CHAPTER IV
EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Economic growth in all countries has generally been associated with a decrease in the population of labour force engaged in agriculture. The picture in India, however, appears entirely different. The proportion of population dependent on agriculture has been incessantly enlarging with every successive Five Year Plan and gradual growth in industrialisation.

Table 4.1

Growth of Agricultural labour in India
Anantapur and Satya Sai Taluk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All India</th>
<th>Andhra Pradesh</th>
<th>Anantapur</th>
<th>S.S.T.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>30219000</td>
<td>9249000</td>
<td>4373000</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>45095000</td>
<td>13384000</td>
<td>6264000</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>51859250</td>
<td>15391600</td>
<td>8291642</td>
<td>17185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>59638138</td>
<td>17700340</td>
<td>9369556</td>
<td>19763</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Population Census Tables and Taluk records
Undoubtedly there is a definite progress in industrialisation and yet for the millions of people born in rural areas there is no escape from an agricultural career. While industries are selective and attract roughly the number of persons who can find accommodation, agriculture starts with too many hands; neither selection nor rejection is possible for where would the dejected go? Agriculture thus fills the thankless role of acting as the population Insurance system, always supplying labour for industrial jobs and always accommodating and providing shelter for the refugees expelled from urban occupations. The lack of Industrialisation, tremendous growth of rural and agriculture population, decline in the area of cultivation per capita, the increase in the number of non-earning dependents, the defective pattern of land utilisation and decline and decay in traditional industries and village crafts and the structure disequilibrium at the factor level has obviously brought about a chronic and difficult phenomena of unemployment and underemployment.

The problem of employment has three aspects viz., (a) the problem of unemployment (b) problem of underemployment and (c) the problem of disguised unemployment.
According to the International standards
the term employment connotes "all persons above a
specified age who are at work for pay and profit or
on own account during a specified period". It includes
those who are with a job but not at work due to illness,
injury, dispute or bad weather. The term unemployment
on the other hand comprises "all persons above a
specified age who were in categories of workers but
without a job and were seeking work for pay or profit.

The term under-employment refers to the
"difference but where the amount of work performed by
persons in employment and the amount of work which they
would normally be able to perform. Under employment
is said to be visible when the persons employed are in
a position to put in supplementary labour because they
are working for less than normal hours and are in search
of the additional work of full time employment".\(^1\)

Under employment has also been termed as
disguised unemployment and refers to the quality of
supplementing labour which can be contributed by those

\(^1\) Eighth ILO Conference 1955 p. 42-44
ILO
with a job requiring lesser efficiency and professional skill than that they possess and which gives them lower equating, and who are seeking or willing to accept a job providing them normal conditions of employment. The invisible underemployment has been defined as "that in which the job do not permit of full use of their capacities and skill and keep their earnings abnormally low". The potential unemployment refers to "the economic units whose productivity is abnormally low". It may be described as "the amount of labour that can be released from land without reducing the total output by more fundamental changes".  

Another and most important aspect of underemployment in India is that of seasonal unemployment. Employment in agriculture in India has its peak and slack seasons. Peak seasons are there of sowing and harvesting; there are seasons where when unemployment is almost non-existent; but for a major part of the year they are generally unemployed or self employed. They are continuously in search of a job.

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2. Ibid
FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT:

The extent of employment generally depends on the extent of self-employment resources, age and sex of labour, the periodicity of labour needs a self-employed occupation and employment status of the labourer.

The permanent labourers are generally employed for one year on contract basis, therefore their employment period is longer compared with the casual labourers where opportunities for employment are determined by the seasonal needs for hired labour which itself depends on the vagaries of monsoons.

It is a common knowledge that agriculture in India still remains to be a gamble. Any day the hail storm, excess or deficiency of rains, plant diseases or pests may sweep away all the labour and capital invested in the fields. In all these circumstances along with the cultivator, the worst sufferer is the casual labourers.

The problem of living is still more difficult for marginal farmers who possess some land. They are restricted from taking up wage paid employment and are
not able to eke out their living. In the Rayalaseema region, where farming in the absence of water resources is a great problem, the marginal farmers face utmost difficulty and sufferings. In fact their position is worse than that of the landless agricultural labour. The agricultural labour during the slack season can leave the village and seek work elsewhere. But these marginal farmers so attached to their lands, the very nature of the agricultural enterprise is such that it requires constant presence even during the off season. Same is the case with those who have to tend their own cattle. Such self employed persons are often not fully employed and yet seldom wholly free.

