

MULTIPLE CONVENTIONS OF UNPAID LABOUR (*BEGAR*) IN SINDH RICE BELT: DUALISTIC RESISTANCE & COOPERATION IN SHARECROPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Ghulam Hussain Mahesar

Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: mahesarg@gmail.com

Anwaar Mohyuddin (Corresponding Author)

Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Email: unwaar@gmail.com

Mail: PO Box 3060, GPO, Islamabad, Pakistan

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to assess the prevalence of unpaid labour (Begar) as a practice of resistance in everyday routine life. Both Sharecroppers and landlords are approached in this research as active agents capable of shaping and transforming their identities and power relations intersected by contextual realities, like, for example, ties of kinship and caste-rivalries. Theoretical concepts of James C. Scott about 'everyday forms of resistance' and 'hidden transcript', 'structuration theory' of Giddens and Meijl's elaboration of 'self' and 'identities' have been applied to understand diversified nature of resistance in sharecropping relationship. This paper will elaborate on the complicated nature of resistance and cooperation in which multiple peasant-landlord identities are managed. Findings indicate that sharecroppers do not always resist the so called imposition of unpaid labour, which is, in fact, a kind of labour in which payment is delayed and reciprocated. It was also observed that unpaid labour could also be employed by landlords as a tactic to resist the perceived accesses of sharecroppers and to pressurize him/her to perform better. Unpaid labour is not imposed by the landlord, instead it is an expected tactical demand conditioned by the field performance of the sharecropper. Begar, is a two way dualistic process of resistance and cooperation of 'low intensity' in which both landlord and sharecropper resist as well as cooperate and reciprocate for different reasons, to seek multiple concession and social benefits from each other and the community.. Data was collected through FGDs, participation observation and conversational interviews, followed by thematic analysis.*

Key words: Peasant Resistance, Hidden Transcript, Structuration, Unpaid Labour, Multiple Identities,

INTRODUCTION

Begar (*Begār*), is a Sindhi colloquial term of the upper Sindh, which means the practice of 'wage-less work' or 'unpaid labour', that is, work performed by a sharecroppers¹ without wages being paid to him/ her. It is the common practice regulated by informal norms, conventions and customs of sharecropping. It is considered as a form of bonded labour in development reports and survey based scientific research [1, 2]. In 2002 the Sindh Government amended the Sindh Tenancy Act and made the extraction of "unpaid labour (*Begar*)" from tenant's family member as illegal [3]. Tenancy Act and legal rights to tenancy, in practice, are hardly respected in Sindh rice belt. Sharecroppers and landlords do not even know what it means, or how it relates to their

sharecropping.

While making informal agreement, sharecropper is supposed to do *Begar* of his landlord, mainly to ensure his or her continuity of land tenure. Sharecroppers are supposed to be bound to work without making any immediate demands in cash or in kind, from the landlord. They are supposed to tame landlord's animals, bring fodder for buffaloes, load and unload grain from tractor trollies etc. The practice of *Begar*, however, has now so much changed and diversified in Sindh Rice Belt that it seems to have lost, if ever, its overtly exploitative and unilateral obligatory character. It is, now, being resisted in many diverse ways by both the sharecropper and the landlord.

In recent years in Pakistan, when small farming—below 5 acres of land—has also increased from 58 percent in 2000 to 64 percent in 2010 [4] and the alternative sources of income generation for sharecroppers have diversified, the social status and standing of landowners and landlords has considerably become horizontal vis-à-vis sharecroppers and poor villagers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

General approach of the research is embedded in interpretative and subjective research paradigm. Purposive, non-probability sampling was used to select and determine sample size. Study was conducted in three different geographical areas of upper Sindh Rice Belt in Pakistan. The team of three researchers did participant observation,

¹The terms 'sharecropper' and 'tenant-farmer', as defined in English dictionaries, does not help much to define such peasants in Sindh rice belt. Sharecroppers are usually defined as having shelter and tools provided by the landlord, whereas, tenant farmer is relatively in a better position to have his own house and farming tools. Sharecropper usually is on lien, whereas tenant farmer does not take loan. Farming relationship between landowner and the sharecropper/ tenant farmer is so varied and diversified, that sometimes they share certain attributes with the typical sharecropper, and sometimes with the typical tenant farmer. Here, the term 'sharecropper' preferably used because in Sindh Rice Belt, sharecropper-landlord relationship is largely interdependent in nature, although most of the sharecroppers have their personal houses, yet many take input loans and tilling expense loan from the landlord and sell the crop in the market when and where landlord wishes.

