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From the Desk of Chief Editor...

*This volume has the following features. **First**, it covers the regional diversity as it represents northern region (Delhi), central region (Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh) and eastern region of India. **Second**, it caters the academic diversity by addressing the issues of Education, Health, Food & social Security, Tourism and Portrayal of Women in Indian TV Advertisements from the social science stream. **Third**, it also enhances the academic coverage by including paper on Fish Fauna Diversity from the natural science stream.*

Generous and timely contributions from the authors are greatly appreciated for regular publication of this journal which is fully financed by the autonomous cell of the college with the sole aim of enhancing research environment in the country.

Food and Social Security of Agricultural Labourers Some Observations From Chhattisgarh

Krishna Nandan Prasad*

“I look before me a deep dark world, a world writing in anguish.

A world caged and cabined.

By narrow, dark and empty cells, I need Food, I need Life,

I need Light, I need Strength, I need Health, Bright Long Life and Delight”.

-Rabindra Nath Tagore’s exemplary work –

Ebar Phirao More.

Abstract

The century-old suppression, dejection and exploitation have made the life of agriculture labourers much more vulnerable, more deplorable. They undoubtedly constitute the highest share amongst “Have-nots” who have been pushed to the margin of the receiving end in the Production Relations since time immemorial. A few who controls the means of production, get the lion’s share, while the masses is left out with the least for mere survival. Keeping this in mind, the topic entitled “food and social security of agricultural labourers of western Rim Land of Chhattisgarh” has been taken up for investigation. The study is based on primary data generated through structured questionnaires from the field work in 2010.

The study reveals that agricultural labourers barely fill their bellies with rice and Chatni. They are unfed and so malnourished in lack of nutritious diet. It is also noted that the agricultural labourers have abandoned the traditional health care system of Baiga-Gunia and Vaid-Hakim. But have been trapped by the most popularly known Bengali Doctors (the RMPs) n there. A minimal health premium of Rs. 50 per month shows their deplorable social security. A meager amount of Rs. 200 as monthly pension as old-age security is a farce. 60 per cent of them possess Kachcha house, while 23.85 per cent live in wear-and-tear mud wall and husk thatched house. All facts and figures ostensibly indicate that food and social security of agricultural labourers is not secured. They are living a sub-human life which is full of misery in place of a charming music.

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Introduction

Human labour is the most important creator of produced wealth in the society. Although, it is a means of production, it plays a vital role by activating all other means of production. That's why, in the Marxian world view, it is considered as "the sole creator of value and surplus value --- the source of capital accumulation and expansion in the level of production" (Gill, 1997:601). But, ironically they are the most depressed ones. Even then, their role has been immense in the society. Mahatma Gandhi had once said-"I consider labour to be a powerful unifying agent. It is a great equalizer."

India is the largest democracy in the world. It ranks second after China with a population of 108 millions. The two are termed respectively as '**Dragon**' and '**Elephant**' in the rising international economy. In India, there were 40 million workers in 2001; and the work participation rate was 39.1 per cent. Out of that more than half (58.2 per cent) are "cultivators" and "agricultural labourers". And the degree of inequality between the two categories exists mainly due to different resource endowments, and previous levels of economic development. However, this shows a predominance of primary economic activities in this tropical region of the world where the two categories seem to be inseparable from each other. The two are very close to each other.

This is clearly reflected in a minimal gap of hardly 5 per cent point between the two; the respective figure is 31.7 and 26.5 per cent. In other words, this amply demonstrates that there is one agricultural labourer out of four workers in India, who, being landless or possessing a small piece of economically unviable land, are destitute of all other means of production. Hence, his life is full of misery in lack of dismal food-clothing-housing, primary necessities of life, on the one hand, and minimal amenities and facilities, on the other. This situation is not because of under- development, but it is very much imbedded in the system of capitalistic economy in which a few rich thrive over the million poor. That's why, there is an irony, that "wealth and poverty have been increasing in the advanced countries simultaneously", remarks K.R.Narayan (1997:1). It, therefore, does not surprise many, when it is said that the incidence, intensity and inequality of poverty among the agricultural labourers have been alarmingly increasing in the third world countries including India. **Himanshu** (2005:395) observes that "incidence of poverty is the highest among the agricultural labourers."

It is a paradox that such a rich country should have so many poor people living in it. They are unskilled, illiterate manual workers who work on daily basis. That's why, they have been included in the unorganized sector of economy. According to the Census of India, 1991, "Agricultural workers constitute by far the largest segment in the unorganized sector and their number was 74.6 million". The situation would get further accentuated, if approximately 50 per cent out of 110.7 million cultivators belonging to small and marginal farmers are also included in list of agricultural labourers.

Mahapatra (2006:1) views that, "a third of rural households constitute landless labour households which depend completely on wage employment" and "Another 60 per cent rural households is comprised of marginal and small farmers who do not generate sufficient income from their land and supplement their agriculture with outside jobs or wage employment." Since, these farmers possess utterly deficit, small and uneconomic holdings and get very low yield, are forced to work on the land of others in their spare time or in times of difficulties to supplement their meager income. **Document (2003:46)** notes that "Agricultural labourers are the most exploited and suppressed part of the rural poor."

