

CHAPTER-II
OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION :

Sustainable socio-economic change, including sustainable change in ecosystem qualifies the development, whereas development is a long term perspective phenomenon. Short term adjustments may not bring a qualitative change in respect of human entities like socio-cultural, socio-economic and ecological conditions etc. Development is like mirage and it sometimes makes certain groups rich at the cost of others. The agricultural development aspects such as irrigation, agro-industries, input services, farm technology etc. bring more benefits to the rich rather than to the poor farmers. Poor farmers are really victims of all types of development in agriculture sector.

H.H.Chh. Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur State was the first ruler, to implement modern Green Revolution programmes in Kolhapur region during the early beginning of this century. The region is much indebted to his initiation and innovation in agricultural development. Not only this, but the goal of social equality with economic prosperity was emphasised by him. A few of his followers have eventually contributed and supported the same ideology. So, a socio-economic study is one of interest to the academicians of this region. The social reformers and politicians are also keen about acknowledging and acquiring the socio-economic conditions of the general masses of the region.

Yashavantrao Chavan and Vasantdada Patil, eminent personages of the Maharashtra and great politicians proposed to install agro-industrial co-operative commonwealth in Maharashtra for the welfare of the farmers by establishing co-operative sugar factories. After the success of 'Pravara', a large number of co-operative sugar factories came into existence. Favourable agro-climatic conditions in western region of Maharashtra are/ were responsible for a good recovery in sugar production. Number of input incentives to undertake the sugarcane cultivation have been made available to the farmers of this region. All such incentives have strengthened the confidence and faith in sugar co-operatives as an effective means to uplift the standard of living of the ruralites. Thus rural Maharashtra has attracted a number of researchers to overview the performance impact of sugar factories on the farm, farmers, industrial growth and standard of living etc.

However, sugar industry in Maharashtra is facing a number of obstacles since 1980s. This condition has again attracted all types of researchers to review the financial performance of sugar factories. A number of studies on the financial structure and performance of co-operative sugar factories have been done so far. Of late, the growing sickness of this industry is becoming a serious problem. Although the sickness is because of both natural and man-made factors, the important causes of the sickness are, managerial deficiencies, scanty rainfall, inadequate supply of cane and inadequate transport facilities etc. The economics of the sugarcane cultivation is one of the important obstructions to this industry, because, the farmer community lacks in farm management techniques beginning from plantation of crops to harvesting the cane. The

use of water and inorganic nutrients for the cultivation of sugarcane are responsible to deteriorate the fertility of the soil, and is causing the poor yield of sugarcane. Since the emergence of the salinity problems, a number of agronomical research works have been conducted to keep the cane farm safe. Of late, the issue of agricultural sustainability has become vital, considering the ecosystem which is basically dependent on human resource development of the cane growers. The research to that effect is in progress, but has yet not reached the common farmer and if it reaches, it is hard to precept the knowledge to illiterate farmers. Therefore, agriculture today is not an easy and commandable job of ignorant and illiterate practitioners of agriculture sector.

A good number of research works in the field of (i) the performance impact of sugar co-operatives on the region, (ii) on the member share holders of co-operative sugar factories and (iii) impact on subsidiary activities due to co-operative sugar enterprises and vice-versa have been undertaken in Maharashtra, particularly in Western Maharashtra. There is no need to go into detail of such research work, because that is not the thrust area of this project.

This chapter covers an overview of research work done in respect of farm sector workers. It is also felt unnecessary to exercise on, why migration takes place, what are pull and push factors etc. There is an exhaustive literature on these aspects apart from the studies conducted on farm sector workers in the social science faculty. So, there is no need to cover the push and pull factors of migration. The farm sector workers (particularly cane cutters and bullock cart workers) are seasonally migratory because of the drought at their original places and

because of the remunerative wages at their destinations. This work only refers to the task of trade unions to solve the problems of farm sector workers and to unionise them effectively. A few research works have been done in respect of farm sector workers that are engaged in co-operative sugar factories.

