

THE HARSH CONDITION OF LABOURS IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR OF INDIA

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Abstract : In India agriculture labours are the most neglected class and highly unorganised sector of economy. The workers who are engaged in this sector faced various problems like low income, lack of employment, irregular works, lack of trainings, skills and infrastructure problems etc. The main features of agricultural labours are under employment, undeveloped and over population. The agriculture sector mainly suffers from distinguished structural and seasonal employment. The employment in this sector is not available throughout the year. The agriculture labours constitute a consideration proportion of rural work force in India. The productivity in agriculture hangs on the efficiency of agricultural labours depending upon their social & economic conditions. The basic reasons are continuous increase in population of people in rural areas which led to continuous increase in labours in field of agriculture sector. According to 1981 census 2011, there are 118.9 million cultivators across the country i.e. 24.6% of the total workforce of over 481 million. For improvement in their conditions government should take proper step for them like wages reform, new techniques of agriculture, how to work, improve living conditions, proper program to deal with natural calamities such as food droughts etc. in this paper we give an account of the harsh condition of labours in agriculture sector of India.

Keywords: agriculture, harsh condition, agriculture labours, unorganised sector, employment.

INTRODUCTION

The worker who is directly engaged in agriculture or allied activities is known as 'Agricultural Labours'. Those workers who are engaged in other agriculture based occupation such as poultry, horticulture & dairy farming are also comes under agricultural labours.

In India agriculture labours are the most neglected class and highly unorganised sector of economy. The workers who are engaged in this sector faced various problems like low income, lack of employment, irregular works, lack of trainings, skills and infrastructure problems etc.

The workers who work on agriculture land have no right of lease or any type of contracts on land; they generally work for daily wages on another person's land. The main features of agricultural labours are under employment, undeveloped and over population. The agriculture sector mainly suffers from distinguished structural and seasonal employment. The employment in this sector is not available throughout the year.

The agriculture labours constitute a consideration proportion of rural work force in India. The productivity in agriculture hangs on the efficiency of agricultural labours depending upon their social & economic conditions.

In India following Agricultural Labours are categorised under these circumstances.

- Small farming having a very small size of holdings who serves most of time working in farm land of others.
- Landless labours who exclusively works for others
- Tenants labours who works on lease but work most of time on the land of others.
- Sharecroppers who also works as Agricultural Labours.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POOR CONDITION OF FARM WORKERS

Unorganised : Agricultural Labours in India is widely scattered over large number of villages in the country. These labours are ignorant and illiterate which led to not to legitimate rights.

Low Social Status : Most of the agricultural labours belong to lower classes, which have been neglected from several years. They don't have enough income to educate their children & live a healthy family life, in spite of this they have to travel from place to place in search of their livelihood. Due to all this factors their level of affluence is very low.

Agricultural Sector has Abundance of Labour : Agricultural sector has abundance of labour especially during harvesting and sowing periods. But after this period they are mostly jobless and are unable to engage themselves in another alternate job due to lack of skills.

Heavy Burden of Indebtedness : In India, agricultural labourers are generally are generally indebted due to low wages these agricultural labourers have to rely upon 'Landlords' or 'local Sahukar / Money lenders' despite of these they becomes bounded Labourers. As a result of these factors 'Agricultural Labourers' in India are living in cold-hearted conditions.

Lack of Training & Skills : Most of the agricultural Labourers are found in rural areas or in smaller villages. As of our Indian village's old tradition and customs they are conservative and traditional bounded so they are unable to accept new techniques and technologies.

Poor Credit Facilities : Agriculture sector mostly faced the deficiency of credit facilities. They don't have proper policies and programs for rural labourers' development. For upliftment of their livelihood agricultural sector should provide them some effective credit facilities such as 'Child Insurance Scheme', 'Minimum fixed wages Scheme', 'Equality in Women wages' or certain family insurance programs.

Reason for the Increase in Agricultural Labourers despite of all ill-activities : One of the basic reasons is continuous increase in population of people in rural areas which led to continuous increase in labours in field of agriculture sector. It also involves in major cause of Sub-Division and Uneconomic land holdings in rural areas. As a result of 'Fragmentation of land', they become inadequate for their basic necessities & secondly degeneration of cottage industries & handcrafts also.

As all of us are aware of markets strategies i.e. heavy competitions from modern Industrial technologies all small industries are scattered, Since there is no any alternative employment due to lack of skills & knowledge of new technologies which led to divergence of large scale of labours from industrial sector towards agricultural sector.

Increase in agricultural labourers is also due to heavy growth of indebtedness. Low income leads to transfer of land from small owners to the creditors; this makes the farmers to transform into agricultural labourers. A very large portion of rural population is in the custody of non-institutional source of credit especially money lenders that charges heavy rate of interest (Lagan). In order to pay these debts they have to sell their lands or it is occupied by money lenders in exchange of debts.

Breaking up of joint family system also one of the important reason of dependence of workers on agriculture. The economic support system has been reduced with the break-up of joint family System which led to increase the need to work outside of their family lands

According, to Dr B K Mukherjee "Every circumstances which has weakened the position of the small holders has increased the number of Agricultural Labourers, viz. the loss of common rights in the rural economy, the miss use of collective enterprise, the sub division of holdings, the multiplication of rent receivers free and transfer of lands followed by a decline in cottage industries.