Gill (1997:603) explains the nature of exploitation being carried out in the rural areas in these words, "In some region of the country, --- there is considerable degree of capitalist penetration in agriculture and dominant mode of exploitation of labour is through wage employment. But there also exists pre-capitalist mode of production which is characterized as semi-feudal mode of production."

The process of Globalization, Liberalization and Privatization, conceived and designed to benefit and enrich the national and multi-national companies at the cost of the poor, would further perpetuate the sufferings of the poor and of the agriculture labourers, in particular, by strengthening the "**vicious circle of poverty**", a thesis widely discussed and debated as development theory put forward by **Gunnar Myrdal** who has also discussed labour utilization in- and out-side traditional agriculture.

In 1999-2000, percentage of agricultural households was 42.52 per cent in Bihar, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 34.29 per cent. Chhattisgarh, the youngest state of India, born on 1st November 2000, was carved out of the eastern part of Madhya Pradesh. It is a tribal state inhabited by 31.80 per cent Scheduled Tribes. Another scheduled

population, the Scheduled Castes also constitutes a sizable share of 11.61 per cent in the total population. The state's high proportion of agriculture labourers finds its roots in traditionally exploitative mechanism of the scheduled population which has been, by and large, landless and has been forced to work as **farm labour** in the feudal system of economy. Even after 6 decades of independence of India, pathetic conditions of agriculture labourers has not registered any significant change in lack of desired structural change in the political and economic systems. Despite that, the share of agriculture labourers has recorded a phenomenal growth of 93.80 per cent in case of Korea district during the last decade (1991-2001), and is closely followed by Surguja and Bastar districts where agriculture labourers have grown by more than 75 per cent., "A high population density and abundance of labour will favour labour-intensive forms of production such as the cultivation of paddy-rice" (**Knowels and Wareing, 1976:132**). That's why, this Plain has got its nickname the "**Rice Bowl of Central India**."

In such a situation, their bargaining power reduces immensely. Being placed at the receiving end, they are not in a position of bargain. Their power of bargain has been virtually grabbed by the money lenders, landlords, and commission agents. It is, therefore, rightly remarked, "No wonder, the agricultural labour is the most exploited class of people of India". **Mahapatra (2006: 1)** has also revealed a few similar characteristics from Orissa, when he says that "Rural labour households and agricultural labourers households are characterized by low earning, decline in income, low consumption and high debt".

On the perpetuating deplorable conditions of the poor in the Indian sub-continent, which are clearly reflected in their characteristics, the observation of **Professor Aijazuddin Ahmad** is remarkable, when he opines that "In India, the problem of squalor, health and habitation are overwhelming and the political regimes in power have little to offer to the marginalized masses" (**2009: 14**).

The agricultural labourers trace their roots in the *origin and growth of private property*. Differential resource endowments and previous levels of economic development created inequality in material development and social change over time and space. A few became masters who took away the lion's share of production and left a little for the masses. **Karl Marx**, in the post half of the 19th century, had rightly viewed

that “Development is not the growth of capital only, but is also of social change with qualitative distribution”. **H.C.Rieger** views that “Economic growth is an integral part of socio-economic change.” **Palmer** (1977) more clearly states that “Human development comes first than economic development.”

Richard Hartshorne opines that “Concept of development should be taken in reference to human society of any region. It should not be development, but it should be regional development”, as it takes into account of each and every aspect of the region. It is the **Holistic Concept of Development**. In its absence, misery of the masses would reign. The agricultural labourers have played a vital role in the production. Now, the time is ripe for overall development of this section of the society, so that a real transformation of the Indian society- socially, culturally, economically and politically- is achieved.

Objectives

Any study is carried out having some aims objectives that act as a centre-stage around which the whole thesis is developed. It is widely discussed in the statement of the problem. Even then it needs its listing to make the things pinpointed. By doing so, one gets another benefit in formulating some desired hypothesis. To keep this in mind, the following objective has been set at this juncture -

- To evaluate the role of welfare schemes in achieving the vital issues like food security, social security, safe shelter, and a secured future , particularly in case of the agricultural labourers who form the toiling masses of the Indian society.

Data Base and Methodology

This study is based on both the primary and secondary sources of data. Secondary data have been collected from the Census of India, 2001 and the District Statistical Handbooks, Rajnandgaon and Kabirdham districts. It has been used to understand some of the aspects like district-wise distribution, Concentration and growth of agricultural labourers. Here, the *choropleth cartographic technique* has been used to depict the spatial patterns related to distribution of agricultural labourers and their growth over a period of time. Advance quantitative techniques like *zero order correlation*, *multiple correlation*, *regression* and *factor analysis* have been applied to decipher the degree and direction of

relationship agricultural labourers have with other socio-economic and demographic variables.

