Building Differences: An Exploration of Stratification in Ladakh's Labour Market

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List of Acronyms

BRO – Border Roads Organisation
PDS – Public Distribution System
DfID- Department for International Development
UT – Union Territory
LAHDC - Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council

Abstract

Social stratification is alive and well in the northern Indian territory of Ladakh. From the 10th century CE to the present day, historical, economic, political, and social changes to the fabric of Ladakhi society have altered the content of this social stratification to its present form today. In contemporary Ladakh, almost all low-wage labour is conducted by cohorts of migrant workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, and Orrisa. The lives of migrant workers working in Ladakh are fraught with hardship and exploitation. Using the work of Weber, Scott, Fischer and Bebbington, this paper seeks to explore the historical and contemporary evolution of social stratification in Ladakh, with a focus on the stratification between Ladakhi and migrant worker populations in the region.

Keywords: Social Stratification, Migrant Workers, Subsistence, Class, Status, Himalayas, Ladakh

Relevance To Development Studies

In a world of increasing division and differentiation, the study of social stratification, and the factors which lead to it, is a fundamental experience for the student of Development. Patterns of stratification based on the status, class, or power vested within a community are some of the key processes that lead to an internal differentiation within a society and therefore, any prescriptive models to mitigate this differentiation must be based on an intricate understanding of the socio-economic context of a region that led to the development of stratification.

"A cold and rainy morning. We have just finished the five-hour drive from Srinagar, crossing the Zo Ji La, one of India's highest motorable roads. It has been two days since we left Delhi for Ladakh and the sight of the Drass valley, our first view of the region, comes as a blessing. The road we are following was conceptualized by Kashmiri invaders almost 200 years ago, and although its plans were laid a few generations ago, it is being constantly updated and reworked by groups of migrant workers from some of India's most 'backward' districts. We pass by a few groups of workers before we stop at a pair of men who seem to be taking a break". – (Author's Field Notes 2022)

1.1 Introduction

Initially, this research project was aimed at performing a comparative study of the livelihood strategies of migrant workers versus that of local Ladakhi farmers. Through interviews with stakeholders across Ladakhi society and a thorough analysis of the available literature, this research project aimed at understanding what allowed Ladakhi farmers a greater degree of resistance to taking up low-wage forms of labour than that of the average migrant worker. However, as could happen with any qualitative study, my fieldwork and research presented deeper and more pervasive themes that yielded richer avenues for analysis.

It was during this first interview with two migrant workers that these themes began to emerge. In speaking to the two workers, one a Bihari and one a Kashmiri, around a small pot blackened with years of soot, they began to paint a picture of a Ladakh that is not offered in much of the literature on the region[1]. Brought to the region under the false pretences of good pay and 'skilled work' the duo had spent the last 5 months working for the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), helping crews of road builders load equipment and heavy machinery onto trucks.

In the five months that they had been working on this deserted stretch of highway, they had been subject to arbitrary wage cuts, a litany of health issues related to the high altitude at which they worked and a 'supervisor' who took a monthly share of their wages to 'offset' his costs. The two stated that in their time in Ladakh, they had worked on a variety of construction projects and had never once seen a Ladakhi performing menial labour. When pushed as to why they thought that was, one worker pointed out a nearby village and said:

"Each house there has its own walls, their own fields, some even have more than 30 goats. The only work that I have seen a Ladakhi do is working on their fields. We do all the other work for them." - (Author's Field Notes, 2022)

Other interviews taken in the two-week span of fieldwork pointed towards a similar theme. In conversation with a Ladakhi homesteader, when asked why Ladakhi's were not often found working as construction labourers or in other forms of menial wage labour, the answer given was:

"There are always other options" he said, *"We have land, we have friends and the Phasphon[1], why would we need to work so hard?* - Author's Field Notes (2022)

[1] With the notable exception of Johnathan Demenge's illuminating account of the lives of migrant workers in Ladakh.

1.2 Research Problem

Data from local labour offices, statistical handbooks and ethnographic studies conducted amongst migrant worker communities in Ladakh provide some insight into the responses above. Since the region's opening to tourism in 1974, there has been a spate of changes that have altered the material foundations of Ladakhi life. An increase in the region's importance in Indian defence strategy meant that road building and infrastructure development in the region began to increase at a lightning pace.

With these socio-economic shifts in Ladakhi demographics and infrastructure, came changes to the distribution of labour and resources in Ladakh. In 1981, over 84% of the working-age population was engaged in agricultural labour while the secondary and tertiary sectors (hospitality, tourism, transport, and public sector employment) only employed around 3 and 11% of the working-age population respectively. During the last national census in 2011, these figures had almost inverted with only 27% of the working population engaged in agriculture and over 70% of the population engaged in the tertiary sector.

Unsatisfied with employment opportunities in newly opened Ladakh and reeling from the death of the caravan trade, members of the upper classes engaged in mass migration to India's metropolises in search of higher wages and education opportunities. Those that could not migrate chose to take advantage of the newly built government schools that offered education for themselves or their children providing them with a set of skills that would prepare them for a new Ladakh. Equipped with an arsenal of literary and empirical skills there emerged new social groups who began to accumulate capital at a terrific rate through lucrative government contracts, building hotels, businesses, and the tourism industry.

In an essay entitled *"Class, Status, and Party: Economically Determined Power and the Social Order",* Weber states that status can be defined as "*a quality of honour or a lack of it"*(Weber, 1946 pg. 115). Weber states that honour, an unequally distributed social currency, depends on normative and cultural values within a region or society. Although Weber argues that status groups and classes are different social categories, he states that they eventually amalgamate to complement each other; where status and honour provide avenues for the generation of wealth and power which in turn confer a higher status to the recipient.

In Ladakh, status has played an important role in the social cohesion of the community. As described by Janet Rizvi in her study of the Ladakhi community of Photoskar, an individual's status was linked intricately to their position and occupation in the social fabric of the village. Painting a picture of occupational status, Rizvi states that traditionally, it was only the *Amchi*[2] and the village head, *the Goba,* who was seated at the head of the table at any community gathering (Rizvi, 1996) However now, this space is frequently occupied less by monastic and political heads and is now also reserved for the wealthy and well-connected(Rizvi, 1996).

Data and ethnographic evidence (Sudan, 2008; Demenge *et al.*, 2010; Demenge, 2015) also show that in the same period, the increase in the availability of low-wage forms of employment in Ladakh has not translated to an increase in the number of Ladakhi's engaging in these forms of labour. In 2020, of the 1050 workers that registered themselves with the Leh[4] Department of Labour 2020, only 5% of those were Ladakhi(Sudan, 2008).

[2] An Amchi is a doctor trained in the traditions of Tibetan herbal medicine

1.3 Research Question

The facts above coupled with the author's observations and gathered responses in the field, point towards a deeply stratified labour market in Ladakh. Through a mixture of interviews, an analysis of the historical trends of migration and a novel framework using theories of social stratification, and subsistence capacity, this research project is aimed at answering the question:

Why has stratification in Ladakhi labour markets evolved the way it has, particularly between the occupations conducted by local and migrant populations?

1.4 Methodology and Methods

To answer the research question above, this paper has employed a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. The research project relies on the use of interviews taken in Ladakh over a span of two weeks in August 2022, and a thorough analysis of secondary literature on Ladakh to formulate its inductive arguments. This is not to say that this thesis does not make use of any quantitative data sets to formulate its arguments, but rather that these data sets serve to complement and supplement the qualitative inferences taken from field work and a review of the available literature.

The interview process consisted mostly of a set of opportunistic interviews taken with migrant workers and Ladakhi households. There were two sessions of interviews with migrant workers, the first interview with 2 workers, and the second with 7 workers. In recognition of the extremely harsh and often unfair conditions under which migrant workers are employed in Ladakh, the decision was made to only stop and talk to workers that were either on break or waiting at the end of the day for a bus to take them to their labour camps. This was a prudent choice, as many of the workers that I spoke to at them time recounted experiences of arbitrary wage cuts by their supervisors on the basis of even the most minor of infractions. The first set of interviews were conducted on one of the primary roadways in Ladakh, the Srinagar – Leh road, the second set were conducted on a more peripheral road – the road from Leh to Chilling – to ensure that the proximity of the first set of workers to the urban hubs of Kargil and Leh did not affect their responses.

Interviews with the 4 Ladakhi households followed a similar process, the interviews were conducted ad hoc, and the chosen respondents were those who agreed to participate in the interview process. In total, I interviewed 13 respondents: 4 Ladakhi households and 9 Migrant Workers over the course of 6 interview sessions. In nearly all cases, the interviews were conducted in Hindi, with one being conducted in Ladakhi. For the interview in Ladakhi, a language with which I can claim no fluency, I had the help of a close friend and confidant who has been an integral part of multiple research projects in Ladakh. The results of these interviews are presented through field notes reproduced in Appendix 1. Since the data taken from the field research by no means resembles a structured interview process, it was unviable for this thesis to base entire arguments solely on the responses collected over the span of the 2-week research process. Instead, this thesis uses data collected from the field research to substantiate more concrete arguments made from a review of secondary literature on Ladakh and social stratification.

1.5 Overview of Thesis:

This thesis is divided into three main conceptual chapters. Chapter one serves to operationalise social stratification using the theories of Max Weber and John Scott. In this chapter, it is argued that the study of social stratification is mired in a problematic confusion surrounding the notion of class. Drawing on the work of Scott, this chapter argues that the rejection of class as a unit of analysis by

much of the literature leads to an existential crisis for the researcher searching for a unit of analysis upon which to base arguments on social stratification(Scott, 1996, 2002). The vacuum left by a rejection of class is repudiated by an insistence from Scott that we return to the Weberian notion of class, restricting it to a purely economic category (ibid). I show how Scott's plea for a return to Weber's tripartite model of social stratification, far from being a return to an antiquated framework, is prescient when dealing with communities like Ladakh that are caught within a transition from substantive to formalist economies. Finally, Drawing on Weber's tripartite model of stratification, this chapter presents instances of the development of status, class, and command situations that have influenced the direction of social stratification in Ladakh today.

To provide a novel analytical approach to the formation of class, status, and command situations (the fundamentals of Weber's tripartite stratification) in Ladakh's labour market, I have decided in Chapter two to delve into a historical analysis of the literature on Ladakh, spanning from the 10th Century CE to present day. The reason for providing data from such a wide breadth of time is simple. As Weber reminds us, class, status, and command situations resonate through the passage of time; their progression is not broken by changes in epoch or era, but rather their character altered by shifts in normative values of social honour and esteem (Weber, 1946). As power and authority shifted hands from the Kings of Ladakh, to the Kashmiri Dogra, as new classes of merchants and workers arrived in Leh, and as the instrumental rationality of modernity began to pervade every nook and cranny of social and economic life in Ladakh, so too did the nature and character of status, class and command situations alter. Thus, this chapter will study the shifts in Ladakhi history in three periods, the Monarchical period, the Dogra period, and the post-Independence period. Within each section, this chapter will provide accounts of the historical progression of class, status, and command situations in Ladakh and will argue that each of these have an interrelated effect on each other to form social stratification as it is today in Ladakh.

Chapter three approaches the issue of social stratification in Ladakh from the point of view of subsistence. This chapter seeks to answer the seemingly paradoxical nature of subsistence-oriented households in Ladakh in resisting low wage forms of labour. Arguing in line with the work of Fischer, Hill and Bebbington, this chapter argues that subsistence, far from being a barometer of poverty, provides Ladakhi farmers a form of absolute wealth as well as a relative wealth over migrant worker populations in Ladakh. This absolute wealth protects Ladakhi subsistence households from the *compulsion* of manual wage labour and loss of dignity and status that may accompany it(Fischer, 2006, 2008). Thus, this chapter argues that maintaining subsistence is a livelihood strategy for many households due to the protection it offers in terms of the social and material wealth it provides; a strategy which in turn compels Ladakhi farmers to hire migrant labour on exploitative rates, further perpetuating a system of stratification.

2. Chapter One: Status, Occupation and Social Stratification: A framework

Any sociological investigation is only as good as the conceptual framework it employs. For a tradesman or worker, choosing the right tool is as important as the skill with which you use it. Similarly, the researcher of social stratification and status generation is faced with a veritable wealth of analytical 'tools' from which to draw their analysis of events. To operationalise the terminology of *stratification* and *status*, used heavily in the chapters below, this chapter will first provide a brief analysis of the literature on social stratification and status before moving into an analysis of stratification in Ladakh.

The key characteristics of social stratification across most of the literature is as follows: 1) It is based on a designation (normative or institutional) of goods on a hierarchical scale (Grusky, 2008, pg. 5)

2) It is based on systems that disburse these goods to various occupations across the division of labour (ibid)

3) The constant execution of 'mechanisms of mobility' (both social and economic) assigns occupations, cultural roles, and positions that confer an unequal distribution of goods (ibid).

Social stratification then can be seen as the 'internal differentiation' of a society into a hierarchy of social groups (Scott, 1996, pg. 1), each with specific material foundations of life and reproduction, based on the distribution of resources of goods that are - culturally or economically - considered valuable. (Grusky 2008; Scott 1996, pg.5-6). However simple the definition may seem; it is not where the analytical function of social stratification lies. It is the *epistemological background* of those who study social stratification that has added many nuances to the concept and a resulting crisis in its use.

2.1 Theorising Stratification: A Crisis

Neo-Marxist sociologists have used a classically Marxist notion of class as an entry into the investigation of social stratification (Scott, 1996). Much of the scholarship in this camp (Dahrendorf, 1959; Wallerstein, 1979) argue that class structures are the intrinsic landscape upon which inequality is based. These writers argue that the cultural factors of stratification are nothing more than a non-material representation of class conflict (Wallerstein, 1979).

Others like Blau and Duncan (1967) cast away the 'ascriptive' models of class and instead suggest that the sociologist ought to focus instead on a merit-centric argument that assigns *achievement* as the sole disburser of social rewards (Blau, Duncan and Tyree, 1967). They make the sweeping claim that *"In a liberal democratic society we think of the more basic principle (of stratification) as being that of achievement. Some ascriptive features of the system may be regarded as vestiges of an earlier epoch, to be extirpated as rapidly as possible"* (Blau, Duncan and Tyree, 1967, pg. 486).

