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Government Measures for Agricultural Labourers in India and Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural labourers are largest unorganized poorest workers of socially and economically more disadvantaged poor sections of the in Indian society. Today more than 60 percent of the population Indians are depending upon the agriculture. Especially agricultural labours are more depend on agricultural wage, but they are getting lowest wage after hard work and the condition of employment also uncertainty in agriculture. In the present situation agriculture is mainly depend on rain fall, but monsoon always gambling on Indian agriculture and such a situation agricultural labour remain unemployed for a large part of the year, he/she finds only seasonal employment. Therefore looking to all these disadvantages of the agricultural labourers we made an attempt to examine the study on agricultural labours problems and the various government measures to improve the conditions of agricultural labourers in India as well as Karnataka.

KEYWORDS : Agriculture, Labour, Programmes, Karnataka

Introduction:

Human factors are of supreme importance in any pattern of economic development. More or less agricultural labourers are largest unorganized workers of socially and economically disadvantaged poor group in Indian society. The census of India defines an agricultural labourer as a person who works on another person's land for wages in money, kind or share. Even today especially agricultural labours are unorganized and they are basically unskilled; they may not be skilled even in the art of cultivation. Consequently, their supply is perfectly elastic and whatever they earn is in the nature of transfer earnings. The employer often uses this position to his personal again by contracting to pay less than what the market forces would have warranted. And the agricultural labour is migratory in character and drawn from a distant place to the place of work during a busy season. The latest trends of falling prices of the agricultural products and the extension of the period of unemployment have worsened their living conditions, though not beyond recovery or improvement. Most of these problems are common to India as a whole, though their nature and extent vary from state to state and from region to region depending mainly on the agrarian conditions. Therefore looking to all this aspect we have an attempt has been made to know the problems and the government measures for improvement of the agricultural labourers in Karnataka as well as India.

Objective and Database:

This paper examines on the specific objective of understanding the agricultural labour problems and the government measures in Karnataka. The paper mainly based on the secondary data will be collected from census reports, journals and other published documents for used in the study.

Demographic Profile of the Study:

Karnataka is one of the major states of South India. It's total land area is 1,91,791 sq.km. It accounts for 5.83 percent of the total area of the country (32.88 lakh sq.km) and ranks eighth among major States of the country in terms of size. According to the 2011 census, the total population of Karnataka is 6.11 crores. Of this, 50.9% are male and 49.1% are female. The 2001-2011 Decadal Growth of Population is 15.67 percent. Population density is 319 per km, the sex ratio is 968 females per 1000 males and 38.57% of the people in Karnataka live in urban areas. The literacy rate is 75.6% with 82.85% of males and 68.13% of females being literate. All these information has been provided in table 1.

Table.1: The Demographic profile of Karnataka and India

Items	Unit	Karnataka	India
Total Population as per 2011 Census	000s	61131	1210193
Male (2011 Census)	do	31058	623724
Female (2011 Census)	do	30073	586469
Rural Population (2011 Census)	do	37553	833087
% of Rural population		61.43	68.84
Urban Population (2011 Census)	000s	23578	377106
% of urban Population	%	38.57	31.16
Sex ratio (2011 Census)	Females Per 1000 males	968	940
2001-2011 Decadal Growth of Population	Percent	15.67	17.64
Literacy Rate (2011 Census)	Percent	75.6	74.04
Geographical Area (2001 Census)	Lakh Sq.Kms	1.92	32.87
Total Livestock - 2007 (P)	000s	32812	510600
Forest Area (2005)	Sq.Kms	4335	774740
Net Per capita Income	Rs.	60946	53331

Source: Economic Survey of Karnataka 2011-12 report, Pp-xxxii

Agricultural Workforce in India and Karnataka:

Workers in the agricultural sector are classified into three main categories namely, cultivators, agricultural labour and workers engaged in forestry, fishing and livestock etc. We are primarily concerned with the second category of the above categories, viz, agricultural labour. It is evident from the table 2 that the Indian population is tremendously increasing during the period of 1961 to 2011. The total agricultural workforce has declined from 70.36 in 1961 to 54.8 in 2011. During the same period the percentage of cultivators also declined from 53.7 in 1961 to 29.4 in 2011.