Primary data have been generated through structured questionnaires at the agricultural household level to understand the ground reality pertaining to the household income level and its various sources; female work participation rate and their contribution in the household income; consumption level of amenities and facilities like housing (its type, room density, septic/dry latrines in the house), operation of saving bank accounts, and insurance- cover; food consumption pattern; incidence of illness; and indebtedness.

To achieve this objective, stratified random sampling method has been evoked. To have more samples, two villages from all the developmental blocks of the study area have been randomly chosen considering the accessibility in mind. This will also help in getting spatial patterns of various aspects of agricultural labourers while traversing from one end to another. Two villages from each developmental block have taken for a total coverage of the study area. At the second stage, 15 agricultural labourers' households from each village have been randomly chosen, but care has been taken to cover both types of households- landless and with little land almost on parity basis in terms of many a characteristics.

Review of Literature

Unorganized Labour* by L. Mishra (1999)** - This work throws light upon the ever-lasting agonies of the deprived and exploited teeming millions of India's population called "Unorganized Workers***" in economic parlance. These workers include small & marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers, fishermen, leather workers and salt workers. The work is based on tertiary and secondary sources of data along with keen field observations and rich experiences gained during the Participatory Organizational activities of different parts of the country, as has been claimed.

The work deals with the issues like rural indebtedness and bondage (e.g. **Halis** from western, middle and eastern India), great suffering of contract labourers and their journey to bondage (e.g. from eastern U.P. and Bihar to Punjab and Haryana), low wages paid throughout the country across the States and regions, and their employment-underemployment- unemployment situations in the form of short notes, but in a succinct manner. The author also critically examines the government's plans and policies and

related labour laws which have not benefited the poor. Henceforth, the role of NGOs is sought. A strong conscientious process among the have-nots to get them rid off the vortex of poverty and the vicious circle of exploitation is the need of the time. It is advocated that *Top-down Approach* should be replaced by *Bottom-up Approach*.

Labour in Unorganized Sector by Damodar Panda (1999) – This book takes up the issues of incidence of labour in unorganized sector, the operational parameters and ameliorative measures. The first part contains 5 chapters namely Introduction, profile of Labour, unorganized Employments, profile of unorganized Labour and existential Pattern in the Study Area- Orissa. One finds definitions of agricultural labourers, their distributional patterns at district and block levels, inter-state migration of unorganized labourers, bonded labour, child labour, wages, working hours, literacy level among the labourers, the caste and sex composition of the unorganized labourers, etc.

The second part is devoted to rules and regulations related to agricultural wage rates and earnings, legal conditions of work and living, and various social security and welfare measures in effective in case of unorganized workers in different mining and factory acts, but that again excludes agricultural labourers. And therefore, the author deals with the ameliorative measures suggested and sought by numerous national committees, international conventions, central and state governments which are also reflected in a number of policies and programmes related to the unorganized labour force. There are as many as 11 tables as supplement for factual data.

Indian Labour Conference Conclusions: C. S. K. Singh (Ed.) 1998 -

This work is a compilation and analysis of Indian Labour Conferences' (from 1st to 33rd) decision and recommendations on the vital issues like industrial truce, industrial relations, trade unions, wage, dearness allowances and bonus, welfare, social security, workers' education and training, their participation in management, I L O Conventions and Recommendations, and Labour under New Economic Policy, contract and unorganized labour(i.e. child labour, women labour and domestic servants) all in a conclusive manner. It is useful in understanding an exhaustive thoughts and its translation into various reports regarding the welfare and social security of the organized Indian workers. It contains a

long list of 26 Appendices pertaining to summary of a conference, any scheme for industrial workers, report of a committee, etc.

Labour in Informal Sector by Fazal Ahmad (1999)-

The book entitled “Labour in Informal Sector” focuses its attention on the precarious life style, poor socio-economic and health conditions, exploitative nature of the industry in the form of more hours of work and low wages with no facility despite the Bidi and Cigar Act, 1966, and finally apathetic government officials’ attitude in extending and enforcing Minimum Wages Act, 1948. The study drawing primary data from 250 respondents of Patna Town, Bihar using Purposive Sampling Methods, spreads over 9 chapters including Introductory and Conclusion. It contains 70 tables mostly having information on various aspects of Bidi workers collected during the field work through questionnaires. The study takes up the case of more than 4 million Bidi workers of the country who form an important segment of the highly neglected informal sectors in the country.

Development with Dignity by Amit Bhaduri (2005)

This work is a conceptual one. It theoretically discusses the success and fall of market, interaction between the polity and the economy citing various references, and defining issues of development with dignity. It seeks for **Alternative Development** based on participatory democracy ensuring social consumption and social production which would use ‘insurance scheme like system’ by enhancing greater participation, greater accountability and greater transparency. It asks the government to come out from “**Can’t Do IT**” syndrome, and urges to adopt a new policy of Public Finance— “Employment First, with Growth as the Outcome” by abandoning its old policy of — “Growth First, and Full Employment Later”. The author strongly advocates that ‘**development with dignity**’ is not a utopia; it can also be achieved in the Indian context by providing full employment.