Casting the landscape of status generation on an individual's life cycle instead, Blau and Duncan investigate the effect of an individual's father's occupational prestige, their education and their first job on status generation and find that these variables account for a 33% variance in the occupational status of men (Blau, Duncan and Tyree, 1967; Sewell, Haller and Portes, 1969). Their rejection of class and other 'ascriptive' structural processes of stratification and status generation are echoed by social psychologists who accept Blau and Duncan's basic model of social stratification but introduce 'psychological constructs' like aspiration and mental ability to the generation of status and occupational position in the life cycle(Sewell, Haller and Portes, 1969). Although both papers reject 'ascriptive' structures in constructing the social inequality that leads to stratification, they do not provide much justification for this position. For instance, in their concentration on *aspiration* as a

psychological construct that "*perform(s) functions in transmitting anterior forces into subsequent behaviours"* (Sewell, Haller and Portes, 1969, pg. 90), the authors provide no explanation as to where these 'anterior forces' originate and what their possible impact on *aspirations* may be.

Other camps in the literature also echo the dissolution of class as a category of analysis, albeit for very different reasons. Pakulski and Waters (1996) argue that class as a concept has ceased to provide any real relevance to the lived experiences of much of the western world (Scott, 1996) due to what they perceive as a reduction in class differentials in highly industrialised societies (Pakulski and Waters, 1996) In the context of a study into the evolution of labour stratification in Ladakh – a region which is by no means wholly industrialised nor post-industrial – this argument cannot succeed. In fact, in much of the developing world, class differentials exist and - in contrast to the assumptions of Blau and Duncan – even flourish. For instance, Duggal and Dilip (Dilip and Duggal, 2002) show empirically that expenditure in health care in India is wholly dependent on class differentials (ibid).

The myriad depictions of class, its suggested demise as an analytical tool (Pakulski and Waters, 1996) and its outright rejection (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Sewell, Haller and Portes, 1969) presents, on the surface, a crisis for the analysis of social stratification. How can one investigate the evolution of social stratification without a unit of analysis on which to base it? Is the solution, as Blau and Duncan (1967) or Sewel et al (1969) offer, to reduce this unit to the life cycle of the individual? Or is the solution to reject class for an analysis in favour of other concepts like gender, ethnicity, and sexuality (Scott 1996, 2002)?

In his text "*Stratification and Power: Structures of Class, Status and Command",* Scott (1996) provides a possible solution. He argues that scholarship on social stratification could solve this crisis – the crisis of class as he calls it – with a return to the Weberian understanding of class (Scott, 1996). The Weberian notion of class, those components of an individual's life that is predicated *solely* by the economic and its disbursement of goods (Scott, 1996), is juxtaposed to the concept of status groups, which Weber defined as those components of an individual's life that are governed by social honour (Gerth and Mills, pg. 186-7). To this dialectic of class and status, Weber adds the related concept of power[3] to form a *trilectic* framework for social stratification(Weber, 1946, 1947; Scott, 1996, 2002). Just as class and status situations relate to the typical effects of each order (social or economic) on the life chances of an individual, so too does Weber define power or command situations as *"those causal components in individual life chances that derive from the differentials of power that are inherent in the exercise of rulership" (Scott, 1996, pg. 45).* The next section of this chapter will explore the value of Scott's re-evaluation of the Weberian conceptualisation of class and status in solving the "crisis" of social stratification research (Scott, 1996, 2002). As much as is possible, this section will supplement Weber's arguments with examples from Ladakh.

2.2 Weber: Class, Status and Stratification

Weber and Class

The two major texts Weber produced on status and stratification are "*Class, Status and Party" (Weber 1946)* and *"Status Groups and Class" (Weber, 1947).* Across these two papers, Weber outlines his conceptualisation of class, class situations, status, status situations and dignity to explore the evolution of social stratification in society. Starting with an exploration of the difference between economic power and social power, Weber argues that power garnered through the economic is not

[3] Scott (1996) argues that this has been misrepresented and should be instead called command

tantamount to power granted to one through the social (Weber 1946). Weber calls the way economic power is distributed in a community, the *economic order* (Weber 1946) and similarly gives the title *social order* (ibid) to highlight the hierarchy through which social power is distributed. Although separate entities and systems of *ranking*[4], the two orders are often similar in their content and react with one another (ibid).

Marking another difference between class and status, Weber provides three characteristics of class that are separate from status. Weber states that class can be seen when several people in a community have common "causal" experiences of lifestyle (Weber 1947). This is added to with the stipulation that these experiences are predicated *solely* by economic interests (Weber, 1946, Scott 1996) and finally, are "*represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets"* (Weber 1946, pg.115). The combination of these features of class are what Weber calls the *class situation* (Weber,1946, 1947).

In Ladakh, an example of two groups that are diametrically opposite in terms of their 'causal' components of lifestyle, are represented solely by economic interests, and embedded within the labour markets, are the migrant workers and subsistence-oriented farmers in Ladakh. In the context of class situations, migrant workers are present in the region for *solely* economic reasons instead of those relating to status generation (Demenge et al., 2010). Moreover, compared to the Ladakhi supervisors and farmers for whom migrants' labourers work the lifestyles of migrant workers are seemingly homogenous[5]. This is of course not to create a monolith out of the experiences of Ladakhi migrants but rather shows to serve that the "causal" components of lifestyles among migrant workers are very similar and point towards the existence of class situations and status situations between Ladakhi and migrant populations.

Weber, Status and Command

Weber outlines status thus: "*In contrast to classes, status groups are normally communities. In contrast to the purely economically determined 'class situation' we wish to designate as 'status situation', every typical component of the life fate of men is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honour". (Weber 1946, pg.118)*

Weber's focus on the lifestyle of an individual, the indicator of membership to a particular class situation, is also the key indicator of one's position within a status situation or status group (Weber 1946; Scott, 1996). However, the primary difference between these two concepts is that while class situations are predicated exclusively on the economic situation of an individual, membership to a status group does is not dictated by *property*[6]. Thus, like class situations, status situations are also expressed by a particular style of life (Weber, 1946) that is expected from those in a particular group or community. Linked with these manifestations of lifestyle are impositions placed on social intercourse with members of other status groups (Weber, 1947). Weber states that the notion of what constitutes a viable style of life for membership into a status group is borne out of the normative and the institutional structures in each society.

In *Status Groups and Class (Weber 1947)* Weber provides a more detailed outline of *status and status groups*. He states that the term status:

"..Will be applied to a typically effective claim to positive or negative privilege with respect to social prestige so far as it rests on one or more of the following bases: A mode of living, a formal process of education which may consist in

[4] Weber does not use this term; I have borrowed it from Parsons and the functionalist school of social stratification
[5] The lives of most migrant workers are uniform in the tasks they perform and the hardships that they suffer. See Demenge et al (2010) for an illuminating insight into the lives of migrant workers.
[6] One of the defining characteristics of a membership to a particular class situation according to Weber.

empirical and rational training and the acquisition of the corresponding mode of life, and on the prestige of birth or of an occupation" (Weber, 1947, pg. 127).

The prescience of Weber's claim on the generation of status in the context of Ladakh must be delved into briefly. Studies (Girst, 2008; Richard, 2015) have found that the inculcation of a 'western' model of education in post-independence Ladakh has directly affected the status generation and resultant lifestyles of Ladakhi children (Richard, 2015). Girst's study in the Kargil district of Ladakh show that the attainment of education for both men and women had quick become a pre-requisite for a 'suitable' marriage (Girst, 2008). The intermarriage of two families then is dictated by a specific social estimation of status.

Furthermore, in the context of the social stratification between Ladakhi's and the populations of migrant labour in the region, the stark differences in the 'style of life' (Weber, 1946, 1947) of Ladakhi farmers and migrant workers are clear indications of the difference in social prestige associated with their occupations and resultant lived experiences. In his ethnographical account of the lives of migrant workers building Ladakh's roads, Demenge (2010) shows categorically that the 'modes of living' of migrant workers are significantly different to those of most Ladakhi families (Demenge *et al.*, 2010; Demenge, 2015). Interviews I conducted also pointed to a perception among migrant workers that their styles of life were markedly different to those of Ladakh farmers. When asked why he felt Ladakhi's were not seen doing the same work as migrant workers, a worker from Kashmir pointed to a nearby village and said to me:

Each house there has its own walls, their own fields, some even have more than 30 goats. The only work that I have seen a Ladakhi do is working on their fields. We do all the other work for them." - (Author's Field Notes, 2022)

His response outlining the material wealth and relative comfort of Ladakhi households compared to his 'style of life' as the key reason for a lack of Ladakhi participation in low wage labour is yet another indication of the formation of social stratification based on the interplay of economic situations (the existence of a class of migrant workers) and status situations (a particular style of life that is based on a normative notion of honour) (Scott, 2002, 1996; Weber 1947, 1946).

Scott: A Return to Weber

Scott argues that much of the contemporary scholarship on social stratification - while not refuting the tripartite of class, status and command - focuses on only one of the three analytical concepts to formulate their theories of social stratification. For example, Marxist understandings of social stratification, argued that economic differentiations were the basis of the formation of a social class instead of status, which Marx considered a vestige of pre-capitalist societies (Scott, 1996, 189 -192). Those from the normative functionalist school of social stratification saw status as the agent of stratification (Scott, 1996). The conflict school, critical of the functional normativists, argue that it is instead power that is the basis of social stratification in a community (Scott, 1996).

Scott's argument that a return to the Weberian triad of stratification, which takes into account the intensive research and singular focus of the schools listed above, is the best way forwards for research into social stratification. Weber's recognition of the role of the economic and the non-economic in altering an individual's life chances, and thus their entry into particular class or status groups, places a great deal of importance to the interdependence of these parallel streams of power that run within a community (Scott, 2002). As we have seen above, status is distributed to a particular group or individual based on an estimation of social honour whose roots lie in the normative and institutional values of a community (Scott, 1996). In the same way, class situations exist in situations where the labour market or commodity market produce access to resources or goods, which in turn betters or worsens their 'life chances' (Scott, 2002. Pg. 30).

Although class and status situations originate from separate sources – markets or normative values, they are often linked to one another in intricate ways (Weber, 1946, 1947). For example, in Ladakh, occupations such as those in the public sector (government jobs for the state or centre) are prized not for the salary they provide - which are modest compared to other jobs in the tertiary market - but for the prestige and honour they confer to the recipient(Girst, 2008). Thus, the Weberian notion of class situations and status situations shows us that as status reinforces class, so too does class reinforce status. The material foundation of an individual's style of life then becomes the defining indicator of membership to different class and status situations.

Scott states: "*The material features of class relations, he [Weber] argued, become central features in conscious- ness and identity because the styles of life with which they are associated are the principal bases for the estimation of social honour." (Scott, 2002, pg.30)*

As we have seen above, the prescience of Weber's triad of social stratification and its ease of application to Ladakh is quite remarkable. The following chapter seeks to explore the application of Weber and Scott's argument further in the context of the development of stratification in Ladakh. To do so, the following chapter will provide an account of the historical, political, demographic, and economic changes that took place in Ladakh as the region shifted on its arc of modernity, while providing examples of the development of particular class and status situations in the region as they appeared.

3. Chapter Two: Social Hierarchies and Stratification in Ladakh: Past to Present

Ladakh is not unique in its transition from substantive to formal economies and shares much of the same experiences as communities across the globe caught amid this transition. Although the *content* of these transformations may be different in different communities, the *form* remains the same; peripheral communities undergo rapid and myriad changes to their labour markets, social hierarchies, and the material forms of production in these communities. To understand these changes as they occurred in Ladakh, this paper must first rely on a historical analysis of the processes that went behind the formation of a Ladakhi identity in the periods before and after India's independence.

The first period, the "monarchical age" spans from the 10th Century CE to 1841, and the second period, categorised by colonial and Dogra rule lasts from 1841 till the year of Indian independence (1947). The final period, spanning from 1947 to the present day is characterised by the governance of the Indian state.

3.1 The Monarchical Period

Historians and sociologists writing on this period of Ladakhi political and economic history are the first to acknowledge the flaws inherent to having such a large section of history to condense into a homogenous historical account. Rizvi (1996) argues that the reasoning behind this is twofold, the first being that there is a serious dearth of historical accounts available to fill in large gaps in the region's history. Ladakh has a long history of oral traditions and the loss of these sources of knowledge through either death, conquest or old age have left large unfillable gaps in historical accounts of the region (Rizvi,1996). The second reason provided for amalgaming the entirety of Ladakhi history from the 10th century to 1841 into one historical category is because this period saw

very little change in the political and economic lives of a majority of Ladakhis (Rizvi, 1996; Rinchen Dolma, 2018a, 2018b).

The monarchical period of Ladakh was a pre-capitalist society with a fixed class situation of aristocratic and monastic nobility who exercised supreme executive power over a large population of villagers and merchants(Michaud, 1996). With the aristocracy in the capitals of Leh and Kargil, the foundation of Ladakhi society comprised of local village heads who bore the responsibility of collecting taxes and land rents from merchants and farmers(Michaud, 1996). Below this lay a class of tenant farmers, who although isolated from Ladakhi society, enjoyed a better position in the labour hierarchy than the landless peasantry who worked on the fields of tenant farmers(Michaud, 1996). Erdmann states this population of workers, at the bottom rung on the monarchical period's labour hierarchy and social stratification, were subjugated even further by social notions of purity and untouchability (Erdmann in Michaud, 1996, pg. 289).

By all measures, life in this period of Ladakh's history was highly stratified into various levels of class, status and command situations. The supreme authority of the monarch gave legitimacy to the class group of aristocracy that maintained their control through taxes and land rents. The status and legitimacy given to the status group of monks and monastic heads originated from a cultural and normative assessment of the value of the sacred. Demarcated by a power of the religious over the mundane, the Buddhist monastic tradition commanded much power in Ladakhi society, differing sovereign powers have historically presented gifts of land, tax breaks and human resources to monasteries as gifts of fealty or appeasement(Michaud, 1996). In the monarchical period, monasteries and their head Abbotts enjoyed large tracts of commercial land upon which the landless classes worked and toiled for little to no pay. The status afforded to the monastic tradition provided them land, a wealth of economic resources and yearly tributes of grain and livestock allowed for the continuation of their status situations through Ladakh's period of monarchical rule(Rinchen Dolma, 2018b). This is an important fact as much of the land gifts given to the monasteries in Ladakh remain within their control even today, providing the monastic institutions a wealth with which they have been able to retain their status situations.

