

A Study on Socio Economic Conditions of Agricultural Labourers in Sawyerpuram Panchayat in Thoothukudi District

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Abstract

The agricultural labourers are mostly unorganized. The demand for agricultural labour is seasonal and depends upon the size of holdings and the types of crop. Abundant flow of manpower has made them weak in their bargaining power and can't fight for their rights. The wages of agricultural labourers are very low compared to other wages. They do not have permanent work. Most of them are either unemployed or underemployed. They do not have any organization. However agricultural labourers are getting poor wages. Agricultural labourers who are mostly landless and form a significant section of rural society mainly depend on wage employment in agriculture. Their income had always been meager, resulting in poor living and heavy indebtedness. So the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers are very poor. The prevailing wage rate is not sufficient for maintaining their minimum standard of living. The agricultural labourers are unable to save since they are in cutter poverty very few save negligible amount and they make use of banks and post office for their savings. The study reveals that, the living style of agricultural labour households with larger family size gives us not satisfactory and also the socio economic conditions of agricultural labour households are very poor.

Keywords: *Agricultural labourers, income, employment, social condition, economic condition, wage, indebtedness.*

1.1 Introduction

Agricultural labourers play an important role in the development of our country. Most of the agricultural labourers are less in number and engaged in agro-based operation for their livelihood. Their supply is over and above the requirement and hence disguised unemployment has been the common feature in agriculture. Transferring a larger part of them to non-farm sector will not create a serious problem. Another feature of Indian agricultural labour is their low productivity. Consequently, they are paid less. In certain instances they are bonded to the land-lord or moneylender. Also, they do not get employment throughout the year and so most of them remain unemployed.

The poverty syndrome among agricultural labourers needs to be read against such a background of prolonged rural under development, assetless, unemployment, low wages, under-nutrition, illiteracy and social backwardness constitute the poverty syndrome among agricultural labourers. These reinforce each other so as to constitute a vicious circle of poverty. There is little inter-generational upward mobility among agricultural labourers households.

1.2 Focus on the problem of the study

The agricultural labourers are mostly unorganized. The demand for agricultural labour is seasonal and depends upon the size of holdings and the types of crop. They are not homogeneous in character and are unskilled and unorganized. Abundant flow of manpower has made them weak in their bargaining power and hence paid very low wages.

Socially, a large number of agricultural workers belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Therefore, they are an oppressed class. They are not organized and cannot fight for their rights. The hours of work are very lengthy and in some cases, attached agricultural labourers have to work from dawn to dusk in the houses and farms of their employers.

The wages of agricultural labourers are very low compared to other wages.

Agricultural labourers who are mostly landless and form a significant section of rural society mainly depend on wage employment in agriculture. Majority of them belong to scheduled castes and Backward Classes are among the worst exploited section of the society.

Their income had always been meager, resulting in poor living and heavy indebtedness. Much worst are these who get casual agricultural, employment and work on daily wages and do not own a piece of land. They merely exist and do not live. Their morning holds no promise for the evening and they can never sleep without tensions for they no stocks left for the morning. In the struggle for their mornings and evenings passes off their whole life.

1.3 Review of the study

In this study of Dharma Kumar “Land and caste in India” point out “Wages fluctuated around subsistence level and falling below it in times of famine. The real wages were generally falling from 1973 onwards.

Roy. R. in his study, “Caste in Indian Politics” regarding, majority of the agricultural labourers belong to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes these stigmatized people are depressed since their birth. The various kinds of social sanctions precluded them from taking to more productive occupations.

According to the National Labour Commission, an agricultural worker is one who receives income in the form of wages obtained as a result of working on land. These workers have nothing except their labour to earn livelihood. They are generally unskilled and unorganized.

Mamata Swain study on “Agricultural Tenancy and interlinked Transactions” regarding agricultural labourers are, Landless Casual Labourer (LCL) does not have any owned land and he hires out labour to earn his livelihood. Attached Labourer (AL) is attached to a particular employer and works for him. Usually he is provided with homestead land or land for cultivation by the employers. But he has the freedom to work for other employers when his employer does not have enough work for him. He is semi-attached to that extent. And he is paid wages for the days he works for the employer. Farm Servant (FS) is a fully attached labourers who is paid annually or monthly.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Aside from time and season the diversity in the village characteristic like irrigation system, cropping pattern, availability of non farm employment does play vital role in detaining the level of living of agricultural labour households.

Thus the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labour households vary with time and space and the issue becomes both time specific and village specific. As such an assessment of socio-economic conditions of agricultural labour households in each village at any given point of time (or at different time points) becomes quite relevant and inevitable. It is in this context the present survey is undertaken.

1.5 Objectives

1. To study out the social and economic causes of low standard of living.
2. To Analyse the income and employment potentials of agricultural labourers in the study area.
3. To examine the consumption, savings and indebtedness of agricultural labourers.
4. To give suggestions to improve their socio economic status.

1.6 Metzodology

Survey method is used in this study. Primary data and secondary data were collected from different sources. Various statistical tools have been used to find out the employment, income, consumption, cost of living, the level of saving and wage structure. Random sampling method is used to find out the sample size.

1.7 Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. The primary data were collected from the agricultural labourers selected from this village. The population figures were collected from the village administrative officer. The collected data were arranged in a random sampling method. This random sampling method is used to select the samples.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The present study aims to examine the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers in Sawyerpuram panchayat by taking into account the size of the family, caste, education, income, expenditure, savings, indebtedness and wages as indicators for evaluation.

