CHAPTER III
Chapter III

LABOUR STRUCTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

Before 19th century, agricultural labourer had no special problem and there was no separate class as 'agricultural labour'. Agricultural work was mostly done by the farmers themselves. Population was less and the land was more. Hence, practically every one was owning the land. But at the end of 19th century, there became a separate class of 'agricultural labourer'.

In the 20th century there became a rapid increase in the number of agricultural labourers. In 1929, total number of agricultural labourers in India was 2 crore 10 lacks. It became 3 crore 30 lacks in 1931, 5 crore 32 lacks in 1971 and 7 crore 50 lacks in 1981. These days due to a great pressure of population on land, an agricultural labourer is playing a very important role in agricultural work. Due to sub-division and fragmentation of holdings, agricultural land has been divided into small pieces, and has also become scattered. This has enhanced the use of the services of agricultural labourers.

2. TYPES OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

Agricultural labourers are of the following three types.
i) **Physical labourer**

Those labourers, who work with their own hands are called physical labourers. They irrigate the land, plough it, sow the seed in it, and do the weeding and harvesting work. These labourers can easily be called manual labourers. Their number in every village of U.P. is very large. These labourers are untrained. Their source of knowledge about doing the agricultural work is only watching others doing various types of agricultural work, and using their own common sense for the same. They mostly belong to backward and scheduled castes. On the basis of survey of some villages of Kanpur district it was found that out of total number of manual labourers, engaged in these villages, 10% belonged to upper classes, and rest were of the lower classes.

ii) **Mechanical labourer**

These days, machines are also used for certain processes of agriculture. For example, tractors are used for ploughing the land. There are machines for harvesting of the crops also. The labourers who drive these machines, or repair them, or perform other allied services related with them, are called mechanical labourers.

iii) **Mental labourer**

In agriculture, field must be ploughed at right time. Ploughing should be done up to a certain fixed date beyond which or earlier than that, it will not give good yield. It should be irrigated at proper time, and the desired quantity of water should be provided. More or less than that will not give good yield.
Seed must be sown at proper time and with proper seed rate. Weeding and harvesting etc. must be done at proper time. Thus, it is clear that the time factor is very important in all the stages of agriculture. For this a farmer has to consult the experienced and old persons in the village. On the advice of these persons, timely operations are performed in agriculture. If wrong advices are given, the yield will not be satisfactory. Hence mental labour plays a very important role in agriculture. Those persons who feel that agricultural work can be done without brain, are wrong, because minor mistake in the time factor in agriculture will decrease the yield.

3. NATURE OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURER

Agricultural labourer is mostly casual because when the work in agriculture becomes heavy temporarily, labourers are employed to cope with this heavy work. When the work is over, their services are terminated. This mostly happens on two occasions. (a) When the agricultural crops are sown, and (b) when the crops are harvested.

There are some farmers who engage agricultural labourers on permanent basis, and utilise their services throughout the year.

Mostly agricultural labourers are uneducated and untrained, but some of them know the agricultural techniques well and therefore, they are better paid, and command respect in the eyes of the employer.

An agricultural labourer lacks mobility, and it is not
possible for these labourers to go outside, because they have a lot of attachment with the area to which they belong. They cannot take any risk, because, in going outside, there are numerous risks. They prefer to work at less salary in the village, rather than to go outside on a bit higher remuneration.

By nature, satisfaction of labourer lies in tensionless life. They are not of fighting nature, nor they prefer to change their employers, unless of course they are compelled to do so. By nature, they are very hard working, sincere and honest. On the basis of survey of Kanpur district, it has been noticed that some of agricultural labourers of this district are dishonest and they do not work sincerely. But on the whole, agricultural labourers in Uttar Pradesh are of very calm and quiet nature.

By nature, they do not form trade unions. There are no trade unions of agricultural labourers in Kanpur district.

4. SOURCES OF SUPPLY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURER

Sources of supply of agricultural labourers are of two types (i) Internal sources, (ii) External sources.