3.2 The Arrival of the Dogra

By 1841 Ladakh was under the control of the Dogra court. Historians of the region have argued that although Ladakhi aristocracy lost much of their political authority and economic control of the flourishing caravan trade that ran through the region, the lives of Ladakhi farmers and landowners stayed largely the same (Michaud 1996).

Landowners that had sided with Gulab Singh's general, Zorawar Singh during the latter's long march towards Leh, were given the authority to continue to collect tax from the serfs under their control whilst those landowners that were loyal to Ladakhi led rebel armies and militias were either stripped of their titles or had their land subsumed under the collective authority of landlords loyal to Gulab Singh. Another example of a status situation, membership to which is predicated on a similar style of life dictated by the normative values of society, that saw most of their status remain intact were the monasteries. Singh's work on the contemporary land holdings of Ladakh's monasteries today show that much of their authority and control of commercial and residential land remained unchanged under Dogra rule (Singh in Dolma, 2018, pg. 232).

The establishment of Dogra rule in Ladakh also paved way for the migration of many Muslims from Kashmir. Whether this was a concentrated effort on the part of the Dogra court to build a class of intermediate merchants and middlemen in their newly acquired territory, or whether the migration of Muslim merchants was an opportunistic method of primitive accumulation that

aimed at capturing new markets, is still debated today (Michaud, 1996). Whatever the case, the influx of Muslim migrants in the region led to a new class of money lenders who, by paying off the land debts of peasant families, were able to establish themselves as a class of landowners in a short period of time. By renting their newly acquired properties to poor Buddhist farmers, Muslim landowners were able to develop a large amount of "merchant capital" (Michaud, 1996, pg. 290) which was transformed into "exchange value" through investments into trade on the flourishing trade route (Michaud 1996, pg. 290). Thus formed a new class situation of traders and merchants, combined of both Buddhist and Muslim households who, while sharing vastly different styles of life predicated by their normative values (for example, rituals and belief systems), maintained similar styles of life predicated by their access to labour and commodity markets (for example, their material lives, access to trade markets, and business interests).

The development of these class situations by no means wiped out those of the past but rather class situations and status situations evolved with shifts under the new command situations devised by the Dogra court. As fealty to the Dogra court brought with it the ability to continue taxing a population of landless farmers (Michaud, 1996), so too did it bring the status associated with the ability to command taxes from a population. As the command situations of the Dogra court opened the markets of Ladakh, it brought with it a new class situation of Kashmiri Muslim traders who entered an already existing class situation of Ladakh traders.

As power changed and shifted hands in Ladakh from the Monarchical period to the Dogra period, so too did the content of class, status and command situations alter. However, as we have shown, the command, status and class groups that developed in these periods were not lost in the annals of history but rather evolves in ways that sought to retain their position and privilege, provided either through the solely economic, the normative, solely through access to command, or as it is in most cases, through a combination of all three.

3.3 Post-Independence

The partition of the fledgling Indian state in 1947 bifurcated the country overnight. As millions made their way to 'homelands' they had never seen before, crafted for them by the arbitrary divisions of India's western and eastern states, Ladakh saw its first glimpses of inclusion into the wider politics of the Indian state.

At first, not much was destined to change in the region; the project of Indian state building being otherwise occupied with the greater politics of the accession of Kashmir into the newly 'imagined community of India. However, Ladakh was not to be isolated from the geopolitics of the Indian state-building project for long. The First Kashmir War of 1947 saw West Pakistan making significant inroads into the state of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh with their armies positioned only 30 kilometres from Ladakh's capital Leh. Another conflict on Ladakh's Tibetan border between China and India in 1962 cemented the region's geo-strategic importance in the eyes of policymakers in Delhi. Simultaneously within Ladakh, this experience led many leaders to question their position within the wider politics of Kashmir, in turn prompting the beginning of agitation towards Ladakhi self-governance (van Beek, 1998, 2000).

This section will begin with an exploration of the socio-economic changes that occurred in Ladakh in the post-independence period while paying particular attention to the generation of status and the shift in value systems from the traditional and substantive to the positivist and formal.

Changing the Minds of Ladakh

Although formal education existed in the region prior to the colonial project, access to it was restricted to Ladakh's elite and most scholarship was predominately religious in character (Richard, 2015), Arguably one of the first introductions to formal education[7] in Ladakh came with the establishment of the Moravian Mission School in Leh in the late 19th century (Richard, 2015). Established by a collective of Moravian missionaries, the school did not see high enrolment rates from local Ladakhi's for many years. Those that did send their children to the Moravian school were of a select few that could afford it and were simultaneously convinced of the value of a formal education (ibid). Thus, a significant number of Ladakhi boys[8] that attended the Moravian school were the sons of Muslim merchant families, whose greater participation in trade and wage economies and intercourse with cultural values external to Ladakh, altered their attitudes towards the utility of education and their "economic role expectations for their children"(Richard, 2015).

However, this was not the case for a majority of Ladakhi's at the time; their attitudes towards education perhaps best described by the common proverb: "*The educated man makes for a poor farmer"* (Richard, 2015, pg.42). With little to do with knowledge and skill development in subsistence livelihood strategies, education was neither economically nor socially significant enough for the average Ladakhi to allow their children to take time away from the lour intensive work of cultivation (Bray 1983). These glacial changes in the attitudes of Ladakhi's towards formal education picked up pace in the post-independence period. With the building of primary in schools in nearly every village and secondary schools in every district of the region, education was, for the first time, open and accessible to all[9]. Literacy rates in the region grew exponentially, since 1981[10] the literacy rates in rural Ladakh increased from below 10% for females and 30% for men to 65% of women and 85% for men in 2011(Zutshi and Angmo, 2017).

Soon, only those that possessed the requisite skills in the positivist traditions of formal education were eligible for the most coveted occupations in the wage economy. Public sector positions - prized for the status, authority, and job security that they bestowed – were the first to require a certificate of secondary schooling. Those that were able to afford the newly established private schools in the urban centres of Ladakh had an advantage over their peers in Ladakhi public schools, due to the latter's lack of education standards[11]. An increase in the number of children sent to school meant that households in rural Ladakh were beginning to appreciate the utility of a formal education and were making this decision against the value of keeping their children home to help with cultivation. These decisions were made simpler by the introduction of a slew of technological innovations in the fields of Ladakhi farmers as well as the introduction of social provisioning services like the Public Distribution System (PDS)[12]. As education became a coveted means towards

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[7] Defined here as a system of education - based on sciences, maths, English and Urdu - predominantly in the western classroom style.

[8] In the pre-independence period education was a male-dominated sphere of life

[9] For an exploration to the quality of this education and its effects on the wellbeing of Ladakhi children, see Richards (2015).

[10] The first year of data collection in Ladakh

[11] A fact perhaps best seen through the fact that over 95% of Ladakhi's failed their secondary school examinations in 1991.

[12] See the below sections for a discussion on these changes.

a new end (social mobility and status generation) for Ladakhi households, so too did positions in the wage economy become coveted.

As Richard (2015) states in her study of well-being and education in contemporary Ladakh that "*Ladakhis (no longer) consider what others might call "informal education," such as learning how to do housework, fieldwork, or herding, to be education*."(Richard, 2015, pg.60). This change in attitude towards education, spurred by ideological shifts in what is considered a valuable livelihood strategy, have resulted in a massive shift in the attitudes of Ladakhi households towards the value of traditional skillsets. This is perhaps best seen through the fact that now subsistence-oriented families short on labour would rather hire migrant labour from Nepal, Bihar and Jharkhand to help with cultivation work rather than allow their children to distract themselves from their study.

We see here the necessary requirements of status generation posited by Weber. Status, he reminds us, can be seen by one or more of the following: "*A mode of living, a formal process of education which may consist in empirical and rational training and the acquisition of the corresponding mode of life, and on the prestige of birth or of an occupation" (Weber, 1947, 126).* In the context of education in Ladakh, we see all the above. Education in positivist and empirical skillsets have provided Ladakhi families with avenues towards new modes of living based on economic wealth and status acquisition. As education offers those who possess it the eligibility to apply for the most coveted of positions in Ladakh's labour market, the status generation that begins in Ladakhi classrooms is plain to see.

Altering Family and Land

The Indian state then began to promulgate a spate of legislation aimed at transitioning Ladakhi society and its markets. Of these pieces of legislation was the 'Buddhist's Polyandrous Marriages Prohibition Act 1941', a colonial-era law that aimed at restructuring the edifice of the most basic unit of Ladakhi social life; the family (Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). The banning of land holdings being passed down based on primogeniture and the abolishment of polyandry altered the social structure of the family and in turn changed the social relations of production that had been present in Ladakh for centuries(Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). The ban on primogeniture meant that land, which was once reserved for the eldest son, was now divided equally between sons and daughters(Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). As pointed out by Schmidt (2008) a reduction in landholdings also reduced the amount of available crop to each novel nuclear family, forcing family members to search for employment in the wage market. Livestock, now also divided equally between offspring, meant that a family needed to have enough land to till for their subsistence as well to grow fodder for their livestock(Mankleow, 2008). Many, forced by circumstance to choose between their livestock and crop farming, sold their livestock in the marketplaces of Leh and Kargil (Girst, 2008; Mankleow, 2008). As the number of farmers without livestock, with which to plough their fields, increased, so did the number of farmers who turned to technology as their salvation (Mankleow, 2008).

The introduction of the tractor and new chemical fertilizers promised to save time and manpower in the fields of Ladakh, and for a while they did. Troubles with mechanized and chemical farming soon became apparent. With no government guidelines on the safe application of government fertilizers in Ladakh, farmers were left to their own devices, and many began experimenting with mixtures of local and chemical fertilizers in the preparation of their crops(Mankleow, 2008). This un-uniformity in the application of fertilizer meant that farmers in the same village witnessed vastly different harvests and in turn, vastly different levels of income and subsistence in the same growing year(Mankleow, 2008). Recently, many farmers who used

unregulated amounts of fertiliser in their fields have found their soils infertile and far less productive that those farmers that did not initially have access to chemical fertilisers (Mankleow, 2008).

The introduction of the social provisioning system of the Public Distribution System (PDS) also provided alternative avenues to Ladakhi's reliance on subsistence agriculture (Dolkar). Through the provision of a monthly supply of grain, oil, rice and other essential commodities, a Ladakhi household can now prioritise non-agricultural livelihood strategies that include sending their children to school, moving off the homestead in search of work in the urban centres of Ladakh and most importantly, refuse certain types of labour that are below their status expectations (Dolkar 2010).

The introduction of technology and social provisioning systems like the PDS have changed the modes of life of many Ladakhi farmers and in some cases, unequally. As the introduction of fertiliser and tractors did not occur uniformly on the fields of Ladakh (Mankleow, 2008), there developed, within Ladakhi farmers, a group of farmers whose material modes of life were altered and changed by the high yields and productivity that the new technology offered. As the revenue generated from their farms increased, so too changed the material conditions of their lives (Mankleow, 2008), leading to the development of a new class situation of farmers within the community of Ladakhi farmers.

The Market

A change in the structure of the family, a reduction in the labour intensity of agriculture, a reduction of yields and an increase in the empirical literacy of many young Ladakhi's led to a series of changes in Ladakh's labour market. The first of these changes was a drain of human resources from the substantive economy to the newly formed wage economy. This 'brain drain' from the substantive economy, whose modes of production were centred around centuries of oral knowledge regarding farming techniques, handicrafts, and crude ore mining, resulted in a vacuum of skilled labour in the traditional economies of Ladakhi society.

Those who were previously landlords, tenant farmers, and merchants and found themselves without a steady stream of passive income were forced to find a way to retain their class situation and resultant status within Ladakhi society(Michaud, 1996). Merchants, dealt a heavy blow by the closure of the national borders around Ladakh and the subsequent death of the caravan trade, were quick to capitalize on the network of roads being built into the region by buying trucks and hiring enterprising young Ladakhi men to drive goods between Srinagar and the new markets in Leh (Michaud, 1996). Those with the land or the capital to buy land for commercial use were those traders and merchants whose fortunes from the silk route allowed them to re-establish the prestige of their class situation.

In 1981, over 84% of the working-age population was engaged in agricultural labour while the secondary and tertiary sectors (hospitality, tourism, transport, and public sector employment) only employed around 3 and 11% of the working-age population respectively. During the last national census in 2011, these figures had almost inverted with only 27% of the working population engaged in agriculture and over 70% of the population engaged in the tertiary sector(Dolker, 2018).

As road networks expanded, so too increased the requirement for workers to build them. Ladakhi farmers that I spoke to stated that in the 1980s and early 1990s, groups of men from a village would work as labourers on nearby road-building projects to earn money[13]. This however changed with the introduction of migrant labour in Ladakh.

[13] See Annexure 1 for the detailed field notes of each interview

Although there is currently no research that explicitly follows the introduction of migrant labour into Ladakh - a research gap that is significant in its own right - there are a few pieces of scholarship that deal with the effects of the introduction of migrant workers on Ladakh's labour market. Demenge et al (2010), use ethnographic evidence taken from migrant worker populations around Ladakh to build a picture of the exploitative circumstances under which these workers operate. Other studies point to the introduction of migrant workers in Ladakh as a factor that allowed Ladakhi households have at least one family member transition from the agricultural sector to the wage market (Dolker). Data and ethnographic evidence (Sudan, 2008; Demenge *et al.*, 2010) also show that in the same period, the increase in the availability of low-wage forms of employment in Ladakh has not translated to an increase in the number of Ladakhi's engaging in these forms of labour. In 2020, of the 1050 workers that registered themselves with the Leh[4] Department of Labour 2020, only 5% of those were Ladakhi(Pal, 2018).

In Ladakh's traditional labour markets, labour was not a commodity that could in any way be bought or sold. Labour was instead seen as a community resource that was divided equally among households. The *Bes*, a method of labour pooling in traditional Ladakh, meant that farmers and cultivators would always have a ready pool of labour to draw from during harvest and sowing seasons (Rizvi, 1996)). As the positivist forces of modernisation began to commodify labour and land so began the death of the *Bes.* As more men and women left spent more time away from their fields and their farms, the collective labour resource of the *Bes* began to run dry and those who remained within it were stretched too thin for *Bes* to have a meaningful effect on the lives of Ladakhi's. The introduction of a new pool of unskilled labour meant that many employment opportunities in the new wage labour economy did not require the skill set of the traditional, and instead reflected the abilities of the pool of migrant workers that entered Ladakh.

