

CHAPTER -III

LANDLESS AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN KHADAKLAT

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

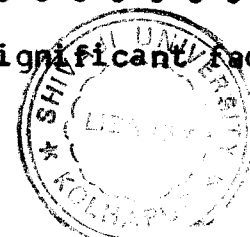
The landless labourers from a sizeable section of the total population of the village. There are nearly about 2250 families in the village. Out of these, there are 166 families are perhaps the weakest of the weaker sections in the population. These families do not hold any land and their livelihood almost entirely depends upon the earnings they get if and when work on the farm becomes available. We shall begin this presentation of Socio-economic conditions of these families with facts about their demographic features. As mentioned earlier, the interviews were conducted of the heads of the Selected Forty five families. We may therefore first note the age-group-wise composition of these heads. For the sake of convenience, we have formed three age-groups. (1) Those who are below the age of 30, (2) those whose age is between 31-45 years and (3) those who are more than forty five years old.

TABLE NO.1

TABLE SHOWING THE AGE-GROUP-WISE BREAK-UP OF THE HEADS

Sr.No.	Age-Group (in years)	No.of heads (Respondents)	Percentage to total
1)	Below 30	10	22.22
2)	31 to 45	21	46.67
3)	46 onwards	14	31.11
TOTAL		45	100.00

This table by itself does not reveal any significant facts



in the context of our study. But it may be noted that relatively there is a small number of families whose heads are below the age of 30.

Out of the forty five respondents, seven were women. Thus there are landless agricultural labour families having female heads. They have to shoulder the responsibility of the other family members.

The type and size of the family gives some idea of the relationship between economic activities and structure of the families. It is generally presumed that there is a predominance of joint family system in rural India. However our survey shows a different situation as far as landless labourers are concerned.

TABLE NO.2

FAMILY TYPE AND SIZE

Family Type	No. of families	Percentage to total	Total members	Average size (Average no. members per family)
NUCclear Family	28	62.22	128	4.6
Joint Family	17	37.78	147	8.7
TOTAL	45	100.00	275	

As the table shows, there are only 17 (37.78%) families who are joint or extended. On the other hand the number of nuclear families is quite large. This may indicate that the very nature of economic activity determines the nature or type of family.

Similarly the size of the family, particularly of the nuclear family, gives us some idea of the relationship between economic condition and family size. We are however not sure whether poverty tends to restrict the size of the family.

The total population of the sampled families is 275. Out of these the number of children below the age of 10 is 70. The total number of persons who work on daily wages is 134. These figures would show that almost all the grown-up and physically able members of the families have to work for their daily bread.

TABLE NO.3

GIVES INFORMATION ABOUT THE NUMBER OF EARNING MEMBERS
IN RELATION TO THE TYPE AND SIZE OF THE FAMILY:

<u>No. of earning members</u>	<u>Joint families</u>	<u>Total members</u>	<u>Nuclear families</u>	<u>Total members.</u>
1	-	-	5	12
2	3	17	18	89
3	3	23	3	15
4	5	42	2	12
5	3	37	-	-
<u>6</u>	9	19	-	-
7	1	9	-	-
TOTAL	17	147	28	128

It was obviously presumed that, because of landlessness and the basic need of daily food, a large majority of all the adult members would be earning members in the family. This is what is exactly revealed in the table. Out of the total number of 275 persons in the sample, as many as 134 have to work on daily wages.

That is about 50 percent of the total members have to work away from the home. The remaining 50 percent are either children or very old persons who can not do any physical work. As we studied all the families in detail we could find out the number of earning members in each family. A typical example of one joint family is such that out of 9 members 7 were earning members. Similarly, out of the 28 nuclear families with average size of 4.6 the earning members were 58 that is 2.1 on an average per family. This situation itself explains the reasons of continued economic and educational backwardness of this section of society.

In traditional Indian Society caste generally determined the occupation of the members consequently, economic condition of the people also in general was correlated with the caste in which people were born. During the British rule, intercaste relations and some of the caste customs and practices went on changing. But caste as an endogamous group remained as rigid as it was in earlier days. Moreover, due to agrarian policies, the upper caste people made progress and they were also benefited from the changing government policies. On the other hand the lower caste people remained economically backward and some of them, because of the loss of traditional means of earning, turned to be agricultural labourers. In Khadaklat village this is clearly seen from, Table No.4.

TABLE NO.4

THE CASTEWISE BREAK-UP OF LANDLESS AGRICULTURE
LABOUR FAMILIES IN KHADAKLAT VILLAGE:

Sr.No.	Caste	Number of families in Khadaklat (Approximate)	Landless agricultural labour families	Percentage (to total families the said caste)
1)	Brahmin	48	Nil	-
2)	Gujar (Shvetambar Jain)	12	Nil	-
3)	Jain	142	Nil	-
4)	Maratha	360	23	6.3
5)	Lingayat	810	11	1.3
6)	Kumbhar	42	Nil	-
7)	Lohar	12	Nil	-
8)	Gurav	35	Nil	-
9)	Nhavi	18	Nil	-
10)	Parit	25	Nil	-
11)	Dhanagar	152	8	5.2
12)	Khatik	4	3	75
13)	Chambhar	72	Nil	-
14)	Dhor	5	5	100
15)	Wadar	46	10	27.7
16)	Koravi	45	Nil	-
17)	Mang	62	22	35.4
18)	Sutar	5	3	60
19)	Mahar	268	58	21.6
20)	Muslim	85	23	27
TOTAL		2238	166	

The table shows the castewise number of total families, landless families and percentages of the landless families to the total families in different castes. There are in all 20 castes in the village and the number of total families is 2238.