Age and sex are also important factors, old persons, women and children are unable to go to other places for seeking work unless accompanied by some young man. Further, the jonal customs and status also sometimes prevent the woman from reverting to wage paid employment.

EMPLOYMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR:

The position of employment is different with regard to attached and casual labour.
ATTACHED WORKERS OR PERMANENT WORKERS:

The attached worker is either a yearly paid worker or monthly paid worker. He is employed either on yearly basis or seasonal basis or on monthly basis. He has therefore, security of employment to a certain extent. The days of his agricultural employment are certainly more than those of the casual job seekers.

The employment of attached male and female workers in Satya Sai Taluk is shown in the following table.

Table 4.2

Employment (Agriculture) of attached male and female workers in Satya Sai Taluk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of employment</th>
<th>Number of workers</th>
<th>Days of employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half yearly</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal employment</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are 14,900 land holders in Satya Sai taluk of which 503 land holders have land above 25 acres. They employ permanent labour to help them in field activities, but not all of them provide employment for the whole year. Most of them prefer to keep the whole time servant for the busy season or at the most for six months. There are hardly 92 job holders possessing land above 50 acres who employ whole-time servant. It has been found that out of total agricultural labourer force 17,185; 1563 persons are in permanent employment at the time of this survey. Of total 1563, 865 of them are employed for a period of one year, 164 are employed for season and 65 for six months period. 1094 are males and 409 are females out of total 1563 permanent workers. The big land lords generally prefer to employ small boys and girls as permanent labourers, who attend to their household work and grazing of the cattle. They are paid very meagerly. 46 of such boys and 23 of such girls were found to be in employment at the time of this survey. The permanent male labour has his major work in the field while the permanent females has labour in addition to the work in the fields attend to the cattle, cleaning the cattle sheds and several other household duties.
CASUAL LABOUR:

The casual workers are those who are employed on daily wage basis or weekly basis. As long as work is in hand, they are employed. For rest of the time they are either in non-agricultural employment or in self-employment, failing which they remain unemployed. There are total 15,622 casual workers of which 7,498 are males and 8,123 or 52% are females. The casual workers have no security or certainty of employment. Many villages in Satya Sai Taluk are in the interior where non-agricultural jobs are very few and therefore the workers mainly depend on finding work in agriculture. They can not afford to displease their employer and are ready at the call of the employer to accept the job offered. The employer has an upper hand and takes full advantage of the helplessness of this class of labour.

The major portion of Satya Sai Taluk comes under the rain shadow. Therefore it is dry for the major portion of the year. Hence the work in agriculture is also limited for the days when sowing or reaping is done. In an average the casual male worker gets employment for 178 days in a year, casual female worker gets employment for 152 days. The children get employment on an average for 242 days in a year.
Among the agricultural labourers the persons belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe have a higher proportion. Their proportion is higher among the casual workers compared to attached workers. Another interesting feature is that even among the casual agricultural workers, the workers belonging to scheduled tribes get employment for more number of days compared to other castes. The total days of employment in respect of casual male and female in agriculture is given in the following table.

Table 4.3
Agricultural Employment of Casual male and female workers in Satya Sai Taluk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Category</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Day of employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7,498</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8,124</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,864</strong></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agriculture in India is a seasonal occupation. As such agriculture does not provide employment to either types of labour, throughout the year. As a result, agricultural labourers have to seek employment in non-agricultural work. In a remote place like Satya Sai Taluk, which is not yet recognised for development purpose, the opportunities for non-agricultural work is limited. The volume of non-agricultural work available for attached male is limited to 44 days and female attached labour have no opportunities of non-agricultural work. The investigation into the avenue of self employment shows that the scope for self employment is very little.

From the above table it is also very clear that self-employment opportunities are more for female workers both casual as well as attached, which goes up to 48 days for casual female and 35 days for attached female. Casual male workers and attached male workers have equal facilities of non-agricultural work and secure it for 44 days in a year. Self employment of attached male is more which is 32 days than casual male which is limited to 26 days in a year.
UNEMPLOYMENT OF CASUAL AND ATTACHED LABOUR

As already mentioned earlier agricultural workers do not get work on a regular basis. To a large extent they remain unemployed or underemployed. Attached labourers who are also known as 'contract labourers' who are attached to particular landowners do get work on permanent basis and for longer periods compared to casual labourers. But the number of such labourer is comparatively small and they too have their own difficulties and problems. For example they are severely exploited by land owners. They have to render bonded labour. Their wages are very low. They are not even free to work under any other land owner.

