

**OWNERSHIP AND LABOUR CHARACTERISTICS IN COMMERCIAL
FLORICULTURE SECTOR FROM MAVAL REGION OF MAHARASHTRA**

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INTRODUCTION

The leading states practicing commercial floriculture in India are Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana. Among the export-oriented units approved by Govt. of India, most are near Pune, Chandigarh, Bengluru, Hyderabad and Delhi.

Pune district is leading all the way ahead of other districts in Maharashtra in acreage and production of flowers. Maval falls within one of the core areas of commercial flower cultivation. Maval Taluka, is one of the 13 talukas of Pune district. Maval occupies the Western margin of the district, and is bordered by Mulshi to the south, Khed to the North and Pune to the East. Towards the west, Maval shares boundary with Raigad district. In terms of area, Maval is the 4th largest tehsil in Pune. Vadgoan is the taluka headquarter.

Maval region has traditionally been an agricultural and pastoral economy. Dairy activity and milk production has been a major allied activity to the rice cultivation. However, in the post-liberalization period, floriculture has been one of the most promising options made available to the Maval region. Maval possesses almost all the requisite factors for floriculture, i.e. fertile soils, irrigation facilities, yearlong congenial climate, nearness to Mumbai, all-season connectivity by roads and railway, Mumbai airport facility, availability of cheap labour etc. Flowers are grown in two different types of units. The first type is the green houses located at MIDC Talegoan floriculture cluster, while the second type of units are the scattered ones, located in Maval villages and owned by progressive farmers. These two types of units have marked

Fig. 1. THE STUDY AREA



MAVAL TALUKA



difference in their scale of operation, resources available, input costs, target markets and revenue generation. Hence, it is necessary to understand the present socio-economic condition of the stakeholders in this activity, i.e. the owners of the greenhouses and the labour employed in the

same.. This information was directly gathered from the 374 respondents (owners and workers) in form of primary data. The present paper tries to highlight the socio-economic characteristics of these functional groups.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GREEN HOUSE OWNERSHIP

1. Two groups of owners were identified. The first type was the owners of the green houses located at the MIDC Talegaon, the the second type was the native farmers of Maval, who have diversified to floriculture.

2. The age structure of the owners differ at MIDC and the Maval villages. The MIDC green house owners are in the higher age group as compared to the individual unit owners in villages.

Table 1: Age composition of floriculture unit owners

S. No.	Age Classes	No. of owners in MIDC	No. of owners in Maval villages
1.	≤ 20 years	00	01
2.	20-30 years	02	11
3.	30-40 years	07	16
4.	40-50 years	13	04
5.	50-60 years	15	02
6.	> 60 years	03	00

Source : Primary survey by the researcher

The table shows that the individual owners in villages are younger than the owners in MIDC. This difference in the age structure can be understood if one considers the way of acquiring land for the activity. At MIDC, the plots are sold/leased out. Therefore, for acquiring the land for floriculture, the person must have the necessary amount. This amount is quite high (15 lacs per 10 years), which can be arranged/borne only by senior age group. On the other hand, in villages, the requisite land is already available with the farmer. This land may have been used in traditional way, for food crop cultivation or for dairy activities. Since green house cultivation is a modern concept, the younger, educated youth of the villages can easily be attracted to it. Since

land is readily available, these young farmers may experiment with floriculture, investing only for the variable cost.

3. Most owners at MIDC as well as in villages are males. Female participation is much lesser compared to their male counterparts. This is expected in the Indian social scenario, where the economic power and decision making rights are vested with males alone. Female share in ownership at MIDC 21%, while in villages, only 4% owners are women. However, the higher percentage of female ownership at MIDC may be misleading. The survey showed that the floriculture activity is registered in the name of the wife of the actual owner, in order to avoid the income tax.

4. The educational qualification shows that the MIDC owners are more educated than the Maval individual unit owners. While owners from Maval are barely graduates, the MIDC owners are highly and even technically educated.

Table 2: Educational status of the green house owners

S. No.	Educational Qualification	No. of owners in MIDC	Unit owners in Maval villages
1	Below Secondary School level	00	05
2	Up to Higher Secondary level	03	21
3	Up to Graduation	22	08
4	Post Graduation/Technical Degree	15	00
	Total	40	34

Source : Primary Survey by researcher

5. The information on the residential/Domicile status of MIDC unit owners reveals an important characteristics that not a single MIDC unit owner is a resident or native of Maval. All the MIDC unit owners stay outside the Maval region, mostly in Pune or Mumbai. Of these, 77% are Maharashtrians, 23% are non Maharashtraians but domiciled in Maharashtra.