Women Development in India by Lalit Latta (2005)

Women Development in India is a statistical profile which has been presented in a tabular form that contains latest data and statistical information regarding status of women, which

have been compiled from the Census of India, Selected Educational Statistics, Employment Review, Crime in India, India Nutrition Profile, Manpower Profile in India, Women Profile, and so on. One can easily understand the macro level inter-state comparative picture of demographic, educational, labour force participation, nutritional status, crime, participation in decision-making process, and progress under different developmental programmes related to women in India. The work is in a compilation form in 49 tables.

Sukhpal Singh“Survival of Agricultural Labourers in Punjab: A Burning Question” has presented his short but touching commentary on the worsening conditions of the oppressed and exploited dalit agricultural labourers in Punjab, who constitute about one-third of the state population, the highest among the states of India. It also seems to be the first state in India where ratio of suicides committed by the farmers and agricultural labourers in Bhatinda and Sangrur districts in 2008 was 3:2. The agricultural labourers demanding for more wages, homestead and more number of working days under NREGA were mercilessly beaten up by the state police and were put into the lock-ups. The large farmers of Ferozpur district have not only reduced the fixed wages of agricultural labourers for paddy plantation from Rs. 1000 per acre, but have also arbitrarily warned other farmers against the payment of higher wages; those not abiding it would be fined a sum of Rs. 5000. All these include the total absence of any semblance of protection or security for agricultural labourers.

Study Area

The study area includes adjoining districts of Rajnandgaon and Kabirdham situated on the western undulating *Rim Land (Singh, 1971:736)* of the Chhattisgarh plain (**Fig.1**). It is southern part of the Maikal Mountains. This area is characterized by hills and forests on the northern and southern flanks which is inhabited by the tribes and thereby falls amongst the *poorly developed and problematic region*” of Chhattisgarh (Chauhan and Singh). But the eastern part is endowed with fertile soil in the central plain heavily populated by non-tribal population. Thus, the study area may be taken as a **proto-type** of

the state in terms of its shape and size, and physical and cultural settings in a geographical context.