From the point of view of employment the position of casual workers is perhaps the worst. And it is these workers whose number is very large. The employment and unemployment days of casual labour is shown in the table 4.4.

Both casual male and female are unemployed for nearly four months in a year. Even among this, unemployment casual female labour is more than casual male labour
The village Puttaparthy which is the taluk headquarters has the ashram of Sri Satya Sai Baba wherein the construction work activities go on throughout the year. The workers belonging to Puttaparthy and the surrounding villages in the area of about 10 K.M. have therefore the opportunities of non-agricultural work. The workers belonging to other villages do not have such opportunities. They seek work in the forest, road construction etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>71.7 %</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>62.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agriculture</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17.7 %</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10.4 %</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total days of employment</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>67.9 %</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>66.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days of employment</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>32.1 %</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>33.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leaving the workers belonging to Puttaparthy and surrounding villages, the opportunities for non-agricultural work is about 48 days in a year. The workers belonging to Puttaparthy and surrounding villages get non-agricultural employment for 168 days for male in a year and 48 days for female workers. In other villages the non-agricultural employment is estimated to be 48 days for male and 57 days for female. The total days of non-agricultural self employment for casual and attached male and female labour is shown below.

Table 4.5

Non-agricultural and Self-employment of attached and casual male and female labour in Satya Sai Taluk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of employment</th>
<th>Casual Labour</th>
<th>Attached Labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agriculture</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not only these casual workers are inadequately employed, but also their working conditions are very bad. The work under the most tyring circumstances. They have to work hard in sun and rain. They have no fixed working hours. There is no provision for holidays or other facilities which inturn affect their efficiency, health and life very adversely.

Unemployment in agriculture is not a feature of the region alone but it is to be found in all Asian and third world countries where subsidiary occupations and cottage industries have not been developed to provide work to the agriculture workers during off seasons. Infact in some of the South African countries the problem is greater than India. In Burma, the agriculture labour is employed for about 7 months. 3

In Ceylon the peasants are generally unemployed for about 4 months. 4 The same situation is to be found in phillipines, Siam and other countries. Even in China, peasants are hard pressed. In the words of Tawney

3. J. Russel Ardus: Burmese Economic Life 'Stand ford' p. 263
"Chinese peasants are constantly on the brink of actual destitution. They are saved partly by their own ingenuity and fortitude and partly by communism, by reducing their consumption of necessities and thus using up the physical capital". 5

UNDER EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE:

Mr. Chiang Hsich observes "Agricultural production may absorb the total labour supply of the community but with the same amount of capital, with the same institutional framework and with the same size of land holding it may be possible that by raising the intensity of work per hour, by improving the organisation of work and by introducing single labour farming devices requiring little or no net addition in capital outlay a number of workers could be released indicates the degree of disguised under-employment prevailing in the community in question". 6

It is with this criteria it can be said that the agriculture labour too suffer from underemployment.

5. Chiang Hsich: "Under employment in Asia? p.703
6. Ibid p.704
It would be wrong to say that they were fully employed when the investigation shows that they do seek self employment. Due to excessive pressure of population, the available employment which admittedly inadequate is shared, as in the case of land among too many claimants. Arthur Lewis during 50's estimated that some 20 M people were unemployed in India.

It was difficult for us to estimate the underemployment. However, it needs to evidence to show that the seriousness of potential under-employment in agriculture today has reached enormous proportions.

REMEDIAL MEASURES:

The remedy of the problem of unemployment can be found in two directions. 1) Increase in resources and their employment providing capacities and 2) re-organisation of the economic sector in a manner that facilitate the withdrawal of the surplus population without affecting production. This can be done by using more capital to

replace human labour and by enlarging the size of farms and creating opportunities to absorb the workers thus released.

The Government of India and the State government have already taken steps in this direction but the best use of the government help has to be made to see that the fruits of the developmental efforts reach every nook and corner of the country and thus the doors of the real needy.

Another remedy of the problem is in creating the seasonal cottage industries in rural areas which may offer jobs to needy people during the slack seasons. Example set by Japan in this regard is worth emulating.