



Agricultural Labourers: Problems and Prospects (A special reference to tribal Areas)

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1. Introduction

In India, agriculture has been considered as a depressed industry and one of the major problems in Indian agriculture is the problem of agricultural labourers. The phenomenon of unemployment, underdevelopment and surplus population are simultaneously manifested in the daily lives of agricultural labourers.

2. Causes of Growth of agricultural Labour

There are various causes which have accelerated the growth of agricultural labour in our country which may be broadly summed up as under:

- (1) high net growth rate of population in the country.
- (2) Growth of absentee landlordism
- (3) Disintegration of village communities of the pre nineteenth century.
- (4) growth of indebtedness due to low income leading to transfer of land from the small owners to the creditors, resulting in the farmer in to becoming agricultural labourers.
- (5) The extension of money economy to rural areas in replacement of payment in kind
- (6) decline of domestic industries and handicrafts.

3. Definition of Agricultural Labourer:

According to the First Agricultural Labour Enquiry (1950-51) Those people are agricultural labourers who are engaged in raising crops on payment of wages. The National commission on labour regard "Agricultural labourer as one who is basically unskilled and unorganized and has nothing but physical labour to exist, As such, the major part of the income of such a worker is derived from wages for work on land" The Census of 2001 "A person who works on another person's land or wages in money or kind of share is regarded as an agricultural labourer. She or ne no risk in the cultivation, but merely works on another person's land for wages. An agricultural labourer has no right or lease or contract on land which she /he work.

4. Categories of agricultural Labourers

The National Commission on Labour has divided agricultural workers into two group(1) Landless Labourers permanent labourers who are attached to agriculture household and temporary or casual labourers.

- (2) Very small farmers whose main source of income, in view of very small holding, is wages employment

5. Economic Condition of Agricultural Labourers

The condition of agricultural labourers in India is simply appalling. They are poor and their level of living is very low. They subsist in life. always face dire poverty. unemployment, exploitation. misery and uncertainty. They have no social status. Some idea of the horrible condition of their existence can be formed a few facts listed below.

1. **Employment :** As has been seen in earlier chapters, agricultural labourers do not get work on regular basis. The magnitude of unemployment and underemployment of agricultural labour has been examined in earlier parts of this Article. Not only they inadequately employed. their working condition too are very bad. They have to put in very hard labour under the strong sun and in the rain. And their working hours are not fixed. There is no provision for holidays.
2. **Wages and Income:** The income of agricultural labourers is very low. For a considerable part of years. They are out of work and earn nothing. They are paid partly in cash and partly in kind. According to 25th round of the National sample survey, conducted during July 1970 to June 1971, the average wages per day for the country as whole was Rs.2.03 for landless workers and Rs. 1.08 for small cultivators. The position of agricultural workers has further worsened due to rapid rise in prices which took place during the last ten years.
3. **Consumption and standard of living:** The low level of these poverty-stricken people who do not get work throughout the years. can easily be imagined. The level of living of agricultural workers in the country is very low. Generally. They eat Jowar, bajra, maize and other inferior cereals. Items such as fruits, vegetables milk, meat and other nutritive foods do not at all figure in their diet. They do not have even the minimum clothing, education and health facilities are not existent for them and their houses are no more than the places for animals which they share with them. They also suffer from many serious diseases. To meet these expenditure, they take loans and are driven into the clutches of money lenders.
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6. Measures for Improvement for Tribal condition

- (1) Fixation of minimum wages
- (2) Special Area Programmes
 - i) small Farmer Development Agencies.
 - ii) Crash scheme for Rural Development.
 - iii) Tribal Area Development Agency
 - iv) Hill Area Development projects. v Rural work programme.

7. Suggested Remedies

- (1) Improvement in the working condition. (2) Raising the level of living.

References

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