This trend continued to the extent that those jobs that require the skill of the traditional, for example repairing canals and irrigation channels, are entrusted to the State (Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). This has led to issues of the sustainability of this model when seasonal labour leaves in October construction projects ground to a halt and the price of labour increases to the point where only the elite can afford to hire. As the price of labour dropped, it became harder for local Ladakhi to justify their entrance into the 'physical labour for wage' economies that sprung up in Ladakh.

3.4 The Rationality of Development

The literature surrounding the above socioeconomic shifts in Ladakh post-independence, is vast. From the myriad texts written on these transitions Ladakh, a majority of which emanate from schools of Tibetan Studies and South Asian Studies in the western world, I see two camps. There are those studies that romanticise Ladakh's traditional economies and belief systems; arguing that the effects of modernity have irreparably damaged the social fabric of Ladakh, leading to an increase in communal violence, crime, anthropogenic disasters, and the destruction of community resources.

Perhaps the most cited text in this genre of Ladakh studies, *Ancient Futures* by Helena Norberg Hodge, paints a picture of a Ladakh that has been irrevocably altered by 'industrial monoculture' (Norberg-Hodge, 1991). Arguing that this monoculture, drafted by the rationality of modernity, has pushed Ladakhi society towards the brink of cultural destruction, identity loss and communal conflict, Hodge points towards these effects as a part of the process of specialisation that seeks to divide and empirically codify all aspects of Ladakhi life. In this belief, Hodge claims no individuality, she stands on a crowded stage of researchers who place their sole heuristic focus on the effects of modernity on traditional Ladakhi life. Authors like Girtz and Schmidt (Girst, 2008; Schmidt, 2008) argue that the introduction of modernity and urbanisation to Ladakh have drastically

altered the ecology of the region, leading to detrimental changes to the family and farms of Ladakhi's.

Another camp in the literature rejects the anti-modernity hypothesis and instead argues that the introduction of the instrumental rationality of modernity in Ladakh has quelled the propagation of many of the social evils that they see as characteristic of traditional Ladakhi life. Authors like Dar et al (2019) argue that the influx of tourism and the introduction of the wage economy have led to a decrease in female mortality, an increase in literacy and the lifespan of Ladakhi families(Dar *et al.*, 2019). They also point to the development of cooperative trade markets and the introduction of the Public Distribution System to point towards the social benefits of the introduction of modernity(Dolker, 2018).

These dichotomous views problematic for a variety of reasons. The first among them is that both camps present Ladakh as a typical example of a society transitioning from traditional to modern. This linear view of the evolution of Ladakhi history echoes a type of Marxist Historiography that seeks to present the entirety of human social history as a teleological process with modernity as its logical end. Norberg-Hodge echoes the Weberian thesis of the rationalisation and differentiation of life and the removal of the 'canopy of the sacred' (Reed and Weinman, 2018, pg. 32) as the catalyst and driver of the development of modernity. Arguing in the line of the French Weberian arc of modernity (Reed and Weinman, 2018), both camps argue that the de-incarnation of the scared (in the case of Ladakh, the traditions of Bon Buddhism) gives way to the application of science, bureaucracy, and the instrumental rationality of modernity: positivism. Both camps apply this deterministic approach to the study of transitions in post-independence Ladakh, and in turn automatically present Ladakhi's as supine observers of the changes that wash over their society.

Although a continued critique of these two camps in the Ladakh studies scholarship is not within the ambit of this paper, the critique presented above provides a valuable avenue of analysis of the transitions that occurred in Ladakh post Indian independence. Both the anti and pro modernity camps argue that the *instrumental rationality* of modernism, based in the positivism and empiricism of the western cannon of Enlightenment (Berendzen, 2009) has pervaded Ladakhi society and has developed a cohort within Ladakhi society that value and revere the manifestations of this project of modernity. Evidence of the entanglement of development in Ladakh with the instrumental rationality of modernity is perhaps best gleaned by a quote from Leh's Development Commissioner in 1981: *"If Ladakh is ever going to be developed, we have to figure out how to make these people greedier. You just can't motivate them otherwise" (Norberg-Hodge, 1991 pg. 88).* Horkheimer and Adorno in their text *Dialectic* argue that instrumental reason, a part of formalist rationality, seeks to subjugate the natural and the social into calculatable forms; arguing that Enlightenment does not cast its light on that which cannot be calculated and formalised (Berendzen, 2009).

In a similar vein, Norberg-Hodge argues that the traditional and sacred in Ladakh have given way to the authority of the empirical. Nicole Girst also portrays a similar picture, of a Ladakh whose traditional economies have been rejected for entry into the wage economy(Girst, 2008). For the study of the evolution of social stratification in Ladakh's labour market with a particular focus on the differentiation between migrant workers and local Ladakhi populations, Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason provides interesting insight.

In *Eclipse* (1947) Horkheimer argues, a la` Polanyi, that as instrumental reason progresses, society is fractured into competing groups who vie and tussle for power leading to the formation of social hierarchies(Horkheimer, 1947; Berendzen, 2009). This stratification within society has a dis-embedding effect of alienating interpersonal relationships within society. This dis-embedding process is tempered by "processes of culture" (Berendzen, 2009) that seek to mitigate alienation.

For example, in Ladakh's traditional labour markets, the occupations of blacksmith, dancer and musician are hereditary and occupy fixed positions within the social strata of Ladakhi rural life. In the closest approximation of the caste system in Ladakh, dancers, blacksmiths and musicians are required by normative convention to marry within their communities and have very few avenues of social mobility. These alienating effects are tempered however by the cultural processes of the sacred. The same dancers and musicians who are shunned in most other spheres of Ladakhi traditional life are given positions of extreme authority and prominence during all religious festivals. Dancers are plied with ritual *Chang*[14] and are given the first servings of meat during weddings and birth celebrations, musicians travel from house to house and are entitled to hospitality across the village during similar ceremonies (Rizvi, 1996). Here we see that in the substantive or traditional economies of Ladakhi life, the alienating processes of instrumental reason have evolved symbiotically with cultural processes that seek to mitigate and harmonise the alienation caused by social stratification.

The problematic arises when cultural processes cannot evolve in time or do not develop to mitigate alienation caused by the instrumental rationality of modernity. While cultural processes can manage the dis-embedding effects of alienation that arise internally in Ladakhi society, when external sources of this alienation, inimical to traditional cultural processes, are introduced, culture has no recourse for mitigation. Horkheimer states that in situations when instrumental reason is left to develop unfettered from cultural processes that mitigate its alienating effects, the only recourse left to society is an inherent flaw upon which instrumental rationality is built, what Horkheimer calls subjective rationality.

Stating that *"When pressed for an answer, the average man will say that reasonable things are things that are obviously useful, and that every reasonable man is supposed to be able to decide what is useful to him"* (Horkheimer, 1947, pg. 3), Horkheimer argues that the positivist process of classification and instrumental rationality develop notions of value within an individual or community(Berendzen, 2009). Through these processes, Horkheimer states that 'usefulness' is equated with 'self-preservation' (Berendzen, 2009)

For example, in Ladakh the opening of the region to the markets of the Indian subcontinent led to an increase of the availability of migrant labour in Ladakh's labour market. The introduction of a cadre of cheap and unskilled labour caused change and differentiation that no cultural processes internal to Ladakh could mitigate. Among farmers in Ladakh's substantive economies, labour (especially agricultural labour) was a resource that could neither be bought or sold and was freely available through a model of community recourse management known locally as the *Bes*[15] (Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). With the introduction of migrant labour into the labour market, the cost of labour reduced and the subjective rationality of Ladakhi's dictated that they draw instead from a pool of cheaper labour rather than rely on traditional pools of labour.

In the chapter above, the evolution of stratification in Ladakh has been explored through an analysis of the historical evolution of class, status and command situations in the region. We have seen that through Ladakhi history the tripartite streams power that led to a system of social stratification – class, status, and command – have intricately interacted with each other to produce nuanced systems

[14] Chang: A homemade barley beer. Sweet, sour and without bubbles it tastes more like a wine and can vary greatly in alcohol content (Source: RangSkat Tibetan English Dictionary) Although alcohol bought in the markets of Leh and Kargil or the many army canteens around Ladakh is considered by most to be better in quality, and therefore higher confers a higher status on the drinker than Chang, no Buddhist Ladakhi celebration is complete without copious amounts of the drink.

[15] The Bes is a system of co-operative labour exchange, where farming households help each other with the key tasks of cultivation (Definition taken from RangSkat Ladakhi English Dictionary)

of division within Ladakh and within the labour market in particular. The rush towards coveted positions in the tertiary sector of Ladakh's labour markets, have reduced the value of traditional economies and skill sets to the extent that the maintenance of subsistence systems is, in no small part, now dependant on a steady stream of cheap labour in the rest of India. The status associated with the most coveted occupations in Ladakh develop not just via the economic power they bestow on an individual but also due to the normative estimation of positive social honour associated with an education. As Ladakh shifted between the hands of local kings, to Dogra rules to the Indian state, authority and the privilege of power shifted and with it rose and fell the status position of many. Those that were able, by virtue of their historical entrenchment in positions of privilege and power, were able to ensure the maintenance of their class and status situations through new trade routes with Kashmir, and after independence, with the greater Indian State. In this way, the evolution of class, status, and command situations – or social stratification – in Ladakh has been influenced by the region's unique history, the influence of external actors and States, and their normative values.

4. Chapter Three: Subsistence Capacity and Labour Stratification

Thus far, this research project has outlined an arc of modernity for Ladakh that is by no means unique to the region. Studies (Fischer 2008, 2005) of communities, undergoing the transition from an agrarian mode of production to the formal and positivist traditions of wage work, show that these communities witness many of the typologies of change that Ladakh witnessed in its post-independence period. We have seen in the chapters above that Ladakhi society underwent rapid demographic, social and economic changes in their transition from the traditional and substantive economies to the formal and positivist economies of wage work. Changes like the abolishment of polyandry and primogeniture, the introduction of technological innovations to agricultural work, social provisioning systems like the PDS, an increase in literacy rates, the introduction of the new industries of tourism and hospitality, and the introduction of migrant workers into Ladakh's labour market, interlink with each other to amalgamate into a system of stratification whereby traditional labour and low wage labour are given low status markers compared to the coveted positions in Ladakh's tertiary sector.

Most of the scholarship considers the transition of subsistence-oriented farmers to formal wage economies as an indication of upward social mobility (James Scott 1976). However, as Fischer points out in his text *"The Disempowered Development of Tibet in China"* (2014), this is a problematic view because it does not consider the value laden nature of local normative hierarchies. If, as Fischer states, the transition from agricultural to low wage labour has the potential to be seen as a "downward displacement" (Fischer, 2014, pg.273) within local labour strata, then there is dissonance between the theory, upon which most scholarship is based, and the realities of farmers undergoing this transition.

This is important for the purposes of understanding the evolution of labour stratification in Ladakh's labour markets. If the compulsion to transition out of subsistence is taken as an *a priori* fact instead of as an untested assumption, all arguments or theories that try to explain why some communities choose to maintain their subsistence fall into a trap of trying to rationalise livelihood strategies through an economic-centric view.

The data above suggests that instead of leaping at opportunities of low wage labour on the lowest rungs of Ladakhi labour hierarchies, farmers tend to avoid labour that is stigmatised in favour of livelihood strategies that confer higher status and dignity. Although the existence of notions of status and dignity related to occupation in Ladakh are clear, and discussed extensively in the

preceding chapters, an interesting manifestation of the status generation and upward mobility of certain types of occupations can be found in a linguistic analysis of Ladakhi honorifics.

Koshal (1987) states: "*As Ladakhi society is highly stratified, its language shows an elaborate honorific System. Ladakhi Speakers express honour and respect by using certain social indicators and linguistic markers. The most effective, meaningful and valued method of manifesting this sense of honour and respect is through the instrumentality of language behaviour." (Koshal, 1987, 154).* In her study of the urbanisation of Kargil and its resultant effects on the villages in the surrounding valley, Nicola Grist shows that in the Suru Valley[16] the use of honorific titles now also indicates the occupational status of the individual (Girst, 2008). For example, Girst shows that "*the term Kacho was in the past only used for men from the handful of hereditary noble families of Kargil tehsil, but it is now used as a respectful title for Shi'a men from the bureaucratic elite. The term sahib is usually used for Sunnis of similar status."* (Girst, 2008, pg. 93).

4.1 Subsistence

The Ladakhi preference for occupations based on the status they confer is by no means a unique phenomenon; scholars of occupational stratification have widely used status generation as a conceptual tool to understand the interlinked processes of status and occupation to explain how particular manifestations of stratification occur. A gap however does exist in the literature, few texts[17] deal with the maintenance of status through subsistence strategies. In fact, most of the literature on subsistence considers it *a priori* that subsistence is an indicator of poverty and destitution. These social scientists have tried to explain the reasons behind subsistence farmers choosing to maintain subsistence strategies through a variety of lenses. In the context of Tibet, Wang and Nanfeng Bai (Nanfeng and Bai in Fischer, 2014) argue that the choice of Tibetan farmers to shun forms of low wage physical labour for subsistence-oriented livelihood strategies was a function of the "backwardness of Tibetan farmers" (Fischer, 2014)and was inimical to the idea of development through productive accumulation (ibid).

Another widely cited depiction of subsistence, and theorisation behind why farmers may choose to maintain a subsistence-oriented lifestyle, comes from the author of "*The Moral Economy of the Peasant",* James Scott (1976). Scott explores the behaviour patterns of what he calls the "Subsistence oriented farmer"(Scott, 1976. The subsistence-oriented family, both a unit of consumption and a unit of production in the market economy, must meet its own 'irreducible' subsistence demand before it can begin to produce its surplus for the marketplace (Scott, 1976). As the term subsistence denotes, the risk of failure (producing below subsistence levels) for these families is so severe that most engage in livelihood strategies that focus on risk aversion rather than the maximization of profit (Scott,1976).

This principle of "Safety first", borrowed from James Roumasset' s study of rice production in the Philippines (Roumasset in Scott, 1976, pg.13-15), is an axiom of behaviour that Scott presents as the first consideration for a subsistence-oriented family when making decisions that relate to their production and consumption. Describing the principle, Scott states that subsistence-oriented families will choose strategies that minimise risk over profit. Using an example from Clifton R. Wharton's text "*The Economic Meaning of Subsistence"* (Wharton in Scott 1976, pg. 16-20), Scott argues that subsistence-oriented families would prefer crops that yield lower average returns over those innovations or new crops that may increase yields in one season but reduces them below "subsistence crisis zone" in another season (Scott 1976).