conversational and semi-structured interviews, FGDs and individual case studies during the sowing or planting season in the flooded rice fields, in *Otaqs* (traditional guest houses), and *Maikhanas* (place for smoking and drinking). Regional approach in the selection of sample size and area has been adopted. Villages from Talluka Larkana of District Larkana and the Talluka Nasirabad of District Qambar-Shahdadkot were selected due to the underlying belief of the researchers that, it constitutes the core of Sindh Rice Belt.

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

Theoretical Framework

To offset the perceived losses, risks, deficits and dangers involved in landless sharecropping, the peasants usually resort to passive, hidden resistance in everyday life, which has been praised by James C Scott as the “everyday forms of peasant resistance” [5, 6]. “Public transcripts” are contested by peasants through “hidden transcripts” “by using patterned language codes to resist the power of landlords. Peasants make use of language tools like “rumor, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, and anonymity” [6].

Sharecroppers are approached here as active agents structuring the socio-political structures and managing their multiple identities. Therefore, we found it useful to analyze the changing nature of wage-less work and the transforming peasant identities through the lens of “Structuration” theory [7], and the concept of “slef” and ‘identities’ as elaborated by Meijl [8].

Should make it clear that above theoretical concepts has been applied here, not to prove or disprove above theories, but just as analytic tools to make sense out of the metonymic reality ‘unpaid labor’ in the context of Sindh Rice Belt. Our concern here is to deal with the multiple conventions of perceived resistance in relation to multiple sharecropper identities. Do the landlords apply *Begar* as counter-resistance tools? Answers to these questions would help us conclude, if the *Begar* is a kind of peasant resistance, a landlord resistance or a dualistic process in which both resist and cooperate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Field performance of the sharecropper is not conditioned by the producing the maximum crop, or the maximum yield or the maximum profit at minimum investment. It is not even dependent on serving landlord without being paid. Field performance is dependent upon the mutual cooperation of

the both stakeholders in which assisting the landlord in manual labor is taken by both as positive. Both the landlord and the sharecropper as risk averting and try their level best to produce high yielding crop. Field performance, hence, means both the stakeholders are satisfied that the other is doing his/her best. Landlord or landowner may provide inputs, all fertilizer, even, sometimes seed and tillage expenses on interest free loan, if it is in his capacity. Sometimes, even landlord/landowner has to take input loans, for his part. There were found some cases in which landlord took the loan from the merchant to provide for his share of the fertilizer, whereas, sharecropper was able to finance fertilizer and tillage expenses from his own pocket. Mutual cooperation and ensure the trust that the sharecropping agreement will last longer Sharecropping is not merely an economic contract, but it binds both the stakeholders in a social relationship as well. As the landlord is not much more apt in manual agricultural labor, sharecropper is expected to do simple and causal agriculture related tasks on behalf of the landowner or landlord. From the sharecropper’s point of view, it is deemed wise to keep the landlord in good humour by providing for animal fodder and loading and unloading, as such tasks are easier and accessible for him without costing much. Sharecropper can easily avoid unpaid labor by making scores of excuses, yet because of its lighter and manageable nature he prefers to perform it.

Resistance through / to Unpaid Labour

Resistance to unpaid labor by the sharecropper or the resistance through the tactical demands of unpaid labour and threats of land-snatching by the landlord spring up when, somehow mistrust develops in both or one of the stakeholders. Landlord thinks that the sharecropper does not take cropping seriously, or he finds another better sharecropping option. Sharecropper thinks that assisting the landlord through unpaid labour is no more worthwhile. Landlord starts implicating him deliberate unpaid labour. All this complicatedness leads to the further mistrust. Sharecropper starts feeling certain that the land will now be snatched. He starts looking for alternatives. The landlord also starts approaching other sharecroppers. Unpaid labour is then no more served, if the sharecropper has a viable alternative. It is just like a cold war. Both stakeholders are secretly resisting, either to get rid of the other, or to bring the other to one’s point. All that resistance may finally lead to either land-snatching by the landlord or to land-abandoning by the sharecropper. Hence, land-abandoning is also as common, in Sindh rice belt, as the land-snatching. Both practices are utterly disliked by the villagers. Hence, unpaid labour, willingly done, is also taken by the locals as a social symbol and an indicator that the relationship between sharecropper and the landlord is stable and it will last for quite some time.

