

CHAPTER - V

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5.1 INTRODUCTION :

In this last chapter we present a brief resume of the earlier chapters, the major findings of our study and the suggestions based on them.

5.2 THE PROBLEM

In the first chapter we have stated that the studies on agricultural labourers conducted so far have come up with the major problems of agricultural labourers in India and that we wanted to examine the conditions of agricultural labour in one particular village of the Konkan Region. It is an established fact that Konkan Region is one of the most poor regions of Maharashtra State. The conditions of the agricultural labourers in such region are worse than their counterparts in the other regions. The main problem under study was thus, to find out the exact conditions of the agricultural labourers in the village and to examine the changes in their conditions during the last forty years.

5.3 METHODOLOGY :

As reported earlier the case study method was followed by concentrating on an intensive study of the agricultural labourers

in the Phanasavale village with a sample survey covering 50% labourers was conducted with the help of an elaborate schedule (appended). The primary data so collected was analysed and the conclusions have been drawn. It has, of course, been supported by the relevant secondary data.

5.4 MAJOR FINDINGS :

Following are the major findings of our study :

1. Most of the agricultural labourers surveyed belonged to the age group of 18 to 60 years although some of the respondents have also reported the cases of child labour (Table No. 4.1) and Table No. 4.2)
2. The analysis of the caste structure showed that all of them belonged to the backward castes including scheduled castes and other Backward Class. Thus, agricultural labour is mainly constituted by the lower castes of the society (Table No. 4.3).
3. The average size of family of the respondent has been 5 to 6 and most of the respondent families had more than one person working as an agricultural labourer (Table No. 4.1 and Table No. 4.4).
4. The incidence of female labour has also been prominent among all the respondents, but a few (Table No. 4.1 and Table No. 4.4).

5. The literacy percentage has improved particularly during the last decade (Table No. 4.5).
6. As regards the housing facilities, in the past, very few Pakka houses were owned by the agricultural labourers but now the situation is changed for the better (Table No. 4.7).
7. The drinking water facilities have also improved although both quantitatively and qualitatively they leave much to be desired (Table No. 4.8).
8. As regards the land holdings, it is seen that most of the agricultural labourers are only marginal farmers with uneconomic size of farm (Table No. 4.9).
9. Those having the land holding also have the livestock but again the average livestock population is very low (Table No. 4.10).
10. The number of milch animals with the labourers is also inadequate leading to lower consumption of milk (Table No. 4.10).
11. Regarding the income of labourers surveyed, it has been found that for the high income families (Third category respondents in our analysis having relatively higher income), the major composition is of wage-income and for those who have lower incomes, have to depend upon the subsistence farming and the income from some other sources (Table No. 4.11).

12. The payment of wages is substantially improved in the sense that most of the labourers are paid as per the revised minimum wages. However, the minimum wage itself is not minimum considering their needs (Table No. 4.17).
13. The female labour is still discriminated against the male labour in the payment of wages and the wages received by a female labour are extremely low (Table No. 4.16).
14. The expenditure analysis shows that lower the income higher is the expenditure, consequently the poorest of the poor have huge deficits which they normally cover by accepting loans at exorbitant interest (Table No. 4.14).
15. The composition of expenditure shows interestingly that the low income labourers have a larger proportion spent on non food items. These non food items include consumption of tobacco, pan and liquor (Table No. 4.13).
16. In respect of average employment available, it is observed that the extent of unemployment is almost of 185 days for all the labourers (Table No. 4.15).

Thus, the study shows that despite some marginal improvement in the living conditions of agricultural labourers, the twin problem of poverty and unemployment is still a cause of concern.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS :

Taking into consideration the findings above we offer the following suggestions for the further improvement in the conditions of the agricultural labourers in Konkan Region.

1. The potential of irrigation facilities should be exploited further with a view to increasing the level of irrigation.
2. As a concrete remedy over the problem of substantial unemployment we felt that the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) should be modified for Konkan Region in the following way. :

In such district suitable industrial centres should be established for a cluster of 10 to 15 villages of a sub-region. It need not be necessarily a political sub-region and rather the demarcation of sub-region should be guided by the consideration of the availability of natural resources and the production of major crops. For Example, alphanso(Mango), Cashew and Coconut are the three major horticultural produces taken in the Konkan Region. If the canning of these fruits and processing of some of them are undertaken on a large scale by the industries centres, wage employment can be provided to a number of job seekers all around the year. Such modifications in the EGS will certainly provide an effective solution for the problem of unemployment.

3. The restructuring of minimum wages and a revision in them are necessary. The present minimum wage for the area under study is Rs. 14.00 per day which should be revised at least upto Rs. 20.00 per day.
4. For improving the drinking water facilities it is suggested that a common reservoir for 5 to 6 villages which are geographically adjacent could be provided with the tap could be provided with the tap connections for all the villagers.
5. It is observed that the cattle population is not having either proper living conditions or medical facilities. For overcoming this problem the financial assistance should be provided by the nationalized banks for construction of cattle shade and the veterinary health services should be properly streamlined.
6. With the growing awareness among the agricultural labourers the organization of labourers, on the lines of trade union with the initial outside leadership, should be encouraged so as to ensure a better bargaining power.
7. Last but not the least the non essential expenditure particularly on tobacco and liquor should be discouraged by suitable campaigning of the adverse effects of such habits.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be stated that the problems of agricultural labourers in Phanasavale and many such villages in the Konkan Region can be dealt with squarely if the political leaders, the various agencies of the Government, the voluntary organizations and above all the labourers themselves take up the challenge seriously by confronting the problems rather than running away from them.