Migratory Men

Place, Transnationalism and Masculinities

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Chapter 13

Masculine anxieties of undocumented South Asian male agricultural workers in Greece

Productive use of bordering regimes and potential emasculation by racial capitalism

Reena Kukreja

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Introduction

> The secret of profit making must at last be laid bare.
>
> (Marx, 1977, pp. 279, 280)

Studies on temporary migrant labour regimes reveal that state-created exclusions, in their utilisation of racial hierarchies, deliberately discriminate against racialised, working-class migrant workers (Basok et al., 2014). Regulations contractually tying workers to single employers, differential wage structures for local versus migrant workers and harsh working conditions are all tied to threats of state-enforced deportation for protesting workers. The consequent labour precarity allows for maximisation of capitalist accumulation (Cruz-Del Rosario & Rigg, 2019; Strauss & McGrath, 2017). This chapter furthers this conversation and fills an important gap in understanding labour management techniques by foregrounding masculine anxieties regarding emasculatory deportation. I demonstrate that the secret of efficient profit-making lies in racial capitalism's ability to suture culturally specific masculine norms about failed masculinity faced by working-class migrant men with othering discourses based on racial logic and Islamophobia to enforce labour docility. Illustrating this with a case study of undocumented South Asian men in Greece from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, I also show how masculine anxiety around earning a livelihood sets off contestations, (re)iterations and reworkings of masculine ideals within each national group, pitting them against each other, with the Pakistanis being pegged the lowest in the intra-group masculine hierarchy.

Greece, the first European Union (EU) country to be reached from South Asia and the cheapest in terms of human smuggling rates, is a late entrant to flows of South Asian migrants flocking to its low-paying, immigrant niche labour market. With the widening of neoliberal reforms in home countries, the scaling back of state-provided social services such as free or subsidised health care and

education, the global recession, and the simultaneous saturation of older over-seas labour markets, newly emerging migrant labour hubs such as Greece have become attractive. An undocumented Pakistani man working in the agricultural region of Megara in 2018 explained:

> A man from my village was working in Greece. He told me, 'Come over. There is work to be found easily in agriculture.' Barely able to earn Rs 60 a day in Pakistan as compared to over Rs 5,700 [€25] that I could earn in just one day in Greece made my decision easy.

In the men's home countries, the pressure to conform to an ideal breadwinner masculinity in the face of an ever-declining income from agriculture, whether as a small landholder, tenant farmer or daily wage labourer, has resulted in rural, working class and poorly skilled men experiencing an intense failure of masculinity (Kukreja, 2020). This is best summed up by my respondent who expressed that 'the masculinity of men is being killed by poverty and distress in farming'. Since the early 1990s, economic liberalisation, with its trademark removal of agricul-ture-related subsidies and support prices combined with the deregulation of the ru-ral credit market, has created an agrarian crisis in the three South Asian countries. The increased alienation of rural communities from land and sources of livelihood is marked by declining security of tenure for small landholders, concentration of landownership and reverse tenancy (Bokhari, 2019; Padhi, 2012). A focus group of undocumented Indian men in Megara reflecting on the agrarian crisis in 2019 said:

> The procurement price for wheat or rice is almost next to nothing – the gov-ernment sets the price very low – much lower than what we spend on grow-ing. Look at how many farmers commit suicide in Punjab each year – some die by consuming pesticides, others hang themselves, while some others eat some poison or the other to kill themselves. They do so because they are simply unable to pay off debts. Their condition is very desperate. Parents are unable to pay for their children's school fees that are Rs 10,000 per month. In India, an ordinary factory worker earns a maximum of Rs 5,000–7,000. Where will he find the money to educate his children, or feed the family?

The increased vagaries of agriculture due to climate change intensify the mas-culinity crisis confronting rural Bangladeshi men. As one Bangladeshi migrant worker from the strawberry agro-industry in Manolada noted: 'Unseasonal floods and salination of our fields because of the cyclones have made survival from our land impossible. I cannot feed my family anymore or dress them well'. The daily humiliation due to the men's failure to live up to their culturally de-fined breadwinner masculinity is evident in quotations such as: 'Even my wife would taunt me about my inability to support her and the kids by saying, "What kind of a man are you that you cannot feed us properly?"' (Pakistani participant, Megara). Migration overseas, with its promise of better earnings, emerges as a quick-fix strategy to shake off the 'failed' masculinity tag (Kukreja, 2020).