Table - 2: Distribution of Agricultural Workforce in India and Karnataka 1961- 2011

India		1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total Population (in Millions)	1	439	548	683	844	1027	1210
Total Agriculture Workers (3+4 in %)	2	72.36	70.12	68.35	67.01	58.4	57.2
Total Cultivators (in %)	3	52.8	43.14	42.33	39.85	31.71	31.6
Total Agriculture Lbourers (in %)	4	19.56	26.98	26.02	27.16	26.69	26.4
Karnataka							
Total Population (in Millions)	1	23.6	29.3	37.1	44.8	52.7	61.1

Total Agriculture Workers (3+4 in %)	2	70.36	66.69	65.03	63.1	55.88	54.8
Total Cultivators (in %)	3	53.7	40	38.25	34.36	29.48	29.4
Total Agriculture Lbourers (in %)	4	16.65	26.69	26.78	28.74	26.4	25.4

Sources: Census of India 1961 to 2011, Venketeswaralu (2003) Pp.148

The total percentage of agricultural labourers have increased from 16.65 per cent in 1961 to 28.74 per cent in 1991, however it has drastically comedown in 2011 to 25.4. It is clear in the table (see table 2) that population has increased rapidly. It is also clear that workers depending on land have declined for both cultivators and agriculture labourers. However, non- agricultural employment opportunities are not created to absorb the surplus labour force from agriculture.

The percentage of cultivators has also declined during the periods of 1961 to 2001. From this it may be concluded that agricultural workforce is shifting from agriculture to other sectors.

Bonded Labour:

In agriculture there is a special class of agricultural labour called the 'bonded labour' who are at the bottom of agricultural ladder in India. The large aboriginal population live and the condition of this agricultural labourers and the condition is very much like that of slaves these are called in different names in different states in India.

Table.3: Number of Bonded Laborers Identified and Rehabilitation in Major Indian States.

States	No. of bonded labour (1985)	Identified Free & rehabilitation (1995)	Identified in the 1996 survey	Identified released till march 31-2004	Rehabilated
Andhra Pradesh	61336	14017	0	37988	31534
Bihar	11002	9472	106	13370	12552
Gujarat	61	38	0	64	64
Haryana	195	21	0	551	49
Karnataka	62689	40033	19	63373	57121
Kerala	829	820	0	823	710
Madhya Pradesh	4655	2912	18	12822	11897
Maharastra	772	319	2	1398	1319
Orissa	41065	27817	0	50010	46882
Rajasthan	6813	5770	0	7488	6331
Tamil Nadu	32581	31591	25008	65573	65573
Uttar pradesh	16199	13420	237	28195	28195
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	3626	3526	2992
Chhatisgrah	0	0	0	124	124
Punjab	0	0	0	69	69
Uttaranchal	0	0	0	5	5
Total	193197	146230	29016	285379	265417

Source: Kulamani (2007) Pp.26-27.

The prominent feature of this system is that a man pledges himself or sometimes a member of his family against a loan. Inability to pay back the loan results in the attachment of that person to the creditor till such time when the loan is finally repaid. Agrarian serfdom thus lingers on in India- a relic of the Middle Ages, which might well be regarded as one of the darkest blemishes in the economic life of the present day India.

It is shows that in the above table. 1 number of bonded labours identified in 1985 we have drowned its percentage constitute 32.45 percent in Karnataka; it is also highest in Indian states. In second position 31.75 percentages in Andhra Pradesh and third 21.26 percentages Orissa. Whereas very lowest in Gujarat, Haryana and Maharashtra .0.03, 0.10, 0.40 respectively. At the same time rehabilitated these labourers were respect of percentage in the each state. In the present situation bonded labour identification rare in the country.