1) Internal sources

Agricultural labourer is available in those areas where agricultural work is carried on. Some times, the labourers who are already employed, suggest their friends and relatives who are not employed as labourer. Hence, the first internal source is the area where agricultural work is done, and the second internal source is exhausting labourers themselves. Third internal source is the relations and friend or acquaintances or land owner himself.
ii) **External sources**

External sources are according to following two points of view.

a) **Area point of view**

b) **Occupation point of view**

(a) From the area point of view, the labourers are recruited from the places which are outside the village, that is, these labourers reside in other villages and even in other districts. On the basis of survey of Kanpur district it has been found that workers of Nepal and Almora are working as agricultural labourers in some villages of Kanpur district.

(b) From the occupation point of view the labourer may be either manual labourer or mechanical labourer. Manual labourer is one who works by his hands, and mechanical labourer is one who drives the agricultural machines, like tractor, thresher, etc. For recruiting these labourers advertisement is made, or they are recruited through employment exchange.

On the basis of survey of Kanpur district, it has been found that most of the agricultural labourers are recruited from internal sources, and very few labourers are recruited from external sources.

5. **APPOINTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURER**

During the period, from ploughing of land to harvest of the crops, there are many agricultural operations which are either done by the man power, or by machines. In case of machines also man power is needed to operate them. Hence, at every step man power is needed, and for that agricultural labourer is employed. This
agricultural labourer is appointed in the following ways.

1) **Appointment by land owner himself**

In general, the land owner finds his own labour to be insufficient for the agricultural work on his field and, therefore, employs his family members and other extra labourers in case of need. In general, already employed labourers, and some other labourers, available in the village, are employed by him. These labourers are employed either on daily wages or partly on feeding and clothing and partly on some money, or some other terms to which the labourers agree.

2) **Appointment through employed labourers**

When the employed labourers are insufficient for the total agricultural work and the additional required labourers are not available to the land owner, the land owner asks his already employed labourers to find out and bring some additional labourers on their own goodwill. The terms and conditions about their payments are settled in the presence of the employed labourers who bring them.

3) **Appointment through friends and relations**

Under the circumstances when the land owner is not able to get the labourers, neither by himself nor through the employed labourers, he requests his friends and relations to help him in this respect. His friends and relations either arrange the whole time workers for him or send their own labourers on some definite terms for his help in agricultural work after finishing their work on the field where they are employed. In this way these labourers earn extra wages by doing extra overtime work.
iv) Appointment through employment exchange

In this method the land owner has to send his requirement for the agricultural labourer to the office of Employment Exchange, where the names and the addresses of persons, who can work as agricultural labourer are maintained. The Employment Officer directs some persons to contact the land owner. The land owner employs them for his work after setting with him the terms and conditions for the payment of the wages.

In U.P. agricultural labourers are neither demanded by land owner from the Employment Exchange, nor their record is maintained by the latter. It is also observed that no person gets himself registered for the agricultural work in the Employment Exchange in Uttar Pradesh.

v) Appointment through advertisement

For the recruitment of desired number of labourers, advertisement may be given in the newspapers. This practice is adopted in the urban areas, but it is not adopted in the rural areas in U.P. There are some cases in which requirement of drivers of tractors, and operators of the agricultural machines is fulfilled through advertisement for manual labour. This practice is not popular in Uttar Pradesh.

vi) Appointment through educational institutions

In the educational institutions where the agricultural sciences are taught to the students, 'Students farms' are maintained for the training of students, where the agricultural labourers are employed. In these institutions many educated persons, who are
not employed any where, are also available on the farms, either employed on daily wages or searching for an employment. Such labourers can be available to the land owner on some terms and conditions, if he goes to the institutions and tries to seek the help of the farm superintendent in this respect.