It is hard to estimate the number of South Asian men in Greece. Many opt not to declare their entry into Greece to avoid the Dublin Regulation around first safe country arrival, while others go underground after their asylum pleas are rejected. Almost all aspire to move on to neighbouring EU countries or Germany. Co-ethnic shopkeepers who provide supplies to worker dormitories and thus maintain records of migrants' purchases place the population between 150,000 and 200,000 (Kukreja, 2021). These migrant men are overwhelmingly concentrated on the island of Crete and the mainland, in agricultural regions such as Argos, Thiva, Megara, Athens, Marathona, Manolada and Skala-Laconia. Athens and its industrial suburbs of Piraeus and Aspropyrgos are also a hub for smaller pools of migrants who have legal status. The men explain their preference for farming jobs by stating that 'agriculture is almost the same everywhere. We are familiar with it and so the Greeks prefer hiring us' and 'staying in the farm allows us to avoid the police, unlike if we were to work in a big city'. Migrant illegality is experienced on a 24/7 basis by these men. Discourses of racism and Islamophobia inscribe otherness on their bodies, as their dark skin and racially distinct physical features serve to typecast them as dangerous others (Kirtsoglou & Tsimouris, 2018).

This chapter demonstrates that efficient profit-making hinges on the exploitative and emasculatory treatment of undocumented men like the ones in this case study. I argue that bordering regimes create a perpetual anxiety for these migrant men about the potential for emasculation upon deportation. This potential demasculinisation is further informed by the men's racialised visibility and otherness, the fungibility of labour, a reserve surplus population and their migrant illegality – factors that accentuate 'masculine anxieties' around how to stave off the loss of a masculine worth defined by employment and the ability to support one's family. These cumulative anxieties are used productively by racial capitalism, with the active help of exclusionary state labour and citizenship regimes. The baggage of politically divisive and exclusionary nationalist discourses and histories of colonial and postcolonial encounters that the migrant men carry as bordering memories from home countries is also productively utilised in the pursuit of capital accumulation.

Below, an outline of my methods is followed by my theorisation about racial capitalism's productive use of masculine anxiety. A discussion on bordering processes of othering and exclusions in Greece then leads to details on fears of masculinised public humiliation that efficiently enforce labour docility. I end with a brief note on pushback by migrant workers against emasculatory bordering regimes in Greece.

Methods

This chapter draws on 124 semi-structured one-on-one interviews, 17 focus groups, field journaling and observations conducted in four phases in Greece, from 2018 to 2021, with Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian migrant men. Most Indian migrants there are Sikhs, while the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis

are Muslims. Participants worked as farm labourers in the agrarian regions of Argos, Manolada, Thiva and Megara, where agricultural activity is seasonal or year-round. Unless otherwise specified, all interviews cited in this chapter were with undocumented men whose status in Greece was considered 'illegal'. They belonged to different age groups (18–55), and had varying durations of stay in Greece (2 days to 11 years). I observed the men as they worked in the fields, enjoyed brief moments of leisure and camaraderie during lunch breaks or rides back to dormitories from farms, cooked and ate meals, spoke with their families back home on their phones, prayed at gurudwaras or mosques, and sought work. Interviews were conducted during the men's breaks, at their dormitories or rented accommodations, ethnic cafes and stores, or at the gurudwara in Megara.

My identity as a diasporic Punjabi woman with a parent each hailing from Lahore and Patiala in Pakistan and India, respectively, along with my multiple migration history and fluency in Punjabi, Urdu and Bangla proved invaluable in initiating contact and conducting interviews with the men. I was positioned as an uneasy insider-outsider – my insider status rested on my co-ethnicity, while my outsider status was predicated on my privileges of class, employment and Canadian citizenship. The men bound me within rigid conservative and patriarchal familial relations by positioning my identity as '*bhaajee*' (sister) or '*khalajaan*' (aunt). This construct of a maternal confidante allowed them to lower their guard and talk about loneliness or the tensions of struggling with masculine ideals.

