**UNIT . V Agriculture Labour**

**Meaning :**

**Agriculture labourer can be defined as the involvement of any person in connection with cultivating the soil, or in connection with raising or harvesting any agricultural or horticultural commodity, management of livestock, bees, poultry etc.**

Features of Agricultural Labour

It is one of the primary objects of the Five Year Plan to ensure fuller opportunities for work and better living to all the sections of the rural community and, in particular, to assist agricultural labourers and backward classes to come to the level of the rest. One of the most distinguishing features of the rural economy of India has been the growth in the number of agricultural workers, cultivators and agricultural labourers engaged in crop production. The phenomena of underemployment, under-development and surplus population are simultaneously manifested in the daily lives and living of the agricultural labourers. They usually get low wages, conditions of work put an excessive burden on them, and the employment which they get is extremely irregular.

Agricultural workers constitute the most neglected class in Indian rural structure. Their income is low and employment irregular. Since, they possess no skill or training, they have no alternative employment opportunities either. Socially, a large number of agricultural workers belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Therefore, they are a suppressed class. They are not organised and they cannot fight for their rights. Because of all these reasons their economic lot has failed to improve even after four decades of planning. This can also be seen from the Prime Minister's speech made in Lok Sabha on August 4, 1966. The Prime minister emphasized - "We must give special consideration to the landless agricultural labour. Although there has been tremendous progress in India since Independence, this is one section, which has really a very hard time and which is deserving very special consideration.

Seasonal unemployment is a characteristic feature of Agricultural Industry and under employment of man power is inherent in the system of family farming. According to first A.L.E.C., adult male agricultural labourers were employed on wages for 189 days in agricultural work and for 29 days in non-agricultural work i.e. 218 day in all. They were self-employed for 75 days. Casual male workers found employment for only 200 days, while attached workers were employed for 326 days in a year. Women workers employed for 134 days in a year. Unlike industrial labour, agricultural labour is difficult to define. The reason is that unless capitalism develops fully in agriculture, a separate class of workers depending wholly on wages does not come up. Difficulties in defining agricultural labour are compounded by the fact that many small and This can also be seen from the Prime Minister's speech made in Lok Sabha on August 4, 1966. The Prime minister emphasized - "We must give special consideration to the landless agricultural labour. Although there has been tremendous progress in India since Independence, this is one section, which has really a very hard time and which is deserving very special consideration."1 Seasonal unemployment is a characteristic feature of Agricultural Industry and under employment of man power is inherent in the system of family farming. According to first A.L.E.C., adult male agricultural labourers were employed on wages for 189 days in agricultural work and for 29 days in non-agricultural work i.e. 218 day in all. They were self-employed for 75 days. Casual male workers found employment for only 200 days, while attached workers were employed for 326 days in a year. Women workers employed for 134 days in a year. Unlike industrial labour, agricultural labour is difficult to define. The reason is that unless capitalism develops fully in agriculture, a separate class of workers depending wholly on wages does not come up. Difficulties in defining agricultural labour are compounded by the fact that many small and marginal farmers also work partly on the farms of others to supplement their income. To what extent should they (or their family members) be considered agricultural labourers is not easy to answer. However, it will be useful to refer some of the attempts made by experts in this connection.

1. The First Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee 1950-55 defined Agricultural Labourer as - "Those people who are engaged in raising crops on payment of wages"

2. The Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee 1956-57 enlarged the distribution to include - "Those who are engaged in other agricultural occupations like dairy, farming, horticulture, raising of live-stock, bees, poultry etc. "In the context of Indian conditions the definition is not adequate, because it is not possible to completely separate those working on wages from others. There are people who do not work on wages throughout the year but only for a part of it.

Therefore, the first A.L.E.C. used the concept of agricultural labour household. If half or more members of household have wage, employment in agriculture then those households should be termed as agricultural labour household. This concept was based upon the occupation of the worker.

The Second Committee submitted that to know whether a household is an agricultural labour household, we must examine its main source of income. If 50% or more of its income is derived as wages for work rendered in agriculture only, then it could be classed to agricultural labour household.

According to the National Commission on Labour "an agricultural labourer is one who isbasically unskilled and unorganised and has little for its livelihood, other than personal labour." Thus, persons whose main source of income is wage, employment fall in this category. Mishra and Puri have stated that "All those persons who derive a major part of their income as payment for work performed on the farms of others can be designated as agricultural workers. For a major part of the year they should work on the land of the others on wages."

