CHAPTER-8

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The main conclusion that arises from the foregoing analysis is that "the landless labourers play a very important and crucial role in the agricultural economy of Raipur and Chandrapur district. Inspite of the introduction of technology in agriculture especially the use of modern agricultural machinery and implements, agricultural operations cannot be completed without them. The availability of labour is a major constraint in the agricultural land use and cropping pattern. The quality and quantity of labour available at the periods of peak labour demand has a great influence on the decision making process of the farmers. Inspite of urbanization and industrialization, there is a regular growth of the landless labourers and agriculture provides employment to most of them. Seasonal unemployment is a conspicuous feature of the agricultural sector and this compell them to migrate outside their villages to nearby villages or to some town or city in search of job.

The author has made extensive use of primary data which was drawn from a comprehensive survey of 850 households in Raipur and Chandrapur district with the help of a questionnaire during 2002. In the foregoing chapters we have tried to analyse our data to test the hypothesis that we have set before us while undertaking this work.

Both district has good climatic conditions, vast reservoir of surface and ground waters and fertile soils which have favoured agricultural development.

The result was that this district made rapid strides in agriculture. High growth rates were recorded in agricultural output and productivity. So in such an agriculturally advanced district it was thought worthwhile to examine the role of landless labourers in the agricultural economy.
The researcher has sampled 850 households in which nearly 6,410 persons live. The survey result indicated that the heads of the households were males having big families (6-10 members), mostly belonging to schedule and backward castes and most of them were uneducated. They did not give importance to the education of children. They cook food on kanda. They thought that one of the surest way to gain social status in the society was through higher income and education. Most of them prefer going to private doctors for treatment. Their houses are poorly served by kaccha roads. They are aware of the Anti-Poverty Programme because few of them have been benefited by this programme. Most of them are aware of the Family Planning Programme but they were not implementing it because of illiteracy and poverty. They are of the opinion that children are the gift of God and more the number of children more will be the helping hands in supplementing their income. They are not aware of the Minimum Wage Act because the wage rates are fixed even below the current rates of wages. Since they are illiterate they cannot fight for their rights.

The following general conclusions may be drawn from the study:

1. The number of landless labourers is large and growing rapidly in Raipur and Chandrapur district. There has been an increase of 276.6 percent in the number of landless labourers during the last thirty years. This tremendous increase is the result of-
   (a) rapid growth of population during the last thirty years (68.7 percent) increase.
   (b) Rapid decline in the number of workers engaged in household industries (-87.1 percent) and in other occupations (-29.3 percent).
   (c) Fragmentation of holdings has rendered many holdings to become very small and uneconomic.
(d) Rise in the cost of agricultural inputs. (e) Increase in the number of intermediaries.

2. Agriculture provides employment to almost three-quarters and the bulk of the addition to the total labour force will continue to be absorbed in the agricultural sector in the study area. But it was observed that-

(a) employment opportunities in the agricultural sector tended on the whole to large behind the increasing number of labour force.

(b) There is heavy dependence on the agricultural sector which ha resulted in underemployment and constant migration of landless labourers in search of better employment.

(c) Male, female, children all work in the agricultural sector. They do the work of harvesting, weeding, irrigating, threshing, transplantation, sowing, applying manures, interculture, winnowing and preparing the fields.

(d) From the type of work these labourers do, it is evident that they are not occupied for the whole year.

(e) On an average, a labourer gets work in the agricultural sector for 131.2 days in a year; Male labour is employed for 161.4 days while female labour employed for 101.1 days.

(f) The wage rates in the agricultural sector for 131.2 days in a year. Male labour is employed for 161.4 days while female labour employed for 101.1 days.

(g) The wage rates in the agricultural sector are low. Average wage rate for male labourer is Rs.27 per day and for female it is just Rs.15 per day. Wage rates are high during rabi season (ranging between Rs.30-25 per day for males and Rs.15 to 20 for females) (g) There are variations in wage rates
for different cropping seasons, for different agricultural operations and for male and female labourers.

3. The growth of employment in the non-agricultural sector in the study area is a result of distress phenomena of unemployed agricultural labourers who are forced to undertake non-farm work either inside the villages or as daily commuters to nearby city area or as seasonal migrants to some far off urban centres.

(a) Inside the villages they work as loaders, rag-pickers, basket makers, constructional workers, in match industry, pot makers and weavers. They work for 8 to 10 hours and get an average, employment for 30 to 50 days in a year. Male labourers get employment for 51 to 70 days while female labourers for 30 to 50 days. Wage rates are higher than the agricultural sector. It varies between Rs.20 to Rs.35 per day. There is difference in male and female wage rates. Most of the males get Rs.30 to 35 per day while most of the females get Rs.20 to 25 per day.

(b) Daily commuters are mostly male labourers. They migrate from distance of 5 to 30 kilometres to Raipur city. They do the work of baildari, in different factories, brick making, glass making and repairing. They work for 8 to 10 hours and get employment for 20 to 50 days in a year. The wage rates are higher being Rs.35 to 50 per day.