Emasculation by deportation within racial capitalism's bordering strategies

Theoretical conceptualisations about normative masculine ideals and hierarchies reveal these to be multi-layered, relational, socially constructed, culturally specific, based on socio-economic and political statuses such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and citizenship, and constantly negotiated and reimagined (Connell, 2016). Men's hegemonic masculinity, negotiated and affirmed by the capacity to maintain breadwinning status, is enacted by a few men. The gendering of men emerges through relations of power between different groups of men and in relations with women (Messerschmidt, 2018).

Critical studies in men and masculinities have compelled us to rethink traditional theorisations of masculinities by arguing that masculine identity formation 'need[s] to be located within broad debates on power, gendered power and men's relations to such power' (Hearn, 2004, p. 51). While acknowledging that the 'category of men is … socially and societally constructed' (Hearn, 2019, p. 54), many scholars agree that masculinities are produced through negotiations with power that occur within the constraints of structural inequality (Berggren, 2014).

A growing body of interdisciplinary studies on masculinity and migration reveals that masculinities and masculine hierarchies get (re)shaped by the process and type of migration undertaken (Della Puppa, 2019; Ingvars, 2019); by gender regimes and social divisions in chosen destination countries (Gallo & Scrinzi, 2019; See Gallo & Scrinzi, this volume); by social divisions in host societies, including

class, race, ethnicity, religious identity and employment (Charsley, 2005); and by othering discourses such as racism and Islamophobia (Kirtsoglou & Tsimouris, 2018). While some scholars focus on political and economic factors as motives for men's migration, others situate the masculine migratory imperative within pressures to conform to the heteropatriarchal 'male breadwinner' masculine ideal (Osella & Osella, 2000), the rite of passage into manhood (Monsutti, 2007), or the acquisition of hegemonic masculine stature, marked by wealth and displays of consumer goods not attainable in their home countries (Ahmad, 2011).

For South Asian men, cultural meanings of successful manhood or rural hegemonic masculinity are emblematised by respectable social status, an enviable job, a consumerist display of wealth, muscularity, and marriage and parenthood (Chowdhry, 2019; Osella & Osella, 2000). Masculinity in this region is also considered to be heterogenous, with its construction derived from caste ideology, or religious or ethnic identity, and the colonial encounter (Sinha, 1995). Intra-group masculine hierarchies among Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian men originate from colonial-era divides created between Hindus and Muslims. Postcolonial encounters between the three countries – whether military or through othering discourses – accentuate vernacular borders between ordinary citizens. Such borderings are transported, almost intact, across to Greece and replicated there by migrants.

Critical geographers argue that capitalism as it is commonly understood must be rethought as racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983; Wilson-Gilmore, 2022). Capitalism seizes upon existing social and/or political inequalities to its advantage, in particular, race and racial differentiation, by legitimising and normalising the exploitation of those who are excluded from rights within society. As Melamed (2006) explains, capital 'can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups … These antinomies of accumulation require loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires' (p. 77). Unequal relations of power that underpin the racial thrust of accumulation are evident in capitalism's use of other ascriptive categories such as gender, evident most notably in the feminisation of labour in export processing zones (Ngai, 2004).

Contemporary theorisation on bordering regimes widens discussions beyond physical barriers, visa regulations and the externalisation of borders. As Etienne Balibar (1998) puts it, a border is 'no longer … an institutional site that can be materialized on the ground and inscribed on the map' (p. 89). Increasingly, borders are recognised as heterogenous, diffuse and productive (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013), with bordering constituted as 'practices and discourses that "spread" into the whole of society' (Paasi, 1999, p. 670). Bordering is also a system of control and management that operates in multifarious ways, through legislation that institutionalises, regulates, pushes back or deters migratory movement, or through ideologies, cultural norms or discourses (Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Importantly, the act of bordering 'reflect[s] and magnif[ies] anxieties about crime, security and the fear of difference that are present in the national body' (Parmar, 2020, p. 176). Cooper et al. (2014) term the mobilisation of fear a form

of diffuse bordering. Here, ordinary people become border guards, a process known as the vernacularisation of borders, thus doing away with the need for a constant top-down display of force.

Borders, as politico-ideological projects, are considered highly productive for racial capitalism. With 'capital depend[ing] on restrictive border regimes to secure its (re)production' (Georgi, 2019, p. 574), the selection of people to cross borders is 'largely based on the capitalization of their resources' (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002, p. 128). The regulation of political borders, through restrictive migration regimes, is pivotal to global capitalism as it enables the precarisation of migrant workers and legitimises the denial of worker rights (Walia, 2021).

