

THE PRACTICE OF UNPAID LABOUR (BEGAR) IN SINDH RICE BELT: LOOKING FOR THE EVIDENCE OF EXPLOITATION IN SHARECROPPING ARRANGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focuses on the life experiences of sharecroppers, of Sindh Rice belt in Pakistan. The purpose of this paper is to grasp the subjective meaning of sharecropper's experiences associated or related to the unpaid labour (Begar), and to assess the prevalence of Begar as a kind of social and economic exploitative arrangement. Sharecroppers are approached in this research as active agents capable of shaping and transforming their identities and power relations. Field Theory with attributes 'safety first' and 'risk aversion' have been applied to understand multiple aspects of unpaid labour (Begar). It was found that Begar is not a major form of exploitation, as usually it is depicted. Wage-less work is not imposed by the landlord. Contrary to that, it is explicitly negotiated by the sharecropper. Begar is a two way dualistic process in which both landlord and sharecropper cooperate and reciprocate for different reasons to seek multiple concession and social benefits. The practice of unpaid labor is a continual process influenced by multiple identities of the sharecropper and the landlord, in which dominance and subjugation are not fixed and unilateral, but fluid and ever-shifting. Data was collected through field group discussions, participation observation and conversational interviews, followed by thematic analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Begar is a Sindhi colloquial term of the upper Sindh, which means the practice of 'wage-less work' or 'unpaid labour', that is, work performed by a sharecroppers without wages being paid to him/her. It is the common practice regulated by informal norms, conventions and customs of sharecropping. It is considered as a form of bonded labour in development reports and survey based scientific research (Maliha, Razzaq, & Shazreh, 2004) (Bhandar

Sangat, 2012). Rapid assessments and quantitative surveys generally attribute the prevalence of bonded labor, as a kind of exploitation, as the common phenomenon, or as the norm of peasant society. The characters of bonded labor have been defined by one rapid assessment as “long-term and heavy indebtedness; dependence on the employer for subsistence needs and services; restrictions on movement; violence or threats of violence; non-payment or excessively low wages; unpaid or obligatory labour of family members...and inequality of negotiating positions” (Maliha *et.al.*, 2004:27-28). None of these characters generally hold true in case of Sindh Rice Belt. Sharecroppers are not indebted; they are not dependent on landlord or on subsistence agriculture; their movement is not restricted; threats of violence are very rare; payment and non-payment of wages is negotiated or, in return, reciprocity is expected; obligatory family labor on the land of landlord is almost non-existent; inequality in positions to negotiate is not greatly polarized between landlord and sharecropper.

In Sindh Rice Belt small landlords having 20 to 30 acres of land are commonly found, yet the majority of landholdings belong to small landowners who largely do self-cultivation. In case, small landholder is engaged in other occupation or in a government job or goes to earn in the Gulf, he rents his land on sharecropping. Small landlords and their sharecroppers expect and maintain friendly reciprocal relationship in all spheres, including in terms of unpaid labour. Big landlords having 100 to 200 acres of land are uncommon.

Despite all that, one cannot deny that in certain regions of Pakistan like lower Sindh, sharecroppers are not being exploited through the extreme form of unpaid labour (*Serri*) and debt bondage (Bhandar Sangat, 2012), (Ercelawn & Nauman, 2001:4). The situation in Sindhi Rice Belt, which is located on the right side of river Indus in Upper Sindh, greatly differs from the lower part of Sindh. Although some of the quantitative surveys implicitly assume that there is some reciprocity involved in unpaid labour in upper Sindh, it is considered meaningless to explore what conventions of reciprocity prevail there, or how unpaid labour is negotiated between sharecropper and the landlord. They have

largely focused on the lower Sindh where unpaid labor may take the form of forced labor trapping sharecropper into debt bondage Bhandar Sangat, 2012; (Ercelawn & Nauman, 2001:4)). This paper has also been written on the assumption that the unpaid labour, its prevalence, its negative consequences and its exploitative nature in certain areas cannot be properly understood until and unless multiple and less extreme forms of conventions of Begar, are systematically analyzed in the context where they prevail.