2.2 REVIEW OF SOME RESEARCH WORK DONE :

It was in 1971-72, when rural to rural immigration of cane cutters and bullock cart workers had begun in large numbers to the sugar factory area, during the time an efforts were made to highlight the socio-economic aspect of the workers.

Pathare and Dhongade¹ have undertaken a study to highlight the socio-economic life of the migrant workers, and to identify the agrarian relation in general. The study highlighted on the working conditions, nature of work, hours of work, problems of workers regarding family background wages and exploitations etc. These efforts were made to present a paper at the Annual Conference of Indian Society of Agricultural Economics.

Jan Breman, a scholar of great eminence, specially visited India to study agrarian relation, exploitation, seasonal migration etc. On his first visit to India, he concentrated on the problems of cane cutters and bullock cart workers involved in sugar factories in and around the Bardoli taluka of Gujarat State.² He extended the study of the phenomenon and impact of migratory labour in South Gujarat. He covered both the intra-rural circulation and the seasonal movement of landless labourers and small peasants to industrial employment of a semi-urban nature. According to him, the type of seasonal migration that takes place in sugar

factory's belt, is mostly bound up with the capitalist development of rural production in South Gujarat area i.e. a process in which the organisation of the dominant class of farmers into agricultural co-operatives has played an important part. He had conducted an exhaustive field work covering five sugar factories, members of the factory, cane harvesters and transport workers etc. He narrated the socio-economic life of the workers including the role of mukadamas, recruitment of workers, wages, working conditions, working hours, exploitation etc. But he could not refer to the role of trade union in tackling to their problems, since there no trade unions had entered this field during the period. The role of trade union was limited because of the co-operative organisation of the sugar factories in Maharashtra. However, his study was a victual to the trade union movement's strategies and policies, because he tried to explain in detail the types of exploitations at several levels viz. at mukadama level, at factory level and at farmer level.

Apart from this study, Breman had analysed the 'Patronage and Exploitation', in which he dealt with the relations between different classes of capitalist agriculture and agrarian relations. Although the patronage and exploitation is not related to the context of this present work. In the third part of this book, he referred to mobility and immobility of seasonal migrants, covering impact of the seasonal trek of the migrants on the rural order of the South Gujarat plain. He further dealt in an elementary way with the forces that result in the periodic or permanent expulsion of these workers from the home regions.

At the same time Joy Richards working at Gokhale Institute, Pune was evolved in the area of his interest i.e. the migrant cane cutters and bullock cart workers that migrated from drought area of Maharashtra to Poona, Ahmednagar area, where a good number of sugar co-operatives are localised.

Labour Commissioner, Bombay³ in November 1986 circulated a questionnaire among the private and co-operative sugar factories asking them to furnish socio-economic conditions of seasonal migrants including the wage rates; whether the workers under the level of minimum wage, their total number, service conditions, nature of work etc. The response to this survey was inadequate. Whatever information was collected, however was tabulated and analysed systematically. The report had analysed the nature of work, wages, bonus, travel, gifts etc. Following are the important points explored by this survey :

1) Most of the recruitments were made through contractors. Every contractor and a sugar factory has to seek permission, by obtaining a license to employ or recruit workers according to the Contracts Act. But almost 90 per cent of contractors and 64 per cent of employers have not taken the licenses as per the Act.

2) No provision of holidays, leave facilities were made available to the seasonal workers. However, a few factories have made available the facilities like medical aid, education and loan advances to the workers.

3) Hutatma Kisan Ahir Co-operative Sugar Factory was (and is) the only factory which had paid more than the prevailing wage rates during the period.

