

## Agriculture labour paradigms in Haryana

Anuradha Nandal

Department of Geography, Panjab University, Chandigarh, Punjab, India

### Abstract

Agriculture Labour paradigms in Haryana are changes constantly from India's independence. The Change in the labour relation and contract between the labour and employer create the structure in society. The present study deals with explore of the relations between the labour and employer. In this study explored the layers of structure and try to understand the different bonding between the societies in the point of view of labour. Particularly focuses of the study to examine the Agriculture labour in the context of society.

**Keywords:** agriculture, change, employer, Haryana, labour, society, wages

### Introduction

Haryana is a landlocked state in northern India. It is between 27°39' to 30°35' N latitude and between 74°28' and 77°36' E longitude. The total geographical area of the state is 4.42 m ha, which is 1.4% of the geographical area of the country. The altitude of Haryana varies between 700 and 3600 ft (200 metres and 1200 metres) above sea level. As per India State of Forest Report, FSI, 2013, the Forest Cover in the state is 1586 km<sup>2</sup> which is 3.59% of the state's geographical area and the Tree Cover in the state is 1282 km<sup>2</sup> which is 2.90% of the state geographical area. Thus the Forest and Tree Cover of the Haryana state is 6.49% of its geographical area.

There are two Agroclimatic zones in Haryana. The North-Western part (also referred as Paddy belt) which is suitable for Rice, Wheat, Vegetables and Temperate Fruits, and the South-Western part (also referred as the Cotton belt or Dry belt) which is suitable for Cotton, Millets, coarse cereals, tropical fruits, exotic vegetables and herbal & medicinal plants. As Kharif season cultivation depends on rainfalls & the Northern part receives ample rain, rice is extensively cultivated in this part. Punjab bordering area from Cheeka-Kaithal to Karnal-Kurukshetra is a major belt of Basmati rice cultivation & most mill of Basmati rice are present in Karnal-Kurukshetra. The cotton belt which receives less rainfall grows Cotton, however farmers with irrigation still prefer growing Rice. Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar & Jind are among major cotton producing areas of Haryana. Southern districts Bhiwani, Rewari, Jhajjar and Mahendragarh in Haryana are usually arid and major producer of Millets like Bajra & Jowar. During Rabi season, major crops in Haryana are Wheat, Gram & Mustard.

Sugarcane cultivation is done in parts adjoining the Yamuna river & in some internal pockets where irrigation facility is available. The cultivable area is 3.7 m ha, which is 84% of the geographical area of the state. 3.64 m ha, i.e. 98% of cultivable area is under cultivation. The gross cropped area of the state is 6.51 m ha and net cropped area is 3.64 m ha with a cropping intensity of 184.91%.

### Labour and poverty

Haryana's head count poverty ratio, which was always one of the lowest in India, also appears to have been declining continuously over time. With an overall head count ratio of 21.90 and a rural one of 23.17 in 1987-88 according to one estimate, Haryana now enjoys the second lowest incidence of poverty in the country. This is a considerable improvement over the 1970-71 ranking of fourth place and a poverty incidence of roughly 40 per cent in both rural and urban areas. Most of the improvement in Haryana's rank can be attributed to the decline in rural poverty. The urban poverty reduction performance of the state is less impressive, as well as less important in terms of the weight of the urban population in the total rural plus urban population. (Bhalla, October, 1995)<sup>[3]</sup>. As the green revolution matured, the train of events which left some agricultural labour households below the poverty line, despite rising wages and employment, began to take on an identifiable shape. By 1972-73, the surge of small farm households into the hired labour force reported in S Bhalla, had become a source of grievance for the landless, who complained that landed households were taking away 'their' jobs, in particular the secure 'permanent labour' jobs. While 0 to 2.5 acre operators accepted casual as well as permanent labour jobs, members of bigger farm households in the prime green revolution regions took up permanent labour jobs almost exclusively. Given the fact that in the prime green revolution regions, more than half of all hired labour days demanded permanent labour days, the changes on the demand and on the sources of labour supply side combined, tended to eat into the share of the employment cake, which would otherwise have gone to agricultural labour households. For landless households with no working permanent labour member, the number of casual labour day's work available in some technologically advanced regions actually went down. Meanwhile a large subset of agricultural labour households went into dairying, either for the first time or on an expanded scale; so also did small farmers. (Bhalla, October, 1995)<sup>[3]</sup>. In general it is evident that the multiplication of small