[16] The urban centre of which is Kargil Town
[17] Scott and Fischer being two notable exceptions

Regarding their attitudes towards undertaking wage labour, Scott claims that subsistence-oriented families will employ the same risk averse strategy to decide whether they take up wage labour. Writing that "*Considerations of subsistence security impel peasants to choose to have subsistence over wage labour"* (Scott, 1976, pg. 36)*,* Scott makes it clear that the Safey First imperative is *the* key decider when considering a transition from subsistence economies to wage labour.

Scott takes pains to point out that farmers will maintain subsistence-oriented lifestyles only in the context of a *dire shortage* of land, capital, and employment opportunities (Scott 1976, pg. 32). In the context of Ladakh, this is seemingly not the case. Employment opportunities in the lower wage sectors (construction, manual labour, etc) are abound in the region. Evidenced by the authors field notes and statistical data from the region however, there is a dearth of local interest in low wage forms of employment which lead to the import of migrant workers from the rest of India into underfilled sectors.

Scott's exploration of subsistence follows the classical understanding of subsistence as the last stop before destitution. His exploration of the Safety-First imperative belies an underlying assumption that subsistence-oriented families are risk averse because they are constantly teetering above an abyss that, with one wrong move, could swallow them whole. In this assumption, Scott stands on a crowded stage. Studies both recent and past present subsistence as a *state* from which one needs to be rescued, either through entrepreneurship or external action.

An anthropological critique of these theorisations of subsistence and their resultant investigations into the 'irrationality' of subsistence farmers comes from Polly Hill (Hill, 1986). In her critique of S. Ghatak and Insergent's textbook on development agriculture (Hill, 1986, pg. 16), she argues that much of the scholarship on subsistence have based their arguments on faulty premises. The result of these misapprehensions is the inability of subsistence theory to recognise inequality (Hill, 1986). The first of the misapprehensions in subsistence theory that Hill points to is the assumption that 'traditional' agricultural systems produce all the foods that they require(ibid). Hill argues that there will always remain a group within a community of subsistence farmers who are not able to produce enough for their subsistence and therefore are compelled to work on the farms of richer 'subsistence farmers'. In a separate case study on grain farming in Southern India, Hill provides evidence that shows that most 'self-sufficient' in a community in Karnataka were those who were the wealthiest.

Another problem of the focus on self-sufficiency in mainstream[18] literature is the implication that *"(..)a proportion of farm output is not sold but consumed by the farmers household"* (Hill, 1986, pg. 18). Hill argues that it is only those rich farmers in a community that can decide to refrain from selling their crop. Pointing to data from her field work in Batagarawa, Nigeria (ibid, pg. 18) she shows that the poorest of farmers were often compelled to sell their grain immediately after harvest to meet short-term demands (ibid, pg. 74). Hill's analysis of Development Economics literature provides insight into the pitfalls open to the un-wary researcher. To represent all Ladakhi agriculture as a monolith of experience and circumstance is fallacious and represents an injustice to the reader and to those Ladakhi's who – although living in communities where the average experience may self-sufficiency – do not have the means or resources to be self-sufficient.

I have found however, that a majority of the Ladakhi households that I spoke to were able to grow enough for their own consumption (except for one family). I do not state this to claim that Ladakhi communities are free of inequality, nor to claim that any inequality should be ignored. Although Fischer was able to avoid Hill's critique of ignoring inequality in his study of subsistence in

[18] S. Ghatak's self-professed claim in the introduction of his book is the intention to have it canonised as *the* textbook for development agriculture.

Tibet - due to the high levels of land reform in Tibet, land holdings among farmers were similar - the same grace does not apply for this study. There is deep inequality of land holdings in Ladakh; a small percentage of farmers own almost 40-50 times the land of local Ladakhi farmers (LAHDC, 2014, 2017). This study however is not a study of a small substrata of Ladakhi farmers and relied instead on interviews from farmers with land holdings below or at the National average (1ha). By doing so, I hope the more generous reader will join me in believing that this study too avoids Hill's scathing critique.

Building on Hill's conceptualisation of subsistence Fischer (Fischer, 2014, pg. 304-307) argues that instead of maintaining subsistence as a strategy to resist poverty or - in the context of Scott's work - State control, farmers *value* subsistence because it provides the material foundations from which to make a greater number of choices vis a vis their livelihood strategies (Fischer, 2014). Data[19] suggests, Ladakhi households are far below the national average of per capita income in India and its neighbouring states. If in this context we are to argue that subsistence strategies in Ladakh are not a symptom of poverty in the region, there must lie a hidden base of wealth or assets that Ladakhi farmers can rely on to avoid stigmatised forms of work.

4.2 Absolute Poverty Measurements in Ladakh

Figure 1.1 outlines the annual per capita income of Ladakh's two districts from 2008[20] and compares it to the per capita income of Jammu and Kashmir as well as the national average. Although the per capita income of the Leh district is slightly higher than that of the Kargil district (Rs. 15,728 and Rs.13,509 respectively), both figures are far below the state average of Rs. 20,604 and the national average of 27,422 (Richard, 2015).

District	**Per Capita Income**
Kargil District	13,509
Leh District	15,728
Jammu and Kashmir State	20,604
India	27,442

FIGURE 1:REPRODUCED FROM "BEING LADAKHI AND BECOMING EDUCATED: CHILDHOODS AT SCHOOL IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYAS" (RICHARDS, 2015, PG. 18)

On human development indicators, Ladakh also does not fare too well compared to other Indian states and Union Territories. A study of 5,471 children under the age of 5 from both districts of Ladakh show that, due to a lack of nutritional access, over 24% of children in 2020 are 'stunted', over 17% are 'wasted' and over 95% have a form of iron deficiency anaemia(Singh. *et al.*, 2022).

The data above points towards the assumption that Ladakh is low in the hierarchy of the Indian labour market and that an availability of low wage menial labour would present itself as a panacea for the ills poverty that affect Ladakhi society[21]. However, data and ethnographic evidence

[19] See figure 1 below
[20] The last available data for Ladakh's per capita income
[21] A fact supported by the fact that majority of Ladakh's wealthy have built their wealth from non-agricultural activities.

(Sudan, 2008; Demenge *et al.*, 2010) provide evidence to the contrary, showing that the increase in the availability of low-wage forms of employment in Ladakh has not translated to an increase in the number of Ladakhi's engaging in these forms of labour. In 2020, of the 1050 workers that registered themselves[22] with the Leh Department of Labour 2020, only 5% of those were Ladakhi (Pal, 2018).

The discussion on absolute measurements of poverty in Ladakh is mired in confusion and contradictory data. Ladakh's recent realisation of their long sought-after UT status has removed Ladakh from the bureaucratic machinery of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. While the new union territory begins the processes of training surveyors and outlining the agenda of their own economic surveys, one must rely on the economic census data from Ladakh while it was a part of the Jammu and Kashmir, and from the sparse collection of quantitative studies conducted in Ladakh. However, even the data taken from J&K state censuses is limited. In most cases, the data tables do not represent Ladakh as a separate region and instead provide an amalgamated data set for the entire state. In our discussion of the difference between absolute poverty and asset wealth in Ladakh, this presents a problem.

We know, for example, that Ladakh's average per capita income in 2008 was 49% lower than the national average(Richard, 2015), but we also know that the data does not reflect the purchasing ability of Ladakhi families due to this figure not because no Ladakhi has been required to pay income tax since 1981 (Fewkes, 2009, pg.153). Another revealing dataset is the measurements of families that are below the poverty line in Ladakh[23]. Over 30% of Ladakh's rural population and 5% of its urban population were registered below the poverty line in 2007, markedly higher than the percentage of rural households below the poverty line in the Kashmir District (26.4%)(Dame and Nüsser, 2011).

Although the instance of families below the poverty line presents a stark picture of rural Ladakh, this measurement of poverty is not an accurate representative of the incidence of poverty in Ladakh. Putting aside the inability of poverty line measurements to accurately represent the lived experience of those whose income lies just above the poverty line, yet live almost identical lives to those below it, the poverty line measurements in rural Ladakh are unreliable because they do not account for the number of Ladakhi families that do not rely on wage economies for their daily survival. Although there are very few families in Ladakh that may be considered *wholly* subsistence oriented[24], it would be fallacious to argue that *all* subsistence-oriented families are dependent on the income of household members engaging in wage economies.

A majority of the Ladakhi households[25] that I spoke to stated that their farming activities[26] provided enough for their yearly consumption. Only one respondent stated that they required additional income to support their household, a situation he ascribed to a lack of access to water during the previous year's harvest[27]. If most families in rural Ladakh can sustain themselves from their pastoral or agricultural activities[28], it could then be inferred that poverty line measurements in

[22] This number is not indicative of the total number of migrant workers registered in Ladakh, of the 12 migrant workers I had interviewed, none of them had registered with the department of labour. This statistic instead shows the gap between Ladakhi registration for low wage labour and that of migrant workers from Bihar Jharkhand, Nepal. Orissa and Kashmir.

[23] Henceforth called BPL families

[24] As discussed in previous chapters, most rural Ladakhi families have at least one family member engaging in circular migration between rural and urban landscapes.

[25] All of whom had land sizes lower than 1ha (the national average)

[26] Conducted on their own plots of land

[27] Which interview is this from?

[28] A fact by no means universal to all families in Ladakh and not one that can be extrapolated from the limited amount of data

Ladakh do not reflect the actual state of poverty of a household, as it may do so for a household that is fully dependent on income for their survival. Although these measurements of poverty, or rather, their critiques provide us with the resulting inference that Ladakhi households are wealthier than the official data suggests, they are not evidence enough of a wealth hidden in subsistence that is opaque to conventional measures of poverty.

In his text on the relative capacity of Tibetan subsistence-oriented households compared to Han migrant workers, Fischer (2014) juxtaposes evidence of the productivity, yields and productive assets of Tibetan subsistence households compared to that Han Chinese farms to show that their productive and agricultural asset base provides them with a 'wealth' unseen by typical measures of poverty (Fischer, 2014). A similar analysis, although useful, is not possible in the context of Ladakh. As discussed above, the total dearth of data on Ladakhi farms and their productive assets or yearly yields makes it almost impossible to make meaningful inferences on the productive ability of Ladakhi households. The sparse data that *is* available is laughably contradictory to the realities of Ladakhi farms. For example, in Table 6.03[29] of the latest 'Digest of Statistics' released by Jammu and Kashmir in 2019[30], states that 4 hectares of Ladakhi arable land was made available for growing Barley (J&K State Government, 2019). This is simply impossible. Over the course of my field work for this research project, of the 5 Ladakhi households that I interviewed all grew barley on farms that were all at least 0.5 hectares in size.

To further add to the confusion, the statistical handbook published for the same years on the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) website states, that just for the district of Leh alone, over 4385 hectares of land was irrigated for barley (LAHDC, 2017). This discrepancy in the data provides significant difficulty in understanding the productive wealth of subsistence- oriented families in Ladakh. Therefore, for a clearer example of the hidden asset wealth available to subsistence farmers - an integral part of their ability to resist undignified forms of labour - one can find recourse in Anthony Bebbington's framework of assets(Bebbington, 1999).

4.3 Subsistence as Wealth: The Value of Social Assets

Bebbington's work on assets stemmed from an already burgeoning debate in the scholarship on sustainable livelihoods. In part borrowed from the 'pentagon of capital assets' published by the Department for International Development (DFID) (Scoones, 2015) Bebbington's work on assets reflects a new approach to understanding poverty and wealth in rural livelihoods. DFID's version of the framework on sustainable livelihoods proposed that instead of understanding the incidence of poverty in a community through only physical and financial assets, the introduction of three new categories of asset (the Human, The Natural and the Cultural asset) as a way of better understanding the reality of poverty in the developing world(Scoones, 2015). Although critiqued for its reduction of livelihood strategies into economic-esque categories (Scoones, 2015), it's reliance on the wrong category of assets or for its reduction of 'nature' into a single category (Scoones, 2015), the project to understand the differences in types of assets and the way in which they interact is essential in understanding the character of poverty of a region. Shunning the archetype of the *tri-lectic* of capital, land, and labour, (Scoones, 2015) the five capital assets provide a finer understanding of the distribution of resources in rural Ladakh and the way in which they interact to provide Ladakhi farmers with 'wealth' that is blind to the eyes of typical poverty measurements.

[29] Reproduced in Annexure 2
[30] The last year of Ladakh's inclusion in the State's census.

Bebbington argues that in the context of the transition of livelihoods dependent on natural resources, one must retain a broad understanding of the resources that individuals require in the process of "composing a livelihood" (Bebbington, 1999). Bebbington thus constructs his version of the pentagon of 'capital assets' (ibid) which he argues are essential in understanding the strategies that farmers take to build their livelihoods. Differing slightly from the 5 assets constructed by DIFD in their scholarship on sustainable livelihoods, Bebbington's pentagon of assets is structured as follows: Human asset, natural assets, produced assets, social assets, and cultural assets(Bebbington, 1999).

In his text, Bebbington views assets as "vehicles for instrumental action (making a living), hermeneutic action (making living meaningful) and emancipatory action (challenging the structures under which one makes a living)." (Bebbington, 1999, pg. 2022). Borrowing moderately from Sen's notion of human capital, Bebbington argues that assets or resources, he uses the word interchangeably, provide households with the *capability* to be and act within strategies that define as most aligned with their interests (Bebbington, 1999, pg. 2024). Assets in this conceptualisation are then not just the tangible and the real, those assets that can be counted physically in terms of productivity, land yields, tractors, irrigation channels and crop prices, but are also those intangible resources like community labour pooling, migration networks, political ties, and group membership (Bebbington, 1999).

Bebbington argues that each of the five categories of asset capital are in a constant state of negotiation with each other to provide rural households the best strategies for composing their livelihoods. He states: "*Livelihood strategies are attempts, from existing and often severe constraints, at a continuous management and modification of these substitutions, trade downs and draw downs on different capital assets. How these trade-offs are made, and which ones are preferred, vary across the life cycle, and also across the short term. The different capitals are thus not only inputs to livelihoods and development strategies – they are also their outputs"* (Bebbington, 1999, pg. 2033). To provide further evidence of the existence of wealth in subsistence oriented Ladakhi households this paper will provide insight into the asset Bebbington considered most important for his framework: Social Assets.