6. There is significant difference between the MIDC unit owners' and village owners' income levels and occupation. The MIDC unit owners are basically businessmen, who have some other business, and have diversified to floriculture. Another class of owners are high-level government

officers, working or retired, who have worked in floriculture-related departments. They not only have the requisite capital, but also the first hand technical knowhow about floriculture. Among the owners of units in rural Maval, high as well as medium income group's participation is also seen. The higher income group in this type is of the rich, local farmers, who have other cash crop production (generally sugarcane). High income earned through the existing farming, has led them to experiment with floriculture. Some of them also hold important positions in the local politics. The genuine farmers, who are actually into progressive farming and implementing new methods, are the ones who have medium incomes. These farmers have taken training in floriculture, availed of loan facilities.

Table 3: Financial status of green house owners

Sr. No.	Income Group (Annual)	MIDC Units	Maval village units
1	Less than 5 Lacs	00	06
2	5 Lacs tp 10 Lacs	08	13
3	10 to 15 Lacs	21	10
4	Above 15 Lacs	11	05

Source : Primary Survey by the researcher.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LABOUR

The Poly houses require both, trained and unskilled labour force for daily operations. The need of trained labour is in the initial period after establishment of the Poly house. This is the technical staff which inspects and ensures a smooth functioning of irrigation system, foggers, dehumidifiers, and instruments measuring humidity, light conditions and Carbon-Di-Oxide levels. Once these functions are streamlined, the technical staff has no role to play.

The daily operations of the Poly house are managed by another set of skilled or semi-skilled workers, which stay and work at the Poly house location for the entire year. They are used for harvesting, chemical treatment, pre-cooling, grading and packaging of the flowers. Activities like weeding, cleaning, irrigation, handling of boxes etc do not require skilled manpower. Hence unskilled labour is employed for the same. Office attendants, accountants, dispatch clerks etc are the office staff needed at the Poly house. Interviews of 300 workers across the Poly houses in Maval, have revealed the following characteristics of labour in the floriculture activity.

1. The technical staff for maintaining the machinery is not employed permanently, but is hired under an AMC (Annual Maintenance Contract). These professionals are based in Pune.
2. For a Poly House of 1 acre, 6-8 unskilled labours are needed for Rose cultivation, while 7-9 persons are required for Gerbera/Carnation cultivation.
3. For office jobs, 2 persons are needed for 1 acre Poly house.
4. Talegoan MIDC (Rose Cultivation) Poly houses have average 8 workers per poly house. These unskilled workers are landless labours generally brought from backward rural Maharashtra. 70% of labour in this cluster is an imported labour from Districts like Aurangabad, Beed, Nashik, Ahmednagar, and Solapur. Some labourers are also from Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

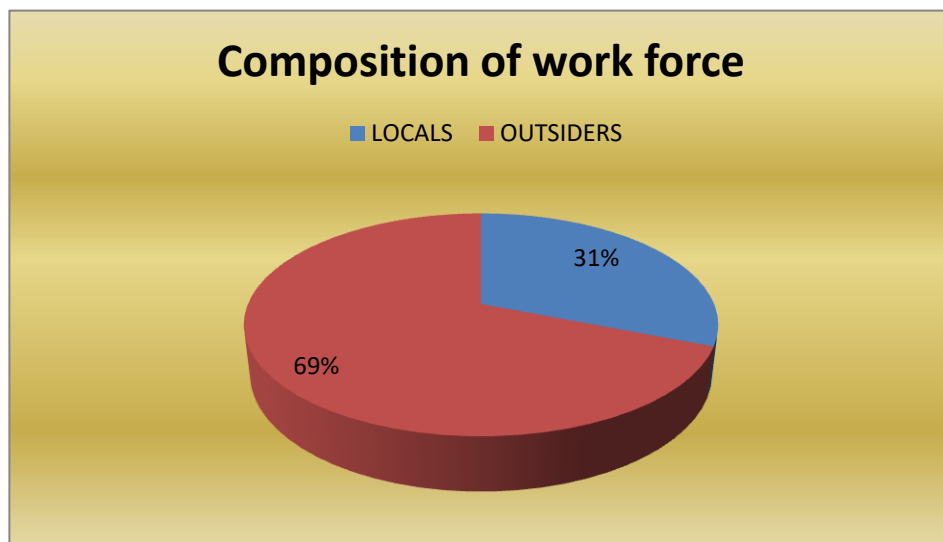
Table 4: Native places of Migrant Labour