Classification of Agricultural Labourers :

Agricultural labourers can be divided into four categories –

1. Landless Labourers, who are attached to the land lords;

2. Landless labourers, who are personally independent, but who work exclusively for others;

3. Petty farmers with tiny bits of land who devote most of their time working for others and

4. Farmers who have economic holdings but who have one or more of their sons and dependants working for other prosperous farmers.

The first group of labourers have been more or less in the position of serfs or slaves, they are also known as bonded labourers.

Agricultural labourers can also be divided in the following manner :

**1. Landless agricultural labourers**

2. Very small cultivators whose main source of earnings due to their small and sub-marginal holdings is wage employment.

Landless labourers in turn can be classified into two broad categories :

1. Permanent Labourers attached to cultivating households.

**2. Casual Labourers.**

The second group can again be divided into three subgroups :

(i) Cultivators (ii) Share croppers (iii) Lease holders.

Permanent or attached labourers generally work on annual or seasonal basis and they work on some sort of contract. Their wages are determined by custom or tradition. On the other hand temporary or casual labourers are engaged only during peak period for work. Their employment is temporary and they are paid at the market rate. They are not attached to any landlords. Under second group comes small farmers, who prossess very little land and therefore, has to devote most of their time working on the lands of others as labourers. Share croppers are those who, while sharing the produce of the land for their work, also work as labourers. Tenants are those who not only work on the leased land but also work as labourers.

**Characteristics of Agricultural Labourers**

Before any attempt is made to evolve a rational policy to improve the living conditions of agricultural labours which happens to belong to the lowest rung of social and economic ladder,

it is essential to know the distinguishing features that characterize agricultural labourer in India. The main features, characterizing Indian agricultural labour are as follows :

1. Agricultural Labourers are Scattered Agricultural labour in India is being widely scattered over 5.6 lakh villages, of which half have population of less than 500 each. And therefore, any question of building an effective organization, like that of industrial workers, poses insurmountable difficulties. Thus as the vast number of agricultural labour lies scattered all over India, there has been no successful attempt for long, to build their effective organization even at the state level not to speak of the national level.

**2. Agricultural Labourers are Unskilled and Lack Training**

Agricultural labourers, especially in smaller villages away from towns and cities, are generally unskilled workers carrying on agricultural operation in the centuries old traditional wages. Most of them, especially those in small isolated villages with around 500 population, may not have even heard of modernization of agriculture. Majority of them are generally conservative, tradition bound, totalistic and resigned to the insufferable lot to which according to them fate has condemned them. There is hardly any motivation for change or improvement. Since, there is direct supervision by the landlord, there is hardly any escape form hard work and since there is no alternative employment. The agricultural labourer has to do all types of work-farm and domestic at the bidding of the landlord.

**3. Unorganised Sector**

Agricultural labourers are not organized like industrial labourers. They are illiterate and ignorant. They live in scattered villages. Hence they could not organize in unions. In urban areas workers could generally organize themselves in unions and it is convenient for political parties to take interest in trade union activities. This is almost difficult in case of farm labour. Accordingly, it is difficult for them to bargain with the land owners and secure good wages.

**4. Low Social Status**

Most agricultural workers belong to the depressed classes, which have been neglected for ages. The low caste and depressed classes have been socially handicapped and they had never the courage to assert themselves. They have been like dump-driven cattle. In some parts of India, agricultural labourers are migratory, moving in search of jobs at the time of harvesting. Government measures to improve their lot by legislation have proved ineffective so far due to powerful hold of the rural elite classes in the rural economy.

**5. Demand and Supply of Labour**

The number of agricultural labourers being very large and skills they possess being meager, there are generally more than abundant supply of agricultural labourer in relation to demand for them. It is only during the sowing and harvesting seasons that there appears to be nearfull employment in the case of agricultural labourers. But, once the harvesting season is over, majority of agricultural workers will be jobless especially in areas, where there is single cropping pattern.

**6. Less Bargaining Power**

Due to all the above mentioned factors, the bargaining power and position of agricultural labourers in India is very weak. In fact, quite a large number of them are in the grip of village money lenders, landlords and commission agents, often the same person functioning in all the three capacities. No wonder, the agricultural labour is the most exploited class of people of India.

**7. At the Bidding of the Landlord**

There is generally direct and day to day 'contact between agricultural labourers and the landlords' on whose farm they are working. Unlike industrial workers, this direct contact between the employer and employees is a distinct feature of agriculture labourer. The above mentioned few important characteristics distinguish agricultural labourers in India from industrial workers. Thus partly because of factors beyond their control and partly because of their inherent bargaining weakness, the farm labourers have been getting very low wages and have therefore to live in a miserable sub-human life.

**Agricultural Serfs or Bonded Labourers**

At the bottom of the agricultural cadre in India are those labourers whose conditions are not very different from those of serfs. Agricultural serfdom has been most prevalent in those parts of India where the lower and the depressed classes and most in numerous. The ethnic composition of villages which governs the social stratification is responsible for the survival of the slavish conditions. In Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, a large aboriginal population live and the condition of this agricultural labours is very much like that of slaves. These are called in different names in different States.

**Different Types of Agricultural Activity**

Agriculture involves rearing of animals and crop cultivation

* Agriculture aims at providing enough, healthy food to feed the population worldwide
* Different types of agricultural activities are practiced in different regions across the world
* Factors such as climate affect the type of agricultural activity a farmer can practice

Types of agricultural activities include subsistence farming, nomadic herding, commercial plantation, livestock rearing, etc.

Agriculture involves plants and animals breeding and land cultivation to offer fiber, food and medicine. It also provides other products necessary for life enhancement and sustenance. During the sedentary human civilization, agriculture was a critical aspect of development. Domesticated plant and animal species were farmed for food surpluses to sustain people living in cities.

Agricultural science is the study of agriculture, a field whose history dates back thousands of years. People began planting grains about 11,500 years ago prior to their domestication. On the other hand, wild grains were gathered over 105,000 years ago. However, sheep, pigs and cattle were first domesticated more than 10,000 years ago.

Crops have their origin in about 11 regions across the world. Within the previous century, large-scale monoculture has driven the growth of industrial agriculture and thus its domination of agricultural output. However, more than 2 billion people worldwide rely on subsistence agriculture for sustenance.

Technological developments, plant breeding, modern agronomy and agrochemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides have spurred agricultural output. However, they’ve also led to widespread environmental and ecological damage.

Similarly, animal husbandry practices and selective breeding have increased meat output. On the converse, concerns are rising regarding environmental damage and animal welfare. They’ve led to deforestation, global warming, hormonal growth in meat produced industrially, aquifers depletion and resistance to antibiotics. Although genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are banned in many countries, their use is widespread.

Fuels, foods, raw materials such as rubber and fibers are the major groups of agricultural products. Food classes comprise of vegetables, oils, fungi, grains or cereals, fruits, eggs, meat and milk. The agricultural field employs more than a third of the total number of workers worldwide after the service industry. However, the number of workers in the agricultural sector of developed nations has reduced over the last centuries.

**Types of Agriculture**

Although agriculture is not uniform across the world, it is the most widespread activity. It is classified based on the type of crop being grown, scale of cultivation, intensity, mechanization level, combinations of livestock and how farm produce is distributed. The following are the different types of agricultural activities worldwide:

**1. Shifting Cultivation**

Shifting cultivation is commonly practiced in the tropics. It involves forest clearance through burning and slashing. The cleared land is cultivated until its fertility declines, or for three to five years or until native flora and weeds overtake it. When that happens, farmers abandon the land for a fallow period and clear another forest area for cultivation.

Shifting Cultivation

It is a type of subsistence farming usually done manually. People in the tropical regions such as south-east Asia tend to adopt this type of agricultural activity with a focus on growing grains. However, due to the pressure environmentalists and activists exert to support environment protection from such unsustainable practices, the activity is declining.

**2. Nomadic Herding**

Nomadic herding is the practice of keeping and grazing animals on natural pastures. It is common in the arid and semi-arid regions such as certain parts of Saudi Arabia, northern Africa and northern parts of Eurasia. The practice resembles pastoral farming.

Nomadic Herding

Nomads move with their animals from one place to another in search of water and pasture for their animals. The type of animals herded vary from one region to another. They include sheep, cattle, camel, goats, donkeys and horses. The activity is a form of subsistence farming meant to feed the family.

**3. Rudimentary Sedentary Tillage**

Unlike other types of agricultural activities, rudimentary sedentary cultivation is a type of subsistence farming practiced on the same piece of land year-in, year-out. Land is then left fallow after some years to regain its soil fertility. It is commonly practiced in the tropics and involves the growth of tree crops such as the Para rubber tree and grains.

**4. Livestock Ranching/Pastoral Farming**

Livestock ranching focuses on rearing animals. Unlike nomadic herding, farmers do not move from one place to another in search of pasture and water, but live in settlements. Pasture lands are developed for grazing the animals. Many areas across the globe with large pieces of land with enough grazing areas for animals practice this type of agriculture for commercial reasons.

Livestock Ranching

South America, North America and Australia are some regions across the world that intensively practice commercial pastoral farming on large-scale due to low rains received in the areas. The animals in ranches are mainly kept for wool and meat. Dairy farming is also a critical aspect of pastoral farming.

However, the activity is not sustainable because excessive grazing can lead to destruction of natural pastures. Therefore, farmers end up buying feeds for their animals, making the practice costly.

**5. Commercial Plantations**

Also known as tree crop farming, industrialized agriculture or plantation farming, commercial plantations cover large land areas. Even if practiced on a smaller piece of land, the activity has a high commercial value. It involves the cultivation of tropical crops such as tea, rubber, coffee, coconut, cocoa, grapes, apples, spices, oranges, avocado, mangoes and palm oil.

Commercial Tea Plantation

It is commonly practiced in regions with European colonial influence such as Africa, Asia and Latin America. Colonial governments established most of the plantations in their colonies to supply the European markets with tropical crops. It requires high capital to establish with the majority of the crops grown being tree crops.

Some plantation farms have processing factories. Various farming techniques are adopted to increase farm yield because the goal of such farms is to make profits.

**6. Mixed Farming**

Also known as grain and livestock farming, mixed farming involves the growing of crops and rearing of animals. It has its origins in the humid, mid-latitudes, excluding Asia. It is an agricultural activity with its roots mainly in Europe. Mixed farming develops in close relation to market infrastructure. It is commonly practiced in New Zealand and Great Britain.

Mixed Farming

Mixed farming involves continuous cropping and the growth of crops with varying maturity periods on the same piece of land. It does well in areas with sufficient rainfall or proper facilities for irrigation.

**7. Specialized Horticulture**

Increased demand for horticultural products in highly urbanized areas with dense populations led to the development of specialized horticulture. It has been successfully adopted in northern Hungary, France and the Swiss Lake regions for vineyard cultivation.

Specialized Horticulture

**8. Subsistence Farming**

Subsistence farming involves growing crops and keeping animals for the sole purpose of feeding the farmer and his family. It involves the use of simple farm tools on small pieces of land. Most subsistence farmers are believed to be poor and thus cannot afford to buy improved seeds and fertilizers. Therefore, they farm on land with low soil fertility or rough terrains.

Subsistence Farming

Subsistence farming has low productivity and does not involve the use of irrigation systems or electricity, facilities often unavailable to such farmers. Since the food grown is often consumed by the farmer and his household, almost none is sold for an extra coin.

The agricultural activity is rampant in mid-latitude areas, but has been declining over the years due to Russian farming collectivization; the activity was majorly practiced in Russia.

**9. Intensive Subsistence Farming with/without Rice as a Dominant Crops**

Farming with Rice as a Dominant Crop

Tropical regions with dense populations and high rainfall are the areas where intensive subsistence farming is practiced. Rice is the major crop grown because it can fee and employ many people in every unit area. It is mainly adopted in south-east Asia and farmers make use of animal and manual power to carry out farming activities. Most farmers use manures to improve the productivity of their farms per unit area.Subsistence Rice Farming Farming without Rice as a Dominant Crop

Just like subsistence farming with rice as the main crop, this activity is practiced in areas with low rainfall. Apart from rice, farmers grow other grain crops such as millet and wheat. The agricultural activity is practiced in Central America and southern Africa and areas in northern Africa, Asia and the Middle East without much rainfall throughout the year.

**10. Mediterranean Agriculture**

Mediterranean agriculture involves the rearing of animals and growing of crops in the rugged, Mediterranean terrain. Small animals and crops such as citrus fruits, vineyards and wheat are the crops mainly grown in the region. Horticulture is also practiced with the majority of crops sown in winter due to winter rains. Mediterranean Vineyard Agriculture

**11. Dairy Farming**

Dairy farming involves the rearing of cattle for milk. With its origins in Europe, the activity is highly developed in Sweden and Denmark. However, it has spread to other parts of the world and is practiced in areas near markets. It thrives in regions that enjoy temperate climate.Dairy Farming

**12. Commercial Grain Farming**

Commercial grain farming resulted from mechanization of farms. It is mainly practiced in areas with less-dense population and low rainfall. The grains grown in these areas are drought and weather hardy and thus can survive in dry conditions. Mainly adopted in steppes,

prairies and the temperate grasslands of Australia and South America, the activity mainly involves wheat monoculture.Commercial Grain Farming

**13. Arable Farming**

Arable farming, unlike pastoral or mixed farming, involves the growing of crops without keeping animals. It can be practiced on a large, commercial or small scale. Annual crops such as plantains, vegetables, grains, cassava, potatoes and legumes are often grown in arable farms.Arable Farming

Although existing types of agricultural activities have been classified based on the elaborate Whittlesey’s agricultural technique of classification, it is not permanent. Agricultural pattern worldwide has changed and continues to change due to increased development in agricultural technology and the ever-changing market demands since Whittlesey carried out her study.

Increased demand for fruits and vegetables worldwide as populations adopt healthy lifestyles have led to the modification of how land is used across the globe. With such factors, agricultural activities increasingly become dynamic.

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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. Here, the condition of the farmers and agricultural labourers depend on the intensity of monsoon. Hence they are living an insecure and underprivileged life and earning just Rs. 150/day along with full uncertainty.

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](https://myphotohunter.com/s/?q=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.

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**Causes for Poor Conditions Of Agricultural Labour.**

[1] Unorganised – Agricultural labourers in totally unrecognised as they are ignorant illiterate and widely scattered. Thus the farm workers have no capacity to bargain for securing a fair wage level.

[2] Low social status – Farm workers mostly belong to depressed classes and thus they are lacking the courage to assert there basic rights.

[3] Seasonal unemployment – As the agricultural operations are seasonal thus the farm worker are often

facing the problem of seasonal unemployment and under-employment. Farm workers on average get about 200 days in a year.

[4] Absence of alternative occupation:- In the rural areas the farm workers are not getting alternative job when they suffer seasonal unemployment.

[5] Growing indebtedness – Agricultural labporers in Barpeta of Assam are highly indebted. As the lend of wages are very poor thus the farm workers have been borrowing from land lords and become bonded labourers ultimately it can be said that the agricultural labourers in Barpeta of Assam are living in human conditions and in the absence of organised status. They are deprived of all the basic amenities of their life.

[6] Natural Factors:- In Barpeta district of Assam chronically affected by flood and river erosion. Nearly 31000 hectares agricultural land affected by flood and erosion every years and huge loss of the farmer.

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**Measures to improve the condition of labour**

abolition of bonded labour: - The Indian constitution declared the practice of serf demand offence. It has also abolished agrarian slavery including forced labour by law but it will take sometime before it is removed in practice.

1. The minimum wage act passed in 1948 by state government were advised to fix minimum wages for labour within three years. The minimum wages are fixed keeping in view the total costs and standard of living. But due to some practical difficulties most of the state could not fix the minimum wages till 1974.
2. Other legislative measures: After passing legislation for fixing ceiling on land were acquired surplus lands and distributed it among the land less labourers. About 74 lakh areas of land were acquired as surplus lands and distributed it among land less labour.
3. In India various state have passed necessary legislation for providing housing sites to agricultural labourers. Again under minimum needs programme and 20 point porogramme high priority is being attached to rural housing site cum-house construction scheme.
4. Employment Guarantee Scheme: For providing alternative source of employment among theagricultural labourers various scheme have already been launched by both the central & the state governments. These scheme (FGS) by the Govt. of Maharashtra. Food for Work Programme (FWP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) etc. Among all these schemes NREP and RLEGP got importance.
5. VI.Other Special Agencies :- During the fourth plan two special agencies-small farmers development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agriculture labourers development Agency (MFAL) were developed for conducting various works like irrigation land conservation dairy development piggory development poultry, breeding etc. During the fifth plan both agencies were merged into a single programme.
6. 20 point programme the government introduced the 20 point economics programme in July 1957 in which steps were taken to improve the economic conditions of landless workers and other weaker sections of the society in rural areas. These steps include speedy implementation of ceiling laws and then distribute the surplus land among the landless labour. Making provision for housing sites for landless labourers, abolition of bonded labour liquidation of rural indebtedness and moratorium on recovery of loans from landless workers and receiving og the minimum wage legislation etc. Some other special agencies like SFDA, MFAL etc.\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Unemployment in rural community**

Economic growth of a country depends upon the skills of its people and the application of knowledge, inherited or acquired by them. Optimum utilisation of human resources undoubtedly leads to considerable degree of economic development of a country. Unemployed human resources signify that a section of the society is without any source of income. Hence they experience misery and starvation.

Generally unemployment means an economic active person without any employment. According to Karl Pibram, “Unemployment is a condition of the labour market in which the supply of labour power is greater than the number of available openings.”

As Gillin and Gillin define, “Unemployment is a condition in which a person is able and willing to work normally, dependent upon his earning to provide the necessities of life for himself and family is unable to obtain gainful employment.”

Unemployment in India is structural in nature. In other words, productive capacity is inadequate to create a sufficient number of jobs. This is a chronic phenomenon.

Nature of Rural Unemployment:

India is an underdeveloped though a developing economy. The nature of unemployment, therefore, sharply differs from the one that prevails in industrially advanced countries. Lord Keynes attributes the cause of unemployment to a deficiency of effective demand. But in India unemployment is mainly due to the shortage of capital, the poor exploitation of natural resources and inadequate employment opportunities. That a large number of ruralites are forced to remain jobless in the rural areas is true beyond dispute.

Types of Rural Unemployment:

It is an indisputable fact that unemployment is found in its severest form in rural India. Broadly speaking, rural unemployment may broadly be classified into three categories namely: (a) open unemployment, (b) concealed or disguised unemployment, and (c) educated rural unemployment.

1. Open unemployment:

So far as open unemployment is concerned; identification of the people without work is an easy task. Agriculture in the Indian context is a seasonal occupation and there is always a heavy demand for labour at the time of sowing, wedding and harvesting whereas in slack season, demand for labour falls considerably.

The period of seasonal unemployment in India varies from state to state, depending upon the methods of farming, nature of soil and possibility of multiple cropping. In rained agriculture farmers remain unemployed for four or six months in a year. Because of illiteracy, poverty and poor health they are unable to avail some alternative employment opportunity during this period.

2. Concealed unemployment:

In concealed unemployment, it is difficult to identify an unemployed person. This type of unemployment is also named disguised unemployment. According to the U. N. Committee of Experts,“The disguisedly unemployed are those persons who work on their own account and who are too numerous relatively to resources with which they work, so that if a number of them were withdrawn to work in other sectors of the economy, the total output of the sector from which they were withdrawn would not be diminished even though no significant reorganisation occurred in this sector.”

According to Prof. Nurkse, the marginal productivity of such workers is zero or even negative. In the absence of irrigation facilities, such people look busy in working on their own land, but in fact, they only relieve other members of their family from work. They contribute nothing to agricultural production.

Disguised unemployment in rural India is 25 per cent to 30 per cent. It is mostly prevalent among marginal and small farmers. Here we use the productivity criterion to measure the extent and degree of unemployment.

3. Educated rural unemployment:

The problem of unemployment among the educated rural youth is another major area of concern. The spread of education has created many unemployed young persons who are in search of jobs. But there is no job in the labour market for them. This sort of unemployment leads to very tragic consequences. It breeds frustration among some and discontent among others.

Magnitude of Rural Unemployment:

Accurate figures about the magnitude of rural unemployment are not available. Some figures relating to rural unemployment have been estimated by commissions and committees appointed by the government from time to time.

The National Sample Survey (NSS) of India which conducts periodic surveys to estimate different categories of unemployment usually makes a three-fold classification of unemployment. These are:

(i) The Usual Status Unemployment (USU):

It relates to a person who is considered unemployed but has been trying to get the work. Here we measure it in terms of persons remaining unemployed.

(ii) The Current Weekly Status (CWS):

It relates to a person who has not been able to get employment even for a single hour throughout the week but wants to get the work. It is measured in terms of the number of persons.

(iii) The Current Daily Status (CDS):

CDS refers to the aggregate of all the unemployment days of all persons in the labour force during the week. This is a general concept which includes chronic unemployment and under-employment. It is measured in number of days during the survey week.

At present, estimates about “Daily Status Unemployment” are considered by the government to be the best indicator of unemployment situation in the country.

The Sixth Five-Year Plan formulated by Janata Government put the volume of rural unemployment for the year 1978 at 2.00 m usual status, 8.15 m. weekly status and 16.47 m. as daily status.

Despite the efforts of the government to mitigate the extent of rural unemployment, the reality is that the magnitude of rural unemployment has been increasing for a pretty long time.

The new jobs created within agriculture and outside agriculture have not succeeded in absorbing the new entrants into labour force. Again, the projects started by the government outside agriculture are capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive.

Even in agriculture, some components of the new technology have resulted in a decreased demand for labour. For example, combined harvesters and tractors, in themselves, have reduced the demand for labour. All these factors have led to an increase in the magnitude of rural unemployment.

Causes of Rural Unemployment:

Unemployment, a bane for the ruralites, particularly in a developing country like India, is caused by a number of factors. The major causes responsible for rural unemployment are discussed below.

1. Rapid growth of population:

Growth of population is the principal cause of rural unemployment. Every year population increases by nearly 50 lakh in India. According to Gopalaswami, the annual increase is to the tune of staggering 80 lakh. As the industrial growth of the country does not keep pace with the stupendous rise in population, industrial sector fails to absorb the increasing labour population. As a result a vast number of people, almost 67.7% of the population, depend on agriculture. This leads to rural unemployment.

2. Pressure on agricultural land:

Ruralites depend largely on agriculture for their livelihood. But cultivable land is limited in supply. Whatever measures are taken to make uncultivable land arable, it is not possible to cater to the needs of the growing demand on land in rural areas. As a result unemployment prevails in rural areas.

3. Seasonal nature of agriculture:

Agriculture does not engage the cultivators all the year round. Generally during the sowing and harvesting period, the ruralites are fully employed and the period between the post-harvest and before the next sowing they remain unemployed.

According to Dr. Salter, the farmers in South India are busy only for five months of the year and the rest seven months he whiles away his time doing nothing economically productive. Similar is the case with the peasants all over India. As a result seasonal unemployment is marked in rural areas.

4. Vagaries of Monsoon:

Agriculture in India largely depends on monsoon. Monsoon being whimsical and unpredictable, agriculture cannot be planned properly. Drought or famine or flood adversely affects agriculture leading to rural unemployment.

5. Sub-division of land:

Agricultural land in India is divided into smaller parts and is in the process of further sub division as children inherit the property of parents. Sometimes these small plots are scattered far and wide. Due to fragmentation of land agricultural produce falls and land is reduced to an uneconomic holding. As a result ruralites depending on agriculture are without employment.

6. Traditional method of cultivation:

Traditional method of cultivation adopted by the Indian farmer is unscientific and obsolete. Lack of improved methods of farming as well as absence of skilled labour hampers agricultural output.

Aversion to the use of fertiliser, lack of adequate irrigation facilities and lack of capital to procure modern agricultural tools, seeds and manures affect agricultural produce. As a result rural agriculture loses employment potentiality.

7. Disappearance of traditional occupation:

In Pre- Independent India rural folk were employed mostly in cottage industries. But cottage industries have received a severe setback in the Post-Independent India. Small industries failed to compete with large scale industries. As a result cottage industries are gradually disappearing and many people are being thrown out of employment.

8. Defective social system:

Joint family tradition prevailing in India often takes the shape of an asylum for the idle and unemployed members. This defective social system encourages rural unemployment.

9. Lack of occupational mobility:

Caste system is a potent factor of rural unemployment in the Indian context. It is an institution of occupational distribution that restricts the occupational mobility of the ruralites. Due to caste system an occupation in rural India is hereditary in nature.

If the number of members of a caste increases in comparison to the services demanded, the remaining population becomes unemployed.

10. Disorganisation of agriculture:

Agriculture in India is extremely disorganised and diversified. It follows an inverted economics because the Indian farmer has to willingly invest more to get less. This precipitates rural unemployment.

11. Faulty system of education:

The present system of education undermines manual labour. Educated people develop aversion for physical labour. Hence the rural youth after the completion of formal education looks for a sedentary job in a government office or a private firm. They are both unwilling and unable to adopt agriculture as their occupation. Hence the present education system contributes to rural unemployment.

12. Poverty:

Poverty and unemployment are interlinked. Because of poverty the ruralites have no resource for investment. Consequently they remain unemployed.

13. Lack of employment policy:

Unfortunately in India there is no serious effort for manpower planning. So far as our development plan strategy is concerned, employment has not been accorded its due place. It is not linked with the development process under the assumption that economic growth itself would lead to creation of employment opportunities. But this has failed to bring integration between growth and employment. All these factors account for poverty in general and rural poverty in particular.

Consequences:

The consequences of rural unemployment though less perceptible than urban unemployment, nevertheless, have significant implications for the rural society.

1. Open and disguised unemployment in rural areas lead to huge wastage of human resources. This could have been utilised for the purpose of economic development of the country.

2. Increase in the number of the unemployed increases pressure on land and other scarce natural resources. In the absence of gainful industrial activity in rural areas more and more people fall back upon agricultural activities. This results in further sub-division of already tiny sized holding. This adversely affects agricultural productivity.

3. The unemployed persons in rural areas are unproductive consumers. They merely consume without any contribution to production. In the process they eat away resources which would have been mobilized for capital formation in rural sector.

4. Absence of employment opportunities in rural sector forces people to migrate to cities insearch of jobs.

5. Migratory population crowds the cities. Slums grow rapidly. Environment gets polluted and cities become dens of vices.

6. A significant impact of migration is observable on the social and family spheres. The joint family system is very much in the process of being disintegrated giving rise to nuclear family system.

7. Another consequence of rising unemployment is increase in the number of crimes in the rural sector. In the past rural life was mostly peaceful but along with the increase in unemployment, criminal activities have registered a sharp increase and rural peaceful atmosphere has been considerably destroyed. Cases of drug abuse and drug pedalling unknown in the past have also increased. This has further aggravated rural unrest.

8. Unemployment fails to generate sufficient resources to maintain the health of the ruralites. Meager food and food devoid of required nutrients such as protein and vitamins reduce immunity against diseases and hence the ruralites fall ill more frequently. Their inability to pay for even minimum medical care reduces the general health status.

9. Unemployment affects the social status, personal life and sentiments of the unemployed person. It weakens his ambition, blunts his endeavour, saps his self-respect, shatters his hopes and generates guilt that he is failing to provide care and support to his family. Prolonged unemployment makes him either a delinquent or an antisocial.

10. Loss of social status tends to isolate the unemployed person from the existing contacts. His emotional maladjustment and lack of resources affect his family in several ways. Other members are forced to take up work of any kind for their livelihood without any inhibition.

11. Even temporary unemployment has very serious consequences. It results in suicide, forcing women to immoral traffic and withdrawal from social relationships. This acts upon the morale and social life of the individual, family and community in a very subtle way.

Remedial measures:

The following measures should be adopted for removing rural unemployment.

1. Improvement in the agricultural system:

(a) In order to improve the system of agriculture, steps should be taken to put an end to uneconomic holdings and to prevent the further sub-division of land into even smaller pieces. The scattered portions of land should be consolidated.

(b) The prevailing methods of agriculture do not exploit the natural resources to the fullest extent of their potentiality. The method of intensive cultivation will have to be adopted.

(c) Good seeds, proper tools and adequate manure should be provided to the farmers to boost agricultural production.

(e) There should be rotation of crops so that employment can be provided to the ruralites for a longer period.

2. Rainfall in the country is most uncertain:

Again it is confined to a few monsoon months in a year. This accounts for uncertainty in agricultural employment. To remove this uncertainty additional irrigation facility in the form of minor and major irrigation projects should be provided so that the farmers may adopt multiple cropping and remain busy throughout the year.

3. Increasing the cultivable land:

Steps should be taken to convert barren land into fertile land by scientific methods. Again it is through the scientific methods sandy and rocky land and even marshes and grass lands can be converted into cultivable farm lands.

4. Development of subsidiary industries:

Improvement in agriculture, not supplemented by any other corrective measures, cannot provide employment to the increasing population. The peasant should also get some gainful employment during that period of the year when he is not engaged in cultivation. In order to provide employment to all such people in off-season, some subsidiary occupations such as dairy farming, poultry farming, horticulture, bee keeping, furniture making, weaving baskets and ropes etc. should also be developed. For this purpose, they should be provided with adequate finance.

5. Small scale, labour-intensive industries should be set up to provide employment to surplus rural labour force. These industries should take into account the needs and resources of the rural areas. Furthermore, there should be rural industrialization in big villages in the shape of the establishment of large-scale industries. The local labour as well as other resources should be utilized to develop these industries.

6. Public construction:

The unemployed ruralites can be provided with work by engaging them in public construction like constructing roads, digging tanks etc. These works should be started only in areas where people are without any work.

7. Minimum need programme:

Minimum need programme should be undertaken in the rural areas. This covers the provision of rural housing, water supply, primary health care, primary education etc. Besides providing employment, such a programme will improve the socio-economic health of the rural society.

8. Arrangement for transport of labour:

In order to provide employment to the rural people arrangement should be made for transport of labour from the areas of thick population to the areas where the density is comparatively less.

9. Organisation of agriculture market:

Favourable conditions for marketing agricultural produce will alleviate the problem of agricultural unemployment. The organisation of the agricultural market will increase the income of the cultivator. As a result, the problem relating to rural unemployment will be mitigated to a great extent.

10. Controlling the growth of population:

Efforts should be made to check population explosion so that whatsoever is produced can be available to the existing population and industrial sector can be in a position to give employment to the surplus rural labour. This is how serious problem of rural unemployment will be tackled to a remarkable extent.

In fine, the monster of rural unemployment must be attacked on all fronts and all avenues of gainful occupation must be explored. But it seems to us that side by side with all these efforts, if an effective check is not put on India’s ever growing population, no solution to rural unemployment can be effectively implemented.

**Thank you student, read well ,Best of luck**

**By. CR**