1.9 Size of the population

The present study is confined to Sawyerpuram panchayat in Srivaikundam Taluk, of Thoothukudi District in Tamil Nadu. The study area has more than 70 per cent of the total population depending on agriculture.

The total population of Sawyerpuram panchayat is 12,771, in which the male population 6,286 i.e. 49.22 percentage and the female is 6,485 i.e. 50.78 percentage. The male population is less than the female population.

Table: 1- Size of population in Sawyerpuram panchayat

S.NO	Sex	Population	Percentage
1	Male	6286	49.22
2	Female	6485	50.78
	Total	12771	100.00

Source: Population report in panchayat

2.0 Analysis of the study

Socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers in this study are described. Therefore, the social aspects like the size of the family nature of the family are and sex-wise distribution marital status, educational level and religions of the respondents have been explained. Further the

economic aspect like to value of assets, the annual household income, expenditure pattern, savings and indebtedness of the households have also been analysed.

2.1 Social Condition of the Labourers

Age and Sex-wise Distribution of the Respondents

Age and sex are the determining factors of employment. A family which conations number of children and age-old people will suffer since their earning capacity is low.

Table: 2 - Age and Sex wise Distribution of the Respondent

Age Group	No. of Respondents		Total	Percentage to total
	Male	Female		
20 – 30	4	2	6	6
30 – 40	6	4	10	10
40 – 50	12	10	22	22
50 – 60	36	14	50	50
Above – 60	12	-	12	12
Total	70	30	100	100

Source: Field survey

3.1 Economic Conditions of the Agricultural Labourers

Income Pattern:

The incomes of the agricultural labouers are an important indicator of their economic condition.

Income consists of wages or labour earnings, income from self employment and other miscellaneous sources.

Average per capita Income

The pattern of average annual per capita income of the agricultural labour households by source. It can be seen from the table that the labour households accrue income from three sources, namely, wage employment self employment and others.

Table: 3 - Average Annual Per capita Income of Agricultural Labour Households by Source

Sl. No.	Source of Income	Amount (in Rs.)	Percentage
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1.	Wage employment	3718.45	99.51
2.	Self employment (non Agricultural)	6.06	0.16
3.	Others	12.12	.033
	Total	3,736.63	100

Source: Field Survey

It is observed that the average annual per capita income of the households is only Rs.3,736.63. The major source of income is wage employment which constitutes 99.51 per cent of the total per capita income of the households. As the quantum of employment per year the labour participation ratio in the households and the wage rates are very low, the average annual per capita income is very low.

On an average, male worker works 74 days in agricultural occupation and 83 days in non-agricultural occupation.

The female worker works 53 days in agricultural occupation and 65 days in non-agricultural occupation. So the total income of the female is Rs.8,910 per year. The contribution of male labourer to the total earnings of the households is higher than that of the female. The table clearly shows that the total income of a household is very low. So the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers are very poor.

3.2 Distribution of Income and its Inequality

Table: 4 - Distribution of Households in Different Income Groups

Annual Income (in Rs.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 10,000	24	24
10,000 – 20,000	30	30
20,000 – 30,000	22	22
30,000 – 40,000	18	18
Above 40,000	6	6
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey

Suggestions

1. In order to maintain the family size prescribed by the Government effective family planning measures must be popularised and proper guide line programmes should be conducted / organized.

2. In order to eradicate the problem, during off season, cottage industry should be established in this village and also Government should introduce various poverty alleviation programmes.

3. The prevailing wage rate is not sufficient for maintaining their minimum standard of living. So Minimum Wages Act should be effectively implemented.

4. In order to reduce the unemployment, various schemes with regard to rural development such as JRY, TRYSEM etc should be introduced.

5. The disparity in the wage rate between males and females should be minimised. Equal pay for equal work should be arranged irrespective of sex.

6. There is no agricultural labour organization. The political leaders and Government should come forward to organise a union for the welfare of the people in these areas. This will help them to secure fair wages, proper working hours and avoid exploitation. This will strengthen the bargaining power.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. More than 68 per cent of the respondent households are having larger families as such, they not only have low standard of living but also live in poverty.
2. Most of the respondents prefer to have nuclear family. The elders are also in favour of forming a nuclear family.
3. In our analysis, majority of the agricultural labourers are Hindus. There is religious harmony and perfect co-existence among the followers of these two religions and they even marital relations among them. Other religions do not exist in this study area.
4. Majority of the respondents are BC (ie 86%) and 14 per cent of the respondents are SC.
5. The agricultural labourer is economically poor. They have just hand to mouth existence. Their annual per capita income is just 3,736.
6. The major source of income is wage employment which constitutes 99.51 per cent of the total per capita income of the households.
7. The contribution of male labourer to the total earnings of the households is higher than that of the female.
8. Gini Concentration Ratio was computed. The Gini concentration ratio is 0.28. This confirms that the income inequality among the five groups of households is very less.
9. Nearly 51.39 per cent of the total income is spent on food items, whereas, clothing accounts for 18.92 per cent of their total income. The major share of their income nearly 70 per cent goes to these items.
10. The people are unable to save since they are in utter poverty very few save negligible amount and they make use of banks and post offices for their savings.

Conclusion

The study reveals that, the living style of agricultural labour households with larger family size gives us not satisfactory. Other factor such as possession of assets, less number of days of employment available per worker per capita income, low per capita expenditure high proportion of food expenditure to the total consumption

expenditure and very high marginal propensity to consume tempt us to conclude that the socio economic conditions of agricultural labour households are poor.

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