



PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN INDIA

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Introduction:

With the advancement of knowledge, culture and civilization, the place, pattern, practices and potentialities of agriculture, have been continually undergoing a process of transformation. From a more primitive way of life and source of livelihood, it has come to be realised as a commercialised activity and profitable business proposition and a vital instrument of progress. In a rather fundamental sense agricultural progress is a pre-requisite for industrial development. This is clearly the case in a closed economy, where one of the most important pre-conditions of industrial expansion is the achievement of a rate of increase in agricultural productivity which exceeds the concurrent rate of increase in the demand for food. Rising agricultural productivity supports and sustains industrial development in several important ways. First, it permits agriculture to release part of its labour force for industrial employment while meeting the increasing food needs of the non-agricultural sector. Second, it raises agricultural incomes, thereby creating the rural purchasing power needed to buy the new industrial goods and rural savings which may then be mobilized, by direct or indirect means, to finance industrial development. Finally, it enables agriculture to supply the major wage-good (food) of industrial workers at prices favourable to the profitability of new industry.

In India the vital role of agriculture arises out of the position the agrarian sector occupies in the overall economy of the country. Agriculture is the largest sector of economic activity and has a crucial role to play in the country's economic development by providing food and raw materials, employment to a very large proportion of population, capital for its own development and surpluses for national economic development. Thus, the importance of agriculture despite rapid industrialisation has not in any way diminished. It has become necessary not only to achieve self-sufficiency in matters of food and agriculture so as to throw up surpluses to be made available for investment in the other sectors of economy as well.

Definition Of Agriculture Labour:

Agriculture labour may be defined as labour who works in agriculture or allied activities for the whole or part of the year in return for (in cash or kind or both) for full-time or part time work. The agriculture labour has no risk in the cultivation and no risk of lease or contract on land but merely works on another person's land for wages.

Problems:

The chief economic problems of agriculture labour are :

1. Poverty and low standard of living.
2. Unemployment and Under-employment.
3. Low productivity.



4. Low wages.
5. Indebtedness.
6. **Wages and Income:** Agricultural wages and family incomes of agricultural workers are very low in India. With the advent of the Green Revolution, money wage rates started increasing. However, as prices also increased considerably, the real wage rates did not increase accordingly. Currently labours are getting around Rs. 150/day under the MGNREGA in rural areas.
7. **Employment and Working Conditions:** The agricultural labourers have to face the problems of unemployment and underemployment. For a substantial part of the year, they have to remain unemployed because there is no work on the farms and alternative sources of employment do not exist.
8. **Indebtedness:** In the absence of banking system in the rural areas and trial process of sanction by the commercial banks, farmers prefers to take loans from un institutional sources like Sahukars (moneylenders), landlords at the very high rate (in some cases at 40% to 50%) . This exorbitant rate traps in the vicious circle of debt.
9. **Low Wages for women in Agricultural Labour:** Female agricultural workers are generally forced to work harder and paid less than their male counterparts.
10. **Excess supply:** There are no accurate estimates of work forces as most of the activity and persons involved in unorganised and is unreported. However, the number of persons to work on and depending on a holding is very high.
11. **Seasonal Employment:** - Indian agriculture gambling on Monsoon's. Agricultural labour perhaps may get employment, unemployment and under employment depending on monsoon. And further it depending on vagaries on monsoon. It is reported that a normal monsoon happens once in four years. Thus, the Indian agricultural labour is highly uncertain in employment and in their livelihood.
12. **Migration to other occupations :-** The more educated and efficient work forces are migrating to other forms of employment, leaving weaker work forces in the agricultural profession.
13. **Emerging technology-deprivation of work to agricultural labour:** The emerging agricultural technology leads to mechanisation in agriculture and allied activities results in usage of modern equipment such as power tillers, thrashers, harvesters etc., causes less dependence on agricultural labour and affecting the viability in getting their lively hood.

Solutions:

- a) **Effective implementation of the minimum wage act :-** This would go a long way in the development of quality work forces in agriculture in India.
- b) **Development of agriculture- multi-cropping:-** for better utilization of land resources.
- c) Alternative employment of opportunities.
- d) **Self Help Groups (SHG):** The movement SHGs is primarily aimed at elevating the status of economically weaker sections of the society. The main and prime requirement of women and there families to fulfil their financial needs. The



empowerment of women is a multidimensional process, which enables the group of individuals to rely their identity and powers in all the spheres of life. The journey of the women in the SHGs towards looking their own needs, their solutions, social empowerment, understanding the problems of the society. There are many good results of the SHG movement.

- e) **Minimum Wages Act:** The Minimum Wages Act was passed as long back as in 1948 and since then the necessity of applying it to agriculture has been constantly felt. Means the Act is not applicable to agricultural sector?
- f) **Abolition of Bonded Labour:** Since Independence, attempts have been made to abolish the evil of bonded labour because it is exploitative, inhuman and violative of all norms of social justice. In the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of India, it has been stated that trading in humans and forcing them to do *begar* is prohibited and can invite punishment under the law.
- g) **Provision of housing sites:** Laws have been passed in several States for providing house sites in villages to agricultural workers.
- h) **Special schemes for providing employment:** Rural Employment (CSRE), National Rural Employment Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), and National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP), Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act MGNREGA
- i) **Special agencies for development. Special agencies:** Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agency (MFAL) - were created in 1970-71 to solve the problems of Agriculture labour of the country.

Conclusion:

In India the vital role of agriculture arises out of the position the agrarian sector occupies in the overall economy of the country. Agriculture is the largest sector of economic activity and has a crucial role to play in the country's economic development by providing food and raw materials, employment to a very large proportion of population, capital for its own development and surpluses for national economic development. Thus, the importance of agriculture despite rapid industrialisation has not in any way diminished. As we are aware that near about 53% population of India is engaged in agricultural activities. But agriculture in India is still at mercy of monsoon. Here, the condition of the farmers and agricultural labourers depend on the intensity of monsoon. If monsoon is good then crop is good and vice-versa. Agriculture labour is counted in the category of unorganized sector, so their income is not fixed. Hence they are living an insecure and underprivileged life and with full uncertainty in their earnings. The agricultural labourers are one of the most exploited and oppressed classes in rural hierarchy.

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