I take this conceptual understanding further by arguing that the masculine anxieties of undocumented migrants, such as the South Asian men in Greece, around the acquisition of breadwinner status – or responsible or respectable masculine status – are seized upon productively, through bordering, by the accumulative process. The continued stigma of failed masculinity is experienced at multiple levels. The men's families remind them of this failure, and the men experience it, intra-group, within their migrant male community as they beseech co-nationals to help them obtain employment (Kukreja, 2020, p. 314). The emasculatory spectacle of potential deportation and consequent failed masculinity emerge as efficient tools of labour discipline – men's docility towards physically arduous and low-paying work is coercively extracted on the promise of staving off their masculine anxieties (see Holtum, Lata and Marston, this volume).

For the men I interviewed and others like them, the precariousness of their breadwinner masculinity is predicated upon bordering emanating from restrictive migrant labour regimes and discourses of otherness. Management of labour is also achieved by utilising masculine hierarchies operative within this seemingly homogenous group of South Asian men, for whom memories of colonial-era divisions and postcolonial encounters between the three countries are hate-packed baggage that is hard to shed. To elaborate, Bangladeshis, though united with Pakistanis through the Muslim religion, see the latter as erstwhile occupiers of their nation-state and as committers of atrocities against them. The resurgence of far-right Hindu fundamentalism in India employs the bogey of dangerous Muslim masculinity, for both Indian Muslims and Pakistanis, to trumpet a hyper-aggressive Hindu masculinity. The generalised notion within Greece about Pakistani men as deviant and hyper-sexualised, and as the terrorist other, buttresses this internal stratification. The consequence? Indians and Bangladeshis position their masculinity as safe and peg the Pakistanis as lower down on the intra-group relational masculine hierarchy (Kukreja, forthcoming).

For these racialised male migrants, every day and vernacularised borders, as practices of inclusion and exclusion, operate relationally – but they also continuously intersect horizontally with the Greek populace's internalised borders against them (see Kukreja, 2019, forthcoming). The combination of this diffuse, horizontal and vernacularised bordering is equally productive at multiple levels, for example, as the men worry about locals reporting them to the police. As

men per se, they hold no intrinsic appeal for Greek society or capitalism, but as bordered men, their precarity promises value as surplus is extracted from them. Thus, there is a need to continually maintain their anxieties.

Respectable, responsible masculinity as aspirational

Within South Asia, hegemonic masculinity, culturally emblematised as masterful or awe-inspiring, is recognised as the preserve of a very small slice of rural men who own large tracts of land, hold positions of power and are respected societally for the influence they wield in rural matters. Interviews with the migrant men belie scholarly assertions that this hegemonic masculine status is aspirational for all other men lower on the masculine hierarchy:

> Being a good male is not defined by muscles, good looks, or money – one has to be there for everyone when in time of trouble. Each man has to act responsibly and do his duty to the family and society – only then is he worthy of being called a good man.
>
> (Focus group of Indians, Megara, 2019)

The definition of a 'good man' is understood as:

> One who can survive all odds. One who keeps his challenges or sorrows to himself. One who is able to take care of himself and those who depend on him. A man who does not give up and moves forward and comes out successful.
>
> (Pakistani participant, Megara, 2018)

The men I spoke with revealed a desire to acquire 'responsible' or 'respectable' masculine status (*izzatdaar*) – a culturally specific term alluding to the masculine responsibility of providing for one's family. Interestingly, only the Indian Sikh migrants and the Pakistanis alluded to the tenets of Sikhism and Islam, respectively, as guides for achieving a 'good man' persona. The Pakistanis and Bangladeshis also described a man who could both be pious and not considered a 'good man' because of his neglect or abuse of his family. Doing the right thing as a man, while enacted individually, was understood as acting for the collective well-being of the family. Such cultural notions about responsible manhood glorify sacrifice of the self, described as 'putting others before oneself'. Consequently, such workers endure the indignities of societal othering and exclusion and stoically bear harsh working conditions as they struggle with the burden of 'acting as responsible men in providing for our family's needs and putting our desires aside' (Bangladeshi participant, Manolada, 2019).

