

Analysis of the Socio-economic Conditions of the Agricultural Labourers

Diptiranjan sahoo¹, Minati Pradhan²

1(Department Of Basic Science & Humanities ,Gandhi Engineering College, India)

2(Department Of Basic Science & Humanities ,Gandhi Institute For Technology, India)

Abstract: Since long time agriculture is the prime occupation in India as well as Karnataka, even today about 58 per cent of the population relied on it as prime occupation. It plays a dominant role in India's economic development although its share to GDP has been declining continuously from 57 per cent in 1950-51 to 17 per cent in 2016-17 (including allied activities). Despite declining its relative share in GDP, this sector has registered the reasonable growth in last few decades. However, one of the major bottlenecks that has emerged and can become an insurmountable problem is the issue of shortage of agricultural labour. Due to the low wage rate, wage monopoly, insecurity, seasonal employment in agriculture and other factors have pushed the agricultural labourers to migrate from agricultural sector to rest of other sectors. In this regard, this paper is devoted to articulate the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers in the study region. This study is relied on both the secondary and primary data for its analysis.

Key words: Agricultural Labourers, Exploitation, MGNREGA, BPL, Income, Saving, Expenditure

I. Introduction

As per the 2011 census, India's total population was 1.2 billion of which huge of about 228.3 million populations was relied on agriculture sector (which was 259 million in 2004-05) followed by 110.7 million in secondary sector, 127.8 million in tertiary sector and remaining were the rest of the population. It is really astonishing that between the periods 2004-05 and 2011-12 across the Indian states like Karnataka (4.9 million), Uttar Pradesh (8.47 Million), West Bengal (3.71 million), Bihar (3.63 million), and Rajasthan (3.56 million) huge agriculture workers moved away from the agricultural sector¹. Yes, transforming of excess labour force from agriculture sector to other sectors is positive sign of Indian economy..... but what is the acceptance rate of such unskilled workers in other sectors? Still it is mysterious in India.

Agriculture sector is classified into three main categories namely cultivators, agricultural labour and workers engaged in forestry, fishing and livestock etc..... Labour is the most important factors of production in traditional agricultural system. India's economic development is heavily relied on the growth of agricultural sector. In order to increase the living standard of the agricultural labourers and bring them into the main stream, since first five year plan on words, the central and states governments have set a number of programmes. In India agricultural labours do not possess any other skills and they have little employment opportunities in any other sectors. Agriculture is the weather based activity, if country receives good monsoon, agricultural labourers get their subsistence otherwise not. Indian agriculture was marked by lack of supply of farm labour in recent years. The available labour force was remained under-utilized due to the residuary nature of work in the agriculture sector. Looking at agricultural wage has its advantages both as a statistical measure as well as a way of thinking about how growth trickles down to the poor.

II. Statement of the Problems and Research issues

Problems identify for the study is descriptive and analytical in nature. Since Independence our state and central government have strived to improve the life of the agricultural labourers through implementing several flagship programmes and schemes. Several studies were already done regarding the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers across the country. This is another one effort in this regard and which certainly helps to know the current socio-economic status of the agricultural labourers in the study region. Issues relating to the income, savings, housing, basic amenities, daftness, Debt, banking literacy and so forth status of the agricultural labourers in the study region have been considered for the study.

III. Review of Literature

Accessible Review of literature and documentary sources has helped the researcher to have apparent knowledge about the current research and provide the hints to identify the research gap. Some earlier literature studies reviewed have presented in chronological order as follows.

Sharma H R (2005) traced out that an average daily real wages earning of adult male and female labourers increase in all major states over the pre and post Independence in India. Further, researcher evidenced the fact that the proportion of agriculture labour rural areas had shown increasing trend in most of the major states during the post reform period as compared with pre reform period². Amith Kundu (2006) stated that there is a low wages in agricultural labour markets and in some cases it is being more than the government declared wage. Further, he has recommended the minimum wages to all in all levels³. Dommati Devendra and Krishna Reddy Chittedi (2006), states the need for strengthening of agricultural sector through adopting dual and multi case cropping practices. Further, authors suggests that the components of labour-intensive technology, equal wage, easy credit, agri. marketing facilities and so forth are necessary to attain agricultural development⁴. Kulamani Padhi (2007) concluded that government has to take different measures to further improvement of agriculture labours in India⁵. Mukesh Eswaran, et.al. (2009) opined that stock of labour force in agriculture already exceeds, the way of improving living standard is to improve farm productivity⁶.

