

## Working Condition of Migrant Agriculture Labour in Punjab

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**Abstract:** The aim of the present research is to explore the nature of work and working condition of migrant agriculture labour. The study is based on both the primary survey as well as past literature. A researcher has gone through various magazines, journals, articles research papers, published and unpublished reports, and books related to migrations, agriculture labourers, and labourers laws etc. For the purpose of primary data, interview method was used. Migrant agriculture labourers were interviewed from the 5 villages of Shri Machiwara sahib Block of Ludhiana District to have deep insight into their working conditions. The findings throw light on the fact that working conditions of migrant agriculture labours are not completely satisfactory.

**Key words:** Migrant, Agriculture labour, Nature, satisfaction, Facilities, and working conditions.

### Introduction

Migrant agriculture labour is the most important part of Punjab's agrarian society. Punjab is one of the agrarian states of India. Punjab having an area of 50,362 sq. km, which is 1.54 per cent of the total geographical area of the India. The shape of the Punjab is a triangular. The base lies in the south along Haryana border, the western side is formed by Pakistan border and Himachal Pradesh's boundary forms its eastern side and Jammu Kashmir and Rajasthan's boundaries are touched to Punjab.

The social, cultural and economic condition of Punjab has been changed to a great extent after green revolution. Green revolution put various positive and negative impacts on farmers of Punjab. Along with this it also brought various types of employment opportunities for labour class. Now, the agriculture becomes labour intensive and farmer has to depend largely upon migrant labour. Ludhiana district is one of the biggest district both population and area wise. It also called a

Manchester of Punjab. According to a survey, a maximum of migratory labour works in the field of agriculture, as most of them are poor, illiterate and unskilled persons. The migratory labour comes to rural Punjab from other places. Usually, they come during the peak season of agriculture. But after various visits, many of them decide to work and settle here permanently. But these migrant people face many problems such as communication problem (language problem), lack of shelter some have to manage unhygienic slum areas. Their living conditions are not so good. They are not getting sufficient amount of facilities such as water and electricity etc.

Many research studies have shown that the basic reasons which their inter-migration are that the neighbouring states are badly poor and backward, the migration provides better opportunities and an alternative source of employment to rise up their living conditions. The most important significant factor is the Wages offered by Punjab are quite better the rate offered in their native states. On the other hand, preference is also given to the migrants by the farmers because local agriculture labour stop work during peak season and demand for the higher wages, shortage of the local agriculture labour during peak seasons and moreover, migrant labour is easily available on cheap wages.

The present study on the migrant agriculture labour has been conducted in the Shri Machiwara Sahib Block of Ludhiana district of Punjab. For this purpose, total male-female population, rural-urban with their literacy rate has been shown in the following table:

**Data of Census 2011, Punjab**

| <b>Population</b>          | <b>in Lakh</b>   |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Total population of Punjab | 277.43<br>(100%) |
| Male                       | 146.39<br>(53%)  |
| Female                     | 131.04           |

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|                                       |                  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
|                                       | (47%)            |
| Rural                                 | 173.44<br>(63%)  |
| Urban                                 | 103.99<br>(37%)  |
| Total population of Ludhiana district | 34.99<br>(13%)   |
| Total worker in Punjab                | 9897362<br>(36%) |
| Worker in Ludhiana district           | 1284822<br>(37%) |
| Rural worker                          | 530823<br>(41%)  |
| Urban worker                          | 753999<br>(59%)  |
| Rural male worker                     | 380021<br>(72%)  |
| Rural cultivator worker male          | 117146<br>(31%)  |
| Rural agriculture worker male         | 60259<br>(16%)   |

*Source: Census of India 2011*

The rural population of Punjab, According to census 2011 was 173.44 Lakh persons which come out to be 63 per cent of the total population. These persons are inhabited in 12,278 villages over 22 districts. Punjab is called the greenery of India. Only Punjab is produced 82 per cent cereals produced in the country. The production is at large scale as compared with other states because of

suitable climate, water resources, economic background etc According to census 2001 the total workers in Punjab is 98.97 lakh and number of agriculture worker is 27.98 Lakh. The percentage of agriculture workers are around 30 per cent among total worker (Jindal, 2016).

Migration to Punjab occurs from almost all states of India. Migration occurs from rural to urban areas, as well as between rural areas. Nearly all sectors of Punjab's economy employ migrant labour. Migrant women are employed as domestic help in cities and children are employed as domestic help in both rural and urban areas. Migrant labourers are mainly employed in both agriculture sector and industry.

Agriculture labour means any person employed in agricultural crop production as a wage earner, whether in cash or any kind, for his livelihood and includes a person engaged through a contractor or engaged as a self employed person. (Singh, 2007).