S. No.	Place	Males	Females	Total
1	Aurangabad District	29	14	43
2	Beed District	21	13	34
3	Ahmednagar District	20	21	41
4	Solapur District	13	09	21
5	Nashik District	08	05	12
6	From Other States	32	27	59
	TOTAL			210

5. Most of the unskilled labour imported from outside Maval is in form of couples or families including children. These couples stay at the site and perform multiple function of office sub-staff, weeding, guarding the premises and irrigation. After spending a few months at the Poly house, these labourers also acquire skills of harvest, grading and packing.

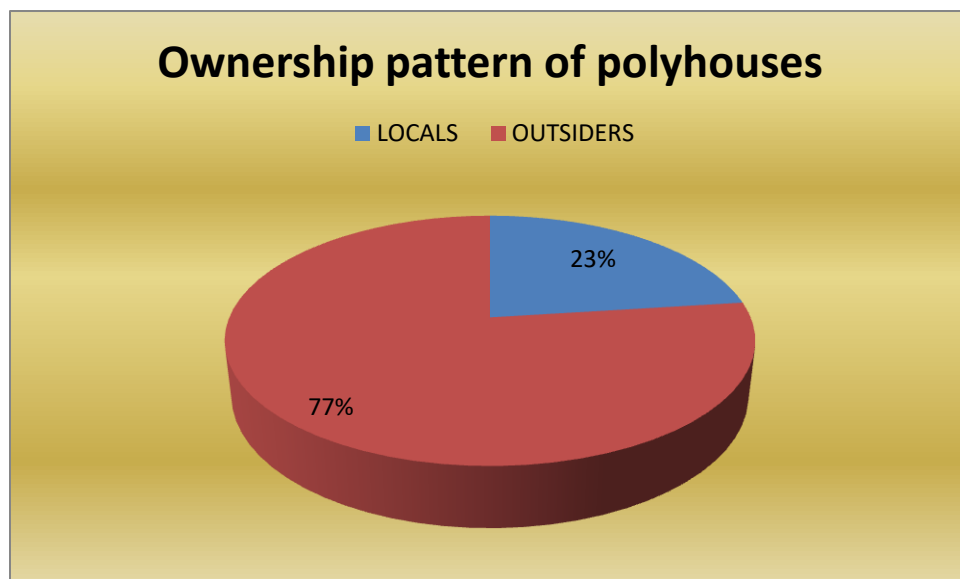
6. The wages to these workers are paid weekly. The average weekly salary for a male worker is Rs.700, while for female workers, it is Rs.600. Sometimes, a couple is hired on a lump sum salary of Rs.5000-5500/- per month. The lodging and food are borne by the Poly house owner.
7. The unskilled labour force is highly mobile in nature. They keep shifting to different Poly houses, or also move to nearby industrial areas in Pimpri-Chinchwad, Chakan etc. Problem of availability of labour and their high mobility was reported by almost all Poly house owners in Maval.
8. Work-conditions of the unskilled labourers are not very good. They do not get any weekly holiday or education and medical facilities for their children. 78% of labourers reported that long hours in the Poly house affects their health adversely. While spraying pesticides and applying chemical fertilizers, use of mask or hand gloves must be used. The primary survey revealed that only 03% of the workers practice these safety norms. The common health problems among the workers were Asthma, headache, vomiting, nausea, fever, fatigue, discomfort etc.
9. The office staff comprises of local youth from Talegaon, Kamshet, Vadgaon, which are mostly under-graduates. 18% of the office staff were graduates while, 82% had passed secondary or higher secondary school exams. Unlike the unskilled labours, they do not stay at the poly house, but commute from their native villages everyday. Their work hours are 10 hours a day and are paid an average salary of Rs.4500 monthly.
10. The entire work force, skilled or unskilled, has an un-organized structure. None of the workers reported of being a member of any workers' union. Hence, facilities like minimum wages, insurance, medical and accidental benefits are not available.
11. In individually-owned poly houses of Maval villages, average number of workers per unit is lesser than Talegaon MIDC, 4 paid workers per acre are needed in these units. The skilled and semi-skilled operations are carried out by the farmer himself or members of his family.