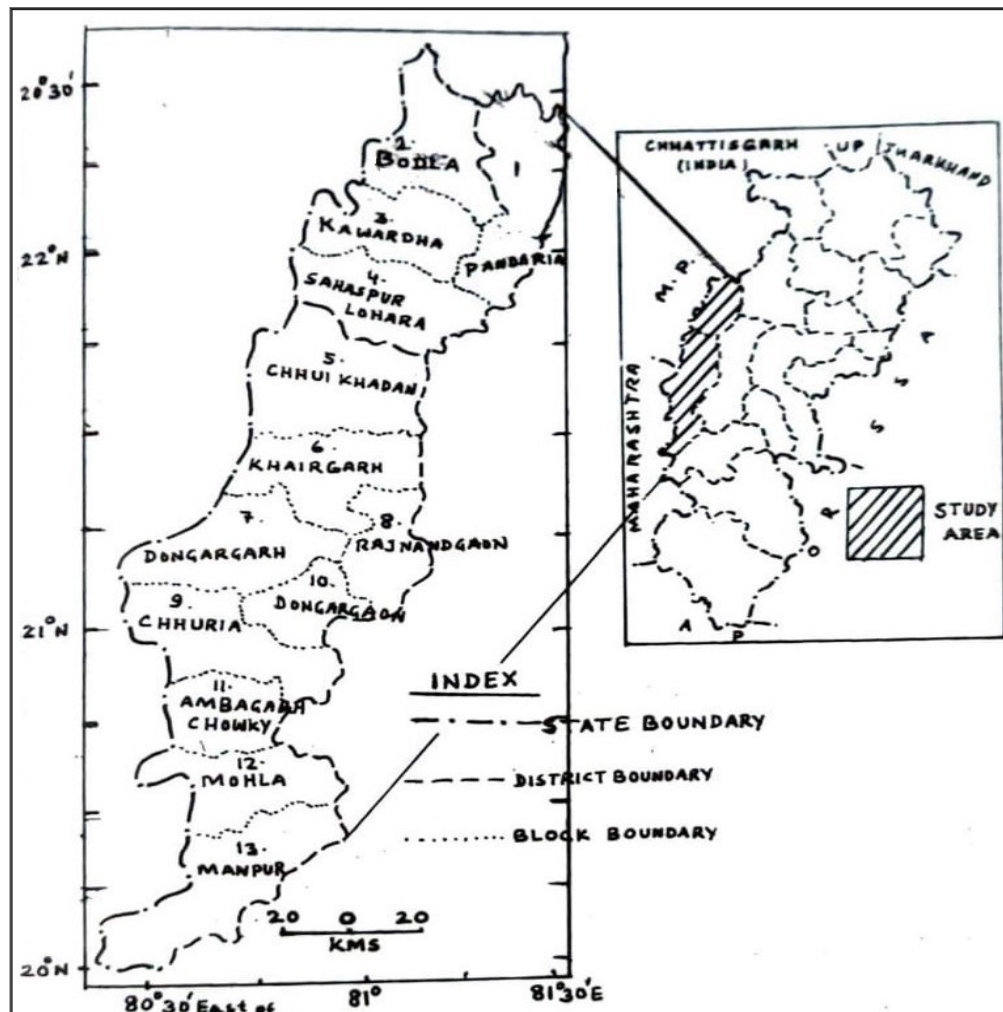


Fig.1 Study Area: Rajnandgaon-Kabirdham District, Chhattisgarh

Both the districts, formerly part of Durg district, record more than 30 per cent growth in agriculture labourers between 1991 and 2001; the actual figure comes to be 36.36 and 31.40 per cent for Rajnandgaon and Kabirdham districts respectively. This growth rate is much higher as compared to the growth rate of population. This considerably high growth in agriculture labourers may be due to their natural growth only, or also due to the structural shift of small and marginal farmers in the process of on-going process of pauperization noticed in the third world countries.

Interpretation

The issues of Food and Social security of the agricultural labourers cover a lot of areas which are essential for human existence. Some of the most important are Food Security, Health Security, Security of Safe Shelter, Security of Pension in Old-Age, Security of Minimum Work Guarantee, Security of Minimum Wage, and Security from Forced Out-Migration. In this chapter, a modest attempt has been made to gather Public Opinion on these issues from the stakeholders itself, i.e. the agricultural labourers to have a better understanding of the existing ground situation in case of Chhattisgarh State through this field study.

Food Security

Food provides all the required elements like carbohydrates, protein, minerals, and vitamins for the growth and sustenance of human body. That is why, there has been a concept of **Nutritious Food** that includes not only cereals (rice, bread, maize, etc.), but also green vegetables, milk and its products, oil, sugar, fruits, eggs, fish, mutton, etc. They barely fill their bellies with rice and Chatni. They are unfed and so malnourished in lack of nutritious diet.

Health Security

The study reveals that the economically and socially weakest section of the rural society, i.e. the agricultural labourers, has abandoned the traditional health care system of Baiga-Gunia and Vaid-Hakim. This old system has been replaced by allopathic system. But its

Table 1 Preference To Health Care System By Agricultural labourers, 2010

S.No.	Types	Nos.	%-age of Households
01.	Baiga-Gunia	5	1.28
02.	Vaid-Hakim	16	4.10
03.	Bengali Doctors	228	58.46
04.	Homeopathic	4	1.03
05.	Govt. Allopathic Health Centres	144	36.93
	All	390	100.00

Source: Based on primary data.

crudest Avtaar is in the form of so-called trained Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs) who are most popularly known as **Bengali Doctors** in the rural areas. They have medical clinics which boards clearly read the name **Bengali Dawakhana**. These clinics have come up like mushroom growth in almost all the medium and large villages. **Table 1**

shows that about 60 per cent agricultural labourers have reported their first preference to Bengali Dispensary in case of any kind of illness. The Management Funda behind this great success of these new Neem-Hakims is their quick and cheap treatment at the door step. They take care of their patients by regular visits. Though they have their clinics in particular villages, they keep on moving like a **Mobile health care Van** in the rural areas. The only serious objection to these RMPs is this that most of them carry fake degrees. So, in many a cases, they seem to prove the proverb- “**Neem Hakim, Khatre Jaan**”. Had they been properly trained and developed professional skills, they would have emulated the **Chinese Bare-Foot Doctors** giving their best in the rural China.

Govt.-run Health Centres (HC), Primary Health Centres (PHC), Community Health Centres (CHC), and District Hospital have attracted as high as 36.93 per cent agricultural labourers as their first choice of treatment in case they get sick. Thus, these centres have succeeded in fulfilling the obligations of the Welfare State to a great extent. Despite that, govt.-run health centres lack desired professional attitude of their doctors, nurses, compounders on the one hand, and well developed infra-structure of buildings, patients-bed, life saving medicines, and well conditioned mobile-cum-emergency vans on the other hand. The Chhattisgarh Govt. has started giving short term medical training to those willing to work in the rural areas as health workers. There is also a provision of Free Health Kit to every such worker. Had it been successful, health care delivery system in the remote far-off rural villages of Chhattisgarh would be much better.