The terms *zaleel hona* and *beyizzat hona*, translated as 'loss of face' or 'loss of respect', emerged often in conversations with the men, and revolve around public or interpersonal humiliation, recognised as a blow to the masculine esteem. The loss of masculine respect is emasculatory, results in downgrading within the

migrant masculine hierarchy and is clearly understood to be based on unequal relations of power. This exercise of unequal power operates interpersonally between men based on their migrant (il)legality, steady employment and national identity, and is also evident in their interactions with the locals, such as the farmers who employ them. Structurally, it is experienced at an intimate level through the racial logic of whiteness and discrimination articulated through exclusionary labour and immigration regimes. This naturalises spectacles of public humiliation at the hands of the local populace, white supremacist groups and, as agents of the state itself, the police.

Hate-fuelled masculine anxieties

Greece has a rigid ethno-national concept of belonging to the nation, one where non-Greeks have been derogatorily referred to as 'foreign dirt' (Papailias, 2003, p. 1076) and whose expulsion is presented as essential to restoring national purity. The Greek version of xenophobia and racist discourse is shaped by racial aphasia within Europe (De Genova, 2016). Religion also plays a role in othering South Asian migrants. Greek national belonging is defined by a common Hellenic ancestry, with Orthodox Greek Christianity, as the state religion, shaping exclusionary state policies against other religions and religious practices. These bordering ideologies of ethnocentrism and Islamophobia have become deeply internalised within the local populace. Nationalist intolerance has been accentuated by the movement of increasingly racialised (and Muslim) migrants to its shores, who are represented by the state and bordering regimes as illegal and/or criminal (Sakellariou, 2017). This intolerance is experienced intimately as emasculation by the South Asian men. As two undocumented men of Pakistani origin in their mid-20s explained: 'People here take one look at you and immediately think you are a criminal, a terrorist, a depraved beast (*haivan*)' (Pakistani participant, Argos, 2019); 'Whenever we enter the subway, I notice that people move away – like they want to get away from us. Women clutch their purse straps a bit tighter. We are not thieves. We will not hurt them' (Pakistani participant, Athens, 2018).

   Bordering discourse, which frames the dangerous masculine other, flattens the men's identities and erases their national, class and ethnic differences. This discourse frames Indians as model minorities, as their religious identity as Sikhs or Hindus is considered non-threatening. The Pakistanis fall on the opposing side in being framed as dangerous Muslims. The Bangladeshis, who are also Muslim, escape this framing. This seeming contradiction is highly productive in facilitating schisms within the 'collective of precarity', a term I employ for migrant men whose lives in Greece are contoured by multiple, overlapping precarities, whether it be their masculinity, national identity, religion, age, class, sexuality or migrant status. These precarities, though experienced individually, are imposed through discourses and regimes collectively on all working-class South Asian migrant men, flattening all intra-group differences and hierarchies, while simultaneously creating more intra-group precarities and schisms. For example, a group of Pakistani and Indian men escaping from drug-related gang wars in

Omonia, Athens had cab drivers refusing to give them a ride until one showed a photocopy of his Indian passport: 'It worked like magic. My Pakistani co-workers silently clambered into the cab after me, pretending to be Indians. I know they felt demeaned' (Indian participant, Athens, 2019). This differential treatment and public rejection of certain national groups such as the Pakistanis results in their being pegged as inferior within the intra-South Asian masculine hierarchy in Greece. For Pakistani men, it adds another layer to their perception of their own failed masculinity and masculine (un)desirability.

The popularity of neo-Nazi and ultra-right groups such as the Golden Dawn is predicated on their anti-immigrant and hypernationalist posturing about Greece facing an existential threat from the flood of so-called culturally depraved and Muslim others. This has resulted in a wave of selective racist violence against Pakistani and Bangladeshi men: 'The assailants nab us and demand that we show our papers. An Indian is let off immediately, but Pakistani or Bangladeshi men get beaten up' (Pakistani participant, Athens, 2018). *Racist Violence Recording Network: Annual report 2020* (UNHCR Greece, 2021) details increased racist violence in Greece against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, with most perpetrators being either civilians or law enforcement officials, thus indicating the pervasiveness and naturalising of hate within the state apparatus and the populace.