Wadera, Vangar and Begar

Relatively bigger landlords, who is usually a village headman (*Wadera*), may have an assistant (*Kamdaar*) appointed to manage a ten to fifteen sharecroppers, tend to pester sharecroppers with excessive unpaid labour. When such a pestering reaches a certain limit, sharecropper starts

resisting secretly by shunning it, making complaints among sharecroppers. He may also make open excuses to the Wadera. If the demand of unpaid labour continues and other sharecroppers are also implicated in it, as in the case of collective unpaid labour (*Vangaar*), then they collectively mobilize each other against the landlord. Wadera used to extract unpaid labour without sharecropper's consent. He threatened one sharecropper of land-snatching and in fact, snatched the land from another. The rest of the sharecroppers intensely disliked Wadera's that attitude and through informal confirmation and consultations (hidden discourse) they resolved to quit the sharecropping of that village-headman. When the landlord came to know that, he started taking normalizing actions (in public discourse), and indirectly entreated them to join him again. When landlord was asked why he implicated them in unpaid labour, he replied, "They are all thieves of my grain...they take away winter crops inside their houses, keep fisting all fodder to their animals...yet they dislike little petty work of mine". Hence, it is, quite clear from the above example that relatively bigger landlords, or village headman-cum-landlords, usually mistrust their sharecroppers and justify unpaid labour as a practice to offset perceived agricultural losses. That example clearly demonstrates the capacity of sharecroppers of Sindh rice belt to launch a successful every day form of resistance through their hidden discourse or script. Yet not all bigger landlords are like that. Some others were found to be very cooperative. Excessively exploitative landlord cannot hold sharecroppers together with him and wise landlords and sharecroppers know that secret very well, yet both resist setting for each other sustainable limits for sharecropping relationship.

Vulnerable Landlords and Permanent Sharecroppers

In certain cases, landlords were found to be vulnerable to sharecropper's whims and fancies, particularly when sharecroppers themselves are small landlords or landowners, and wield relatively greater political power, based on intimate extended kinship group or tribal affiliations. If the land is in the vicinity or neighborhood of sharecropper's house and the landlord's village is farther from it, then sharecropper can sometimes claim tenancy right to cultivate. Baloch tribes who live just around the land under cultivation can threaten to encroach, steal, put allegations, to harass any other sharecropper as well as landlord.

There is probably so much diversity in social relationships within the rice belt that almost all imaginable arrangements may be empirically observed. In that case, landlord cannot exploit sharecropper or implicate him/her in unpaid labour as his landed property is at the mercy of sharecropper. Hence, economic and political inequality between sharecropper, landowner, self-cultivator and the landlord is relative, rather than absolute. In many cases, the landlord is dominant, or apparently assumed to be the dominant partner, yet the sharecropper, as well, could be economically sound and politically stronger. Sharecroppers of Brohi and Mugheri tribe were also found to be in virtual possession of the land under their sharecropping. They have their own agricultural land and live around the sharecropped land, far away from main village centers, connected through distant

narrow and non-metalead paths. Landlords, in such a scenario, resist through hidden discourse and keep blaming them of theft and encroachment when within their village or kinship group. Such sharecroppers know very well about the anxiety of their landlords and to alleviate it, try to keep the landlords in good humour, in public discourse, by offering small gifts, in fact, bring small gifts for their landlords; gifts like cock, a calf, a goat, few kilos of meat of sacrificed animal, dishes at the time of feast-making. Their status is just like that of a permanent sharecropper.

Common Strategies for Begar

Unpaid labour used to serve as a cultural symbolic activity to demonstrate the superiority of the landlord as the owner of the land with the right to snatch land from sharecropper. That symbolic significance has now, considerably diminished. Sharecroppers, however, now actively negotiate the conventions of wage-less work before making informal contract with the landlord. That was not the case few decades back when the village headman was the virtual lord and the will of the landlord was supreme.