holdings is taking place most rapidly in the states where favour absorption per hectare is increasing rapidly, and vice versa. Wherever labour saving technology is being introduced, the percentage increase in the number of small holdings is low, and the decline in the number of really big holdings is typically much smaller than the average. In Punjab (which has the biggest negative trend rate of growth in per hectare use) the number of holdings in the top-most size class has actually risen, while the numbers in both of the bottom size groups has actually gone down, and by very substantial proportions. This may well be the shape of things to come in Haryana as well. If such a major reversal of past trends is indeed in the offing, it becomes practically speaking impossible to assess the likely prospects for women's work in agriculture. With so many different kinds of changes taking place simultaneously, there is little likelihood that developments during the contractionary phase in per hectare labour absorption will affect women in a fashion symmetrical with observed trends during the expansionary phase. (Bhalla, *Technological Change and Women Workers*, October 1989)<sup>[2]</sup>.

The analysis of district level data of Punjab and Haryana shows that demand and supply factors are, in fact, major determinants of wage rate. Whereas productivity of land and inequality in the distribution of landholdings tend to push up wage rate, demographic pressure on land and segmentation in the labour market are dominant variables which tend to depress wage rates significantly. Thus, if wage rates of agricultural labour and hence their incomes are to be improved agricultural growth alone cannot do it. Population on land has to be relieved to some extent. The study also brings out the important role which rural labour organisations and their leaders can play in uniting the labourers as a class and getting them their due share in increased agricultural productivity. (Sidhu, Dec. 1988)<sup>[12]</sup>.

However the some friction presents between the employer and labour also make the reason of concern. Views expressed by labourers in similar group interviews conducted in their caste 'mohallas' were even more bitter. While farmers abused labourers for not working to their satisfaction, labourers expressed their discontent by calling them cheats and exploiters. They often got angry during the interviews and tried to tell how oppressive the farmers were. Narrating the story of a fellow labourer, one of them reported: All big farmers are cheats. They are extremely selfish. Dina, a big zamindar had employed Joga Jhimmar as an attached labourer. He also gave five acres of land for sharecropping paddy to Joga's father. Joga, once, cleaning the canal by chance cut a few plants of paddy. Dina on noticing it, became furious and slapped Joga. In reaction Joga refused to continue working with the 'zamindar'. Dina is so shameless that he took away the five acre land shared-out to his father without paying anything for the labour Joga's father had put in the crop. (Jodhka, Sep 1994)<sup>[7]</sup>.

Jodhka also explored the root causes lies in the structure of society. His discussions on the phenomenon of attached labour in the post-green revolution agriculture have ranged from characterising attached labourers as 'privileged class' to 'unfree slaves'. The field data and the discussion did not present above makes it abundantly clear that attached labourers enjoyed the

kind of status that made them privileged among the poor nor did they see their position as being so. Attached labour functioned more as a labour mortgage system where the labourer, in some sense, had to give up his freedom in order to avail an interest free credit. Implications of such an argument are many. Though it is a voluntary arrangement, in the sense that labourer chooses to enter the relationship, it cannot be compared with employment in the organised sector, as has been argued by Rudra. Here the labourer is compelled to choose an alternative that he not only dislikes but also finds economically less rewarding. And the source of his compulsion lies in his weak economic position. Hence, the indebtedness and consequent compulsion to continue working as attached labourer does imply that there are elements of dependency and unfreedom in the relationship. This, however, should not lead to the conclusion that nothing has changed as far as dependency relations are concerned. There has not only been a formal change in the system of attached labour, substantially also lie relationship has changed considerably. Development of capitalism in agriculture has been accompanied by a near total erosion of the ideology of patronage and loyalty. This also has eroded the unquestioned power of the dominant castes and landlords in the rural society. And the growing integration of rural society into the broader national economy has meant opening up of possibilities of employment outside agriculture and the village. These changes have also created tensions and conflicts in the relationship. Growing dislike for the relationship has made them try to mobilise alternative sources of credit and come out of the relationship as soon as they could. These ranged from dependence on wife's employment/earnings for subsistence needs of the family and minimising borrowings more than the annual wage from the farmers to utilising the money received under IRDP schemes to clear off the outstanding debt and defaulting the bank loan. Despite the compulsions and continuities, it was difficult to identify a process of deplored as argued by Brass. On the contrary, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that the phenomenon of attached labour was on a decline. Though no quantitative evidence could be gathered, the impressions and opinions expressed by farmers and labourer respondents confirmed it. And this was mainly because of growing reluctance on the part of the labourers to work as attached labourers. (Jodhka, Sep 1994)<sup>[7]</sup>.