The Greek media uses isolated instances of gendered violence by Pakistani men to pathologise all South Asian men (Greek City Times, 2022), collectively 'other' them through racist and Islamophobic discourses of 'us' versus 'them' and 'Muslim men as terrorists', and frame their 'masculinity' as dangerous and needing containment. The anxiety of enduring masculine humiliation (*zaleel hona*) upon being questioned by the police in public spaces forces another layer of horizontal bordering, with the Indians and Bangladeshis projecting their masculinity as safe: 'We have been living in the community for years and no untoward harassment of local women was ever reported. But the Pakistanis, ever since they came to Manolada, they have made lewd remarks or harassed women here' (Bangladeshi participant, Manolada); 'a Pakistani did bad things with a Greek woman. It is better to keep distance (*fasla*) from them' (Indian participant, Megara, 2018). Precarity in migrant status, along with fears of detention and potential deportation, leads to receptivity about such divisive discourses. The lack of empathy from Indians and Bangladeshis is also fuelled by similar bordering imaginaries circulating in India and Bangladesh about the 'dangerous' masculinity of Pakistanis.

The ghettoisation of Pakistanis is made complete with the refusal of Indians and Bangladeshis to live or work with the former. They naturalise this exclusion by positioning themselves as civilisationally better with statements like, 'the Pakistanis are dirty. They don't bathe or wash their clothes. There is garbage piled up near their shacks' (Bangladeshi participant, Manolada) and 'they are unclean – see their eating habits' (Indian participant, Megara). Additionally, the Bangladeshis, while united by Islam with the Pakistanis, assert further distancing from the latter by rejecting the Islamic attire of shalwar-kameez, which Pakistani men wear, and articulating their Muslimness as derived from a syncretic Sufi culture.

Thomas Nail (2015) defines a border as 'a process of social division' (p. 3). For this set of migrant men, borders, as social divisions, operate through acts of relational masculine affirmation and derive strength from dominant discourses. The result is a downgrading of the similarly precariously placed Pakistanis. Ironically, these internal borders reaffirm Greek bordering tactics, as they are extended to the Indians and Bangladeshis through their integration within a collectivity of racial others.

Productive use of masculine anxiety

Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) highlight the productive power of borders in creating 'hierarchies within and between labor markets' (p. 111) for the benefit of capital. Like elsewhere, racial and (im)migrant hierarchies are evident in Greece's labour market with its segmentation of certain sectors such as agriculture as an immigrant niche. What makes Greece stand out from other countries using temporary migrant labour is that, since the early 1990s, Greek agriculture has been revitalised primarily with cheap and disposable migrant labour. Over 90 per cent of its agricultural workforce are migrants (Papadopoulos, 2015). Agriculture accounts for nearly a quarter of Greece's exports, hence its significance in the country's economy. Farmers' biggest cost-cutting methods, achieved through hiring illegal migrant labourers, are paying below the minimum wage, insisting on long hours of manual work, practising wage theft and withholding dues (see Kukreja, 2019, pp. 3665–3667).

The state is complicit in this labour exploitation through its restrictive migration regime. The strict regulation of temporary migrant labour occurs through a limited number of bilateral agreements, a lack of regularisation programs for 'illegal' migrants working in Greece, and the increased detention and deportation of migrants without status. These measures are used productively by farmers to disenfranchise workers of their rights by using migrant illegality and potential deportation as labour disciplining tools. As an Indian participant in a focus group said:

> Out of 20 men in one farm, almost 15 are without papers. It is only because of this that we get exploited (*maar khandey aa*) and face mistreatment. If we protest or form a union, all that the farmer has to do is to call the police and, before we can say anything, we will be placed behind bars.
> (Indian participant, Megara, 2019)

The desire to adhere to responsible masculinity is coercively productive, and the men asserted it is used as a strategy to exploit them: 'Farmers (*malikan*) know that we have come here only to earn a living and that we have to send home money. Our families don't believe us that farmers don't pay us on time or don't pay us at all' (Indian participant, Megara, 2019). This intrafamilial mistrust further reinforces the men's failed masculinities. The anxiety about losing a much-coveted

daily wage job, however exploitative it may be, involves these young men nego-
tiating a sense of failed masculinity. It forces them 'to keep our head down and
continue working. The humiliation of losing a job and not being able to support
the family makes us swallow all indignities' (Pakistani participant, Thiva, 2018).
The threats of emasculation upon detention and potential deportation create a
masculine crisis among these precariously placed illegal workers. As a Pakistani
man explained:

