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Unfavourable Conditions of Labourers in Haryana

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Keywords

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ABSTRACT

Haryana is “mainly an agrarian economy and falls among the states of India which adopted New Agricultural Model in 1960’s. Consequently, the high production of food grains, making it self sufficient in food grains. The contribution of the primary sector in the GDP has been continuously declining over the years. But agriculture still holds a central space in the Haryana economy as a huge chunk of its working population is still engaged in agriculture to make their living. Working population in agriculture comprises cultivators and agricultural labourers. A person who earns his living through wages by working on another person’s farm is considered to be an agricultural labourer. Agricultural labourers, an important section of the rural population of Haryana state, is the most neglected section of the population, leading a life of abject poverty. They live in undignified conditions. The main objective of the planning system in India introduced from 1951 is to raise the living standard of the vulnerable sections of the society and the agricultural labourers represent the weakest section of the society both in economic and social terms. Even after the seven decades of planned economic development, the position of agricultural labourers in the society is still pathetic. But the basic problems being confronted by agricultural labourers have not been properly examined, analysed and addressed. Agricultural labourers live in very pathetic and miserable conditions with the lowest share in the national income. Agricultural labourers form an important section of the rural community, but they are illiterates, extremely poor, are caught in debt trap, belong to lower classes, face acute dearth of employment opportunities and have only seasonal employment in” agriculture. They represent the “second largest category of workers in Haryana. The number of agricultural labourers has been shorting up consistently since 1971. Majority of them come from scheduled castes category. Being illiterates, they were not fit for other jobs. Unemployment is widely rampant among them, representing 60% of the total rural

unemployment. They suffer from underemployment very acutely apart from chronic unemployment. Land remaining concentrated in a few hands despite land reforms, a large section of the population depending upon agriculture work as agricultural labourers.

Introduction:

Job opportunities are “falling for agricultural labour due to the mechanization of agriculture, use of pesticides and diversification towards cash crops. Landlords are reaping huge profits, but the condition of agriculture labour is worsening and even their subsistence level is under threat. New Economic Policy started in 1991 has also aggravated their plight, which is evident from all the economic indicators. Agricultural labourers being illiterate and unorganized are not in a position to fight for their due share in agricultural prosperity. Despite being a large section of Indian workforce, agricultural labourers are in a pathetic condition despite rising agricultural trade and labour productivity. Working conditions are sometimes horrifying and child labour is rampant. Apart from this, capitalist development of economy, especially in agriculture has also contributed to worsening the socio-economic conditions of agriculture labour. The problem of rural unemployment and poverty can be addressed if more labour is absorbed in agriculture sector. Agriculture sector has only worsened rather than improving the social and economic conditions of agricultural labourers. The agricultural labourers constitute an important section of the rural community. But they are backward, illiterate, belong to the depressed classes, unorganized, heavily indebted, face paucity of non-agricultural occupations in villages and find seasonal employment” in agriculture. They are suffering from the problems of poverty and “unemployment because employment in agriculture is mostly seasonal. They are also facing the problem of indebtedness, reason being they are not able to repay the loans because of their low” incomes.

Objectives:

The “present paper analyses the pathetic conditions of agricultural labourers in rural Haryana on an empirical basis. The paper pertains the year 2017-18. To accomplish the most important objective of paper mainly focused the economic and demographic features, levels and pattern of income and consumption, magnitude and causes of indebtedness and their social conditions and place in the” society.

Methodology:

For the purpose of “the paper the whole State has been categorized into three regions on the basis of value productivity per unit area, namely low, medium and high value productivity regions. Ten villages from Hisar district, ten villages from Jind district and Ten villages from Kurukshetra district are chosen for the study. Total of 150 agricultural labour households were contacted, comprising 50 households from Hisar district, 50 households from Jind district, and 50 households from” Kurukshetra.

Taking into “account the differences in agro-climatic conditions and to avoid the geographical proximity of the sampled districts, Hisar, Jind and Kurukshetra districts are selected from low value productivity region, medium value productivity region and high productivity region respectively. On the basis of random sampling method, five villages from each district are” selected.