Following are the some of the concluding remarks of the Labour Commissioner's report :

- 1) In an industry, where, the number of workers is more than 1000, the minimum wage rules may be applied.
- 2) The essential conditions in respect of Contract Act be followed both by the contractors and sugar factories.
- 3) The hours of work must have to be determined.
- 4) A provision of weekly holidays with salary must be provided to this class of workers.
- 5) Harvesting and transport workers of sugar factories must be brought under the Minimum Wage Act.

Like all other studies, this study did not refer to the role of trade union and the task of unionisation of these workers. The report is informative rather than analytical.

Development Group, Poona⁴ had systematically analysed the information collected by an empirical survey of seasonal migrant workers in sugar factories. This study emphasised on, (1) The estimation of number of workers and bullock carts involved in sugar factories in Maharashtra. (2) Identification of the original places of migrants from where they migrate toward their destinations. (3) The ways and methods of negotiations between the workers and contractors. The negotiations in regard to the recruitment of workers, advances of loans, methods of payment, travel towards destination etc. (4) Further the study emphasised the nature of work, facilities at their destination, income and consumption patterns of the workers etc. (5) The study also covers a survey of mukadamas, etc. the study concluded with the remark, "This study will definitely help

the planners in general and trade unions in particular." Thus, a task has been identified by this study. The role of trade unions is immense even if there is trade unions, and/or if there is no trade unions of harvesting and transport workers.

M. Phil. level research projects have been completed by T.M. Patil⁵ and G.D. Jadhav.⁶ These studies have focused on the role of harvesting and transport workers in sugar factories and their socio-economic life. The survey was limited to one factory only, viz. Bhogawati (Kurukali) and Vasantdada Shetakari (Sangli) respectively. Both the studies emphasised on the nature of work, facilities at destinations and factory's efforts to solve their problems etc. Jadhav's work contains an overview of exhaustive literature on theories of migration, covering both rural to urban migration and rural to rural migration. Patil's work refers to the worker's agitations organised at unit level factory organisation.

One more study was conducted by Mr. Salve in regard to the problems of migrant cane cutters in Kolhapur district.⁷ This work, like all other earlier efforts, emphasised the economic and socio-cultural life routines at their work places. The problems faced by the workers are explained in detail.

D.V. Kasar in his research report⁸ referred to the economic aspects of seasonal migratory farm labourers working with co-operative sugar factories in Pune district. The study stresses the employment and income of seasonal migrant households, wages, work and other related matters of worker's migration etc.⁹

Madhukar Katre, General Secretary of Maharashtra State Sugar Worker's Union explored the problems faced by migrant workers.¹⁰ He referred to what statutory actions are essential for the welfare of this class of workers so as to improve their living standards, why the industry is not accepting this class of workers as employees of sugar industry. Ways and means to minimise the pressure of the problem have been suggested by him. For example, he suggests formulation of a separate statutory law for harvesting and transport workers like the 'Mathadi Kamagar Kayada' in Maharashtra, provision of leave, holidays, retaintion allowance, bonus, re-employment, provident fund scheme and other facilities to workers at their work places.

Three State level conferences of sugar workers viz. at Walwa, Niphad and Paithan have also resolved to concentrate on actions for solving the problems faced by farm sector workers. Need of awakening and preparing for agitations have been appealed to the farm sector workers at these conferences. The details are explained in the corresponding chapters.

Besides some occasional articles, news columns and other information have been published by local leaders frequently in local news papers focusing on the problems of farm sector workers.

Gopal Guru's¹¹ survey concentrated on the problems of factory sector workers and the trade union movement. He also explored to the factuals experienced by the farm sector workers. He felt essential to unite these workers for their benefit. He concluded by saying that, the Government and sugar factories federation should have to take a more

objective view towards the wage structure and should adopt a cardinal guiding principle i.e. region-cum-industry basis of wage fixation.