Vetrival V. Manegandan R. (2013) points out that according to ILO, about 1, 70,000 agricultural workers were each year run out its means due to the high risk in agricultural sector as compared to the workers in other sectors. Further, they pointed out that agricultural mortality rates have remained consistently high in the last decades as compared with other sectors. Finally, they concluded that in order to confirm sustainable agricultural development in the new minimum, rural workers and their families should have access to adequate health facilities⁷. Doddamani K.N. (2014) discusses about that migration of many poor people around the world are a way of life and the seasonal migration of agriculture labours is not a new phenomenon in Karnataka. Further, thousands of farmers and agriculture labours were migrating seasonally from Hyderabad Karnataka Area to Maharashtra for survival and inclusion⁸. Sunita Sanghi A Srija and Shirke Shrinivas Vijay (2015) discusses about that economy transforms from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy decline in participation of female labours force has been observed. Finally, they concluded that declining fertility rate, caring of child and other factors which have caused for the decline of women participation in outer works in India⁹.

Venu B. N, Umesh K.B. and Gaddi G.M (2016) reveals that migration of labours from their native place to small distance and within the district is high in rainy season but in other season agriculture labourers' migration to other district was relatively high in Karnataka¹⁰. Neela Multami and Sanghvi A.N (2017) states that womens' participation in agricultural activities is less as compared to men and faces more problems than mean in India¹¹. Agricultural labours condition is not good in India and government should twice its budgetary allocation to improve the condition of agricultural labours, opined by Sawant T.R (2017)¹². Venkateshwarlu & M. Ramakrishna Reddy (2017) argued that agriculture labour is counted in the category of unorganized sector so the income is not fixed they are not covered any insecure and full uncertainty in their earnings.

IV. A Brief View of the Study region

Dakshina Kannada is one of the three coastal districts of the Karnataka state with predominantly horticultural and industrial economy. The Total geographical area of the district is 4859 sq.kms of which 27 per cent is covered by forests. District has five talukas viz., Bantwala, Belthangady, Mangalore, Puttur and Sullya. Belthangady taluk is geographically the biggest taluk in the district. According to 2011 census, total population of the district was 20.89 lakh in which Belthangady taluk population share was 12.75 per cent. Kannada, Tulu and Konkani are common languages of the taluk as well district. According to the 2011 census, Dakshina Kannada District has considered one of the most literate districts (88.57%) in the state; at the same time study region (Belthangady Taluk) has registered 4.58 per cent bellow of district average and found in last place in total and female literacy rate (77.99%) among the five taluks of the district.

The net sown area was 1.31 lakh ha and forms 28 per cent of the geographical area (4.77 lakh ha). The gross cropped area stood at 1.57 lakh ha. The land holding pattern in the district indicates that small and marginal land holdings account for more than 90 per cent of the total holding. Cropping pattern shows that nearly one-third of the gross cropped area is under food grains and remaining under plantation and horticultural crops like coconut, areca nut cashew etc. In Dakshina Kannada, Sulya has registered highest area under cultivation of Areca nut which is 11389 hectares in 2016-17. Puttur has stayed at 2nd place by 9865 hectares in this respect. Added to this Belthangady taluk has positioned at 3rd rank (7616 hectares) in the district in respect of area under areca nut cultivation. Data revealed that Belthangady taluk is one of the for most areca nut growers taluks in the district. Further, data also stated that besides areca nut cultivation, other crops like Pepper, Cashew, Coconut, and Rubber have also majorly grown in the district

and also study region. As per the data of D.K District at a Glance, total workforce of the district was 946390 of which 9.74 per cent (92250) was the cultivators and agricultural labourers (2005-06). As per the 2011 census, total population of the Ujire Village was 13429 and literacy rate was 89.59 percent which is above the taluk average. Of the total population about 49.96 (6710) per cent was the workable force and in which 90.76 per cent (6090) was main workers and remaining percentage was the marginal workers (620).