12. The composition of labour in Maval village green houses shows that 97% of the total paid workers are local. They work on daily basis (Rs 90 per day) and do not stay at the site. There is also a seasonal variation in availability of these labourers. During June to September month, there is a general shortage of labour, due to farm operations. The wage rate are very high (uptoRs.130 per day) in this season.
13. A significant change in this composition is a slow increase of non-local labourers who are migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Their present share in the work force (3%) is gradually increasing.

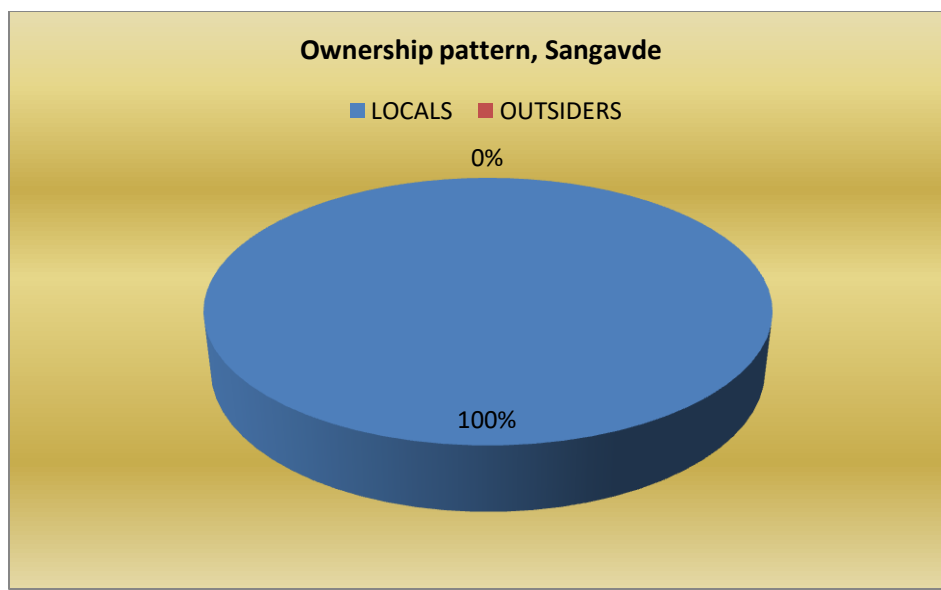


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FIG. 2 a & b : TALEGOAN FLORITECH PARK, TALEGOAN