The author had participated in a three-day programme on “Discovery of Medicinal Plants in Dondi Lohara, 2009 organized by Chhattisgarh Vigyan Sabha, Raipur. It was an awareness programme about the herbal plants available in the area. It attracted teachers from all levels - school to university, social workers, local Ayurved Practioners, and botanists. After the collection of various samples in the form of roots, shoots, leaves, flowers and bark, a full-day live presentation, discussion and queries enlightened the participants. What is important to note is many local Ayurvedic Practioners shared their views on the identification, preservation and wishful use of these plants. The author had the opinion that govt. should pick up such health Practioners, should give more training, should help those through cash or kind or both to make them capable of establishing their own private health centres. This would not only strengthen much appreciated Alternate

and cheaper Ayurvedic health care system, but would also be able to give better health to man at the bottom of the society in order to achieve social justice.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is a new concept. It has come up as a more lucrative service in the developed countries. It is, in fact, a product of the capitalistic economy where a person has to pay in cash for each and every service. Since, India is a fast developing economy, and has adopted the policy of globalization, liberalization and privatization; health sector has also attracted foreign direct investment as Health Insurance. Keeping this in mind, head of the family from agricultural labourers were explained and asked about the monthly health premium they can pay for all sorts of treatment in case of illness. **Table 2** presents some relevant facts at this juncture. It is important to note that a very large number of respondents have reported the payment of Rs. 50 per month towards the health premium. This is the modal value which is followed by the next higher group of Rs. 60. The frequency distribution of remaining values of insurance premium at regular interval is very unevenly distributed.

Table 2: Response to Payment of Monthly Health Insurance

Premium from the Agricultural Labourer Households, 2010

Monthly Premium (Rs.)	Respondents	
	Nos.	%-age
10	13	3.33
20	14	3.59
30	15	3.85
40	19	4.87
50	87	22.31
60	30	7.69
70	22	5.64
80	15	3.85
90	6	1.54
100	9	2.31
No Response	161	41.28
All	390	100.00

Source: Based on primary data.

Old-Age Pension

Pension to workers after the prescribed age of work has been made a rule in the organized sector of the economy, where it is provided by the employers on the last pay received from the employers. This scheme has not been in vogue for the workers of the

unorganized sector, as there is neither fixed employer and nor fixed payment of wage. So, this is now left to the govt. in a **Welfare State like India**. Trade Unions like AIAWU and CITU in the leadership of the Left Parties waged a long battle towards the implementation of old-age pension in the rural areas. The resultant effect was launching of this scheme by various State Govt. to benefit the poor families that included the agricultural labourers, too. This scheme is also in effect in both the districts of the study area-Rajnandgaon and Kabirdham.

Survey 2010 brings out the fact that 43 labourer families do receive old-age pension. A many more who have crossed 60 years of age, have not been included in this scheme. This is because of seer delaying tactics of the officials so as to get some undue benefit from the beneficiaries. Another remarkable fact is the meager amount of Rs. 200 given as monthly pension. It is surprising to note that the govt. is gaining popularity of its social concerns by paying such a little amount which proves like ‘a drop of water in the hot desert’. Survey 2010 had a question as to ‘what amount do you expect as old-age pension from the state govt.’? It was a naïve answer having not a little bit of greed, and full of hesitation, as the modal value of the respondents comes to only Rs. 600 per month, Where as our leaders in Parliament and State Assembly shamelessly demand for exceptionally high pension only after a tenure of 5 years. **Table 6.3** presents some more data regarding frequency distribution of respondents’ demand for old age pension.

Table 3 Expected Old-Age Pension by Agricultural Labourers, 2010

Amount (Rs.)	Respondents	
	Nos.	%-age
300	25	6.41
400	30	7.69
500	79	20.26
600	88	22.56
700	22	5.64
800	46	11.79
900	28	7.18
1000	72	18.45

Source: Based on primary data.

The second largest value is reportedly Rs. 500. So, in general, the people at the lowest level think of Rs. 500 to 600 as monthly old-age pension at the moment, that would fulfill their basic need of survival, i.e. security of food at least Chatni-Bhat and Langoti in their

old-age when they become non-workers. This expectation goes up to Rs. 1000 and even more from the modal value. However, it lacks any clear-cut trend. Despite that, the third group of about one-fifth respondents expect as high as Rs. 1000 as old-age family pension.

After a persistent demand to enhance the amount of old-age pension in view of the rising prices of all essential commodities, the Chhattisgarh Govt. has taken a positive step in this direction, and has announced to increase this amount to Rs. 500 from 1st April, 2011. This is a welcome step that would also benefit agricultural labourers in their old age, when they won't be fit to work in the fields. In fact, this pension scheme should be linked with National Price Index for its automatic revision.

Safe Shelter

It is expectedly noted that none of the surveyed agricultural labourer families is shelter less, while this has become a chronic problem in the metropolitan cities; a sizable proportion spends their valuable part of life on the pavements, bus stands and railway stations in the paucity of home. The agricultural labourers face some different problems of housing. About 60 per cent (232 out of 390) have reported that they possess Kachcha house made up of mud wall and husk thatched roof that causes oozing of water after a year or two, as it is badly damaged by high speed gales during the pre-monsoon transitional period of weather. Secondly, it easily catches fire and gets destroyed; and also causes loss of property and some times human life. They would get rid of this perennial problem, if they get Safe Shelter in the form of pucca house.