(c) There are more seasonal migrants than the daily commuters. Unemployment and poverty have pushed them outside their villages. It is their relatives living in the city, better employment opportunities and higher wages which pull them to the city. They work baildars, in glass factories and in sarya mills. They
work for 8 to 100 hours and get employment for 51 to 60 days per year. Wage rates were higher. It ranged between Rs.30 to Rs.50 per day. Inspite of higher wages it is not always that they get employment all the year round or they are making good income in the city but the conditions are not better than the villages but are worse.

4. Women labourers play an important role in the agricultural and allied activities in the study area but they are paid much less both in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. The reasons are:
   (a) the technology change, in particular mechanisation, woman workers are displaced because technology is not sex-neutral.
   (b) Male and female workers often work in segmented markets. Female labourers are required only for certain agricultural operations
   (c) On the demand side, there is social (male) prejudice which results in the employer assuming the existence of sex differences in performance and/or they could be a deliberate bias against woman workers for whatever reasons.
   (d) On supply side, there may be imperfections and bottlenecks, women may be less mobile, their domestic responsibilities may restrict them to seek jobs within a limited geographic area.
   (e) Women workers of the backward classes suffer from a double discrimination both being women and belonging to discriminated or low castes.

5. The children of the landless labourers are also doing work in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors to supplement the meagre income of their parents-
   (a) In the agricultural sector, they work for mostly 10 hours a
Male children get employment for 101 to 200 days and female children for less than 100 days per year. They are involved in operations like peeling, transplantation, crying of cattle, weeding and sowing etc. Their wage rates being Rs.15 for male and Rs.10 for female per day.

(b) In the non-agricultural sector, they work in pot making, brick making, lock factories, basket making, tailoring, repairing, construction, carpet industry, servicing, rickshaw pulling and rag picking. On an average, they are earning Rs.13 per day. Male child labourers get wage of Rs.26 per day while females are paid just half of male child labourers.

6. The major source of income of the landless labour households was from the agricultural sector (56.3 percent) and partly from the non-agricultural sector (30.5 percent) and from their children's income (13.2 percent). The annual income of nearly half of the sampled landless labourers (45.3 percent) households was Rs.17,500 and another 21.6 percent had income ranging between Rs.17,501 to 18,500. There were few households (15.8 percent) which had a handsome income of Rs.20,500. The average annual per capita income was Rs.2,444. The major share of family budget (68.6 percent) was spent on food and clothing followed by social ceremonets (5.2 percent) and education (3.2 percent). Most of the landless labour households (81.8 percent) were under debt. The debt was mainly taken from professional money-lenders, cooperative credit societies, landlords, relatives and friends. They are mainly taking debt at exorbitant rate at 60/100/year. The few assets which these landless labourers have include kaccha
houses, animals (like buffaloes, cows, sheep, goats and pigs), small agricultural implements (like Khurpi, darati and phawra).

The basic hypothesis that the landless labourers played an important role in the agricultural economy of the study area was further assessed by assessing their involvement in season-wise and crop-wise operations, in various agricultural operations, in farms of different sizes, after the introduction of new agricultural technology and in various livestock operations.

8.1 Role of Landless Labourers in Season-Wise and Cropwise Operations

Kharif season lasts for nearly four and a half months in the study area. On an average, the landless labourer is employed for 52.9 days during this season. Male labourer works for 68.3 days while the female works for 37.5 days. The farmers decision regarding the sowing of arhar, matze and sugarcane still depends on the availability of labour. The rabi season lasts for five and a half months. During this season the landless labourer is employed for 71.2 days. Male labourers work for 82.7 days and female labour is again crucial at that time of sowing and harvesting of wheat, potato and peas crops. This shows the crucial role played by the landless labourers during the kharif and rabi seasons. The farmers decision regarding the cropping pattern still depends on the availability of labour.

8.2 Role of Landless Labourers in Various Agricultural Operations

On an average, a landless labourer is employed for 131.2 days per year in the agricultural sector. The male labour is employed for 161.4 days while the female labour is employed for 101.1 days. Out of
the total male labour days (161.4 days), 33.2 days are devoted to
harvesting, 28.7 days to weeding, 22 days to sowing and 18.3 days to
irrigating fields. Out of total female labour days, 35.4 days are employed
in harvesting 19.6 days in weeding, 14 days in interculture and 10 days
in sowing. This shows that operations like harvesting, weeding, sowing,
irrigating the field cannot be completed without the help of landless
labourers. Farmers especially, large and medium, fully depend on them
for successful and timely completion of agricultural operations.

8.3 Role of Landless Labourers in Farms of Different Sizes

The demands for labour is determined by the size of the farm. Several factors influence the decision making process of the farmers in
the selection of crops grown by them. Large farmers were the most
affected by the availability of labour followed by medium and semi­
medium farmers. The large farmers need labour for most of the agri­
cultural operations and thee is a heavy reliance on them. The semi­
medium and small farmers are poor, socially and economically backward
having small holdings. So, most of the agricultural operations on their
farms are done by family members.