Sharecroppers of Sindh Rice Belt are not vulnerable to debt bondage and an extreme kind of unpaid labour. Therefore, they are not as much prone to such risks. They have evolved multiple conventions to tackle with possible exploitation in terms of unpaid labour, and resist to that in a variety of ways. On the other hand, landlords are also resisting to sustain their status quo. They tend to employ unpaid labour as strategy to keep sharecroppers within limits and to offset perceived excesses of sharecroppers. These and several other structural changes, which will be analyzed here in detail, have affected the practice of wage-less work in great many ways.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

General approach of the research is embedded in interpretative and subjective research paradigm. Purposive, non-probability sampling was used to select and determine sample size. Study was conducted in three different geographical areas of upper Sindh Rice Belt in Pakistan. The team of three researchers did participant observation, conversational and semi-structured interviews, field group discussions (FGDs) and individual case studies during the sowing or planting season in the flooded rice fields, in *Otaqs* (traditional guest houses), and *Maikhanas* (place for smoking and drinking). Regional approach in the selection of sample size and area has been adopted. Villages from Talluka Larkana of District Larkana and the Talluka Nasirabad of District Qambar-Shahdadkot were selected due to the underlying belief of the researchers that it constitutes the core of Sindh Rice Belt.

An individual sharecropper as a representative of his/her sharecropping family, who patronizes his family and makes sharecropping agreement with the landlord or landowner, is the

basic unit of analysis of this study. Two clusters of villages were studied in Larkana District and the third one in Talluka Nasirabad of Qambar-Shahdadkot district. Each village cluster lies about 30 kilometers away from one another. Each village cluster is comprised of 4 to 5 small villages inhabited by sharecroppers. Fifty eight segments of interviews were recorded of 52 sharecroppers along with 2 FGDs. From selection of the topic till the completion of report writing, it took almost seven months to complete. Research was started in June, 2011 and completed at the end of December, 2011 in the same year.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The notions of “safety first” and “risk aversion” (Scott J. C., 1979) (Feeny, 1983, p.769) about the economic vulnerability of peasants are extremely useful, as conceptual analytical tools, to understand the practice of wage-less work. Scott argues that peasants are ‘risk averse’ or follow ‘safety first’ principle. Peasants avoid taking agricultural risks and largely prefer to depend on traditional methods of cultivation. Scott has emphasized the ‘subsistence insurance’ nature of peasant economy by which unexpected disastrous agricultural losses are offset.

Both sharecroppers and landlords are approached here as active agents having somewhat common internalized “habitus” structuring the socio-political structures of the rice belt’s “field” (Bourdieu, 2003).

Our concern here is to deal with the multiple conventions of perceived structured exploitation reciprocity and subsistence ethic, in terms of wage-less work. Why peasants do work for which they are not being paid in cash? Is the wage-less work a total exploitation of sharecroppers, or do they also, some way, benefit from it? Answers to these questions would help us conclude, if the *Begar* is a kind of a reciprocal exchange, or a form of exploitation.

UNPAID LABOUR AS A FORM OF EXPLOITATION: COUNTER EVIDENCE

Relatively bigger landlords having more than fifty acres of land deal a bit differently with sharecroppers. Big landlords are, in

fact, not common in Sindh Rice belt, yet one such landlord could be easily located in each central village (*Deh*). Such big landlords contract sharecropper on the implicit assumption that he/she will do labor free of cost at the landlord's self-cultivated unit of land, which is deliberately left by the landlord for the sharecroppers to cultivate on his behalf. This practice, which is called *Serri* in lower Sindh, is not much institutionalized in Sindh rice belt. Yet it is causally practiced, in case the landlord is a village headman (*Wadera*) as well. Such landed area usually left under cultivated with the expectation that the sharecropper next to it will irrigate, plant and harvest it. Another convention, not recorded in previous researches, is that the landlord allots few acres of brackish land, newly brought under cultivation, to each of his sharecroppers, for cultivation on sharecropping. It is, however, agreed while making agreement that the sharecropper will cultivate that land, willy-nilly, so that it could be brought under profitable cultivation. Landlord provides for all necessary inputs, with substantial concessional loan to lessen the burden on sharecropper. Sharecroppers avoid to cultivate such lands as the profit from them is very low, yet they somehow gladly concede because sharecropper not only makes several concessions in terms of inputs, but also compensates by allotting such sharecroppers the best and economically viable piece of agricultural land. The profit margin from such economic landholdings is more than satisfactory for the sharecroppers. In case, if the sharecropper thinks that he is not being sufficiently compensated by the landlord, he has the option to quit, protest, and renegotiate the terms at any time.