> I will only go back once I have papers or else everyone will derisively write
> me off as a loser, as someone who couldn't 'make it' like the other men.
> I would not be able to bear this *beizzati* (humiliation) [of deportation] nor
> made to forget it.
>
> (Pakistani participant, Thiva, 2018)

The pressure to acquire and retain respectable, responsible masculinity status
through continuous employment also creates hierarchies within this group of
men based on age, (lack of) familial responsibilities, (il)legal status, and the ability
to endure indignities and hard labour at work through forced subservience. This
is illustrated through quotations such as: 'the young ones can take more risks
[in switching jobs] as they have no pressure [familial responsibility]' and 'if we
had papers, then we would not be dependent on those with papers [co-ethnics]
to fetch us supplies or help us out' (Indian participant, Megara, 2019). The fun-
gibility of migrant labour, migrant illegality and a reserve surplus population
of male migrants fuel additional masculine anxieties, with the recognition that,
'if I don't go to work tomorrow in protest against bad conditions of work or low
wages, there are ten others willing to replace me for even lower pay' (Bangladeshi
participant, Manolada, 2019).

Additionally, intensification of labour exploitation occurs through ordering
migrant workers into disparate but productive categories using social divisions
of race, ethnicity or national (un)belonging. This is of immense value to the dis-
cussion earlier on the internal hierarchies present among undocumented South
Asian men due to the bordering memories they carry from home countries. In my
conversations with participants, comments like, 'the Bangladeshi do not have the
muscles to do the physically hard labour of orange picking. Only us Pakistanis
can do it' and 'Indians have a strong work ethic. Wherever you find Pakistani la-
bour, the Greek farmer's profit goes down' are illustrative of the self-valorising of
exploitability that occurs in an effort to corner a segment of the immigrant niche
labour market. Evident also is the attempt of Pakistani men to inscribe a different
masculine scale onto themselves within the intra-South Asian masculine hierar-
chy by deriding Bangladeshi men's ability to undertake hard labour, exactly as
the Bangladeshi men do to them.

The Greek labour market benefits from such divisive processes, enacted by the
three national groups against each other, as they ironically replicate the 'divide
and rule' strategy employed by British colonialists to control natives by pitting
one ethnic or religious group against another. Thus, orange picking in Argos

is cornered by the Pakistanis, the strawberry sector is dominated by the Bangladeshis, and the potato and onion sector in Thiva and all-year cultivation of greens in Megara are the exclusive preserve of Pakistanis and Indians. It appears that the farmers are conscious of these internal stratifications and take advantage: 'If by chance, due to a shortage of labour, I employ a Pakistani to pick strawberries, he [the farmer] will say to me, "Fire him. I don't want Pakistanis to work for me"' (Bangladeshi supervisor, Manolada, 2019).

Such divisive strategies on the part of Greek employers also result in the South Asians framing themselves as exemplary male workers, by strategically positioning their muscular masculinity as indispensable to the survival of Greek agriculture (Kukreja, 2020). Quotations such as 'Greeki [euphemism for Greek people] won't be able to do this kind of work because in this type of work one has to bend and work for 7–8 hours' and 'Greeki farmers can sit in a café and enjoy their coffee and tiropita [cheese pie] only because of our hard labour and strong work ethic' emblematise the valorisation of the self as an unsung, indispensable hero of Greek agriculture and the Greek way of life. Despite being racially marginalised and marked by disposability, this reframing gives the men some measure of self-worth. It also fits in well with the 'sacrificing male' model they are used to – one where *izzatdaar* or honourable men put others before themselves by heroically sacrificing their own desires and aspirations.