All the agricultural labour households from the selected districts were contacted to have a better picture of the indebtedness of the agricultural labourers in Haryana.

Socio-Economic Characteristics Of Agricultural Labourers:

This “section presents an overview of social and economic features of the agricultural labourers. In this section sex, age, caste, education, condition of house and basic provision for subsistence living are taken as the indicators of socio-economic features of agricultural labourers. There are 670 persons in total in the 150 sampled agricultural labour households, out of this 55.30 percent are male and 44.70 per cent are female. Overall the sex ratio is found to be 937. The average family size is 4.47. A major proportion of their population, i.e. 40.12 per cent is below 20 years of age and 10.70 per cent of the population is above 60 years of age. The main source of drinking water is water tap as 89.75 per cent households have water taps. For drinking water remaining households depend upon neighbours and relatives as they do not possess any source of water. 95 per cent of the households are having the facility of electricity and about 97 per cent belong to scheduled castes. Out of the total population, 32.17 per cent are illiterate and among literates 2.5 per cent has got education up to graduation. It is very interesting to find out that only 17.74 per cent households have pucca houses. If we look at the basic facilities for subsistence living, we find that 12 per cent of the household do not possess the facility of latrine and bathroom respectively within their premises and some of the bathrooms are without any roof. Majority of the agricultural labour households belongs to scheduled castes, less than half of the population is literate and fare away from basic provisions for decent living” like drinking water, pucca houses, sanitation etc.

This section analyses levels, pattern, per head income and expenditure of the agricultural labour households.

On an average the annual earnings of an agricultural household are 79.80% of which came from agriculture sector and the balance i.e. 20.20% from non-agricultural sources. There are different “components of income sources with a wide variations. Income earned as permanent labour and casual labour is 38.12% and 41.68% respectively. Average annual income made as casual labour is further divided into Rabi and Kharif seasons. Earnings during the Rabi season come to 19.73% while earnings during the Kharif season come to 21.95%. Non agricultural sector such as wage, earned from non-agriculture sector, income from dairying, piggery, poultry, pensions, salaries also contributed to average annual income, accounting” for just 20.20%.

Table 1: Distribution of Indebted Agricultural Labour Households

Description	Punjab
Sampled households (number)	150
Indebted households (number)	127
Indebted households as percentage of sampled households	84.66

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

Table 1 shows the distribution of Indebted Agricultural Labour Households. It is revealed from the table that there have been total sampled number of households are 150. Table shows that there 127 (84.66) households were indebted.

Table 2: Pattern of Debit according to Source of Credit

Sl.No.	Source of Credit	Amount of Loan

A.	Non-Institutional Sources	
1.	Large farmers and landlords	35.21
2.	Money lenders	40.12
3.	Traders	12.27
4.	Relatives and friends	6.58
	Sub-total	94.18
B.	Institutional Sources	
1.	Co-operative credit societies/banks	2.12
2.	Commercial banks	3.70
	Sub-total	5.82
	Total (A+B)	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

Table 2 shows the source of Credit. Large farmers and landlords contribution have been 35.21% in amount of loan. Money lenders, traders, and relatives and friends contribution have been 40.12%, 12.27% and 6.58% in amount of loan respectively. Co-operative credit societies/banks and commercial banks contribution have been 2.12% and 3.70% in amount of loan respectively.

Table 3 :Pattern of Loans : Purpose-wise

Sl.No.	Purpose of Loan	Proportionate Share
1.	Self-occupation	3.12
2.	Education	2.11
3.	Live stock	3.71
4.	Marriage and other social-religious ceremonies	32.45

5.	House construction, addition of rooms and major repairs	10.23
6.	Health care	15.19
7.	Domestic consumption	29.58
8.	Miscellaneous	3.61
	Total (A+B)	100

Source: Field Survey, 2017-18

Table 3 shows “the purpose of loan. It is revealed from the table that self-occupation, education, live stock and marriages and other social-religious ceremonies purpose of loan have been 3.12%, 2.11%, 3.71% and 32.45% respectively. House reconstruction, Health care, domestic consumption and miscellaneous purpose of loan have been 10.23%, 15.19%, 29.58% and 3.61% respectively.”