The landless agriculture labour families are 166. Their percentage to total families is 7.4. But if we take into consideration the landless families in different castes, there is an enormous variation in this percentage. Brahmins, Gujaratis and Digambar Jains have no landless families at all. Similarly Lingayats, which is supposed to be economically better of caste group, have only 1.3 percent of landless labourer families. Similarly the Maratha caste group has 6.3 percent landless labour families. It may also be noted that those castes who have retained their traditional occupation have not turned to be landless labourers. Some of them like Chambhars, Kumbhars and others do not hold any land but they have not become agricultural labourers, as they self-employment in their own traditional occupations. On the other hand people belonging to Mahar, Mang Khatik and Sutar castes have largely become agricultural labourers. Even among the Muslims, there is sizeable percentage (27%) of families who are landless labourers. The Dhor caste group is a very good example how the loss of traditional occupation has made the living conditions miserable to caste group as a whole. All the families of this caste have become agricultural labourers as there was no other better alternative. Another peculiar example is that of the Sutar Caste. Out of 5 families in the village only 2 could retain their traditional job of carpentry. The other three families had to become labourers. The example of Wadar families is also illustrative in the opposite direction. They do not have their own lands, but they are in demand for their traditional work and hence only 21 percent of their families work as labourers on the farm. In brief it may be

observed that low position in social hierarchy and loss of traditional occupation are the factors responsible to make most of the present landless labourer families to be so.

While taking into consideration various demographic features we have also noted the sex-wise age-wise break-up of the population of the sampled families. This is shown in Table No.5.

TABLE NO. 5

SEX-WISE AND AGE-WISE BREAK UP OF THE POPULATION

Sr. No.	Caste	Total families in the Sample	Adult		Children		Total
			Male	Female	Male	Female	
1.	Lingayat	3	5	5	4	3	17
2.	Maratha	6	10	13	6	5	34
3.	Dhanagar	2	3	4	4	3	14
4.	Sutar	1	1	1	1	2	5
5.	Wadar	3	5	7	5	3	20
6.	Dhor	2	1	4	1	3	9
7.	Mang	6	10	12	10	8	40
8.	Khatik	1	1	1	1	1	4
9.	Mahar	15	30	29	22	17	98
10.	Muslim	6	12	11	6	5	34
TOTAL		45	78	87	60	50	275

It is interesting to note that among the adults there were 78 male members and 87 female members. But among the children, the picture was quite opposite. Male children were 60 and female children were 50. We do not know the exact reason of this declining

number of female children in proportion to male children. But our conjecture is that family planning operations usually take place after at least one male child is born and the married couple generally does not bother about the birth of a female child.

Literacy and education are supposed to be the important factors contributing towards the upward movement of the people in our developing country. Educational backwardness is also correlated with economic backwardness. From this point of view it was necessary to take into consideration the educational level of our respondents. The facts are presented in Table No.6

TABLE NO.6

LEVELS OF EDUCATION AMONG THE RESPONDENTS

Sr. No.	Level of Education	No. of respondents	Percentage to total
1)	Illiterate	23	51.11
2)	Primary	18	40.00
3)	Secondary	4	8.89
TOTAL		45	100.00

Out of 45 respondents as many as 23 are illiterate and 18 can just read and write. It is a well known fact that education motivates the person towards higher aspirations of economic and cultural progress. This is clearly lacking in case of our respondents. We shall see in the next chapter to what extent

there is a change as far as education is concerned in the second or third generations in the families, We have studied. For the present we may just note that the landless labourer respondents are almost uneducated for all practical purposes.

Our study of landless labourers presupposed that the sampled families have major portion of their income from the daily wages earned through working on the farms. We were interested to know the rates of daily wages of the respondents. It may be noted that the present minimum rate of daily wages for unskilled work is more than 25.

Table No.7 shows the rate of daily wages as reported by our respondents.

TABLE NO.7

<u>DAILY WAGES</u>		
<u>Average rate of wages (in Rs.)</u>	<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
10-12	10	22.22
12-15	28	62.23
15-20	5	11.11
20	2	4.44
TOTAL	45	100.00

The table is self explanatory. It shows that a large majority of the respondents earn only about half of the prescribed rate of daily wages. When we consider this alongwith the availability of the work throughout the year we can imagine the condition in which these respondents persist to live. These

facts may also explain why all the adult members well as grown up children also work on daily wages. We have already pointed out that rural agricultural labourers are different in many respects from the organized industrial labourers. The poor economic condition and the exploitation by the landlords is mainly due to the fact that agricultural labourers have so far failed to be organized.