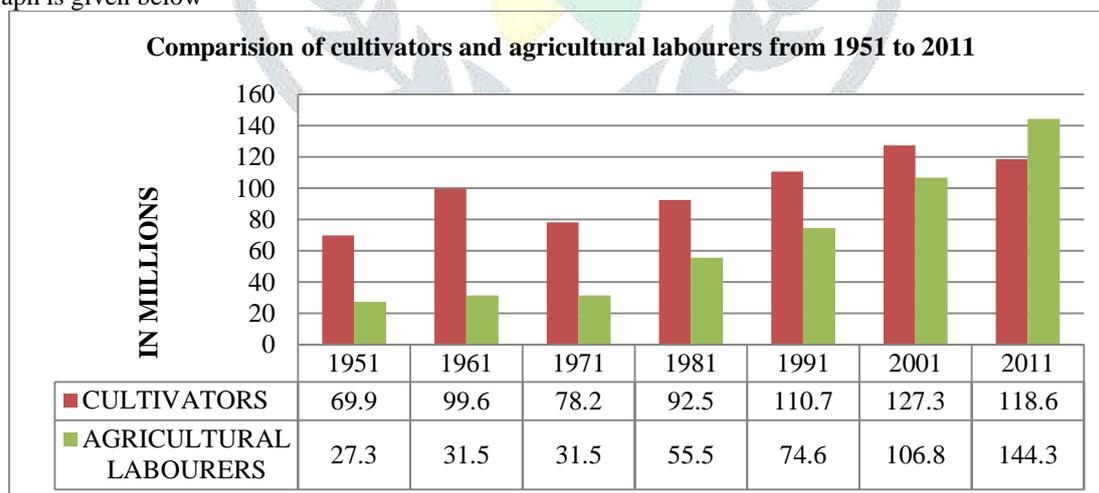
Besides, the change in proprietary rights among the verbal people also brought a change in the position and compelled them to transform from tenant to landless labourers.

Magnitude of Agricultural Labourers : According to 1981 consequence, the agricultural constitute 22.7% of the total labour force which is increased to 26.1% in 1991. Further the total work force engaged in the agriculture sector has increased. In 1951, the numbers of agricultural labourer were 27.3 million which rose to 106.8 million in 2001. Now census 2011 says there are 118.9 million cultivators across the country or 24.6% of the total workforce of over 481 million.

Table 1 : The following table shows the number of percentage of cultivators and agricultural labourers from 1951 – 2011.

YEARS	CULTIVATORS	AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS	TOTAL
1951	69.9 (71.9)	27.3 (28.1)	97.2 (100.0)
1961	99.6 (76.0)	31.5 (24.0)	131.1 (100.0)
1971	78.2 (62.2)	31.5 (37.8)	131.1 (100.0)
1981	92.5 (62.5)	55.5 (37.5)	148.0 (100.0)
1991	110.7 (59.7)	74.6 (40.3)	185.3 (100.0)
2001	127.3 (54.4)	106.8 (45.6)	243.1 (100.0)
2011	118.6 (24.6)	144.3 (75.4)	481.1 (100.0)

We can see from the above table that the number of people working as agricultural labourers has been increasing since 1951. And the percentage of agricultural labours has increased from 19% in 1951 to 30% in 2011. As per above Table 1 bar graph is given below



Suggestions for the Enhancement of Agricultural Labourers

The following suggestions can be offered to enhance the condition of agricultural labourers which is listed below :

1. Development in Negotiating skills : The poor labours are not in position to negotiate for reasonable rewards for their work. To improve their negotiating skills the Agricultural labourers should be organised by creating unions of farm labourers.

2. Abolition of Bounded Labourers : Indian constitution has undertaken legislative measures to abolish the practice of bounded labour. The bounded labour system act was passed in 1976 & about 2.51Lakh bounded labourers were identified and liberated.

3. Generate Alternative employment : For rural workers certain trainings and skills development program are required to generate alternative employment. The public work schemes should be introduced for longer period yearly wise to get fruitful employment. Non-agricultural Industries should be developed so engage surplus labours, such as 'Horticulture', 'Organic Farming', 'Agricultural clinics & Seed Production'.

4. Enhancement in Agricultural Sector : The rural Infrastructure development like better irrigation facilities, warehouse for better access to agricultural inputs and effective implementation of land reforms. The range of farm modernisation can help to improve economic well-beings of agricultural labourers.

5. Growth in Public Investments : There is a need to enlarge public investment in agriculture specially in creating affordable rural social infrastructure like 'Better Education', 'Health Facilities', 'Hygienic drinking water' etc. This will help in strengthening the growth of poor rural labourers.

6. Multiple Cropping Techniques : By improving the condition of agriculture by adopting improved intensive methods and multiple cropping techniques for raising the productivity of agricultural labourers.

7. Security Measures : To introduce social security measures for agriculture labours insurance on marginal contribution and also institute old age pension scheme for the agricultural labourers by the government.

8. Encouraging for Co-Operative Farming : The government must promote for co-operative farming which would provide better incentives to improve productivity of farms so that farmers will be owners of their land and share fruits of their efforts.

9. Better Credit Availability : The financial help at cheaper rate of interest and on easy terms of payment for undertaking subsidiaries occupation should be provided.

CONCLUSION

In India agriculture is the largest sector of economic activity and has a crucial role to play in our economic development by providing food & raw materials; employment to population and surpluses for national economic development. Agriculture is the important sector of our economy as it provides 53% of employment, but in India it is in pathetic condition as it is totally depends upon monsoon.

Agriculture Labour is counted in the category of unorganised so their income is not fixed. Their way of livings are insecure and bounded life. They are one of the most exploited and oppressed classes in rural economy. To conclude it can be said that the condition of agricultural workers is not so good in India. For improvement in their conditions government should take proper step for them like wages reform, new techniques of agriculture, how to work, improve living conditions, proper program to deal with natural calamities such as food droughts etc.

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