Social assets are a typology of non-material assess (Bebbington, 1999) which encompasses the vast social resources upon which are based the livelihood strategies of rural households. These social recourses – for example group memberships, community resource management, relationships of trust and access to commons – allow farmers to draw tangible outputs that provide them an unmeasured wealth of resources(Bebbington, 1999). In the Ladakhi context, there are two examples of social assets that are found in nearly every village and rural community.

The first of these is the *Bes,* a system of community resource management that deals with the sharing of labour resources. In the *Bes* system households are grouped together and pool their collective labour for agricultural work. It is not an uncommon sight to see a group of neighbours working preparing one field for irrigation while another group of neighbours prepare another plot of land for sowing. Through the management of this social asset (shared labour) and the maintenance of the cultural foundations that protect it, Ladakhi families can draw on a pool of labour wealth that is not easily quantified in terms of its effects on measures of absolute poverty in Ladakh. Perhaps the clearest indication of how a social asset like the *Bes* system is helpful in allowing Ladakhi farmers refrain from taking up undignified forms of labour came from a farmer I interviewed in Matho. When asked why it was that one could find almost no Ladakhi's engaging in the types of labour in which migrant workers were employed, he stated:

"There are always other options" he said, *"We have land, we have friends and the Phasphon*[31]*, why would we need to work so hard? (Interview, Authors Field Notes, 2022).*

Another social asset available to nearly all Ladakhi farmers is the system of *Res*. Defined as a system of sharing or turn taking, the *Res* system is applied to many of the facets of daily life in Ladakh's rural communities(Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). *Ba-res,* another form of labour sharing, relates to a turn-based system in pastoral communities where a member of a household (usually a young man) will take the collective livestock of his community to graze. The Chu-Res system is a similar turn-based system of water (natural assets) sharing. In the high-altitude desert of Ladakh, water management is vital for the continuation of farming and subsistence models of livelihood(Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). The *Chu-res* system allocated water from communal irrigation channels for fields on days. This is either done through a system of lottery that picks the first field and every subsequent field to receive water(Beek, 2008; Gupta and Tiwari, 2008). The *Bes* and *Res* systems are social assets of cultural resource management that allows Ladakhi farmers a greater base of material foundations that allows them to refrain from taking up low wage forms of labour. As social assets help Ladakhi subsistence-oriented families maintain their livelihood strategies without the compulsion of taking up undignified forms of labour, so too do Ladakhi families maintain their livelihood strategies to maintain their social assets.

4.4 Absolute and Relative Subsistence Capacity

To define subsistence capacity Fischer introduces the two related concepts of absolute and relative subsistence capacity. Absolute subsistence capacity speaks to the production of a surplus crop, that goes beyond the subsistence levels needed for a household to "reproduce itself economically" (Fischer, 2014 pg. 285). In Ladakh, studies (Dame and Nüsser, 2011) have found that while the introduction of government schemes such as the Public Distribution System and the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) have increased Ladakhi dependence on non-local grains and rice, most households still produce surplus crops and use the *ration-shop*[32] to supplement their diets. In terms of absolute subsistence capacity, it would seem then that Ladakhi farmers fair well. Not only do most produce enough to meet their own needs and sell a surplus in the marketplace, but are also given access to heavily subsidised grains, oil, sugar, and rice. For example, the price list of the PDS in Leh prices a kilo of rice at Rs. 3 (*AePDS-Ladakh*, no date) while the price of a kilo of rice in the market however is Rs 99 (*AePDS-Ladakh*, no date). This is important when we consider that migrant workers in Ladakh who wish to supplement the diet they are given are forced to buy at these prices. Although eligible for PDS rations – many showed me their ration cards- are not allowed to avail of the local PDS system.

'Relative subsistence capacity' then refers to the ability of absolute subsistence capacity in relation to other communities in a closed economic region. Although in the larger structure of the Indian State Ladakhi farms may not be as productive as those on the banks of the Ganges[33] but within the Union Territory of Ladakh, Ladakhi subsistence households – by virtue of their ability to generate surplus and access to social provisioning systems like the PDS – have a much greater subsistence capacity than the migrant workers who come to the region in search of work.

'Subsistence Capacity' here relies on Arthur Lewis and his text: *"Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour"* (Lewis, 1954). The Lewisian model of economic development in

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[31] The word Bes relates specifically to labour sharing while the Phasphun is a group of families that help each other in all major events: life, birth, and harvests.

[32]Colloquialism for PDS distribution centres

[33] A fact that can neither be proved or disproved without the appropriate data

landscapes with 'unlimited supplies of labour' argues that in the nations of the global south, where the population is vastly larger than the available natural resources, large sectors of the economy exist where the marginal productivity of labour is close to zero(Lewis, 1954; Guru, 2015). There is no shortage of papers that discuss this "disguised unemployment" (Lewis, 1954, pg. 2) especially in the agricultural sector, where there are so many workers that the removal of one employee would not impact the output of the farm.

In this model, Lewis assumes that the price/wage of all unskilled labour is at the level of subsistence(Lewis, 1954). In this scenario, Lewis asks the question, from which sectors would additional labour be available to fill gaps in new sectors that offered wages at the subsistence level(Lewis, 1954; Guru, 2015). Pointing to the agricultural sector as the bank of surplus labour of capitalist expansion, Lewis states that this sector and a few others are the first sectors from which surplus labour is withdrawn. Lewis posits that the wage rate in the modern industrial sectors is established by the average productivity of the production of staple foods in the subsistence sectors (Fischer, 2014 and Lewis, 1957). Lewis suggests that a 30% incentive is required on top of the "wages of household subsistence production" (Fischer 2014, 307) to draw labour away from subsistence farming and towards the various expansionary sectors of the modern industrial capitalist experiment (Lewis,1957). In the context of Ladakh, this would mean that wages in the capitalist sector (predominately work done by migrant labour) would need to be 30% higher than the 'value' of the assets gained in subsistence.

Figure 1.2 below is a rough sketch of approximate wages of Ladakhi subsistence families compared to those of migrant workers that I interviewed during my fieldwork.

Ladakhi Households (Monetary income from selling surplus grain)	Migrant Workers (Gross Salary)[34]
8,000 – 13,000 INR[35]	6000 – 8,400 INR

FIGURE 2: SOURCE: AUTHORS FIELD NOTES (2022)[36]

The data above, shows that the salary of migrant labour that I interviewed does not even match the value of the surplus crop sold in the marketplace, this is before we consider that 4 out 5 of the households interviewed all stated that they only sell surplus once they have met their household requirements. Perhaps more telling is the *perception* of the wages given to migrant workers among Ladakhi farmers. A farmer in Drass[37] claimed that although he and his friends would engage in manual labour (he spoke about road building) during the early 1980 and 1990s, the influx of labour from the rest of India had reduced the cost of labour to the extent that the wages offered were too low for Ladakhi farmers to consider. When I told the respondent that the men and women I had interviewed working on the roads in and around Ladakh reported an earning that ranged from 6,000 to 8,400 a month, he stated that the amount was not enough to survive or sustain even one person in a household for a month (Authors field notes, 2022). Whether or not the amount given to migrant workers is truly enough to sustain a single member of the respondent's household is immaterial; the focus here is on the *perception* of this wage. If a subsistence-oriented family believes

[34] The figures in this column reflect the *actual* reported wages of migrant workers after salary cuts from their supervisors.
[35] Ladakhi households reported a range of expenditure and income that varied per month. The amount range in this table has been calculated by subtracting the reported lower bound expenditure by lower bound income and higher bound expenditure subtracted by higher bound income to calculate the higher bound earnings.

[36] See Annexure 1
[37] Interview Number 2

that the inherent value of low-wage labour is beneath their current position, it is a matter of course that soon low-wage labour will start to become stigmatised, further leading to and cementing labour stratification in Ladakh's labour market.

A major limitation of the arguments made above are that the insights gained are extremely gender specific. The *only* Ladakhi's found working in low wage labour during the span of the research process were Ladakhi women. The group of women I spoke to were engaged in clearing the Chilling – Leh road from the debris of a recent rockfall. When asked to speak to their presence in an occupation dominated by male migrant workers, their responses were painfully pragmatic and reflective of the position of many women in Ladakh's subsistence-oriented households. They stated that they engaged in this work to supplement the income their husbands earned as Taxi drivers in Leh. The added burden of maintaining the household, childrearing and income generation is a set of responsibilities that none of the male respondents claimed to bear. In arguing that subsistence provides households in Ladakh with a wealth that saves them from the compulsion to engage in low wage labour, one must ensure that this is not said without the caveat that inequality exists even within subsistence models.

This chapter has attempted to follow the evolution of stratification in Ladakh's labour market by offering a potential answer to the question: why there are low take up rates of Ladakhi workers in low wage labour employment. This chapter answers the question by first problematising the notion that subsistence-oriented families are knocking on the door of poverty. This prevailing view in much of mainstream development economics literature (Scott, 1976)) argues that the resistance of farmers to exist subsistence models is due to an inherent aversion to risk that is a fundamental characteristic of their livelihood strategies. Fischer (2014) on the other hand, arguing in line with Polly Hill, shows that the 'subsistence as poverty' argument does not consider the inequality present in systems of subsistence, arguing that it is only the richest in a subsistence-oriented community that is often able to operate on a model of complete self-sufficiency (Hill, 1986). Building on Fischer's notion of subsistence capacity and Bebbington's notion of social assets, we have seen that the Ladakhi farmer is provided with a wealth from their subsistence models that are not easily captured by conventional measures of poverty. Finally, through a comparison of the wages reported by migrant workers and the revenues reported by Ladakhi farmers, this paper has shown that not only do subsistence-oriented households in Ladakh have an *absolute* subsistence capacity (Fischer, 2014), but are also able to resist low wage labour due to the *relative* subsistence capacity they possess in comparison to migrant workers.

5.0 Conclusion

In attempting to study the evolution of Ladakhi social stratification this paper has rested its argument on three pillars. The first of these pillars comes in the form of the theories of Max Weber and John Scott. I have shown that Scott's call for a return to Weber's triad of social stratification is well applied to the context of Ladakh. Chapter one has shown that Weber's concept of class, status and command situations, their impact in the life-styles of individuals and the constant interaction of the three streams of power are vital in understanding the evolution of social stratification in Ladakh.

The second pillar upon which this thesis is built is a historical analysis of social stratification in Ladakh. To this end, chapter two provided a detailed account of the development of class, status and command situations in Ladakh from the 10th century CE to present day. In maintaining such a longitudinal study of social stratification in Ladakh, this paper serves to provide an outline of how

historical situations of command, class and status have been carried through history via the ability of the privileged class and status groups to retain their positions through a variety of new livelihood strategies. In the monarchical period, class and status situations were impacted heavily by the command situations of the aristocracy. Their ability to command tax, land rents and labour, a virtue of their command situation, was the key determiner of their legitimacy. As power shifted into the hands of the Dogra court in 1841, these command situations were altered to reflect a shift in the locus of power from Leh to Srinagar.

The status and command situations of the monasteries remained largely intact in this period, an argument corroborated by the fact that education was largely controlled by the monasteries as well as the fact that their commercial and residential land holdings did not diminish and are, still to this day, under the control of the various monasteries in Ladakh (Singh in Dolma, 2018, pg. 232). As Ladakh joined the greater politics of the Indian state however, the new command situations set in place by the Indian state set in motion a litany of changes to the structure of class, status, and command situations in Ladakh. These changes to the farms, minds, families, and the markets of Ladakh, changes brought on by the inculcation of a rationality of modernity, have given rise to new class situations of traders, merchants, and businessmen in Ladakh. As new class situations arose, so too did new situations of status.

As education became the fundamental vehicle of social mobility, through its ability to provide access to public sector and private sector employment, the status and honour associated with education rose. However, this rise in the status associated with the skill sets of the formal and positivist came at the cost of the status and value associated with traditional skill sets. The aspiration to move beyond the traditional coincided with the introduction of class situations of migrant workers to the region. As the supply of labour in the wage labour market increased, the wages for manual labour dropped making it easier for Ladakhi households to hire migrant workers on their farms, while the difference in lifestyles of migrant workers and Ladakhi households ensured that the stratification between the two class situations only increased.

The final pillar of this thesis approaches the evolution of social stratification in Ladakh by exploring the notion of subsistence. Through a response to mainstream literature on subsistence, that paints subsistence-oriented families as knocking on the door of destitution, this paper has argued that subsistence livelihood strategies have provided Ladakhi families protection from the compulsion to engage in low wage manual labour. Drawing on the work of Fischer, Hill, Bebbington and Lewis, this chapter has shown that Ladakhi subsistence-oriented households possess an absolute subsistence capacity that provides them with a 'wealth' that is hidden from conventual measures of poverty. Finally, this chapter has employed a comparative wage analysis of migrant workers and the revenue earned by Ladakhi farmers to show that the wages given to migrant workers is far below the reservation wages that Lewis posited would be required to draw surplus labour from subsistence models of production.

As time progresses and relentless march of change carries forward, so too will the class, status, and command situations within Ladakh alter, to produce new models of social stratification that reflect shifts in normative, economic, and power structures. The recent development of Ladakh into a Union Territory (UT) separate from the politics of Kashmir has again altered the command situations in the region. While the Ladakh remained in Kashmir, the region was protected by much of the special amendments available to the residents of Kashmir. For example, until Ladakh's development into a UT, it was prohibited for 'non-Ladakhi' individuals to buy or own land in Ladakh. The promulgation of Ladakh into a UT, and its removal from the special protections offered to much of Kashmir by the Indian Constitution, has spurred fears within much of Ladakh that an influx of business and hotels will increase land prices to the point of unaffordability.

Although Weber's triad of stratification will continue to ebb and flow through the fabric of Ladakhi society, this is not an excuse to lapse into determinism or fatalism. Current models of stratification in Ladakh are wholly unsustainable. On the surface, we see that the exploitation of migrant workers, and to an extent, women in Ladakh, has been caused by conflicting notions of status and modes of lifestyle dictated by class. However, those who seemingly benefit from this exploitation rest their feet on shaky ground. The effects of a loss of knowledge and skill sets in traditional agricultural practices, replaced instead by cheap labour and technological advances, are felt through the region. The number of Ladakhi villages that report water shortages increase every year and the trend seems to be growing unabated. Only through a reminder of the path we have taken, can we see the way forward; and it is in this hope that this thesis has attempted to study the evolution of social stratification in Ladakh.