The population of migrant labour in Punjab from 1981-2001 is given below:

**Data of Migrants in Punjab**

| <b>Census Year</b> | <b>No. of Migrants</b> |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1981               | 822377                 |
| 1991               | 1126149                |
| 2001               | 2130662                |

*Source: Census of India 2001*

The above table shows that according to the census 1981 data, 82,23,77 migrant's persons which increased to 11,26,149 migrants persons in 1991. And the number of migrated worker into state was 21, 30,662. Thus 37 lakh total migrants accounted for 15 per cent of state population and 22 per cent of total working force out of 98 lakh workers in Punjab. They migrated from Bihar (60 %), U.P (21%), and Nepal (9%) (Sharma and Sidhu, 2007).

Mostly, migrant workers mainly working in agriculture field who come primarily from the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa suffer from severe unemployment and under-employment, low wages, low earnings and an agricultural productivity that is much lower than that of Punjab (Sidhu and Rangi 1998).

## **Working condition of Migrant Labour**

In Punjab, industries growth level is very low. So, Industries in Punjab have not been able to provide higher wages to workers as agriculture has been able to do. There have been some efforts to organise migrant workers into trade unions. Different types of parties have organised brick kiln workers, rickshaw pullers, contract workers, workers in grain markets, and those in textile factories etc. into unions. Living conditions for workers in industries are particularly horrible into a tiny room. Accommodation provided by employers is often totally lacking in hygienic amenities. Trade unions have tried to campaign or awareness on these vast issues but the trade union movement remains weak in Punjab. One of the main reasons for this could be that workers are totally helpless and completely at the kindness of employers. A majority of migratory labours are Hindus and belong to Scheduled Caste or other backward caste groups. As compared to workers in the agriculture or construction sector and manual work force, industrial workers are relatively better educated. The chances of an individual being a member of a union are higher if she or he has her own house and has been living in the state for a while. Levels of participation also increase if workers have families in Punjab. Participation levels of educated workers are higher than that of illiterate workers. Yet, on the whole, participation of migrants as well as local workers in union activities is low even on issues like wages and bonus. The dread of discrimination is perhaps the most important reason for worker obedience. Such fears decrease if families live in the state for longer periods.

### **Review of Literature**

Sharma (1982) conducted a study titled, "Impact on Migratory Labour of the Rural Economy of Punjab State" the aims of the study were to identify the factors associated with the migration of outside labours into the countryside of Punjab. Most of the migratory labour worked on a contract basis during peak season in group and on daily wages during the lean season. The study examined, wage Structure, employment pattern and total earning of the outside labour and the Impact of these factors on local labour. About 12 per cent of them were employed as farm servants on the permanent bases. Majority of local agricultural labours complained that the migrant had rendered them jobless and limited their employment opportunities and depressed daily wage rates. The study also deals with the issues of attitudinal change of proprietors toward local labour. Breman (1994) studied the region of Bardoli, Gujarat. He examined the development of the sugar cane industry in the 1960s

lead to broad socio-economic changes .The local group of landless labourers was barred from employment, and as an alternative seasonal migrant from Maharashtra carried out cane cutting jobs in the fields. These migrants workers were worked long hours in ruthless conditions for low wages.

### Objective of the Study

- To study the working condition of Migrant Agriculture Labour..

### Research Question

- Does the migrant agriculture labour adjusting in the poor working conditions?

### Research Methodology

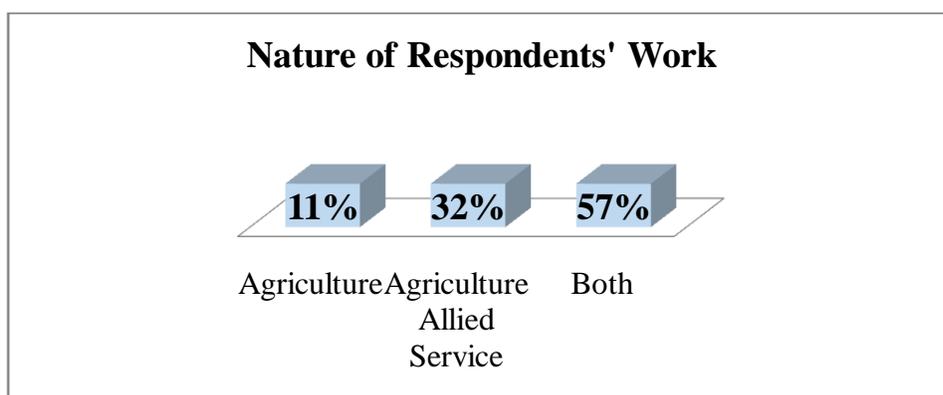
The study was purely based on the migrant agriculture labour who is working in the agriculture sector of the Punjab. Total 75 respondents from the 5 villages of Shri Machiwara Sahib Block of Ludhiana District of Punjab was selected purposively. The data was collected by using personal interview schedule and observation.