V. Methodology

The current research paper has been partially descriptive and partially analytical in nature. This study has been geographically restricted to Ujire gram panchayat, Belthangady Taluk, Dakshina Kannada district. This paper has relied on both the primary & secondary data. Secondary data were gathered from the published and unpublished sources viz., government reports, Journals, periodicals, books, monographs, gazettes and so on. Primary data were collected through preparing well structured interview schedules for the agricultural labourers in the study region. Keeping in mind the scope, duration, and financial burden, about 70 agricultural labour households have been randomly chosen and collected the information as same. To draw inference of the study, data have gathered from the field have presented with the help of appropriate tables. Simple statistical tools like percentage and average mean, median, mode, weight point score method have been used at the time of discussion and interpretation of the primary level data.

VI. Research Results, Discussion and Interpretation

Here, data gathered from the field survey have discussed and interpreted. Totally 70 respondents (Agricultural Labourers) have been randomly chosen, from the Ujire Gram Panchayat of Belthangady Taluk, and collected information through employing structure interview schedules. An average age of sample respondents was 45 years and 58 per cent and 42 per cent of respondents were belonged to male and female category respectively. In respect of education status, majority of about 48 per cent of respondents was completed primary level education followed by 16 per cent and 4 per cent of respondents were got SSLC and PUC level of education in the study region. Further, it is also proved from the field study that significant percentage (32%) of respondents was not taken the formal education. Further, of the total respondents interviewed about 58.56 per cent of respondents together was belonged to SCs and ST category. Thus, about 38 per cent of respondents were belonged to OBC category and remaining only 7.14 per cent of respondents was come under general category. The above analysis revealed that except general category, even today huge proportion of people in rural area depending on Agricultural labour works. Added to the above, of the total respondents interviewed about 92 per cent of respondents had the family and only 8 per cent of them were not had family.

Category of Labour

Bonded labour can be defined under a part-time or full-time agreement and are classified as having a guaranteed number of work hours per week. Mistaking a part-time labourer as a casual is a common pitfall workers. Casual workers, who are given, work when the employer needs them. They are employed for daily wages; there is no job security or medical benefits when they facing sickness. Bonded labourers those attached to some other farming households on the basis of a written or oral agreement. They work as per instructed by their masters and cannot work at any other place. Data gathered from field study regarding types of labour and their occupations are presented in Table-01.

Form the table-01 (Part-B), it can be viewed that 66 (94.28%) out of 70 agricultural labourers interviewed were casual labour followed by 04 (5.72%) of them were belonged in the category of bonded labour in the study region. It realized the fact that majority of respondents employed as daily wage labourers in the study region. Even though central and state government have taken the strict legislative reforms to remove the evil of bonded labour, still it is practicing in rural areas at minute level. It can be viewed from the table-01 (Part-B) that of the total respondents interviewed majority of about 81.42 per cent of them was busy in doing both the cultivation and agricultural labour works and remaining only 18.58 per cent of them was engaged solely agricultural labour works in the study region.

Agricultural labourers are poor; they are provided food and employment security by the esteemed governments. MGNREGA is a flagship programme of central government under which poor persons have provided 100 days of assured work in a year. Table-01 of Part-C is devoted to provide BPL and MGNREGA registration status of agricultural labourers in the study region. It is anticipated that except five agricultural labourers, all of them were interviewed in the study region had registered in Below the Poverty Line. Thus, field survey data revealed that 23 (32.86%) out of 70 agricultural laboureres were assured 100 days of labour work, per year, under MGNREGA in the study region. Districts wise physical performance status of the MGNREGA in Karnataka revealed that this central government employment guarantee programme has poorly implemented in Dakshina Kannada district as compared to the other districts of the state.