Sharecropper has now certain flexible alternatives to choose, in case, landlord may try to impose his will in the form of wage-less work (Begar). Sharecropper is not bound to do sharecropping anyway as they have several alternatives now to opt from. He can do away with sharecropping. But due to the fact that the land is still held as a sacred and invaluable asset with intrinsic value, it has been practiced by their ancestors and the fact that it has become manageable, doing sharecropping is mutually preferred by both sharecroppers and the landlord. One can, however, delineate some of the strategies generally adopted by sharecroppers to resist or accept Begar, once they agree to mutually practice sharecropping. I would like to highlight some of the examples of multiple conventions of unpaid labour, analytically taking sides with the sharecropper here to prove my arguments. The fact that survey based quantitative generalizations depict unpaid labour as universally exploitative of the sharecropper, I would try to prove here that in case of Sindh Rice Belt, at least, it not the norm. In proving so, it might sound like I am taking sides with the landlords, as against sharecroppers, but my way of argumentation is just strategically analytic to depict the other side of the social scene, which is usually ignored by the quantitative researcher, rapid assessors and the human rights activists working from the platform of NGO and donor agencies.

Some of the landless sharecroppers temporarily accept their vulnerable status and do work without being in the hope that landlord will help them in times of need, disease, death and marriages. She/he thinks that injustice is being done to him/her and he/she is being excessively exploited, yet accommodates as there is no viable option. She/he resorts to the theft of his/her own paddy or steals another share-tenant's paddy to meet daily expenses. Sometimes, sharecropper even engages in robbery or dacoity. The eldest sharecropper himself avoids indulging in so called antisocial activities, yet youngsters are allowed, even encouraged to loot, rob, snatch and commit dacoity. Stealing and robbing and encroaching upon landed property is still considered by

some Baloch and Sindhi tribes as a sign of manliness and bravery, as a kind of symbolic honor, though, such trends are now losing ground. Hence, stealing or robbing becomes morally good for them, probably having some roots in the ancestral background of the sharecroppers. In that case, resistance could have historical, racial and ancestral roots as well, in which both sharecropper and the landlord may resist using ancestral, tribal and ethnic roots as leverage.

Some sharecroppers engage in sharecropping of two or more landlords simultaneously and enjoy favors of all yet try to avoid doing *Begar* of any one by hiding his activities or busyness in any one of the landlords. Sharecropper tries not to depend solely on sharecropping. He engages in alternative sources of income or goes to the city to earn in slack season. In that way he takes himself/herself out of landlord's or Wadera's influence and enjoys the freedom to choose any other occupation. Sharecropper builds home in the neighborhood of cropping land. Or he takes such piece of land on sharecropping which is either near to his personal house or village, or away from the village of the landlord. Share-tenants prefer to do cropping away from central villages or do cropping on the land of the landlord of a nearby village, not of his own village. It keeps them away from the landlord and his unpaid labour and makes it easy for him to cut the crop at his will. Lands that are near share-tenant's village and away from the landlord are preferred by the share-tenants, as they can also graze buffaloes and bring fodder for them. It also facilitates the shifting of light winter crops inside homes for manual processing by women folk. In that case, landlord has no choice, except to trust the honesty of the share-tenant. In this way, share-tenant feels independence and liberty from the direct control or supervision of landlord himself or a *kamadar* (personal assistant of landlord for the management of affairs related to land). It also gives him the sense of control over the cropped field and the sting of wage-less work is thus neutralized.

Sharecroppers tame animals and graze them on the land throughout the year to make the most of sharecropping, to offset the perceived loss of paddy that excessively goes into the share of a landlord. They try to make maximum use of grazing land and wasteland adjacent to the cropping land. They graze animals, cut trees for domestic use and efficiently use wild grass. Input expenses are then financed through the sale of tamed animals instead of taking loan from the landlord or a rice-miller. To do cropping of weaker, absentee landlord puts some share-tenants in a position of a psychological and social advantage over the landlord as they cannot be, then, accessed easily to serve their wageless tasks. Such weaker landlords were observed to play to the whims and fancies of the Share-tenants.