Sharecroppers are sometimes intimidated of land snatching, but not forced, to do sowing, planting, harvesting, watering and collecting on behalf of landlord. Sharecroppers, usually, are not allotted share from the produce of such a land. All input expenses of that land are borne up by the landlord himself and sharecropper is merely employed to do necessary labor. Such arrangement is highly variable. In some cases, sharecroppers are paid some cash, a few mounds of paddy or bundles of dry hay are offered by the landlord to assist sharecropper. Although, seems utterly exploitative and exposes the extent to which sharecropper's labor

can be exploited, yet it sufficiently guarantees longer tenure and security from land-snatching so long as sharecropper keeps doing *Begar* and tends landlord's self-cultivated land and domesticated animals.

Sharecropper of a big landlord may be completely on the mercy of landlord to exploit his/ her labor, yet sharecropper, at the same time, gains some side-benefits as well. Submissiveness of sharecropper brings him/her closer to the landlord, to win his trust and familial contacts tend to increase. He gets social protection from landlord. Mutual interaction at kinship group (*bradari*) level, at wedding ceremonies, food festivals, sacrificial and sacred rituals increases and a sharecropper enjoys the ambiance of landlord's circle. In times of need, landlords may turn out to be extremely generous to such submissive sharecroppers and may provide him loan when needed, charity or used or unused material stuff.

PROFIT MAXIMIZATION BY THE SHARECROPPERS

Both the sharecropper and the landlord are well aware of the unpredictability of the crop yield. They calculate impending risks and dangers to the crop, instead of making maximum profit out of it. Moreover, sharecropping agreement is so informal and causal that terms and conditions and the responsibilities of both the landlord and sharecropper are based on subjective expectations of both sides from each other. Each side merely pretends that the other would do his/her best to maximize yield and reduce risks, but who should do what and when, is not clearly identified. For example, those sharecroppers who had low lying and uneven lands under cultivation and those whose lands were at the tail of the water course demanded that landlords should dump the lands with clayey soil and bear up de-silting expenses of water courses. On the other hand, landlord pretends that the sharecropper should de-silt by himself, and should sow crop in time before rainy season, planting a water resistant variety keeping in mind the low lying nature of the land. None of them takes it much seriously. It seemed that if they mutually cooperate, better and higher paddy yield can be produced, but in practice, not a single case of mutual cooperation was found or observed which could have led to the

ideal level of yield from an acre, i.e. 120 maunds/6 kharars per acre. The best piece of fertile land was reported to yield four kharars or 80 maunds per acre, cultivated by a small landowner himself. Whereas average yield was even less than half the best reported yield, i.e. 2 or 2.5 kharars or 50 maunds per acre.

Same can be said of so called unpaid labor. Landlord allots the best piece of land to the sharecropper and expects that he would reciprocate by producing optimum yield, without indulging in theft and would bring fodder for landlord's animals, assist in building house-wall, assist in loading and offloading etc. To say, always, yes to landlord is taken as sign of gratitude towards landlord, in case the sharecropper has been rewarded him by allotting the best piece of land. The best piece of land does not always mean high-yielding one. It could be one less prone to submerge, closer to sharecropper's house, located along friendly sharecroppers, not the bone of contention and easy to irrigate. Instead of profit maximization, in terms of cash-cropping to sell in the market, sharecroppers and landlords take the whole sharecropping relationship as a kind of necessary and natural socio-economic practice, driven by multiple conventions. Sharecropping is not just for profit-maximization, it is also about reciprocity, exchange, social relationships, inherited practices, cultural practices, brotherhood, tribal affiliations, kinship, an intrinsic value of the land, domestication of animals, attachment to ancestral village etc.

VANGÄR (COMMUNITY BEGAR)

The form of free work called Vangär, was the pivotal part of the Sindhi village community controlled by the Wadera landlord. Village headman (Wadera) could summon all of the village peasants to do community work or headman's personal work. Headman, in return, was obliged only to serve them a special meal.