Another problem is wear-tear condition of their houses. This has been reported by 23.85 per cent households (93 out of 390). Most of them have said that they reside in quite unsafe houses which would collapse at any time. Such houses are neither safe from natural forces nor from the point of social security. The agricultural labourers need immediate help from govt. and non-govt. agencies for safer shelter. Programme of Safe Shelter for BPL Families has been started in many states. The Central Govt. is also providing two rooms built pucca house in for shelter less in the rural areas that has benefited a lot of families in other states. Now, effect of this scheme is also being felt in Chhattisgarh.

Wage Expected from Farmers

Agricultural labourers have had a long association with farmers since the origin of settled agriculture and private property. During the **Jajmani System**, they used to receive wage in the form of kind that used to be decided by the farmers. It observed a structural shift in the era of market economy; now it is paid in cash. It has also witnessed an element of bargaining from the workers side which was lacking completely earlier. It is observed that “More than a thousand years ago, **Sukracharya** laid down important and salutary rules for good labour relationship in these words, “The best servant was he who did not desert his employer when the employer was in trouble, and excellent employer was he who prepared to sacrifice even his life for his servant”. He further notes that “Before the dawn of industrial revolution in the country in the late 19th century,...the agricultural labourers though unorganized had patrimonial or patron-client relation with employers for their security and welfare” (**Panda**, 1999:15).

Survey 2010 exhibits some remarkable facts regarding farm labourers expectation of wage from the farmers (**Table 4**).

Table 4: Expected Wage from the Farmers, 2010

S Nos.	Expected wage(Rs @day	Respondents	
		Nos.	%-age
01.	50	10	2.56
02.	60	30	7.68
03.	70	58	14.88
04.	80	173	44.36
05.	90	29	7.44
06.	100	90	23.08
All		390	100.00

Source: based on primary data.

It is noted that not a single agricultural labourer respondent has reported that he expects less than Rs. 50 as per day wage. The lowest wage Rs. 50 is aspired by only a handful of them. Their share gradually increases to 7.68 and 14.88 per cent respectively for Rs. 60 and 70. Thereafter, it abruptly rises to 44.36 per cent respondents demand Rs. 80 as per day wage.

This clearly means that about half of the respondents want at least Rs. 80 per day. Another large group of 33.08 per cent put their wage demand to Rs. 100, as much as they get from the govt. under MNREGA. Here, they forget that farmers can not be equated

with the govt. as most of the medium farmers are not in a situation to give such a high wage. This has resulted in mass migration of agricultural labourers from the state of Chhattisgarh as other **Bimaru States** just after the agriculture work is over.

The other problem is of working hours which are clearly not defined. This causes a prolonged working hours that create agony amongst the agricultural labourers, which can be easily understood from a **Malwa Couplet** from **Halis of Delanpore**:

**“I go in Darkness.
I return in Darkness.
My whole life is full of Darkness.
There is no ray of Light.”**

L. Mishra (1999:23) after D. Bandyopadhyay.

Shiela Bhalla , an eminent economist at CES, JNU views that “while on the labour supply side, existing agricultural workers must be absorbed increasingly in productive non-farm jobs. On the production side, the rate of growth of farm output has got to be pushed up continuously”. Although, labour productivity in non-farm activity has increased from 1.5 in 1951 to 4.0 in 1997, it has not fulfilled the expectations of agricultural labourers. So, this has to be further increased so that a stronger gravitational field is created to check out-migration of this group.

Agrawal provides **two suggestions** to improve the agriculture sector in order to boost its growth for bringing more prosperity in the rural areas such as **more investment in rural development**; and **development of agriculture and its diversification**. **Cottage Industries are Labour-Intensive**. If it is developed, it would be beneficial for the agricultural labourers in the following ways:

- **It would provide work for the landless and poorly landed families.**
- **It does not need high level of skill.**
- **It is often seasonal in nature; and so with proper scheduling,**
- **It may help in reducing unemployment and under-employment among those engaged in agriculture.**
- **It easily attracts rural women labour.**
- **It can create high Forward and Backward Production**

Linkages between Agriculture and Industries.

If this suggestion is implemented, the sole dependence of agricultural labourers of Chhattisgarh on farm wage would also get reduced as has been noted by **Chattopadhyay**

(2001:569) in case of West Bengal, “Though agricultural wage labour is the dominant mode, it can be seen that allied agricultural activities occupy a larger portion of their time and contribute more to household economy”. Until unless, they get food and social security, their life is devoid of music, when the Whole Universe is full of Music:

**‘The murmuring of the River,
The chirping of the Birds,
The rustling of the Wind through the leaves of the trees,
The sighing of the Ocean Waves’**

All soothing sounds of Music are exhilarating, but is it a meaningful music to the people whose bellies are empty, who are suffering from ill-health in lack of proper food and medicines. The answer is negative. Need of Labour Union for Agricultural Labourers: Labour Union is directly beneficial for the workers and indirectly for the employers, as physically and mentally healthy workers free from personal and family agony and tension would prove more innovative and productive. It goes against the employers only when labourers are ruthlessly exploited; and neither get due wage nor receive any proper amenity and facility. On the need for Labour Organization, **Mishra** (1999:86) views that “Labour Organization is a quest for Life and Hope. It is a powerful conveyor of the quest of millions for their survival’. Agricultural Labourers from a total of 38 villages, comprising 27 of Mansa district, 7 of Sangrur district and 4 of Bhatinda district launched a prolonged struggle for homestead land- at least 5 Marla (150 Yards) residential plot to every rural poor family as promised earlier by the Punjab Govt. and jobs under the NREGA.