Season wise Accessibility of average days of labour works in Agriculture filed

The agricultural sector is always facing the seasonal and discussed unemployment problems in India. During the time of sowing and harvesting, there is an increased demand for agricultural labourers, after that demand for such labourers' decreases. Detailed view about season wise accessibility number of days of agricultural works in the study region is provided in Table-02. It can be viewed from the Table-02 that agricultural sector has been offered, persons per month, an average 24.30 days of labour work per month per person in Kharif season in the study region. Thus, this sector has offered on an average of about 20.74 days and 18.23 days of labour work in the Rabi and summer season in the study region. Dakshina Kannada district is well-known for growing commercial/plantation crops. Plantation crops have been offering the works for labourers thorough out all the three seasons. Respondents orally said that they were facing hardship for getting labour works after harvesting to beginning of sowing seasons in the study region.

An average Income, Saving and Expenditure Status of the Agricultural labour

It is proved from the study that almost all the respondents interviewed were belonged to the Below the Poverty Line (BPL). Detailed information of their income, saving and expenditure helps the researcher to assess their current economic status. In this regard, information gathered from the field provided in Table-03.

Income and Saving Status: Income and Savings among individuals in the informal sector is imperative; to lead decent and comfortable living conditions, they have to build the decent income and saving profile. Table-03 (Part-A) shows category wise per month on an average income and saving status of the agricultural labourers in the study region. An average income and savings per month of the agricultural labourers was Rs.7257.73 and Rs. 1098.26 respectively in the study region. Further, Category wise, SCs and ST respondents have registered the low income and saving, per month, as compared with the income and savings of the OBC and General Category respondents in the study region. General category respondents had Rs. 11178.23 of income and Rs. 1235.13 saving per month which is Rs. 2425.88 and Rs.

263.59 high of the income and saving of the SCs category labourers and Rs. 2023.49 and Rs. 158.60 high of the income and saving of the ST respondents in the study region respectively. It can be concluded that SC and ST respondents had the low income and saving capacity as compared to the OBC and General Category agricultural labourers in the study region,

Expenditure Status: In table-03 (Part-B) shows per month an average expenditure status of the agricultural labours in the study region. It is evidenced from the field survey data that per month on an average expenditure of an agricultural labourer was Rs. 6159.47 in the study region. Considering the item wise expenditure of such labourers, huge of Rs.1916.12 has spent, per month per labour, for food items followed by Rs. 980.56, Rs. 812.61 and Rs.761.37 has spent on children education, hospital and clothing respectively in the study region.

Details of the Savings and Debt of Agriculture Labourers

Details of the Saving: Table- 04 of Part-A reveals the saving habit of respondents in the study region. It is evidenced from the field study that 60 out of 70 respondents had the saving habit in the study region. Of the total savers, highest of about 65 per cent of them was put aside some of the portion of their income in public sector banks in the study region. Added to this, about 11.66 and 15 per cent of them were used Chit Funds/local money lenders and in houses to save some portion of their income in the study region. Here, worrying stuff is that even today considerable of about 26.66 per cent of them was saved some portion of their income in unsecured places in the study region.

Debt Received From: Debt is an important prerequisite for all side of growth. Policies have been reviewed from time to time to provide adequate and timely availability of finance to the agricultural labourers. Rural credit system assumes importance because for most of the Indian rural families, savings are inadequate to finance farming and other economic activities. And most of the agricultural labourers do not have in position to pledge their property in formal institutions to accomplish debt needs. On the other hand, money lenders have been charging high rate of interest on credit, this causes for debt trap of Agricultural labourers. Connection with the above lines, of the total respondents interviewed about 72.85 per cent (51 respondents) of labourers have taken lone from different sources in the study region and remaining 27.15 per cent (19) of respondents did not availed lone from any sources. It is evidenced from the Table-04 of Part-B that majority of about 33.35 per cent of agricultural labourers (out of 51 Agricultural labourers) have used the local money lenders for satisfying their debt needs. Added to this only 17.64 per cent of them had taken the loan from formal banking institutions, followed by about 29.41 and 19.60 per cent of them had relied on relatives and friends for this purpose respectively.