Wadera or village headman usually arranges '*Vangär*' in which all of his sharecroppers, village peasants and members of his Raaj are summoned to finish certain tasks like planting or sowing of paddy, harvesting and collecting, loading and deloading from trolley, managing and arranging for guests on occasions like

wedding and death ceremonies, house or wall building, repairing mosque, de-silting water courses etc. *Vangār* of village headman is kind of token service in response to the protection and security provided by the landlord. Only food is served to laborers of 'Vangār' by village headman. Peasants, villagers and sharecroppers, which were previously bound up remain within the vicinity of the village have now moved to far off areas, other villages, towns and cities. Their businesses and occupations have multiplied. It is really hard, now, even for the powerful landlord to gather villagers at one place, not to mention of engaging them in Vangār (community service or his personal work). Community *Begar* is now a rare phenomenon and thought impractical as the power and influence of the village headman has declined in recent decades. Yet the variant of old traditional moral principles of landlordism to regulate village economy, culture and community, still hold sway and followed, though in a greatly modified form, yet sharecroppers and general village peasants now enjoy much more individual and familial freedom. Vangaar, however, can also be called upon by the sharecroppers, in which he/she just serves a meal to unpaid laborers.

VOLUNTARY BEGAR

Sometimes sharecropper and his family voluntarily seek free labor or Begar. They might volunteer to do *Begar*. For example, female sharecroppers may wash clothes and clean landlord's house and in return they may accept to be offered second hand materials, clothes and charity money from the landlord's family. Sharecroppers bring fodder for landlords' animals in exchange or being provided some milk, yoghurt(*lassi*), or buffalo on *aadhiyara* (half-share) that means in exchange of taming a buffaloes or cow or goat entitles a sharecropper to a half of its share.

Accommodative interaction with landlord or his family is considered by sharecropper as socially and economically beneficial by the sharecropper. Sharecroppers expect financial assistance and social support from the landlord and for that purpose little extra work of landlords, performed free of cost, is wisely deemed tolerable.

Wadera landlord overexploits his tenants and uses them in his private manual work without paying them a single penny. Sharecroppers have to do beggar otherwise they can be forced to leave the village and abandon sharecropping. One of the tenants of *Wadera*-landlord was ordered to evacuate the village. The reason was that he had deliberately missed the *Begar* of *Wadera*. Only after begging forgiveness from *wadera*, he was allowed to reside in the village. Peasants dare not usually challenge *Waderas* authority; only when they have viable alternative to dodge *Wadera's* influence, they do defy his authority.

Landlords provide loan to sharecroppers for cultivation expenses as well household expenses but under the tacit agreement that the sharecropper would also look after the some acres of land of the small landlord which he himself cultivates. Sharecropper prepares for him seed bed, waters the rice field and do most of relevant work even harvesting and threshing without and wage payment. It is just the refined kind of unpaid labour.

HOW LANDLORDS JUSTIFY BEGAR

Landlord justifies *Begar* to balance the income losses due to theft and hidden conspiracies by the sharecropper. From the landlord's point of view, he cannot all the time keep an eye on the field activities of the sharecropper. Therefore, some mistrust always remains in the mind of the landlord. For that matter, he adopts the strategy to allow him or tolerate little adventures of the sharecropper and in return, he can employ him in *Begar* to offset the assumed loss due to sharecropper's stealing, theft and the overuse of land resources. He, sometimes, deliberately lets sharecropper's animals to graze all over his land or on its margins, lets him/her to grow fodder on little field, lets him/her to take green paddy grass for animal feeding, lets him pruning field trees and gives some kilos of grain or produce to his children as a good will gesture.

Dry hay and husk form the undistributed share is usually taken away by the sharecropper. Although landlords usually allow several subsidiary concessions to sharecropper, still they internally believe peasants as thieves of land produce and although

sharecropper enjoys several concessions and sometimes voluntarily does work without being paid, still they complain unfairness of *Begar* and wish that it be not imposed.

RECIPROCITY IN BEGAR

Although the nature of relationship is *ad hoc* and the dominance of landlord in forcing the sharecropper to do his free work depends on multiple factors and on “individual whims and fancies” (Maliha, Razzaq & Shazreh 2004:11), there are several other reasons that lead sharecroppers to do, or seek work without wages. What are those individual landlord’s as well as sharecropper’s whims that, to a certain degree, determine the nature of wage-less work?:

- The active involvement of the landlord in farming activities and keeping vigilant eye on them along with taking minor extra field work and house work.
- Landlords living in the same village which makes access to the sharecropper easy.
- Domestication of animals by the landlord for which extra labor needs are met through unpaid labour.
- Landlord being influential and powerful may sometimes intimidate sharecroppers if they show reluctance to cultivate landlord’s personal land. That is, in-fact, a rare phenomenon in Sindh Rice Belt.
- Landlessness of sharecropper making him vulnerable to do unpaid labour. Not all sharecroppers are landless and hence, not all are equally vulnerable. Most of the sharecroppers have their permanent homes in their respective villages. There are very few who are settled temporarily on the land provided by the landlord. Now the right of village headman, as the virtual owner of village property and nearby wasteland is openly contested by co-villagers. In the past, evacuated houses were considered the property of village headman, but now, villagers and sharecroppers sell or gift them to their close relatives. Many sharecroppers in Sindhi Rice Belt have two or four acres of personal agricultural land. Therefore, to fulfill their subsistence needs and animal fodder, they do not have to

depend on the land contracted under sharecropping.