2.3 CONCLUSIONS :

All the above studies are generally related to the socio-economic conditions of the farm sector workers. This is essential to create an atmosphere to have a trade unions to fight for worker's welfare. Simultaneously, it is also essential to overview the employment conditions, wage rates, minimum wages and removal of exploitation of labour if any. And this is only possible if there is a trade union of their own. The task is vital for a trade union, because these workers are facing a number of obstructions in their life style. It is also a task to unite such workers and form a trade union statutorily because of their migratory nature and seasonal work. Therefore, on both ways i.e. if there is a trade union and if there is no trade union, the task is vital and significant.

This study examines employment and wage conditions of these workers involved in co-operative factories. Like all other studies, a brief account of their socio-economic life has been tried to be identified. A special emphasis has been given to the trade union movement in this labour class. Besides, there is an urgent need to improve the transport efficiency, which is responsible for sugar recovery and remunerative to the workers. Sugar recovery improves the factory's economic conditions vis-a-vis workers that is why, it is inevitable to signify the role of farm sector workers.

Of late the industry is facing number of problems. The co-operators are restless, because of Central Government's policy towards co-operative movement for the Eighth Five Year Plan. The number of sugar factory units are increasing contineously. So, the fate of sugar industry is swinging.

REFERENCES

- 1) Seasonal Migratory Agricultural Labourers at a Co-operative Sugar Factory in Maharashtra, Pathare P.A. and Dhongade M.P., I.J.A.E., Vol. XXVII, No. 4, 1971.
- 2) a) Seasonal Migration and Co-operative Capitalism : Crushing of Cane and of Labour by Sugar Factories of Bardoli, Jan Breman, EPW Special No. Aug., 1978.
 b) Of Peasants, Migrants and Paupers: Rural Labour Circulation and Capitalist Production in West India, Jan Breman, Oxford University Press, 1983.
 c) Patronage and Exploitation, University of California, 1974.
- 3) Labour Commissioner, Bombay's Survey of Seasonal Workers involved in Sugar Factories, 1986.
- 4) Sakhar Udyagatil Asanghatit Mazoor - Madhusudan Sathe, Development Group, Pune.
- 5) The Eco-social Survey of the Seasonally Immigrated Agricultural Labourers in Kolhapur District - T.M. Patil, M.Phil. dissertation (unpublished), Shivaji University, Kolhapur, 1991.
- 6) Shetkari Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana, Sangli Karyakshetratil Uos-Tod Karnarya Kamagaranche Samajik Artik Survekshan (Marathi) G.D.Jadhav M.Phil. Dissertation, Shivaji University, Kolhapur, 1990.
- 7) A Socio-economic Study of Seasonal Migrants in Co-operative Sugar Factories with special reference to Kolhapur District - W.N. Salve, Ph.D. thesis, Shivaji University, Kolhapur (unpublished), 1991.
- 8) Economic Aspects of Seasonal Migratory Farm Labour working with Co-operative Sugar Factories in Pune District, D.V. Kasar, Ph.D. Thesis, M.P.A.U., Rahuri, 1989.

- 9) a) Contribution of Co-operative Factories to the Employment and Income of Seasonal Migrant Labour Households in Maharashtra- Kasar D.V. and Pathak N.N., Bharatiya Sugar, July, 1989.
b) Impact of Sugar Industry on Employment and Income of Seasonal Migratory Farm Households in Maharashtra - Kasar and Tilekar S.N., I.J.A.E., July-sept., 1989.
c) Migrant Labour in Sugar Units - Kasar and Pathak, Financial Express, 6-4-1989.
- 10) Ustod Ani Gadivan Kamagaranchya Samashya - M.K. Katre - Amar Hutatma (Weekly) - 17-3-1991.
- 11) a) The Sugar Workers : The Maharashtra Scenario - Gopal Guru, Economic Times, 30-6-1990.
b) Maharashtraatil Sahakari Sakhar Dhandha Va Sakhar Kamagar Chalval : Ek Abhyas - Gopal Guru - Paper presented at Second State Level Conference of Sugar Workers, 1-2 October, 1989.