Accessibility of Basic Necessities

To lead decent life, basic necessities like housing, defecation, bathroom, piped water and electricity and other basics are required. Data gathered through primary level study regarding accessibility level such basics for agricultural labourers are provided in Table-05 (part-A). It can be realised by the primary level study that cent percent of the respondents had owned house. It is also revealed from the study that of the total respondents about 84.28 per cent, 11.42 per cent and 04.28 per cent of them were stayed in tailed, huts, and roofed houses in the study region. it can be concluded that even today considerable of about 11.42 per cent of them was lived in unconditioned houses in the study region. Further, data also articulated the fact that considerable of about 15.72 per cent of them did not have the defecation facility in their house in the study region.

Accessibility Durable Goods in House

Information regarding the ownership status of durable goods of agricultural labourers is illustrated in Table-05 of Part- B. About 91.42 per cent and 62.85 per cent of the respondents' houses have equipped with the TV sets and Grinder. Added to this, about 30 per cent of them had owned two wheeled motor cycles followed by 38.57 and 32.85 per cent of the houses of the agricultural labourers have had the Fridge and furniture sets in the study region.

Problems of Agriculture Labourers

In India as well as study region, agricultural labourers have been facing the various problems but it is not easy to find out the most severe problem which the agricultural labourers facing in the field. To find out the most severe problem they faced in the study region, researcher has employed Weight Point Score Method. The weight points are assigned to all the five problems identified for the study in descending order of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 and then by calculations, ranks such problems have identified accordance with the total weight points scored by each problem identified. In Table-06, the calculations made have presented. It is found from the calculations that as per the agricultural labourers, lack of employment opportunities during off season has scored highest of 322 weight point score and remained at 1st rank among the five problems identified in the study region. Added to this, with 300 weight point score, problem debt has stayed at 2nd rank in this respect. Thus, it can be inferred that having 292 and 276 weight points, low wages and wage bias have stayed at 3rd and 4th rank. Further, based on the calculations it has proved from the field study that the problem like less alternative employment opportunities had lesser weight (184) and stayed in fifth Place among the five problems faced by the agricultural labourers in the study region.

VII. Conclusion

Agriculture is called as the backbone of the Indian economy frequently. Agriculture sector has been facing hardship for a long time. Agricultural workers are generally bifurcated as cultivators and labourers. Higher rate of return in agriculture sector is mainly depending up on the accessible labour force and wage rate. Agricultural labourers always exploited by the land holders (cultivators) through the power of wage bargaining. Basically, agricultural labourers are poor (voiceless, powerless, and choice less) and they are powerless to rise the voice to get desired wages from the land holders. Agriculture sector has been facing the seasonal and discussed unemployment problems since long moment in India. It is evidenced from the study that agricultural labourers in the study region were hardly stroked by 6 days of unemployment (per month) in Kharif Season and 10 and 12 days of hardship (per month) in getting employment in Rabi and winter seasons respectively. In those unemployed days (particularly Rabi and winter season days) they are hardy fight to get their subsistence which in turn causes for low level of living standard of them. So, in this respect government has to provide assured days of employment under MGNREGA in Rabi and winter seasons. The stock of labour force in agriculture sector is already locked and the best way to improve their living standards directly would be the boosting of farm productivity.