### ➤ RESULTS

#### Nature of Work

Every human being is engaged in performing any work in their life. The work can be skilled, unskilled, temporary, permanent or on contract basis. Work can be in the field of education, agriculture or industry etc, In India; people are engaged in various kinds of skilled and unskilled activities like cropping. Sowing, fertilising, howing, foodring, animal careing, visiting to grain markets etc. in the present study an attempt has been made to procure information regarding the nature of work performed by the migrant labour.

**Table No. 1: Distribution of the respondents showing nature of work**

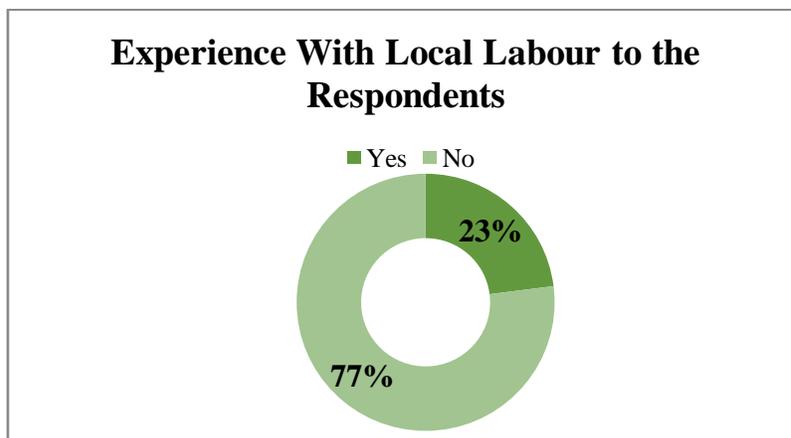


The data represented in the above table indicate that a majority of the respondents i.e. 57 per cent were involved in all the agriculture and agriculture allied activities like Sowing, fertilising, hoeing, foodring, animal caring and visiting to grain markets during crop season etc. along with agriculture 32 percent of the respondents were also working for animal husbandry like care of animals (caring and grazing). There were 11 per cent of the respondents who were mainly responsible for transportation of crops to the market, using tractors, spraying of insecticides and pesticides etc, Thus, from the above findings, it can be concluded that as maximum number of respondents were residing in their employer's house, they are mainly responsible for all the activities associated with agriculture and other agriculture allied activities.

### **Work with Local Labour**

In some cases, migrant agriculture labour has to work with the local labour as they have more experience and knowledge about their native place. They work collectively and have a feeling of brotherhood. They know well about their employers, their behaviour and attitude. They also have more experience with regard to agriculture. But normally maximum number of local labour had shifted their occupations from agriculture to other economic activities. In many cases only migrant labour is working either seasonally or on regular basis in Punjab. In the present study, an effort has been made to procure the information that whether migrant labour is working with local labour or not, the following data has been collected.

**Table No. 2: Distribution of respondents showing their experience with local labour**

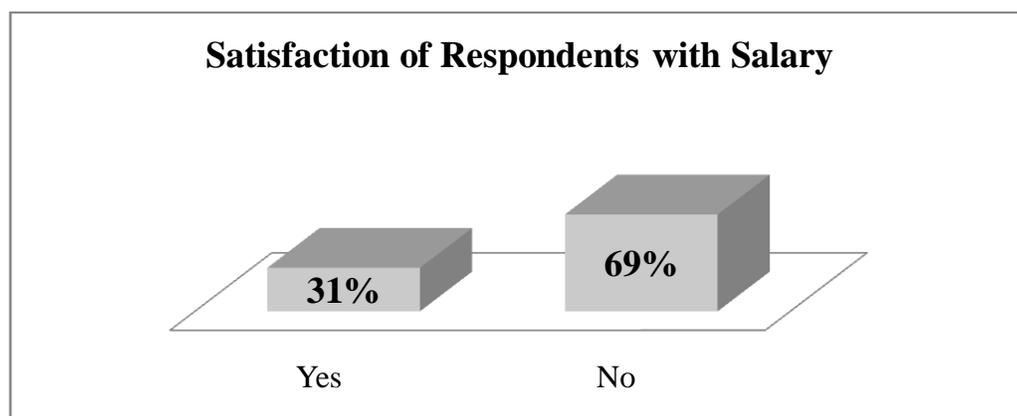


The data presented in the above table indicate that a majority of respondents i.e. 77 per cent had never work with the local labour but the remaining 23 per cent were working along with the local labour. Further probing to these respondents revealed that their work was divided among them. Local labour was supposed to work only in the fields whereas migrant labour was engaged in agricultural and allied activities like animal husbandry's. A Majority of these respondents were residing in their employers' house. And they were responsible for the care of cattle's also like caring and grazing of animals. So the findings highlight the fact that a few percentage of migrant labour is working with local labour and because of the division of labour amongst the local and migrant labour, chances of discrimination and exploitation are very less.