In these institutions the qualified students are also available for the mental labour required for the agricultural work. This mental labour is utilized by the big farmers who are doing the farming on a large scale on their farms. On these big farms man power is not applied so much as mechanical power.

vii) Appointment by other method

In Kanpur district there are some fixed places where a large number of labourers assemble in the morning for getting some work of any type for the day. These labourers are willing to take up any work, like white washing of the house, cutting of grass and shrubs in any lawn or park, helping a skilled labourer in any work, and agricultural work, etc. If a land owner is not able to get the agricultural labourers by any means, he goes to such places and employs as many labourers as he likes on some settled daily wages.

6. SOCIAL SET UP OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

In U.P. the position of agricultural labourer in the society is very low. Though social status in rural areas is judged by caste system, i.e., Brahmins are more respectable than others, yet if a Brahmin works as an agricultural labourer, his respect goes down in the society. Now-a-days the basis of social set-up is the possession of money. Any person, who has more money, is respected in the
society irrespective of the caste to which he belongs.

Even in the marriages of the sons and daughters of an agricultural labourer there are numerous social difficulties. Since the wages of these labourers are very low, it becomes difficult for them to perform all social functions on a normal basis. Agricultural work is supposed to be a menial job in the society. It has now itself become a separate caste, which has been demarcated as labour class in the rural areas.

7. CRITICAL STUDY

In U.P. the position of agricultural labourers is not satisfactory. The methods of recruitment are highly defective. Many of them are forced to work, because either they are uneducated or they are weak, and there is none to succeed them. Though the efforts have been made by the Government to educate people of rural areas also, even then the agricultural labourers are illiterate on account of their weak financial position. They cannot afford to send their children to school. On the other hand they try to get their children engaged for earning money. Though the small children get only three or four rupees per day, yet, this amount is acceptable to them on account of its bad need.

There is no facility for giving any training to agricultural labourer. Though minimum wages for agricultural labourer have been fixed in U.P., yet its implementation has not been properly done.

When they fall sick, they are on the mercy of the nature, as there is no proper arrangement for any medical treatment.
On the basis of survey of Kanpur district, it has been noted that the life of agricultural labourer is very miserable and all the disadvantages mentioned above are true. Thus the agricultural labourer in Kanpur district, and Uttar Pradesh in general, is a victim of numerous evils.
Table 3.1: Area and population of schedule caste and schedule tribes of Kanpur Dehat and Kanpur City.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Area (000 Sq. km)</th>
<th>Schedule Caste &amp; Schedule Tribe Total</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kanpur Dehat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>5170.00</td>
<td>287002</td>
<td>151982</td>
<td>135020</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>5162.00</td>
<td>349274</td>
<td>189020</td>
<td>160254</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>5136.55</td>
<td>429269</td>
<td>233326</td>
<td>195943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kanpur City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1040.30</td>
<td>192324</td>
<td>108516</td>
<td>83908</td>
</tr>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>1048.70</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>1039.50</td>
<td>311419</td>
<td>171317</td>
<td>104102</td>
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</table>

Source: Division of Economics and Statistics, State Planning Institute, U.P., Lucknow.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Kanpur Dehat</th>
<th>Kanpur City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>335456</td>
<td>61670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>102563</td>
<td>28428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Animal husbandry forestry and plantation.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mines</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Family Industry</td>
<td>10151</td>
<td>19210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Non family industry</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Business commerce</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>59099</td>
<td>433560</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Total workers</td>
<td>507269</td>
<td>542772</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>13384</td>
<td>1574</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>520653</td>
<td>544352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source**: Division of Economics and Statistics, State Planning Institute, U.P., Lucknow.
Table 3.3 - Number of operational holdings and operational area (1980-81) in Kanpur district and U.P.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Kanpur district</th>
<th>Uttar Pradesh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of holding</td>
<td>Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Marginal</td>
<td>2,85,761</td>
<td>108147</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Below 1 ha)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Small</td>
<td>76,359</td>
<td>98700</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1-2 ha)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Semi-medium</td>
<td>41,099</td>
<td>11198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2-4 ha)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Medium</td>
<td>14,882</td>
<td>78376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4-10 ha)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Large</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>13332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10 ha &amp; above)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,18,613</td>
<td>409753</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Agricultural Statistics - 1988, CSA University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur.