

B.A. Part II (Economics Honours)  
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## **Problems of Agricultural Labour in India**

As we are aware that near about 53% population of India is engaged in agricultural activities. But agriculture in India is still at mercy of monsoon. Here, the condition of the farmers and agricultural labourers depend on the intensity of monsoon. If monsoon is good then crop is good and vice-versa. Agriculture labour is counted in the category of unorganized sector, so their income is not fixed. Hence they are living an insecure and underprivileged life and earning just Rs. 150/day along with full uncertainty.

The agricultural labourers are one of the most exploited and oppressed classes in rural hierarchy.

### **Problems of Agriculture Labour:**

1. **Marginalisation of Agricultural Workers:-** The workforce in agriculture (cultivators plus agricultural labourers) was 97.2 million in 1951 and this rose to 185.2 million in 1991. As against this, the number of agricultural labourers rose from 27.3 million in 1951 to 74.6 million in 1991. This implies that (i) the number of agricultural labourers increased by almost three times over the period from 1951 to 1991; Agricultural labourers increased from 28 per cent in 1951 to 40 per cent in 1991. These facts indicate the fast pace of casualisation of workforce in agriculture in India. Moreover, the share of agriculture and allied activities in GDP

at factor cost has consistently declined over the years - from 55.3 per cent in 1950-51 to 37.9 per cent in 1980-81 (at 1999-2000 prices) and further to 14.0 per cent in 2011-12 (at 2004-05 prices).

2. **Wages and Income:-** Agricultural wages and family incomes of agricultural workers are very low in India. With the advent of the Green Revolution, money wage rates started increasing. However, as prices also increased considerably, the real wage rates did not increase accordingly. Currently labours are getting around Rs. 150/day under the MGNREGA in rural areas.
3. **Employment and Working Conditions:-** The agricultural labourers have to face the problems of unemployment and underemployment. For a substantial part of the year, they have to remain unemployed because there is no work on the farms and alternative sources of employment do not exist.
4. **Indebtedness:-** In the absence of banking system in the rural areas and trial process of sanction by the commercial banks, farmers prefers to take loans from un institutional sources like Sahukars (moneylenders), landlords at the very high rate (in some cases at 40% to 50%) . This exorbitant rate traps in the vicious circle of debt.
5. **Low Wages for women in Agricultural Labour:-** Female agricultural workers are generally forced to work harder and paid less than their male counterparts.
6. **High Incidence of Child Labour:-** Incidence of child labour is high in India and the estimated number varies from 17.5 million to 44 million. It is estimated that one-third of the child workers in Asia are in India.
7. **Increase in Migrant Labour:-** Green Revolution significantly increased remunerative wage employment opportunities in pockets of assured irrigation

areas while employment opportunities nearly stagnated in the vast rain fed semi-arid areas.

### **Measures Taken by the Government**

1. **Minimum Wages Act:** The Minimum Wages Act was passed as long back as in 1948 and since then the necessity of applying it to agriculture has been constantly felt. Means the Act is not applicable to agricultural sector?
2. **Abolition of Bonded Labour:-** Since Independence, attempts have been made to abolish the evil of bonded labour because it is exploitative, inhuman and violative of all norms of social justice. In the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of India, it has been stated that trading in humans and forcing them to do *begar* is prohibited and can invite punishment under the law.
3. **Provision of housing sites:-** Laws have been passed in several States for providing house sites in villages to agricultural workers.
4. **Special schemes for providing employment:-** Rural Employment (CSRE), National Rural Employment Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), and National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP), Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act MGNREGA
5. **Special agencies for development:-** Special agencies - Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Development Agency (MFAL) - were created in 1970-71 to solve the problems of Agriculture labour of the country.