
PROLETARIANISATION AND THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION: A CASE STUDY OF RURAL INDIA

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Résumé

The laws of motion of development dictate a persistent accumulation on one end of the social hierarchy and relative dispossession on the other. Debates on recent developments in the Indian countryside have in large focused on the crisis of agricultural production and farmers' incomes. The capitalist imperative, however, impacts not just conditions of agricultural production and farm incomes but also the nature of work that men and women engage in. It creates a crisis of social reproduction for sections of petty producers and workers, compelling them to sell their labour power through the process of proletarianization – leading to the enlargement of the working class. An enduring concern in this respect has been that in as much as traditional classes of rural petty producers and labourers comprise certain castes and genders, the emergence of *new* classes of labour are not only shaped by such historical social institutions, but are also shaped by them. In practice, the nature of agrarian transitions and concrete circumstances influences the manner and measure of this process - a topic that remains under researched for the recent time-period. This paper studies this process through the case-study of rural India by investigating changes in the socio-economic composition of the rural Indian labour force from 2004-05 to 2011-12 using the available India Human Development Survey (IHDS) panel data for the said time period. The focus of the paper is to estimate changes in the relative size and composition of working households in rural India, their social composition in terms of caste, gendered division of work, and diversification in employment portfolios and/or intensification of work.

Mots-Clés: Proletarianisation, agrarian change, gender and work, rural labour

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