Some clever and intelligent sharecroppers initially serve *Begar* to strengthen brotherly ties with landlord's caste fellows or with the kith and kin of landlord. To get landlords engaged in death ceremonies, to invite them to their wedding feasts and festivals keeps landlords in good humor. In that way, later on, landlord gives them free hand to cultivate or use the land in their own interest and the unwanted *Begar* is also, thus, avoided. Landlords might rotate share-tenants deliberately but share-tenants might as well voluntarily

abandon sharecropping or break the rule due to excessive Extra wage-less work.

Vangar (Community Begar)

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

Wadera or village headman usually arranges "Vangar" in which all of his share-tenants, village peasants and members of his Raaj are summoned to finish certain tasks like; Planting or sowing of paddy, harvesting and collecting, loading and deloading from trolley, managing and arranging for guests on occasions like wedding and death ceremonies, house or wall building, repairing mosque, de-silting water courses etc. Vangar of village headman is kind of token service in response to the protection and security provided by the landlord. Only food is served to laborers of 'Vangar' by village headman. Peasants, villagers and sharecroppers, which were previously bound up remain within the vicinity of the village, now move to faroff areas, other villages, towns and cities. Their businesses and occupations have multiplied. It is really hard, now, even for the powerful landlord to gather villagers at one place, not to mention of engaging them in Vangar (community service or his personal work) Community Begar is now a rare phenomenon and thought impractical as the power and influence of the village headman has declined in recent decades. Yet the variant of old traditional moral principles of landlordism to regulate village economy, culture and community, still hold sway and followed, though in a greatly modified form, yet sharecroppers and general village peasants now enjoy much more individual and familial freedom.

Theoretical Analysis of Begar

James C Scott [6] has shown through his study of Sedaka, that how peasants resist landlord's dominance in everyday life, during their daily routine activities. How patterned hidden language codes to resist the power of landlords are applied by peasants to resist landlords. Landlords do the reverse of that and try to implicate sharecropper in wage-less labour. Yet in public discourse, usually, the will of the landlord holds the sway, and he is the final decision-maker. Peasants manipulate discourse through "rumor, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, and anonymity" [6]. Conventions and modalities related to wage-less work have, both, open, as well as, disguised aspects. Where landlords are more hostile, wage-less work becomes the hidden practice. It is avoided, feigned, shunned and counter-exploited through theft while doing *Begar*. In Sindh Rice Belt, however, hostile landlords are rare. Few politically influential feudals have, allegedly, been reported to be hostile and have forced their tenants to do their wage-less work [9]. Since the feudal-politicians are not immediately engaged in general peasant culture and as much of sharecropping is done at the level of small landlord's and village headman (*Wadera*), we have explored the practice of *Begar* in all its varied forms at common small village level headed by village headman and

inhabited by small landlords, landowners, simple villagers and peasants.

Therefore, it is justified to theorize that the peasant economy and culture of Sindh is neither totally hegemonized[10] by *Wadera-landlords*, nor the sharecroppers are any more unconscious of their structural economic exploitation as the Marxists might propose. Although the dominant landlords, on the dint of their manifold political networks and links with the police, revenue collectors and political leaders at national level, do influence the village politics and culture, their dominant role has considerably diminished, and their domination of the general peasants and sharecroppers is, now, being seriously questioned and contested by the peasants of Sindh Rice Belt.

In Sindh Rice Belt, conventions of *Begar* have been found to be practiced both, in hidden and public discourses and expressed in both hidden and 'public script' by sharecroppers, as well as by landlords, landowners, and village headman.

Sharecropper and Landlord as Structuring Agents

Practice of *Begar* and general sharecropper-landlord arrangement is more in consonance with the 'structuration theory'[7]. Landless sharecroppers are very well aware, individually as well as collectively, when that the landlord crosses the limits and attempts to exploit them, yet, because of the fact that they do deem it wise not to confront landlord openly, they, initially resist secretly through hidden campaign, and if landlord's attempts persist they come up openly to defend themselves through open dialogue and negotiation. In some cases, when the opportunity is there to get rid of so called 'free work' and landlord's exploitation, they openly resist, or start cheating back their landlords. Hence, sharecroppers are equally responsible for structuring their relationship with the landlords. They are structuring agents who, not only mutually enact social system's structures but simultaneously attempt to transform them as well. Norms of the moral economy and the emerging reality of market economy, and his time and space bound context, not only constrains the sharecropper and landlord, but it also enables them to maneuver in new directions.