8.4 Role of Landless Labourers After the Interlocution of
New Agricultural Technology

Inspite of the introduction of new agricultural technology espe­
cially agricultural implements and machinery, many farm scientists had
thought that the role of landless labourers would decline but till now we
have seen that their involvement in agricultural operations, in farms of
different sizes especially is on large and medium is still very crucial and
important. The number of days of employment have increased due to
multicroping. The bumper harvest requires bumper of hands to handle
and mange it.
8.5 Role of Landless Labourers in Various Livestock Operations

The role of landless labourers in the livestock operations is in no way lesser than in the agricultural sector. They are indispensable. On an average, the labour is employed for 68.6 days per year in various livestock operations. Male labour is absorbed in feeding (14.8 days), bringing fodder (11.1 days), Chaff cutting (8.3 days). Females also play significant role in feeding (18.5 days), milking (16.3 days) and bringing fodder (15.7 days). Female labourers have greater role than male labourers in all operations. They remain in the villages to look after them properly.

Although the landless labourers have played an important and significant role in the agricultural economy of Raipur and Chandrapur district, still the problem of unemployment and underemployment exists. Rural living in India is still like a flying on a many plane. If the single engine shuts off due to malfunctioning or a bird hit, the high flier hurdles down to crash into a dead heap. Droughts and floods do the same. Plop, he falls into an ocean of huger and debt from which rescue is most difficult.

The analysis presented in earlier chapter has a number of far reaching implications for the formulation of appropriate policies related to the improvement in the economic and social conditions of the landless labourers, towards increasing the rural employment potential in both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors, towards creation of jobs in the village itself, towards creation of better employment environment for women and towards abolition of child labour.

1. The first policy suggested is towards increasing the rural employment potential in agricultural and allied sectors: Improvement in
The agricultural sector must be brought about by a consolidation of holdings, the spread of irrigation, the use of better seeds, fertilizers and other inputs, better transport and marketing facilities, double and multi-cropping and the development of the rural tertiary sectors together with a large reduction in indebtedness and an increase in productivity of landless labourers will provide employment to them all the year round. Livestock production is another area which is free from the constraint of limited land resource and which can help most of the landless labourers to improve their economic conditions. Cross breeding of indigenous cross cows supported by a programme of improving fodder and concentrates can lead to a doubling of milk production. Piggery is another important activity which may provide employment to them. Swingles generate higher income and has small period of gestation. Loans should be provided by banks for much animals especially for buffaloes for the sale of milk.

2. The second policy suggested is regarding the allocation of manpower in non-agricultural sector: It should be based on capital extensive and labour intensive technology. The landless labourers have to be provided financial support and technical assistance at subsidized rates to operate dairy, poultry, piggery etc.

3. The third policy has to be made to facilitate employment to the surplus and seasonal landless labour force in their own villages only: Its solution lies in the overall development through the rural works programme to create off farm employment. The rural work programme has a vital contribution to make both towards relief of unemployment and underemployment and assuring of minimum earnings and towards acceleration of the pace of agricultural and rural development.
4. The fourth policy has to be made for the improvement of working conditions of woman landless labourers: Under traditional agricultural production, women's skills and tools might be upgraded. Women might be trained in male typed tasks and operations. Minimum Wage Regulations should be strictly enforced. There might be labour counselling and informal unions for female wage labour. Particular attention should be paid to the non-farm opportunities, animal husbandry, collection and processing of grasses, shrubs and minor forest products and the processing and utilization of agricultural by-products (straw, bran, husks, leves etc.).

5. Fifth policy is suggested for the removal of children from working in hazardous occupations and to create conditions to gradually eliminate all child labour together: Eradication of the problem, at the present stage of economic development is not feasible; what is required therefore is to make the working conditions of child labourers better until we are in position to gradually eliminate the evil totally. Regular medical check-ups must be done at all work sites. Generally, schools should be made attractive in terms of properly qualified and committed teachers with the required infrastructure and economic assistance in terms of books, uniforms and mid-day meals. Voluntary organizations must go to the villages and make their parents aware not to force their children in labour market.

The sum up, amelioration of the lot of the landless labourers who form the bulk of the rural poor and the rural weak through integrated rural development programmes adopting an area approach, intensification of agriculture including animal husbandry, poultry, piggery, forestry etc.,
development of rural crafts and small industries, effective and meaningful land reforms, use of the vast human resources i.e., the landless labourers by providing gainful and stable employment on massive development of land and water resources and organising the landless labourers on healthy lines seems to be the only palatable answers suited to the study area. The task is seemingly difficult mainly due to the enormity of its size but certainly, it is not beyond realms of realization. Once a determined effort is made and it will surely pay rich dividends in not too distant a future.