Table-01: Occupation, Types and BPL and MGNREGA Status of Labourers

Part:A Occupation		Part-B:Work Nature		Part-BPL and MGNREGA membership Status		
ure of the Occupation	of Respondent s	e of Labour work	of Respondents (%)	of Respondents (% of 70)		
(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)	(07)
vator &Labour	57 (81.42)	Bonded Labour	04 (5.72)	BPL	65 (92.86)	05 (07.14)

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Labour	13 (18.58)	Casual Labour	66 (94.28)	MGNAREGA Card	23 (32.85)	47 (67.15)
Total	70(100)	Total	70(100)			

Data gathered through Primary Investigation, conducted in the month of April 2018

Table-02: Accessibility of An average days labour works in Agriculture (per month)

Season		An average Days of Work
(01)	(02)	(03)
Kharif	June	24.13
	July	26.94
	August	23.28
	September	22.87
Average Days of Work in Kharif Season		24.30
Rabi	October	26.37
	November	21.56
	December	18.74
	January	16.32
Average Days of Work in Rabi Season		20.74
Summer	February	16.61
	March	14.73
	April	17.49
	May	24.11
Average Days of Work in Summer Season		18.23

Source: Data gathered through Primary Investigation, conducted in the month of April 2018

Table-03: Average Income, Saving and Expenditure Status of Agricultural labour (per month)

Part-A: Income and Saving Status				Part-B: Expenditure Status	
Category	No. of Respondents	Average Income	Average Saving	Category	Average Expenditure
(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
SCs	18	8752.35	971.54	Food	1916.12
ST	23	9154.74	1076.53	Clothing	761.37
OBC	24	9945.61	1109.86	Health Care	812.61
General	05	11178.23	1235.13	Children Education	980.56
Total	70	7257.73	1098.26	Others	1688.81
				Consolidated An Average Expenditure	6159.47

Source:Data gathered through Primary Investigation, conducted in the month of April 2018

Table-04: Details of the Savings and Debt of Agriculture Labourers

Part-A: Details of the Savings			Part-B: Debt Received From		
Sources	No. of Respondents	%	Sources	No. of Respondents	%
(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
Funds & Local Money Lenders	07	11.66	Money Lenders	17	33.35
Public Banks	39	65.00	Co-ops	09	17.64
Private Banks	05	8.34	Relatives	15	29.41
House	09	15.00	Friends	10	19.60
Total	60	100	Total	51	100

Source:Data gathered through Primary Investigation, conducted in the month of April 2018

Table-05: Accessibility of Basics and Durables

Part-A: Accessibility of Basics			Part-B: Accessibility of Durables		
Basics	No of Respondents (% of 70)		Durables	No of Respondents (% of 70)	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)
Owned House	59 (84.28)	11 (15.72)	Electricity	17 (24.28)	53 (75.72)
Owned House	08 (11.42)	62 (88.58)	Two-wheeler	21 (30.00)	49 (70.00)
Rented Houses	03 (04.28)	67 (95.72)	Three-wheeler	01 (01.42)	69 (98.58)
Electricity supply	70 (100)	00 (00.00)	Refrigerator	27 (38.57)	43 (61.43)
Drinking Water	70 (100)	00 (00.00)	Sanitation	23 (32.85)	47 (67.14)
Internet	59 (84.28)	11 (15.72)	Mobile phone	44 (62.85)	26 (37.15)
Private Both Room facility in House	63 (90.00)	07 (07.00)		64 (91.42)	06 (08.58)

Source: Data gathered through Primary Investigation, conducted in the month of April 2018

Table-06: Problems of Agriculture Labourers

Respondents and Weight Points (WP)												
Causes for Short Life of Roads	No. of Resp.	WP 5	No. of Resp.	WP 4	No. of Resp.	WP 3	No. of Resp.	WP 2	No. of Resp.	WP 1	Total WPs	Rank
(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)	(07)	(08)	(09)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
debt	37	37x5 185	19	19x4 76	11	11x3 33	03	03x2 06	--	--	300	V
Less alternative sources of employment	4	04x5 20	15	15x4 60	23	23x3 69	07	07x2 14	21	21x1 21	184	III
Discrimination in wages	41	41x5 205	7	07x4 28	06	06x3 18	09	09x2 18	07	07x1 07	276	IV
Low wages	34	34x5 170	26	26x4 104	03	03x3 09	02	02x2 04	05	05x1 05	292	II
Unemployment during off season	47	47x5 235	13	13x4 64	3	03x3 9	07	07x2 14	--	--	322	I

Source: Data gathered through Primary Investigation, conducted in the month of April 2018

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