This “section deals with the social conditions of the agricultural sector. In any social system, the more means of production a person has, the higher social position he holds. In Haryana, land is the most important means of production. Agricultural labourers being landless occupy the lowest position in the society. They make their earnings by working on others’ land, but they are given petty wages and the lion’s share of income from agriculture is reaped by landowners. Being landless and being unable to get employment in non-agricultural occupations, they have to work on lower or higher wages for smaller or longer periods as the case may be under landlords choice. They have to bear economic exploitation, social oppression, humiliation and political discrimination. This paper reveals some important facts about the social condition of the agricultural labourers. They occupy the lowest place in the society. They have to live on the periphery of the village, near the ponds in the” village.

In “some cases their houses may have more than one room. Even the number of beds in the houses are less than the number of members in the family. To make things worse, they have to tie cattle and keep fodder in the same house in which they live. The entire area occupied by all these numerous households may be equivalent to the area occupied by four or five landlords of the village. They have to live in sub-human conditions. They have to make their kitchen in the open, there being no space for kitchen in their single-room or at the most in two-room house. In the rainy season, their plight is indescribable. The condition of permanent agricultural labourers is much worse since they have no right of work holidays. If an agricultural labourer takes leave without permission of the farmers, his wages are” deducted.

Farmers “and their children use very abusive and insulting language while talking to permanent agricultural labourers. They sometimes wash dishes and clean cattle-sheds of the rich farmers for two square meals a day. Agricultural labourers are the most exploited” and oppressed and deprived class in the rural hierarchy. Majority of the agricultural labourers belong to scheduled castes category and they are the worst victims of caste prejudices in the society.

Most of “agricultural labourers are scheduled castes and they have been exploited and discriminated in society for ages. The low caste and depressed classes have never had the

courage to fight for their rights. Most of them are conservative and they blame their destiny for their pathetic and sub-human conditions. This conservative thinking can be attributed to the feudal structure of the society, which compels them to bear their unbearable sufferings silently. Panchayats are dominated by the Elite class and very low wage rates are fixed by the elite class for the agricultural labourers and no farmer can pay them higher wages for fear of being penalized by the Panchayat. The state govt. dominated by feudal lord class also does not watch their interests. Despite strenuous labour they fail to meet the basic needs of their families. They have to borrow money from their employers for several purposes. They fail to repay the loan due to very meager earnings and thus, they remain in debt-trap from generation to generation. They become bonded labourers because they can't change their employer without clear the amount of loan. Once the loan is taken, even the women of the labourers have to do household chores in the lender's household for years for the waiver of interest till the principle amount" is repaid.

Conclusion and Policy implications:

They "are the most exploited, oppressed, neglected and deprived section in the rural hierarchy. They are victims of social, political, economic and cultural discrimination. Land Reforms, Green Revolution and New Economic Policy have improved the economic scenario of the country, but the condition of the agricultural labour has no improvement. They are leading a sub human life. They are exploited economically and discriminated socially and" politically. They have to "borrow money, which they fail to repay and thus fall into debt-trap. 90% of the total loans of agricultural labourers are taken by them from non-institutional agencies at very high rates of interest. They are unable to raise loans from institutional agencies as they have nothing to offer security. Moreover, they find it difficult to comply with their formalities and procedures. They owe huge amounts to landlords and rich farmers and because of their inability to repay the loan amount, they become their economically bonded" labourers.

Agricultural "labourers mostly belong to scheduled castes, proper legislation with stringent penalty must be enacted to wipe out exploitation and discrimination. Minimum wages must be raised to improve their economic condition and minimum wages act must be implemented strictly. Discrimination on the basis of caste, class, gender etc. must be abolished to ensure dignified living for agricultural labourers."

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