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Appendix 1: Field Notes

Field Notes (transcribed from author's field notes)

Interview No	**Interview Type**	**Respondent (Occupation)**	**Location**
1	Open ended interview	Ladakhi Household (Farmer)	Matho Village

Family Size: 5
Family Occupation(s): Farming

Productive Assets

Livestock: 4 cows
Land (agricultural use and household): 10 Kanal (0.505 Ha)
Does land produce enough for sustenance? : Yes
Streams of Income: Selling surplus in the marketplace to buy non grown commodities (oil, sugar, spices, salt, fodder for livestock, fertilizer)
Goods taken from PDS system: Grain, pulses, rice, oil and wheat taken every month from the Public Distribution System.
Expenditures: Market commodities, medicine, and non-essential goods.

Simple recall data

How much have you spent in the last month: 5000 Rs

How much have you earned from selling surplus goods in the market: 10,000 – 13,000 Rs (Earned from selling surplus barley, vegetables and fruit in the marketplace.) Respondent stated that they receive around Rs 50 per Kg of Barley sold.

Interview No	Interview Type	Respondent (Occupation)	Location
2	Open ended interview	Ladakhi Household (Farmer/Shopkeeper)	Drass

Family Size: 4
Family Occupation(s): Farming/Shopkeeping

Productive Assets

Livestock: 25+ Goats and 3-4 Cows
Land (agricultural use and household): 13 Kanal (0.657)
Does land produce enough for sustenance: No. Respondent stated that they need to supplement their supplies by buying extra goods from the marketplace.
Streams of Income: Revenue from shop in local marketplace. (There is no surplus grain to sell in the marketplace). Respondent stated that he also works as a part time electrician to earn some money to spend for himself.
Goods taken from PDS system: Grain, pulses, rice, oil and wheat taken every month from the Public Distribution System.
Expenditures: Market commodities, medicine, non-essential goods, religious functions.

Simple recall data

How much have you spent on goods in the last month: 3500-5000 Rs

How much have you earned from selling surplus goods in the market: The respondent stated that no grain surplus is sold in the market. However, he stated that his family normally earns around 10,000-15,000 in a month from his shop in the local market.
Total Earned per month (approximate): 6500 – 10,000 Rs *(Lower bound expenditure subtracted by lower bound income for lower bound earning. Higher bound expenditure subtracted by higher bound income for higher bound earnings.)*

Descriptive notes:

Unlike with the migrant workers I had just interviewed, the reception we received in the village was lukewarm. The first few groups of men and women that I approached	The respondent, tSering Dorje [1] owned a small corner shop in the main village of Drass. **How much land do you use for farming or keeping livestock?** **Ans) We use around 70% of our land for farming and the rest for keeping our livestock and our house. Our land size is small, we only have enough to grow for ourselves, not to sell.** **What do you grow, and how long does your produce last?** **Barley, wheat, tomatoes (in a green house) beetroot and Shalgam (a**

were brusque in their responses and the notes taken from those interviews do not require reproduction here. Finally, after a fruitless search, an old shopkeeper, who had watched me amble around his shop looking for someone to talk to, invited me in and asked me what I wanted to know. What follows is a reproduction of this conversation.	**spinach like vegetable). We grow the barley and other grains in the summer months (April to July) and the same plots of land are used in August to October for planting vegetables to supplement our diet. What we grow is what we eat for the rest of the year until the next harvest season.** **Are you employed with a fixed income?** No. My sons and daughter are in school, studying so that they can earn more money than me. This shop that I have is the only other source of income that we have. Whatever money we get from the shop is used to buy supplies that we need to live (oil, eggs, meats, salt, etc) **How much of your daily/weekly/monthly consumption is from your land?** **Everything we eat is from our land, only on special occasions and festivals do we buy extra meat and vegetables from the market.** **How much of your daily/weekly/monthly consumption is from the market?** Very little. We buy our oil, eggs, spices and some meats from the market but not much else. **Do you sell any of the products you make from livestock in the market?** No. **Do you sell any of the products that you grow in the market place?** We used to be able to sell our surplus grain in the market, but due to a shortage of water for the last few years, we are now forced to sometimes import grain from other parts of the state. **How much do you earn from selling these goods? Is it enough to run your household?** N/a **Is it easy to find work in this region? Tell me about unemployment here.** The respondent's son's and daughter have gone to live with a relative in Leh so that they may get a better education there. In Drass, the respondent says that there are very few jobs save from finding work with the armed forces or in a public sector organisation. The men that do not find

	work in either sector, either work on their family land or attempt to look for work in other parts of Ladakh or in Kashmir. Since Drass is situated on the main highways to Srinagar, many more men and women from this region look for work and income from Kashmir rather than in the rest of Ladakh. **Do you hire labour to work on your land/house?** The respondent stated that although people in the area did hire migrant labour to work on their fields or in their houses, he did not have the means to hire extra labour. When pressed, the respondent stated that a few years ago, he had hired two Nepali workers to help build a boundary wall around his property, a task he could not accomplish without his children who were otherwise occupied with academics in faraway Leh. **Do you prefer a particular community of labourers?** The respondent stated that there was a common assumption among Ladakhis that Nepali labourers were the hardest working of the various migrant communities in Ladakh. He stated that this was because Nepali workers are **"used to the climate, altitude and type of work".** **Describing the communities of labour from South and West India, the respondent stated that they were "lazier than the Nepali workers because they cannot manage the altitude".** **Do Ladakhi men and women also work on the roads or engage in the types of labour that migrant workers normally do?** The respondent stated that there were many Ladakhi's that used to work in these types of jobs. He stated that when he was young, he and many of his friends in the village would spend some of their spare time by working for the Public Works Dept (the civil organisation that builds Ladakh's inner roads). By doing this they were able to earn enough to allow them to spend a week or two in Srinagar. Over the last 10 years however, according to the recollection of the respondent, there has been a large influx of labour from the rest of India. This has resulted in a system where a lot of Ladakhi's are able to hire labour in exchange for a very low payment. The respondents stated that earlier, engaging in Labour paid enough where one could earn enough to sustain oneself. However now, the influx of a large number of Migrant labourers in the area have lowered prices to the point where the wages are too low for the Ladakhi men and women looking for work.

	(When I told the respondent that the men and women I had interviewed working on the roads in and around Ladakh reported an earning that ranged from 6,000 to 10,000 a month, he stated that 6000 was not enough to survive or sustain even one person in a household for a month.) The respondent argued that migrant labourers were able to survive on such cheap wages because they did not have to pay for food or rent in their labour camp and were able to save their income almost entirely.[2] As a part of this conversation, I asked the respondent that if his children had issues with income, would he or his children take up the forms of labour that migrant workers in Ladakh usually conduct. He replied that he would not. He stated that this was because he understood how hard the lives of the labourers were and was decidedly against having his suffer. **"There are always other options" he said, "We have land, we have friends and the *phasphon,* why would we need to work so hard?** **Have you ever been engaged in road building or the other forms of labour that migrant workers normally do?** **He stated that when he was young, he and many of his friends in the village would spend some of their spare time by working for the Public Works Dept (the civil organisation that builds Ladakh's inner roads). By doing this they were able to earn enough to allow them to spend a week or two in Srinagar.**

Interview No	Interview Type	Respondent (Occupation)	Location
3	Open ended interview	Ladakhi Household (Farmer/Shopkeeper)	Stok Village

Family Size: 6
Family Occupation(s): Farming

Productive Assets

Livestock: The respondent stated that they had no livestock but did look after their neighbours two cows.
Land (agricultural use and household): 20 Kanal (1.01 ha)
Does land produce enough for sustenance: Yes. The respondent stated that with the crops grown on his land and the supplies taken from the Public Distribution System, he does not need to buy any *essentials from* the marketplace.
Streams of Income: The respondent stated that his eldest son is a taxi driver in Leh and send a portion of his income home and that one of his daughters work in a shop in Leh's marketplace selling textiles. The income from his children combined with the sale of barley in the marketplace (at around rs 40-50 a kg) is enough to maintain their livelihood.
Goods taken from PDS system: Grain, pulses, rice, oil, sugar and wheat taken every month from

the Public Distribution System.
Expenditures: Market commodities, medicine, non-essential goods, religious functions, and health.

Simple recall data

How much have you spent on goods in the last month: The respondent stated that the last month incurred above average expenditures due to a family member requiring hospitalisation in Leh. Although most medical costs in Ladakh are heavily subsidised, the costs were so great that the respondent needed to borrow money from family and neighbours. In the last month (from the date of the interview) the respondent stated that his family had incurred a cost of around 2,20,000 (Two lakh and twenty thousand). In an average month however, the respondent stated he spends between 6000 – 7000 a month on supplies and other household items. If there is a religious function in the village, the respondent stated that this cost increases by around 1000 rs.

Income (from various sources) in the last month: Not including the money he borrowed from friends and family, the respondent stated that he earned around 15-20,000 in the last month from the selling of surplus barley and supplemental income from his children

Total Earned per month (approximate): 9,000- 13,000 Rs *(Lower bound expenditure subtracted by lower bound income for lower bound earning. Higher bound expenditure subtracted by higher bound income for higher bound earnings.)*

Other Notes:

- Does not hire labour to do the tasks he can do himself
- Had hired labour in the last few years, but not during the pandemic.
- His piece of land is large enough where he can grow crop to sustain his family of 6 for the entire year. There are two growing seasons (April June) (August October) and the food grown in these months is enough for the household.
- The market is used only for buying essential supplies and meats and clothes.
- Respondent stated that he rears his neighbours livestock in exchange for free labour or other goods that are traded between them,

- Used to work on some of the public work projects as a youth (clearing of waterways after the winter ice had melted) but stopped after he got older.

- Respondent stated that no one he knows still works on labour jobs expect on their own fields or in their own homes.
- Respondent states that no one in the region would need to take jobs like those (road building, canal clearing) because these jobs do not pay enough and most residents in the area have enough food, water to see them through a difficult time.
- Respondent stated that everyone in the region had access to land and livestock, if not their own, then at least through a close family member.

Interview No	**Interview Type**	**Respondent (Occupation)**	**Location**
4	Open ended interview	Ladakhi Household (Farmer/Shopkeeper)	Matho Village

Family Size: 5
Family Occupation(s): Farming

Productive Assets

Livestock: The respondent stated that they had no livestock but did look after their neighbours two cows.
Land (agricultural use and household): 15 Kanal (0.7 ha)
Does land produce enough for sustenance: Yes.
Streams of Income: Surplus sold in the market
Goods taken from PDS system: Grain, pulses, rice, oil, sugar and wheat taken every month from the Public Distribution System.
Expenditures: Market commodities, medicine, non-essential goods, religious functions, and health.

Simple recall data

How much have you spent on goods in the last month: The respondent stated that he spends around 5000-8000 Rs a month on the goods listed above.

Income (from various sources) in the last month: He stated his income from selling surpluses in the market, supplemented by his son who is in the Indian Army, is between 10,000- 20,000

Total Earned per month (approximate): 5,000- 12,000 Rs *(Lower bound expenditure subtracted by lower bound income for lower bound earning. Higher bound expenditure subtracted by higher bound income for higher bound earnings.)*

Interview No	Interview Type	Respondent (Occupation)	Number of respondents	Location
5	Open ended interview	Migrant Worker (Road construction)	7	Leh- Chilling Road

Productive Assets

Livestock: N/A
Land (agricultural use and household): N/A
Does land produce enough for sustenance: N/A
Streams of Income: The respondents stated that their income was primarily from their work for the BRO (Border Roads Organisation) and was supplemented by work they conducted in the fields or homes of local Ladakhis.
Goods taken from PDS system: The respondents stated that they are not allowed to take rations from the PDS shops in the area. Although by law they are eligible for PDS withdrawals, the local head of the PDS network has not allowed migrant workers to withdraw their rightful rations
Expenditures: Food, Medical costs, Transport to labour camps from Leh, Transport from hometown to Leh.

Simple recall data

How much have you spent on goods in the last month: The respondents stated that from the 15,000 Rs promised to them a month, their supervisor takes a portion for the upkeep of their labour camp. This includes the costs for their tents, cooking supplies and medicines. The respondents stated however the quality of all these items were subpar and were convinced that their supervisor was taking part of their salaries from themselves.

Income (from various sources) in the last month: 6,400 (after supervisors cut). Some respondents stated that their work for private Ladakhi's (on their farms or homesteads) earned them another 2,000 a month
Total Earned per month (approximate): 6,400 – 8,400

Descriptive notes This interview was taken on the Chilling – Zanskar road that is currently under construction. The road following the violent Zanskar river has been under construction for over half a decade. The interview was taken with **a group of respondents** (numbering 7) who were actively working on road clearance (the last few weeks had seen immense rockfall in the area and the road needed to be cleared on the way). The notes taken are transcribed here in the form of a group interview, I have tried to identify the individual respondents and their answers to the best of my ability.	1. Tell me about yourself. This group consisted of men exclusively from the state of Jharkhand. Some of the men looked older, their faces more weathered by the elements than the rest. A few were forthcoming about their age (ranging between 25 and 37) however, one respondent who looked far younger than the rest, did not offer any information on his age. When asked, he replied quickly that he was 19. 2. How long have you worked in Ladakh? This group had travelled together from their homes in Jharkhand. Each worked different lengths of what they called "tours". These ranged from 6 tours in Ladakh to just one for the youngest of the respondents. 3. When did you last leave your hometown? All the respondents had travelled to Ladakh in the beginning of the 'season' (when the roads in Ladakh open) in the month of June. 4. Tell me about the type of work you have engaged in while you have been in Ladakh? This group of respondents have been working on various road systems in Ladakh. Their first task after arriving in Ladakh was the clearing of rockfalls and debris on national Highway 1 (the Leh to Srinagar road). They were then tasked with laying rocks to widen a stretch of road that lead to a small collection of houses (location unknown) to a main village road. The respondents have since then been engaged on the Leh-Chilling-Zanskar road engaged in both the clearing of debris and the breaking of stones on the route. 5. When did you last go home? The respondents had not gone home since arriving in Leh 3 months before the interview had taken place and stated that they would not leave until the end of the "season" in October (before the roads have closed) 6. Tell me about the type of people that hire you and your colleagues, from your home to come to Ladakh? The respondents stated that they were hired by a Jharkhandi 'supervisor' who answered to a Ladakhi contractor. 7. Were any promises made to bring you to Ladakh?