Pushback against bordering and emasculation

The disparate group of South Asian men, while seemingly bound into submissiveness and abjectivity due to their masculine anxieties, show glimpses of agency as they resist structural and systemic bordering in their daily lives. At a collective level, the indigenous sport of kabaddi, played by teams of Indians and Pakistanis together in the rural spaces of Greece, allows them to engage in cultural resistance by celebrating their muscular, masculine sporting bodies (Kukreja, 2022). For the short duration of kabaddi tournaments, the players and spectators are able to shake off shame about their racialised, masculine bodies, partake in leisure and resist divisiveness. Comments such as, 'it creates a collective. We don't feel isolated' (Pakistani player, Argos, 2019) and 'we celebrate our identity, enjoy the moment, and put aside our demeaning existence here' (Indian spectator, Megara, 2019) underscore how kabaddi provides an avenue to compensate for their forced docility and historically constituted antipathy toward each other.

Strikes undertaken by Indian and Pakistani men on farms, especially in the Megara region, are also illustrative of a bridging over of the divides that result in coercive labour practices and wage theft. Interviews with the workers reveal that the two national groups come together in collective strike action to ensure that no co-national crosses the picket line. This unbordering has, in some instances, successfully forced farmers to come to the negotiating table and give the workers their dues.

The men's warmth and openness to sharing intimate aspects of their lives with me also affirm their ability to transcend divisiveness and distrust. Breaking their bread with me, making tea together, or playing simple games like ludo during

rain-soaked afternoons when no work was possible were beautiful moments of (un)bordering undertaken spontaneously and willingly by different groups of men. Their resistance was also articulated poignantly in their desire to share their narratives: 'We will tell you the truth. After all, you are one of us'.

Conclusion

This case study of undocumented South Asian men in Greece reveals that their aspiration to acquire culturally specific masculine respectability through migration, defined as meeting one's manly responsibility to support the family through remittances, is used productively by racial capitalism. Assisting in this labour exploitation is the structurally embedded racial logic of whiteness that naturalises putative racial 'others' as disposable undesirables within Greece's temporary migrant labour regime. Structural racism also legitimises and condones bordering strategies enacted horizontally by the locals against the racialised migrant others through racial violence and acts of everyday discrimination. Such exclusions and othering, as borderings, are emasculatory for South Asian migrant men as they navigate multiple, contesting masculinities mapped out on their bodies (See Stahl & Zhao, 2021). The bordering further dents the men's fragile sense of masculine self-worth as they try to come to terms with their migrant illegality. The men's attempts to exercise agency in the face of their emasculation – both intra-group and in Greek society – are very limited by structural constraints of racism, illegality, Islamophobia and cultural norms of respectable masculinity.

In their bid to shed the failed masculinity tag that propels their mobility from home countries, the elusive yet very simple desire of acting 'responsibly' as 'respectable' or *izzatdaar* men, through steady employment and remittances, pushes them towards a perpetual state of labour precarity and exploitability. The jockeying for low-paying, immigrant niche jobs between the Pakistanis, Indians and the Bangladeshis internally accentuates their masculine crisis as they self-valorise their own muscular masculinity and work ethic while demeaning those of the others. Hiring practices that echo colonial and postcolonial national and religious bordering, through stratifying groups of people, are borrowed and employed productively in Greece to create precarity.

The masculine crisis is further accentuated by migrant illegality, defined as a 'lack of papers'. Worries about detention and potential deportation precipitate anxieties about public and interpersonal emasculation through the spectacle of arrests. This fear of emasculation, as a continual masculine crisis, is a labour disciplining tool that does not require the overt use of force. Random but limited examples of masculine humiliation of South Asian men at the hands of farmers or police and enforcement authorities are enough to keep the migrant workers divided and in a perpetual state of anxiety.

Such coerciveness is highly productive for racial capitalism. The continued profitable trajectory of Greek agricultural growth and rejuvenation of rural areas is entirely dependent on the flexible labour of migrants such as these South Asian men. It can be argued that culturally specific notions about masculine

humiliation and crisis that lead to South Asian men's exploitation and labour docility are not deliberate within Greece's (im)migration regimes. However, the exclusionary notion of the Greek state lends itself readily to embracing ethnocentric, racist and Islamophobic ideologies. Their permeation within the apparatuses of power and policy frameworks moulds the racial agenda of capitalism to use the masculine crises of South Asian migrant men for surplus accumulation. The total stripping of dignity and worth experienced by the labouring person and their continued masculine failure is best summed up by this quotation from an Indian man: 'Over here, my paperless status has left me totally naked (*nanga kar chadya hai*)'.

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