Sharecropper, in Sindh Rice Belt, as an individual, as a family unit and/ or as one of the routinely interacting sharecroppers, is an active self-asserting, independent structuring agent who, not only mutually enacts social system's structures but simultaneously attempt to transform them as well. Norms of the moral economy and the emerging reality of market economy, and his/her time and space bound context, not only constrains the sharecropper and landlord, but it also enables to maneuver in certain new, creative directions. Sharecropper now can choose, on its own, to do or not to do sharecropping; to oblige or not oblige the village headman; to take or not take a loan and to do or not to do *Begar*. Unpaid labour, even as a kind of moral obligation, can be thwarted by sharecropper if he wished. Yet to maintain good relations, for instance, he decides to work without being immediately paid. Instead, he/she accepts symbolic recognition in the form of admiration, strong brotherly ties, and expects moral, social and economic assistance in times of need. Although generally in

the relationship of sharecropper and landlord, landlord is little more dominant and influential, in case of , at least, one cannot say that landlord's dominance is the sole determinant, or the major factor in the imposition of unpaid labour on the sharecropper. Both agents try to mutually structure their social relationships to best fit their multiple purposes.

Economic wealth or landed property is not the sole determinant of political power and influence in Sindh villages. Other determinants could be high caste, strong kinship, ethnic and racial origins, tribal associations, geographical and ecological features of the region, social and cultural makeup of the peasant society, traditions and cultural values, internal and external migration patterns etc. So much variability is found in sharecropping arrangements related to unpaid labour in Sindh Rice Belt, that one cannot generalize that sharecroppers always resist it through 'hidden script'.

The relationship between sharecropper and landlord, in terms of unpaid labour, is dialectical, as well as dualistic. In *Begar* both equally structure[7] and transform their relationships. Rice culture, not only constrains them both, to act according to the prescribed feudal and tribal rules or kinship norms, but it also enables them to construct their field of relationships to better suit their contextualized purposes. Wage-less work is usually negotiated in a balanced way so that the relationship may last, for the time being, without one party over-exploiting the other. Sharecroppers of absentee landlords or of the far-off village might openly and clearly settle modalities of *Begar* with the landlord and perform accordingly without any one side overexploiting the other. In that case, 'hidden script' to counter landlordism is not usually applied. Sharecropper and landlords maintain responsible brotherly relationships. In case, sharecropper belongs to the landlord's caste or to the high caste, hidden discourse, then almost completely lacks there.

In terms of *Begar*, sharecroppers seem to have actively and consciously negotiated their identities with the landlords. Some of the sharecroppers, however, loosely resist against wage-less work through their 'hidden transcripts' and awkwardly justify *Begar* in 'public transcript'[6]. Hence resistance against unpaid labour is more fictional and metaphorical than real. To balance the power relations between landlord and themselves, sharecroppers use multiple leverages, instead of merely 'hidden scripts', flattery or jesting, including tribal and caste affiliations, kinship ties, social connections and alternative economic sources etc.

Dualistic Resistance

Peasants are generally supposed to be resisting against landlords' exploitation [6] has also followed the same line, yet instead of focusing on active external peasant movements he has focused on daily routine types of peasant resistance. In case of Sindh Rice Belt where violence against sharecroppers or perceived threat of it is largely absent, the conventions and dynamics of resistance take different course.

Instead of just calling it 'every day form of resistance'[6] we would like to label it as a 'two way process of dualistic resistance of low intensity' in which both landlord and sharecropper resist and cooperate for different reasons. Same can be said of the practice of wage-less work in Sindh Rice Belt.