CPI –ML (Liberation) put the following demands for agricultural labourers in Punjab:-

- Minimum Wage Rates - Jobs under NREGA,
- (To be revised time to time). - Health Care Insurance,
- Minimum Land for House, - Education of Children,
- Subsidy to build House, - 8-Hour Work,
- Easy Loan to build a House, - Weekend Holiday.

Food Movement since 1959 by **Bhartiya Khet Majdoor Union** (2009:4) demands the followings:-

- i. NREGA – 200 Days Work & Rs. 150 Wage per Day. Control on Corruption there.
- ii. Indira Awas – Rs. 1 Lac for a Pucca House.
- iii. Old –age Pension – Rs. 1000 monthly from the age of 58 yrs.
 - Constitute Khet Majdoor Welfare Board in Each State.
 - Central Act for the Khet Majdoor.

iv. Minimum Wage Act - Revision.

v. Food Security - 35 kg. of rice per month per family at the rate of Re. 1 per kg.

Organizing the agricultural labourers for better wages and working conditions has been the traditional emphasis of the working class leadership. One can't deny the fact that class struggle/ agitational politics provides new vision to the society. "in Indian situation, this has been articulated by Late Shankar Guha Neogi and his comrades with the slogan of Struggle and Construction" (Gill, 1997:607). It is widely felt that "AIAWU must expand the agriculture workers movement by undertaking spontaneous struggles at local level on class issues affecting the majority of down trodden masses, particularly for implementation of minimum wages and working to 8 hours".

AIALA is working in over 20 states of India and presently has a membership of over 2 million members". **Prof. Prabhat Patnaik**, a radical economist at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (1973:197) had categorically stated four decades ago that "reproduction and perpetuation of underdeveloped areas or peripheries are characterized as an inevitable outcome of capitalistic development. In other words, such peripheries are reproduced within peripheral countries for the small core sector to continue its process of development".

MNREGA

The public hearing (**Jan Sunvai**) became an urgent necessity, as it became obvious that the NREGA had failed to arrest starvation deaths and even scratch the surface of the twin evils of poverty and unemployment in the countryside. Increasing hardship of the poor in wake of rising prices of food, fuel, cloths and life saving drugs and medicines has been contended with 17 to 30 per cent hike in wages under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Agency in view of "Providing adequate livelihood security to the poor, down trodden, and the members of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities" (**Govt. Announcement, Kurukshetra, 2011:48**).

This hike is effective from 1st January, 2011 and is linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI) resulting in automatic annual wage revision. Chhattisgarh has been benefited with 22 per cent hike in MGNREGA wage, where per diem wage has been increased to Rs. 122 from its previous rate of Rs. 100. Agricultural Labourers' Suicide and Social Justice in Punjab: **Singh** (2009:24) by citing the inference drawn in a study conducted by Punjab Agricultural University for the Govt. of Punjab, on the suicides committed by the Farmers

and Agricultural Labourers, says that ‘In two districts of Bhatinda and Sangrur, during the period of 2008-09, 2890 suicides were committed by the farmers and agricultural labourers, out of which 1133 (39.20 per cent) were agricultural labourers’. He further points out that “Punjab has the highest percentage of dalits among the States of India, comprising over 30 per cent of the total population”. In such a situation, the Act formulated for achieving equality, slogan like Development with Social Justice and **Krishi Shramik Samajik Suraksha Yojana (launched by the Govt. from 1st July, 2001 for providing Social Security** to the agricultural labourers all seems to be a farce.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, it is said that all facts and figures ostensibly indicate that food and social security of agricultural labourers is not secured. They are living a sub-human life which is full of misery in place of a charming music. This is because of unwarranted pinching disparity in economic development across the space and society as well. **The** central position of the current report is that “Spatial economic inequalities are inescapable feature of economic development at all geographical scale’, (**Maringanti**, 2009:45). He says that three are **three D’s** (Density, Distance and Division), **three I’s** (Institutions, Infrastructure and Interventions) and three scales of Local, National and International. This Report advocates “ **an I for a D**” (2009:240). He points out that “Now, geography seems to be all the rage. For last 10 years, some of the most prominent US Development Economists have been debating the role of geography in Economic Development” (2009:45).

Interestingly, the big farmers are against **higher** wage to the farm labourers, as has been reported that Big Farmers are against High Wage to Agricultural Labourers in Punjab, “On 6 June, 2009 in Ferozepur district, the large farmers of 12 villages reduced the fixed wage rate of agricultural labourers for paddy transplantation to Rs.1000 per acre. Last year, this rate had touched Rs. 2000 per acre (**Singh**, 2009:25). This situation prevails in every state.

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