In the changing scenario women's gradually affected but they didn't not gain much. The lower strata women still living in mercy conditions. Yadav explains women are missing from this narrative all together. It might seem women are simply victims of this depressing scenario. In fact, the image of the female as victim reverberates in opinion-making dailies of the region routinely. In an article on gender discrimination one university professor contrasted Haryanvi men with women. She wrote that the Hiryanvi man is proud of his "martial race, ancient heritage, medieval struggle, modern progress, rural culture, full granary, green fields, milk buffaloes, agricultural machinery, school and college going sons". On the other hand, the social status of the veiled women of Haryana, the professor added, had not changed substantially since the days

of the Manusmriti. Women were still "called unwanted, made to live in the conventional cage of rigid customs, treated as Draupadi of Mahabharata who could be disgraced and humiliated publicly and that they still were the victims of 'hukka' (or community smoking pipe) culture which makes the man a giant and woman a pygmy". (Yadav, Dec. 2000)<sup>[13]</sup>.

The share -cropped farms, by their very nature, were fragmented as these were primarily operated by owners of small parcels of land who also had rented in additional land on share basis. As fragmentation of land is regarded as a source of production inefficiency in Indian agriculture. Therefore, not taking this factor into consideration and ignoring it in production function analysis, makes the comparison of technical efficiency dubious. The technical and allocate efficiency is greatly influenced by the quality of management or, what in modern literature has been called, human capital. This variable is conspicuous by its absence throughout the discussion. The decreasing returns to scale observed in the study may be due to omission of such variables. In view of the limitations of both data and analysis discussed above, the author's conclusion about lower efficiency of share -cropping in Haryana agriculture is hard to accept. The section dealing with returns -to -scale function, its estimation and the discussion which follows seems redundant as the information about the returns to scale could have been easily obtained from the functions which have been estimated to compute marginal value products of various inputs. (Salam, Winter 1981)<sup>[11]</sup>.

Brass authentic study showed the different picture of agrarian scenario. He pointed out ad nauseam it is precisely because workers exhibit agency in the form of a growing consciousness of class that landholders in Haryana increasingly resort to the debt mechanism as a method of waging class struggle 'from above'. That the latter is effective is clear, not just from what the labourers themselves have to say on this subject but also from what Jodhka states in his thesis. And second, what he forgets or perhaps does not know is that even chattel slaves were able to pursue specific kinds of agency, the exercise of which did not obviate the unfree nature of their relation. Jodhka fails to comprehend that an important difference exists between a free labour market (a direct exchange between worker and employer) and at free market in labour (an indirect exchange involving only employers or the latter and contractor. The next point he operates 'a two-class model' based on a landlord/labourer dichotomy, as a consequence of which I maintain "that a powerful class of landlords is still in control of the politics and economy of contemporary rural Haryana" is of course nonsense on stilts. Excluding quotations from other sources and informants, the term used by me with reference to contemporary Haryana is not 'landlord' with its implications of pre- capitalist(-'feudal'/semi-feudal) relations of production and political power but rather 'landholder'. As is clear not just from my article on but also from everything else I have written on the subject of agrarian transformation and unfree labour, the concept 'landholder' encompasses rich peasants and capitalist farmers. Linked to this is his equally problematic view that

those who now possess economic power have shifted its focus and locus away from the village and 'outward to the possibilities of greener pastures in towns and big cities". Unfortunately for Jodhka, this too is nonsense: where it has occurred the recent expansion by agrarian capital into urban India has not been at the expense of (and thus involved a loss of interest and/or contraction in) its rural operations. Much rather the contrary, since rich peasants and capitalist farmers whose economic activity straddles the rural/urban divide, continue not just to own and consolidate property in the village but also to depend on the profitability of agricultural production in the latter context for the success of their whole accumulation project. (Brass, Aug 1996)<sup>[4]</sup>.

The agriculture labour paradigm show the nature of the relation between the labour and the landlord depends upon the many factors. Above explain many paradigms mostly depend upon the demand and supply. However, different type of labour activity presented in agriculture not directly comes in the fold of law but it was based on risk share concept. In the risk share concept labour always fall in menace such as lake of account knowledge, limited participation in the sell and buy activities. And most important did not having a complete agreement format between the landlord and labour. The risk also involved in the agriculture labour is related to change of pattern of wages. In same village a group of labour got the wage in the from related crop. Such as when the wheat harvesting season labour got the wages in the fixed amount of wheat. In the same or nearby villages labour got the wages in the monetary form. The problem also faced by the landlords or employers due to uncertainty in the demand and supply. However with increase of NCR region and expend of industries affected the agricultural labour paradigms in Haryana.

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