LIVING CONDITIONS

As we know that the sampled families belong to weakest of the weaker sections in the community, we were not much interested in knowing the detailed living conditions of these families. However we wanted to know the housing conditions and the basic amenities like water supply available to the respondents.

Table No. 8 shows a caste-wise picture of the type of houses.

TABLE NO.8
CASTE-WISE HOUSING TYPES

Caste	Pakka House	Kachha House	Hut	Total family	Total members in family
Lingayat	1	2	-	3	17
Maratha	1	3	2	6	34
Dhanagar	-	2	-	2	14
Muslim	-	5	1	6	34
Sutar	-	1	-	1	5
Khatik	-	1	-	1	4
Dhor	-	2	-	2	9
Wadar	-	3	-	3	20
Mang	-	6	-	6	40
Mahar	1	10	4	15	98
	3(6.67)	35(77.78)	7(15.55)	45	275

In this context also it was but expected that the houses in which our respondents could only be of very ordinary type and of poor quality. Only two families of the upper castes have relatively better houses. A large majority has what can be described as kaccha houses that is the houses with mud walls and ordinary roof. Similarly there are 7 families residing in traditional huts. The area covered by the houses of our respondents is also an indicator of poor living conditions. We did not find any houses or the hut with more than two rooms. Again there were only 17 houses having two rooms. All the remaining houses have one single room each. The average area covered by each of the 45 houses observed by us was only about 100-150 Square feet. If we take into consideration the total number of people in the sample, the per capita residential area is just about 20 Square feet. This reveals another aspect of poverty of our respondents, namely the poor condition as regards shelter which is one of the three proverbial basic needs of human beings.

Water is undoubtedly the most fundamental need of every living being scarcity of water is common in many Indian villages even after the planned development of more than forty years. The village of Khadaklat is one of such villages. Only the relatively better off and rich sections of the people have their own private sources of water such as taps, wells or borewells. The government have recently introduced water supply scheme to the village with private as well as common tap connections. It is practically impossible for our sample families to opt for private taps connections. Formerly they were totally dependent upon common wells. The present situation can be seen from Table No.9.

TABLE NO.9

SOURCE OF POTABLE WATER

Source of Water	Respondents	Total members of family	Percentage
Well	3	15	6.67
Common Tap	8	32	17.78
Bore well	9	48	20.00
Common Well and Tap	10	85	22.22
Common Well and bore-well	8	61	17.78
Tap and bore well	7	39	75.55
TOTAL	45	275	100.00

As the table shows our respondents have to depend on more than one source of potable water, especially during the summer season. The water supply from the government scheme becomes very irregular and some times during summer and tap water is available once in three or four days. Our respondents have therefore to fetch water from well belonging to rich farmers.

On the basis of information elicited from the respondents we could roughly calculate the income of each family. For this we used the information regarding (1) rate of daily wages, (2) number of earning members in the family, (3) the approximate number of days on which the work is available.

Table No.10 gives a rough idea of the annual income of the families of our respondent families.

TABLE NO. 10
INCOME OF THE FAMILIES

Total annual income of the family (in Rs.)	Respondents	Total members in family	Percentage
Below 2000	1	1	2.22
2001 - 4000	7	36	15.55
4001 - 6000	17	86	37.78
6001 - 8000	8	43	17.78
8001 -10000	8	50	17.78
Above 10000	4	59	8.89
TOTAL	45	275	100.00

As is clear from the Table the income of each family varies as per the number of earning members in the family. Average per capita annual income is roughly about one thousand in our sample of 45 families. That is the daily per capita income is just Rs. 2 and paise 75. Moreover, it may be noted that more than 50 percent of the families have a per capita annual income of less than Rs.900.

This can give us an idea about the extreme poverty of these families. Moreover this also explains why there is a large extent of indebtedness among these families. All the families use their entire income for day to day basic needs. We did not come across any family which saves money for any considerable period of time. On the other hand as many as 42 families are in constant debt of one type or other. The nature of this borrowing is shown in Table No.11.

TABLE NO. 11

SOURCES OF BORROWING

Borrowing Source	No. of respondent	Percentage to total
Bank only	10	23.80
Money lender only	12	29.58
Friends only	6	14.28
Relatives only	5	11.90
Bank and money lender	2	4.77
Money lender and friends	6	14.28
Friends and relatives	1	2.39
TOTAL	42	100.00

As the table shows, most of the respondents (72%) approach the money lenders, friends or relatives for money at the time of needs. Only about 28% of the respondents have borrowed money from the banks. The interest rates of the private money-lenders are very high and hence the debtors taking money from them become perpetual debtors. This is a reality in case of most of the respondents in our sample.

CONCLUSION:

The foregoing account of the socio-economic conditions of the sampled families is quite enough to show that the landless agricultural labour families in Khadaklat from the lowest section of the Society. They are economically backward. At the same time most of them are from socially backward Strata of the society. Their backwardness in education can be regarded as both the cause and effect of their Socio-economic backwardness. On this background we can proceed to see what types of schemes and programmes and opportunities for development and progress are available to them, to what extent they take advantage of these schemes and the obstacles in their desired development.