CHAPTER VII
Chapter VII

EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES REGARDING AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

1. GOVERNMENT POLICY IN RELATION TO DETERMINATION AND PAYMENT OF WAGES

Government has been very keen throughout in determination of wages of agricultural labourers. It has got a survey made about the condition of agricultural labourers and efforts have been made to improve their conditions in respect of wages. Just as there is a minimum wages act for industrial worker, in the same way minimum wages acts are to be passed for agricultural labourers also in various states. The states, in which such acts have been passed are not paying due attention for the implementation of these acts. The result is that the agricultural labourers whom the act is meant for, are not able to get their benefit.

So far as payment of wages is concerned, these wages are paid either in cash, or kind or partly in cash and partly in kind. U.P. Government has recently introduced a scheme of 'Antyodaya'. According to this scheme the areas where difficulty of commodity is felt payment of wages is made in terms of grains. On account of this method labourers are not feeling the impact of high prices but so far as evaluation of Government Policy, in this respect, is concerned, Government has not made same punishing provision in
those cases where default in payment is made by an employer of agricultural labourer.

Government has also not cared to maintain the statistical record regarding the payment of wages and the default in payment of wages.

2. **RESTRICTION ON MISUSE OF LABOURER**

It is often seen in U.P. and specially in Kanpur district that agricultural labourer is engaged for one purpose, as for ploughing, but he is used for other purposes also. If he does not perform these functions for which he was not appointed, the services may be terminated, and it is also possible that his wages for the period he has worked may not be paid in full. On account of these reasons the life of agricultural labourers is full of worries, and they are highly dis-satisfied. Such behaviour of employer creates a tension in the brain of agricultural labourer which is very harmful for his health. Government has not done any thing to prevent such mis-use of labourers.

3. **BONDED LABOUR**

Bonded labourers refer to such labourers who work without getting any payment and when some remuneration is given to them it is very meagre which is not sufficient for maintaining even the minimum health. The result is that these labourers practically starve and suffer from numerous agonies.

Government has framed a number of provisions for abolition of bonded labourer. Any one who engages bonded labourer has to
undergo punishment. But the fact is that these provisions have no practical value, because there is none to report about such cases to the Government. Even today bonded labourers are found in abundance because, before unemployed agricultural labourers, the main problem is to get the means of livelihood in order to keep their body and soul together. That is why they take up the work even at a negligible remuneration. In addition to these, many labourers are highly indebted and they have to work under the money lenders free of charge. In U.P., bonded labour is a sort of disease which spreading on account of weak economic position of the labourers.

4. **Restrictions on Child Labour**

Agriculture is an industry in which some work can be performed by children. On the basis of survey it is noticed that many children are working either in the houses of the farmers or at their fields. Though there is a factory Act 1948, according to which children, below the age of 14 years, cannot be employed in effect, but no such act has been passed for agriculture, i.e., in agriculture, children below the age of 14 years can work. No doubt, Government officers try that such children should not be engaged, but there is no concrete policy in this respect. The result is that natural growth of the child is restricted. This restriction in growth affects adversely and after becoming adult he is not able to make his mark in his career. The child works from the age of 8 years to 10 years and while doing his work he is scored by his employer, and some times he is punished also. His conscience becomes very weak. Taking work from children is
not only harmful to the children, but it is harmful to the society and the country also.

5. **FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE**

These days a large number of cases are being filed in the court of law, against the agricultural labourers by the money lenders for the recovery of their debts. In these courts a labourer cannot defend his case in a better way, because he has no money to engage a lawyer. Under these circumstances, Government should provide the facility of free legal assistance to such labourers.

In some cases, land belonging to agricultural labourer is occupied by others in an illegal way. Labourer wants that possession of such land should be given to him. He cannot use physical force for this purpose. If he wants to go to the court of law, he has to engage a lawyer, for whom he cannot pay. Therefore, in such cases also free legal assistance should be provided by the Government to the labourers.

Some times employer levies foul charges against those labourers who work under him, with a view to compel them to continue to work under him. On the basis of survey, researcher has come to know that in some villages of Kanpur district false charges of theft, were levies against the labourers and it was not possible for these labourers to defend themselves in the court of law due to shortage of money. There are many such cases in the villages. Government has so far not adopted any concrete step for providing the legal assistance to the agricultural labourers. Though such facility exists in the case of criminal
offences, yet agricultural labourers are not able to avail them-
selves of this facility.

6. **LABOUR WELFARE**

    According to I.L.O. Report the welfare facilities bear
upon the healthy and congenial surroundings for workers to work
more enthusiastically and with more efficiency. These welfare
facilities consist of facilities for daily or any other periodical
get-together of workers, for rest and recreation, to and fro
transportation work, in case ordinary public transport facilities
are inadequate or impracticable, etc. In Kanpur district the
various measures have been designed to provide several welfare
facilities, such as, medical, educational, and recreational
facilities.

7. **FACILITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT OF LABOURERS**

    At present very few facilities for employment of labourers
have been provided by the Government. These facilities are very
meagre while the number of agricultural labourers is too much.
Government has started construction of roads and bridges etc. with
two objects, firstly, it will provide employment to the labourers
and secondly, it will make economic development of rural areas.
No doubt, this is a good step on the part of the Government, yet
a lot is to be done by the Government in this respect. There are
no employment exchanges in rural areas which may guide agricul-
tural labourers in respect of the places where employment facility
exists.
8. **CRITICAL STUDY OF GOVERNMENT POLICY**

No doubt, Government is very keen in making various provisions for the facility of agricultural labourers, but no concrete policies have so far been drawn in the following respects.

i) Determination and payment of wages  
ii) Mis-use of labourers  
iii) Bonded labour  
iv) Child labour  
v) Free legal assistance  
vi) Labour welfare and employment of labour

Many labourers are suffering because, even after working sincerely, wages are not paid to them properly. Bonded labourers are very common today, children are used by the farmers in place of adults for saving the cost of agriculture, but from social point of view it is not good and Government has not done any thing in this respect.

Though there are Blocks and Block Development Officers who provide numerous facilities to farmers, yet nothing substantial has been done in this respect. Government policy, regarding agricultural labourer, is not a fool proof policy.

Gram Panchayats are also not taking active part in developing the standard of agricultural labourers.

No agricultural work can be carried on without the active assistance of agricultural labourer, hence a sound Government Policy in various phases of agricultural labour is the need of ours.