagiri district involves some seven to eight hundred kilometres of march, to and back, part of it a very severe climb through the western ghats. The hardship of camping in the open for more than half the year, exposed to the cold in the winter months, through the sweltering heat in the summer, and at the mercy of the rains on the trek home, is reflected in the frequent loss of life of
both man and animal. The long march of twenty, twenty-five days each way is undertaken by young children, pregnant and newly delivered mothers, as well as by those past fifty years. Often month-old babies are carried on the backs of the mother. These severe conditions tell on the health of the migrants who consequently age far before their time. It is a strain on the migrants and a loss to the society in terms of the strength and productive capacity of its labour.

The encampments of the Lamans in the villages in the Konkan are invariably on a piece of wasteland with no facilities. It is often a long walk to the watersource; since rarely will the local villagers allow the Lamans to draw water from their wells. Indeed, the camps are often three to seven kilometres distant from the main village and although the Lamans may return year after year to the same villages in the Konkan, they remain 'outsiders' in the local imagination and unabsorbed in their social structure. While the men and some of the women go up into the forests to drive the bullocks, the other women, remaining in the camp, busy themselves with cooking two meals a day on wood-fires, gathering fire-wood, filling up water, grazing the animals and minding the children.

For the children of the tanda families school is dispensed with for these seven months. Although many Lamans, in the course of discussions, blamed their misfortune and exploitation on their own illiteracy, it is evident that the need for and significance of education does not form a positive part of their value system. In reply to why the children were
not sent to school, the perfunctory replies all pointed to the bother of getting transfer certificates from the home village schools and the fact that the camps were five or more kilometres from the school, but often with a great deal of indulgence in tone:

"This one? She doesn't stay in school. She ran away."

Scattered and migratory as the Laman camps are, compulsory primary education has no meaning in their lives. The result is a new generation that will suffer the same handicaps as the older one. Considering the further fragmentation of their landholding, the physical strain that the migration involves, and the illiteracy of the young generation, their life seems doomed to limited options.

An interesting effect of the economic impoverishment upon the cultural traditions of this group is seen in the changes in the women's costume. Up to the present generation, the women wore elaborate, hand-embroidered and decorated full skirts and conspicuous jewellery originally of silver; but latterly of an alloy called 'Pupaya'. However, in recent years, they are increasingly changing to plain, six-yard mill-produced Saris, much like the ordinary dress of the rest of the rural proletariat in the State. Although to some extent the change to the simpler styles of the majority cultures around them, signifies an aspect of modernisation or 'Sanskritisation' as well, a majority of the Laman indicated that the women folk could no longer indulge in the fancy hand-work required for the traditional costume, because they
had to supplement the family earning by field labour or
daily-wages on public works. The result is that almost
no one in the new generation of girls has been taught the
traditional needle-work that was a hallmark of the tribe.
The famous Rajasthan embroidery with mirrors and shells is
thus almost a lost art among this group, and a cultural
loss to the larger society.

Perhaps the most difficult to compute and yet the
most pervasive effect of migration is the group's self-image
and outlook upon the future. Except for a few young mukadams,
who had jumped their status from transport labour to contractor,
the large majority of the adults interviewed described their
lives in depreciating terms and viewed the future in a fatalistic
mood. Many openly voiced their amazement that any interest
could be generated in their lives. There was a clearly
perceptible awareness that they were the outsiders in both
communities whether in the home region or in the place of
migration, and that they had no share in the developmental
efforts of the administration.

In the next chapter, therefore, we examine the role of
the Government, its developmental policies for the home region
and their impact on this migration.
CHAPTER VI

Notes.


3- Childers, C.H., Pastoralists and Nomads in South Asia, Weisbaden, 1975, is only a brief ethnographic monograph that does not cover these details.

4- Breman, J., op. cit. page 1327.