Economic Condition of Agricultural Labour:

Agricultural labours are lowest rung in the socio-economic set-up of the rural society in India as well as the state like Karnataka. In present situation a major part of agricultural labour households do not own any land. As per the 32nd round of the NSS about 51.37 per cent of the agricultural labour households did not own any land. The average size of land cultivated per agricultural labour households was 1.33 acre only. Agricultural labour remain unemployed for a large part of the year, he finds only seasonal employment. This is the period when he is forced to barrow and fall in debt and once he falls in debt he finds it hard to get out the bondage. Hours of work in agriculture depend upon natural factors. The working conditions obviously are fixed by nature. Since they have to work in the open they work both in sun and rain. The hours of work vary from place to place, season to season and from crop to crop. The working hours are generally from sunrise to sunset. Sometime they are made to work during the nights as well for irrigation and threshing etc. In fact, the terms are dictated to them and they have absolutely no bargaining power. The household income and consumption expenditure of an average agricultural labour households are precariously balanced, and that too when it finds some work. Otherwise, most of them are in debt, which they owe to the money lenders and other local sources. As per NSS estimates, 52.32 per cent of agricultural labour households were indebted at national level. The money wages of agricultural labour are miserably low and in spite of the fact that minimum wages legislation has been enacted in most of the states. Finally the standard of living of agricultural labourers is degrading. The abject poverty, which is largely the consequence of a meagre income level, haunts every aspect of their living. This can be quantified in terms of low consumption expenditure on the one hand and the pattern of consumption on the other. As is to be expected food forms the most significant items of consumption expenditure of these households. As per the Agricultural Labour Enquiry Reports these households spend 85.3 per cent of their income on food 6.3 per cent on clothing and footwear and 8.4 per cent on services and miscellaneous the consumption pattern is indicative of extreme backwardness and unemployment.

Government Measures Pertaining to Agricultural Labour:

Since Independence, the central as well as the state governments have taken some measures to improve the economic condition of agricultural labour. They include the passing of legislation to fix minimum wages for agricultural labour, the removal of disabilities the ceilings on land holding and the redistribution of surplus land among the landless labourers etc. The Indian constitution has declared the practice of serfdom an offence and abolished agrarian slavery including forced labour by law. During the Second Five-Year Plan, efforts were made to encourage the formation of labour co-operatives and these co-operatives members are workers undertake the contract of government projects, such as construction of roads, digging of canals and tanks, a forestation etc. They provide employment to agricultural workers during off-season and also eliminate the possible exploitation of workers by the private contractors. And government has been introduced employment guarantee schemes from 1977 provided employment in different schemes like Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (1989) and recently MGNREGA programme launched by the Central Government during year of 2006 and covering entire country.

The Government introduced the 20-point economic programme (July 1975) which included a number of measures to improve the economic condition of the landless workers and other workers section of the community in our villages. These measures are speedy implementation of ceiling legislation and distribution of surplus land among landless labourers and small peasants. Provision of house sites for landless labourers and conferment of ownership rights to the houses if they have been occupied by them for a certain period, abolition of bonded labour, liquidation of rural indebtedness and moratorium on recovery of debts from landless labourers, artisans and small peasants. These are the efforts have been made the central government for improvement of the agricultural labourers in the last some decades.

Conclusion:

The development of any country or area is mainly depending upon the employment opportunities. India is one of the highest population leading countries and it is in second position in the world. More than 65

percent of the population are mainly depending on the agriculture. But at current position over crowded in agriculture and number of agriculture labourers are land less and small piece of land holder were has facing underemployment and unemployment problem. These labours are originally backward and unskilled; they are not able to getting employment in growing modern rest of the agriculture sectors. Therefore, the proportion of the agriculture labour position is decade to decade wise increasing and in the same time the employment opportunity is also decreasing. But in the meanwhile number of government programme were generating employment opportunities for these poor families' labourers, even though these opportunities are still dream of them due to lack of proper implementation as well as the miss use of government authority and over corruption has been made avoid from employment opportunities of poor labour. And the government schemes were failed to identifying of real beneficiary of poor agricultural labourer still they are migrating from their origin for employment. Therefore, properly implementations of popular government employment generation programmes are only improve the condition labour.

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