Unpaid labour is not always imposed by the landlord, nor sharecropper always resists it, yet in case of negative reciprocity, it takes certain elements of resistance. *Begar* manifests itself in a form of certain ever-emerging yet dynamic social pattern; hence a patterned response to resist. It is not static type of patterned resistance. It is structured through its own contextualized dynamics of the 'field' [11] of Sindh Rice Belt. Resistance here is not one way or unidirectional. Landlords are also resisting by imposing *Begar*, by not helping them in times of need and through social boycott to make off for the loss of paddy, crop produce, husk and the hay that sharecroppers consume without his consent. They protect their landed property from encroachment by the sharecroppers and to stop them from overexploiting their land and produce. Believing that the sharecroppers are not what they pretend and knowing that they would consume land produce without his consent, landlord feels justified to implicate sharecroppers in unpaid labor. Hence, a sort of negative reciprocity is practiced there. Landlords also tend to over invoice or under invoice input loan taken by sharecropper to offset perceived excesses of the sharecropper. Sharecroppers, on their part, backbite, agitate and sometimes openly quarrel if the landlord tries to extract extra labour from them. Hence, both parties are well aware of what may go on in their absence. They know so much about each other's hidden scripts that the distinction between public and hidden scripts or discourse becomes meaningless in case of Sindh Rice Belt.

Multiple Sharecropping Identities and Selves

Sharecropper as a person, who performs work without pay, should not be discussed, merely in terms of his/her subjugated role under the subjugating landlord. Sharecropper is the person or actor who shares his/her plural identities with others around him/her, acting in certain specific context with multiple purposes. Meanings, categories and identities are, now, no ore fixed entities, nor identical in all situations, instead these are ever changing and moving webs of significations, that is, Difference [12].

Individual sharecropper's 'self' has to manage multiple identities even in his generic capacity as a sharecropper. Sharecropper as a sharecropper cannot be abstracted from his other identities and contextual realities. He/she may belong to a certain high caste, tribe, village, neighborhood, to a son in Dubai, to brother who drives Quniqui, to a landlord uncle, to another brother who is primary teacher, to a landless peasant, to a religious leader who respects him a lot. He could be a newly migrant *Baloach* from the bordering area of Balochistan. Sharecropper may well be a famous thief, a dacoit or a brave hero for his people. He may also have dozen of buffaloes, a fish pond, a guest house, or none of these. He could also a large kinship group in a village or a single relative. How his self-deals with all these identities with whom he shares his own multiple identities is

the question of practice and process in which he plays the role of an active agent. While performing *Begar*, all his multiple identities can affect his dealings with landlord. Similar corollaries, in terms of multiple identities, can be drawn of landlord as well. Hence, the 'self' can be best "understood as pluralist, fragmented, emergent, dialogical, relational, inconsistent and culturally determined"[8]. In Unpaid labour, as in other agricultural and social activities, sharecroppers take multiple I-positions when they interact in differenthorizontal and vertical zones, at different levels to create their own internally dynamic field or cultural landscape [8].

CONCLUSION

Above debate on the nature of '*Begar*' leads me to conclude that sharecroppers of Sindh Rice Belt have the capacity to negotiate unpaid labour, instead of being that imposed by the landlord. They are capable to take risks, as well as resist the village headman's authority. They can assert their identities, in this ever globalizing world, as they have alternatives to depend on. Their "dialogical selves" can get extended beyond the traditional cultural settings to take multiple I-positions when they would interact internationally and transnationally, in different zones, at different levels to create their own internally dynamic ethnoscape. (Meijl, 2008). Hence, when they are involved in performing unpaid labour, it is not just an event that elapsed in which sharecropper, just as a sharecropper, was engaged with another dominant single identity. Instead, the practice of unpaid labor is continual process influenced by multiple identities of the sharecropper and the landlord, in which dominance and subjugation are not fixed and unilateral, but fluid and ever-shifting.

Resistance against unpaid labour is more fictional and metaphorical than real. Relationship of landlord and the sharecropper, in terms of so-called unpaid labour, in Sindh Rice Belt, in terms of *begar*, is a two way dualistic process of low intensity' in which both landlord and sharecropper resist and cooperate for different reasons, to seek multiple concessions and social benefits from each other and from their community. Unpaid is also a dualistic process of in which there is a lot of reciprocity and exchange. That reciprocal aspect of unpaid labour has been analysed in other parallel paper, in which it has been related and contrasted with the exploitative interpretations of unpaid labour. For better understanding of the phenomenon, it is deemed advisable, to read both papers.

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