- Sharecroppers do not prefer to do sharecropping of the big landlord, due to the fear of work extortion. More than fifty percent of the land belongs to the small landowners who are usually employed in some other business, job or occupation. *Begar* as a form of exploitation is virtually absent in case of small absentee landowners and sharecroppers, in fact, feel themselves lucky and independent.
- On the contrary, in certain instances, being the sharecropper of *Wadera* landlord and house being built on the land-area provided by the village headman may virtually convert sharecropper into a slave. Sharecropper belonging to the low-caste family, tribe or to the neighborhood of poor peasants makes him vulnerable to wage-less work.
- Being the relative of the landlord or *Wadera*, or belonging to the high-caste may save sharecropper from being implicated in wage-less work.
- Sharecropping on the land of absentee landlord who rarely visits his lands lessens the probability of work extortion.
- Living in a different village away from landlord's home or reach also saves sharecropper from extra work without pay.

Above acts clearly demonstrate that although, sharecropper-landlord relationship is considerably ad hoc, it is not solely subject to individual whims and fancies of the landlord. Sharecropper also takes rational decisions to choose or not choose wage-less work. Moreover, social and contextual factors like sharecropper's individual standing in the kinship group, village or having or not having some landed property etc., greatly determine the nature and incidence of wage-less work.

Unpaid labour has multiple uses for them, it not a kind of total exploitation. Sometimes, it is practiced as a reciprocal exchange (Mauss, 1970) when it is served to the *Wadera*, and as a negative bargain, when it is served to the landlord of sharecropper.

Peasant economy of Sindh, in today's interconnected and ever globalizing world is still largely a moral economy, in which reciprocity and exchange is still practiced in somewhat varied

form, though, largely cash crops are grown there and sold in the market. *Begar*, hence, in certain instances is just like a reciprocal gift exchange (Hart, 2007).

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF BEGAR

Mixed Moral Economy: In Sindh Rice Belt, the modalities of avoiding agricultural risks and adaptation of subsistence agriculture have their own uniquely dynamic structure. Rice is not only a staple food, but it is also the major cash crop of the area. Sharecroppers and landlords store enough paddy, hay, husk and wheat to consume throughout the year, yet larger portion of the produce is sold in the market. Hence, contrary to James Scott's notion, sharecroppers in Sindh Rice Belt look at the pros and cons of both, of how much is taken away by the landlord and destroyed by vagaries of weather (safety-first/risk aversion) and how much is left for their annual consumption (subsistence requirements) and market sell (cash economy).

Peasant economy of Sindh Rice Belt, still, largely seems to be moral economy in which socially and economically better positioned sharecroppers, landowners and landlords protect, cooperate, as well as, resist and exploit on moral, socio-cultural grounds, independent of economic differences. Economically weaker sharecroppers, villagers and kinship groups are assisted and defined against one another (Williams, 1978) in such a complicated way that the mere economic inequality as a basis of exploitation becomes practically relativised, rather meaningless.

Traditional solidarity, community consciousness, is still somewhat intact, yet the authoritative position of the landlord has weakened due to occupational diversification, impact of mass media and rural-urban mobility, giving way to trans-village casteism and further horizontal mobility. Impact of market economy has been considerably adapted to the traditional moral and cultural values. There are no signs of any open resistance or a revolutionary situation confronting landlords against sharecroppers.