### Satisfaction with Salary

Human being has some basic needs. And they are doing work for fulfilment their needs. In the ancient period, the barter system was prevalent. But now days, more preference is given to cash payment to fulfil their daily needs. If people get sufficient salary in return of their work done, they feel more satisfied get encouragement to work hard. People migrate from their native place in the search of better work opportunities to get more money. So that they can fulfil the basic needs and provide comfort and facilities to their family. Hence, it can be said that Money is one of the major reasons for the migration. If people get sufficient rewards in return, they feel satisfied. On the other hand, less salary, exploitation and harassment lead to the unsatisfaction and have more chances of frustration. In the present study, an effort has been made to ascertain their views regarding the satisfaction with salary of the respondents.

**Table No. 3: Distribution of respondents showing their satisfaction with salary**

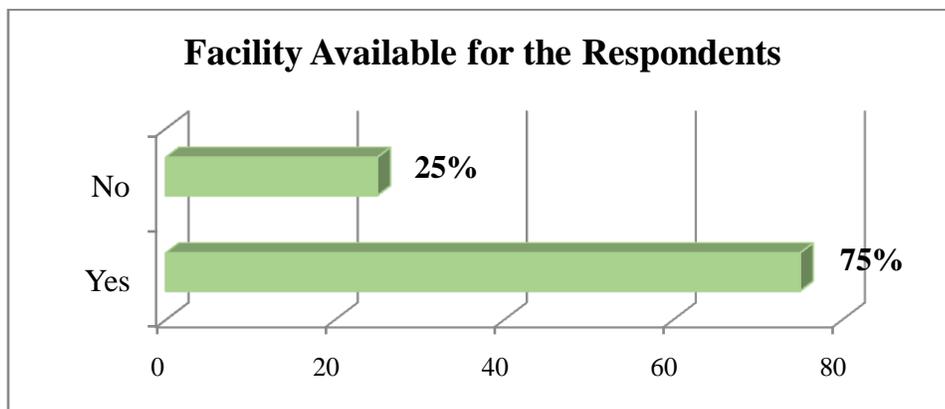


The data presented in the above table indicate that a majority of the respondents, i.e. 69 per cent, were not satisfied with their present salary. According to them, their salary was not sufficient to fulfil the basic needs of their families. A maximum number of these respondents had a large families and they were not able to provide them proper education, health and recreational facilities to their children. There were 31 per cent of the respondents who expressed satisfaction with the present salary. Further probing to these respondents revealed that, many of these respondents were either un-married or having small families. Thus, it can be concluded from the above findings that a maximum number of respondents were not satisfied with their salary.

### Facilities Available for the Migrant Agriculture Labour

In every place, people are provided with facilities to lead a comfortable life and work efficiently. Migrant agriculture labour is also provided some facilities along with the salary as they have migrated from their native place. In order to maintain their family life and increase work output, farmers (employers) provide them some facilities like free accommodation, free water supply and electricity, food (both kacha and pakka food)and medical facility etc,. IN the present study, an effort has been made to procure information that whether the migrant labour is provided with extra facilities apart from their salary or not, the following data has been collected.

**Table No. 4: Distribution of the respondents showing availability of facilities**



The data represented in the above table indicated that, a majority of the respondents i.e. 75 per cent were availing the facilities of accommodation, electricity, water and sanitation etc.,. As maximum of these respondents were residing in their employer's house. But there were 25 per cent of the respondents who were facing difficulties like they were living in the fields. Further probing to these respondents revealed that they were not provided with proper infrastructure for their residence, limited facility of electricity, insufficient quantity of food, (as only the working member was entitled for the food). Therefore, it can be concluded that it becomes very difficult for those migrant labour to work without proper facilities away from their native place.

### **Conclusion:**

It can be concluded from the study the migrant agriculture labour has lack of employment opportunities in their native place and comparatively higher wagers motivated them for migration. The finding indicates that a majority of the respondents are from lower-socio economic background. Their family size is too large and this is the reason of their poor economic condition. Moreover they are not satisfied with their salaries. Large family size, low income and illiteracy are the reasons that why they could not provide good education to their children. It can be concluded from the above data that migrant agriculture labour have poor working conditions. They are facing a number of difficulties. They have lack of facilities like housing, electricity, sanitation, water and schooling etc.,. And their life is too much problematic. The state government must ensure that employers meet basic legal criteria of employment and provide employees with basic social security and facilities along with job security.

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