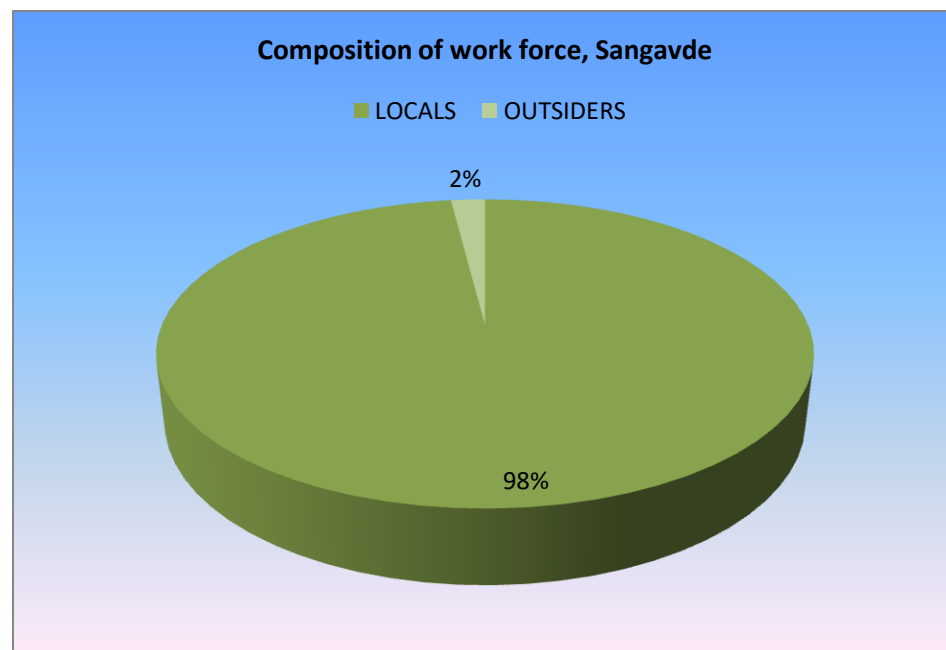


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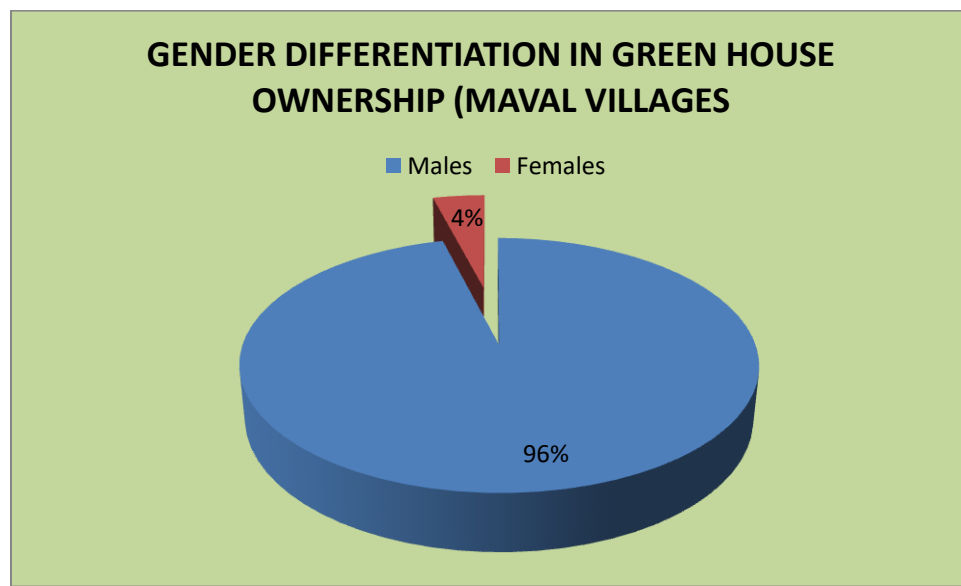
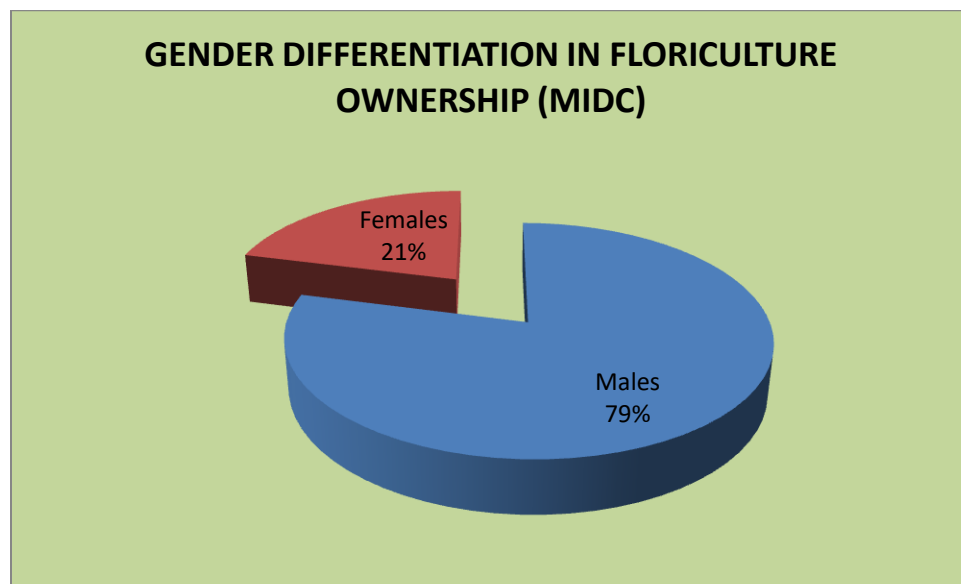


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FIG.3 a & b: POLY HOUSES IN VILLAGES OF MAVAL



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