Sharecropper and Landlord as Structuring Agents: Practice of *Begar* and general sharecropper-landlord arrangement

is very much in consonance with the 'field theory' (Bourdieu, 2003). Landless sharecroppers are very well aware, individually as well as collectively, that they are being exploited, yet, because of the fact that, sometimes, in certain situations, they feel themselves powerless, they do not resist openly. The same can be said about their landlords. Landlords may also feel hapless before certain contextualized sharecroppers. When the opportunity is there to get rid of so called 'free work' and landlord's exploitation, sharecroppers openly resist, or start cheating back their landlords. Viewing from the lens of field theory Bourdieu, sharecroppers share their "internalized structures" (habitus) (Bourdieu, 2003) with other sharecroppers, villagers and the landlords. Habitus, being a structuring structure, allows them to act creatively within the field of Sindh Rice Culture. Field is the structured structure, which changes, modifies or transforms the rules (doxa) (Bourdieu, 2003) and norms of rice culture, in its own way. Structure of the field is not fixed, or controlled by the forces outside the field. Sharecroppers, Village headman, landowners and landlords are the prime agents who internally shape and restructure the field of Sindh Rice Belt. The domination and subordination of individuals and groups within the field will be contingent upon the possession or ownership of the social (social contacts), cultural (sharecropping skills, religious sect), symbolic (high caste), economic (land, domestic animals) and political (tribal affiliations) capital by the sharecroppers and landlords.

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND MULTIPLE CONVENTIONS

In today's' globalizing world, peasant communities are no more isolated or secluded entities. Gone are the days when villages were homogenous and self-sufficient units. Peasant communities are now directly dependent on their urban counterparts for the everyday necessities of life. They sell their produce in the market at the city; have established links with the miller and the middleman and maintain familial relationship with their educated relatives living in urban suburbs. Roads and transport has brought villages nearer to urban centers. Yet despite that globalizing force, peasants of rice belt seem to have maintained their distinctive

identities structured by their own internally dynamic 'field' and 'habitus' (Martin, 2003). Change of locations, increasing mobility and contacts do not have led to homogenization, instead rules of social inclusion and exclusion (Barth, 1969) influenced by peasants' multiple role, caste, sharecropping, alternative sources of income have led to further differentiation.

Meijl (2008) has cited Ritzer (1992) who maintained that globalization leads to homogenization, whereas, contrary to that, globalization may lead to heterogeneity as well (Appadurai *et.al.*, 2001). The same can be said of Sindh Rice Belt and the practice of wage-less work prevalent there. The practice of *Begar* has greatly transformed now. It is not strictly practiced, followed or abided by the sharecroppers. Both landlords and sharecroppers manipulate it in many different ways to satisfy their own interests. For example, sharecroppers perform wage-free work, when they feel like it, when it also suits their purposes. Otherwise they do not even engage in sharecropping arrangement. They sometimes cheat or deceive their landlords and back off from promised *Begar* when it would not affect their sharecropping agreement. Similarly, landlords, also, are not always assertive, all powerful or exploitative. All these variations further lead to the complex of sharecropping arrangements in which *Begar* serves multiple functions through multiple conventions of labour and of both landlord and sharecropper.

CONCLUSION

Begar, or unpaid labour is just like a reciprocal practice; it is a delayed exchange, inalienable, actor dependent, qualitative in relationships and practiced between people, instead of, between objects. *Begar* is like a moral obligation, not an economic compulsion, on the part of sharecropper to serve, and in exchange seek certain concessions. *Begar*, once served, also morally constrains landlord to reciprocate and provide certain benefits and concessions to the sharecropper.

The fact that sharecroppers have now alternatives to sharecropping, they do not feel obliged to remain yes-men of the landlords. That fact has further tilted the conventions of *begar* in

favor of sharecroppers. They are now more often explicitly negotiating the terms and conditions and the conventions of work without pay. The practice of wage-less work has so changed in Sindh Rice Belt that it can no longer be said as an extreme form of exploitation, not to mention of the root cause of social and debt bondage, as it is in lower Sindh. Therefore, it would be fallacious to generalize wage-less work, as essentially exploitative of the sharecropper, over the whole Sindh. Peasants cannot be reduced to few categories; neither some nor all of peasant and sharecropper categories can be labeled as victimized or marginalized. Moreover modalities and conventions of unpaid labour differ from region to region. To assume that all landlords are essentially exploitative is also a myth. On the contrary, as we found during our survey, there can be found certain land owners and landlords who may be exploited and their landed property controlled and manipulated at will, by their sharecroppers. Therefore, exploitation, if found, cannot always be generalized as one way unilateral practice in which landlords are reified as exploitations of the labour of sharecroppers.

Sharecropping arrangement, in terms of unpaid labour (*Begar*), in Sindhi Rice Belt is a two way dualistic process in which both, the landlord and sharecropper, resist, cooperate and reciprocate for different reasons, to seek multiple concessions and social benefits from each other and from the community.

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