	The group was unanimous is stating that they were promised a salary of Rs 500 a day (15,000 a month approx.) and a camp with facilities to take care of them. 8. (If yes,) Are these promises being kept? The group of respondents stated that the amount given to them was indeed the same as they were promised, however, they did state that their 'supervisor' took a cut from each month's salary so at the end they received, in hand, around 6,400 Rs a month (far below India's minimum wage for this form of labour). 9. When will you go home? The respondents stated that their 'contract' was for a period of 6 months (the traditional tourist season in Ladakh) and that they would leave as soon as the term was over. 10. Have you had any Ladakhi's working with you? The group stated that there were no Ladakhi men that they had seen working with them or even in the same projects as them. One respondent stated that on the roads that lead to the interior of Ladakh (where the roads are still being built and are more mud trails than tarmac) he had seen a group of Ladakhi women who were working to clear the road of debris of rock fall from the night before. When asked if this was a usual occurrence, the respondent stated that on the roads where there was a lack of migrant workers, or in the villages that were far from the highways, Ladakhi women often engaged in ensuring the roads were useable and in good condition. 11. If yes, in which positions have you seen them working? Apart from the Ladakhi women discussed above, the respondent stated that the only time they have met a Ladakhi is when they have offered the locals their services in engaging in private work during their free time. One respondent stated that when he first started working in Ladakh (in the early 2000's) that were a large number of Tibetans and a few Ladakhi's that engaged in the same labour as him. However he states that in the last five years, he has never had a Ladakhi colleague. 12. If yes, do you think the Ladakhi workers earn more than you? The respondents did not have a clear response to this. They did state however, that they felt that there was a bias against workers from Bihar and Jharkhand and that Nepali workers were highly favoured over their counterparts from mainland India. 13. Can you tell me about the working conditions here? The respondents stated that they considered their working

conditions to be better than what they have seen in the rest of the country. Here they say (in Ladakh) that they are treated better by the local populations than in other parts of the country where labour based discrimination is higher. They say they are more welcomed and most importantly do not face any caste based discrimination.

14. What are the differences between the conditions at home and here in Ladakh?

When pushed on what the respondents refer to as 'welcoming' one respondent said that he believed that the worker here was treated better by the locals. He stated that when not working on the roads, he spends his time working for a group of residents in the village closest to his camp, he states that the families that he works for are kind to him and provide him two meals a day while he works (as well as give him a fair daily rate). When asked what a fair daily rate meant, he stated that it depended on the work that we was doing but it could range from between 200 to 500 rs a day.

15. Have you engaged in any forms of labour for a private individual or contractor?

Of the group of respondents, there were three men who had worked on the lands of Ladakhi households. Each was engaged in different types of work, one built a boundry wall for a rich Ladakhi landowner, one worked on the fields with a group of families rushing to complete their harvest and the last worked with a Ladakhi mechanic, helping him change the tyres of the multitude of trucks that are a common fixture on the highways of Leh.

Interview No	Interview Type	Respondent (Occupation)	Number of respondents	Location
6	Open ended interview	Migrant Worker (Road construction)	2	Srinagar – Kargil Road

Productive Assets

Livestock: N/A
Land (agricultural use and household): N/A
Does land produce enough for sustenance: N/A
Streams of Income: The respondents stated that their income was primarily from their work for the BRO (Border Roads Organisation). The respondents stated that the work they did for private families in Ladakh did not pay them a wage commensurate with their expectations and that it was too low to be counted as part of their wage.
Goods taken from PDS system: The respondents stated that they are not allowed to take rations from the PDS shops in the area. Although by law they are eligible for PDS withdrawals, the local head of the PDS network has not allowed migrant workers to withdraw their rightful rations.
Expenditures: Food, Medical costs, Transport to labour camps from Leh, Transport from hometown to Leh.

Simple recall data

How much have you spent on goods in the last month: The respondents stated that they earn around 15-20,000 a month but their supervisor cuts their salaries for the maintenance of their labour camp. The respondents also stated that they were subject to arbitrary cuts in their salary depending on the whim of their supervisor. One respondent stated that his salary was reduced one month to 3,500 Rs (half of their usual earnings) because his supervisor accused him of sleeping on the job.
Income (from various sources) in the last month: The respondents stated that they earn around 7,000 Rs a month. They stated that although they have worked on the fields and homesteads of local Ladakhi families, this income was spent in one day and thus they didn't count it as part of their monthly income.
Total Earned per month (approximate): 3,500 – 7,000 a month.

Descriptive Notes:

This pair of migrant workers were met on the road in between Sonmarg and Kargil after the Zo ji la pass. At an altitude of around 3400m, the pair of workers were taking a break when	Unlike the first group interviewed, this pair of workers were from vastly different parts of the country. One from Bihar and the other a Kashmiri, they made for an interesting duo. Sitting in front of their stove, taking warmth from the small flames that licked over the sides of a pot, blacked with years of soot, they began to tell me about their experiences in Ladakh. The Bihari spoke first when asked about themselves. **" I've been here for over 7 months now, and will remain for another 3 months. My home is near the border between Jharkhand and Bihar, an area with very little opportunity for work and with a family as large**

I approached them. Sitting next to a small propane stove, upon which sat a blackened pot of *chai,* the two men were waiting for the BRO truck to take them back to their camp site.	**as mine (he had 4 younger brothers and an elder sister) the pay that is available in Bihar is not enough to sustain my household."** He said that although he had secured a BA in engineering in Bihar, he was unable to find work and had heard from a friend in college that work could be found in abundance in Kashmir and Ladakh. He stated that he was given a phone number of a 'supervisor' to contact and upon calling him was told to go to Srinagar and register himself as an engineer with the BRO after which the supervisor would find him work. He stated that the supervisor assured him that he would be given work that was commensurate with his education and experience. With another colleague, he took a three day journey to Srinagar where he found more than 20-30 men from his district in Bihar waiting to register themselves with the BRO. The group of men registered themselves and waited for more instruction from their supervisors. After a week of waiting with no word from their supervisor, the respondent stated that he received a call from another man claiming to be another supervisor in Ladakh. This man told him that although there were no positions open for engineers in the BRO, he would be able to receive work as a bridge builder with pay similar to that of an entry level engineer. (when asked to clarify this amount, the respondent stated that he was offered 20,000 Rs a month. This was an increase of over 13,000 from his previous income) " I was very excited when I heard what I was going to be paid but I never even received half that amount. My supervisors keeps most of my salary and says he is taking is rightful cut from the workers." At this point the tea was ready, and despite my greatest protestations, a small cup of the brown milky liquid was thrust into my hands, and eager eyes watched as I drank it down fast to avoid the taste. The Kashmiri man began to intersperse the conversation with his experiences: He stated that he too was a graduate of engineering from a university in Srinagar and was promised a pay of 25,000 to work in Ladakh. He stated that he was sure that he was not going to get the amount that was promised him and when asked why he took the work, he pointed at the road leading back to Srinagar and said **" the politics there are more dangerous than the work I do over here".** He said that he was paid around 7,000 Rs a month and the rest of his salary was taken by his supervisor. Both men had been engaged on this deserted stretch of road since their

	arrival in Ladakh. Their task was to help crews in charge of heavy machinery pick up metal beams and transport them to a site nearby where a bridge was being built to a nearby village. In the evenings, when the drivers of the cranes and trucks went back to their camps, the duo took it in turns to watch over the equipment and materials to stop them from being pilfered. When asked if any Ladakhi labourers had worked with them in the time they had been stationed on this section of the Srinagar –Leh highway, the two shook their heads and said no. One stated that although he had seen a few Ladakhi's work as drivers and operators of the heavy machinery, it was a rare occurrence, and that the only interactions that they had with Ladakhi's were when they engaged in small tasks for local families in exchange for food and meagre pay. When I asked them why it was that they thought that the Ladakhi's were rarely found engaging in the same work they did, they stated that there was no reason for them to do this type of work. The Kashmiri respondent pointed to a nearby village while stating: **" each house there has its own walls, their own fields, some even have more than 30 goats. The only work that I have seen a Ladakhi do is working on their fields. We do all the other work for them."** Pointing towards a particular house, the Bihari respondent added: **"Do you see that house there? Just a few months ago we rebuilt the walls surrounding their fields and when we asked for our payment, we were told that because they gave us food and drink while we were working, that would only give us 200 Rs a day. Tell me, what can I do with 200 Rs a day?"**

Interview No	**Interview Type**	**Respondent (Occupation)**	**Number of respondents**	**Location**	**Notes**
7	Open ended interview	Ladakhi Labour (Road clearing)	3	Leh - Chilling Road	The only Ladakhi's that the author met working on the roads as well as the only women. This group of women hailed from the nearby

					village of Chilling. When we drove past, they were taking a break on the side of the road. They were engaged in sweeping the road from small piece of debris from recent rock fall in the area

Family Size: 5, 4, 7
Family Occupation(s): Farming and Daily Labour

Productive Assets

Livestock: Of the three respondents, two households did not have any livestock and the other only had two cows which they had just recently sold.
Land (agricultural use and household): The respondents stated that they did not know how large their land size was but did say that their farms were some of the smaller ones in the village of Chilling.
Does land produce enough for sustenance: The respondents stated that their lands produce enough basic food to survive but they are unable to grow enough to sell in the markets and thus must supplement their income by working a few weeks in a month clearing the roads around Chilling.
Streams of Income: The respondents stated that their only source of income was working for local contractors. They are employed by a local contractor who pays them to clear the roads from the debris left behind by rockfall.
Goods taken from PDS system: The respondents stated that they all take rations from the local PDS shops. However, since the ration network does not reach Chilling, they must travel to nearby Alchi (a two-hour drive) to pick up their rations.
Expenditures: Transport, Medical bills, Education, School Uniforms, Religious functions

Simple recall data

Note: *At this point in the interview process, two of the respondents refused to answer any more questions relating to financial matters. Citing their husbands as the heads of their households, the two respondents stated that they were not aware of how much money was spent in the household. The data below is from the singular women of the three who was still amenable to answering the below questions.*
How much have you spent on goods in the last month: 5,500 Rs
Income (from various sources) in the last month: The respondent stated that she was not aware of how much money her household earned from his work as a Taxi driver in Leh but said that it was enough to run the household. She stated that the income she received from labour was spent on non-essential goods for her and her children.
Total Earned per month (approximate): The respondent stated that she earned around 5000 a

month for three weekends of work a month. (This is significantly higher than the daily wage given to migrant workers doing the same work, on the same road.)

Appendix 2: Reproduced Data

Table 6.03 From the "*Digest of Statistics" (Jammu and Kashmir State Government, 2019).*

Table No. 6.03 (Contd.)

Crops Irrigated by District 2018-19

(Area in Hectares)

S.No.	District	Area Irrigated				
		Rice	Maize	Wheat	Barley	Other Cereals Pulses & Millets
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Anantnag	21668	1003	0	0	91
2	Kulgam	12955	535	0	0	135
3	Pulwama	12360	200	0	0	122
4	Shopian	307	147	0	0	2
5	Srinagar	2903	0	0	0	134
6	Ganderbal	8032	1955	0	0	0
7	Budgam	25315	1917	0	0	236
8	Baramulla	20471	4654	0	0	273
9	Bandipora	9221	737	0	0	377
10	Kupwara	17166	2843	0	0	2
11	Leh	0	0	2509	4	5127
12	Kargil	0	0	1623	0	5618
	Total Kashmir Div	**130398**	**13991**	**4132**	**4**	**12117**
13	Jammu	61776	485	43361	43	2989
14	Samba	10202	0	9575	111	1
15	Udhampur	2779	2048	1992	136	563
16	Reasi	836	428	644	13	28
17	Doda	1382	507	826	152	63
18	Kishtwar	1100	365	29	56	392
19	Ramban	984	50	202	0	0
20	Kathua	20245	563	18427	23	141
21	Rajouri	3869	561	3576	0	81
22	Poonch	2796	582	1901	0	0
	Total Jammu Div	**105969**	**5589**	**80533**	**534**	**4258**
	Total J&K	**236367**	**19580**	**84665**	**538**	**16375**

Table 5.01, reproduced from LAHDC Statistical Handbook 2016-2017 (LAHDC, 2017)

Table No: 5.01
Area Irrigated
(Area in Hectares)

Year	Area Irrigated under														
	Rice	Wheat	Maize	Barley	Other Millets	Pulses	Total Food Grains	Fruits & Vegetables	Other food Crops	Spices	Total food crops	Fooder	Oil-seeds	Other non-food Crops	Total Area Irrigated
2001-02	-	2604	-	4734	436	270	8044	338	-	-	-	2068	73	-	10523
2002-03	-	2653	-	4702	377	272	8004	331	-	-	-	2070	73	-	10478
2003-04	-	2894	-	4504	349	249	7996	331	-	-	-	2024	73	-	10424
2004-05	-	2894	-	4480	384	249	8007	334	-	-	-	2020	67	-	10428
2005-06	-	2973	-	4463	375	272	8083	348	-	-	-	2089	65	-	10585
2006-07	-	2756	-	4682	355	251	8044	285	-	-	-	2078	67	-	10599
2007-08	-	2968	-	4452	359	286	8065	352	-	-	-	2089	74	-	10599
2008-09	-	2634	-	4639	379	306	7958	439	-	-	-	2028	86	-	10516
2009-10	-	2690	-	4646	342	297	7975	448	-	-	-	2095	86	-	10608
2010-11	-	2579	-	4421	-	192		360	-	-	-	1947	86	-	11692
2011-12	-	2595	-	4488	97	243	7423	320	-	-	-	1991	90	-	9824
2012-13	0	1092	0	2869	556	258	4775	409	1	3	5188	2093	86	0	7367
2013-14	0	1077	0	3934	622	251	5884	527	3	1	6415	2100	83	0	8595
2014-15	0	2776	0	4288	564	258	7886	472	1	5	8364	88	89	2073	10614
2015-16	0	2362	0	4708	575	263	7908	452	0	6	8366	2092	84	2176	10542
2016-17	**0**	**2713**	**0**	**4385**	**553**	**265**	**7916**	**439**	**0**	**6**	**8361**	**2082**	**97**	**2179**	**10540**