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# Poverty among the landless agricultural labourers in Eral Taluk, Thoothukudi District

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**Abstract**---Poverty is multi-dimensional in character, scope and content. Poverty has an economic face, a social face and a Psychological face. Poverty's economic face includes joblessness, unemployment, and lack of finances to satisfy the family's basic needs. Poverty leads to low economic growth. This reduces the productivity of labour force and economic growth is affected. Landless agricultural labourers means, "Employment in rural areas other than in agriculture". In this study area the landless agricultural labourers is not satisfactory. Their standard of living is very low. They are not in a position to purchase their essential goods. The remedy is to create job opportunity among the unemployed people. The government must take adequate steps to provide financial assistance and introduce job-oriented programmes to this area of landless agricultural labourers. Further, in this study area, there is no agricultural labour organisation.

**Keywords**---Poverty, agricultural labour, income, expenditure, standard of living, employment.

**Introduction**

In India, poverty is treated as an absolute phenomenon where significant section of the society is deprived of minimum requirements of clothings, cereals, pulses, milk and vegetables required for adequate calorie intake providing a bare subsistence level. All the quantities together expressed in money terms provide the minimum per capita expenditure.

Poverty is multi-dimensional in character, scope and content. Poverty has an economic face, a social face and a psychological face. Poverty's economic face includes joblessness, unemployment, lack of finances to satisfy the family's basic needs and child labour. Poverty's social face is manifested in high levels of illiteracy, violent behaviour, high levels of teenage pregnancy and single parenthood, high levels of substance abuse and a large number of idle men and women. Poverty's

psychological face is associated with low esteem, lack of knowledge, feeling of hopelessness and dependency.

Poverty is not only a condition of low income, low consumption and lack of assets, it is above all a condition of vulnerability, exclusion and powerlessness. Poverty leads to low economic growth. If the poor are badly nourished their health is poor. This reduces the productivity of labour force and economic growth is affected. In Indian rural areas, most of the poverty stricken people belong to suppressed caste. Having bad infrastructure facilities, these schedule caste and tribes experienced high birth rate associated with high death rate. Many of the poor are in regions where arable land is scarce, agricultural productivity is low and drought, flood and environmental degradation are common. Indian rural areas are often isolated in every \sense, opportunities for non-farm employment are few and demand for labour tends to be highly seasonal. Often the poor live in regions that have more promising endowments of natural resources but lack access to social services and infrastructure. In a country like India, overall development is dependent on agricultural development.

To live in poverty may be sad, but to offend or (be) hurtful to society creating problems for those who are not poor' is, it would appear, the real tragedy. The specification of a 'poverty line' may do part of the job 'the poor' are those people whose consumption standards fall short of the norms, or whose income lie below that line. The concept of poverty questions: i) only the poor? ii) only the non-poor or iii) both the poor and the non-poor?. It seems a bit grotesque to hold that the concept of poverty should be concerned only with the non-poor.

Removal of poverty and raising the standard of living of the people has been the twin objectives of our economic policy since independence. The fact that a vast majority of Indian masses has been condemned to a very low level of living for many past decades is a matter of common knowledge.

Poverty in India is a deep-rooted problem. Its evil and diabolic consequences are manifested in many forms like death, malnutrition, disease etc. The war against poverty in India continues unabated but poverty still rules the roost. It was defined in terms of monetary factors by which the extent of poverty can be measured. Subsequently, poverty is defined in terms of the minimum calories that a person should take in order to be at the subsistence level. In other words, the minimum food requirements taken by a person is set as a basis for poverty level, though it differs slightly between rural and urban persons.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To estimate per household per capita income of landless agricultural labourers.
2. To estimate per household per capita consumption level of the landless agricultural labourers.
3. To assess the degree of inequality in the distribution of per capita income and per capita consumption of landless agricultural labourers.

## **Scope of the Study**

Rural poverty in our country prevails among the households of cultivators, landless agricultural labourers and artisans. Formulation of the poverty alleviation programmes of the Government require detailed picture of living conditions of landless agricultural labourers also. So it is hoped that this present study will be useful to the policy makers in framing policies relating to the uplifting of poor people above the poverty line.

## **Methodology**

The present study is an analysis of poverty and economic conditions of the households of landless agricultural labourers in Perunkulam Village of Eral taluk. There are about 894 households of farmers in Perunkulam Village. Of these households, 546 households belong to the categories of landless agricultural labourers and 100 households were selected at random. With the help of the village administrative office, a list of the households of landless agricultural labourers was prepared in the alphabetical order with the names of the heads of the households. 100 households were selected by using simple random sampling technique using the lottery method.

## **Review of Literature**

According to Kuznets with economic development in the share of tertiary employment in the labour force increases mainly because of slow growth of technical progress in services, a high income elasticity of demand for some of the tertiary activities and increasing urbanization resulting in rise in the demand for services like transport and distribution. Chuta and Liedholm's review of rural landless agricultural labourers cites a number of studies which have shown that such backward and forward linkages between rural landless agricultural labourers and agriculture are quite strong. Landless agricultural labourers means, "employment in rural areas other than in agriculture". For landless agricultural labourers capital investment needed is very low. This investment will imply that the investment is fixed assets in plant and in raw materials. Examples for landless agricultural labourers are match works, pot making, honey production, beedi making, sheep breeders, match works and construction works, etc. As observed by Kishor C. Samuel the poverty line has been changing from plan to plan. It was Rs.3,500 per family in the Sixth plan, which increased to Rs.6,400 in the Seventh plan and further to Rs.11,000 in the Eighth plan, all in terms of current prices. The 'Poverty line' has been defined in terms of annual income of a family consisting of five members as an average.

## **Findings**

1. Majority of the people in the study area are educated at primary level, which constitutes 42 per cent, secondary level which constitutes 14 per cent and higher studies 22 per cent.
2. Majority of the households of landless labourers belong to BC ie., 76 per cent of the total population in the study area. The next majority dominated caste is MBC ie., 18 per cent.

3. Out of the 100 households 60 per cent households live in concrete house, 28 per cent live in tiled houses and 12 per cent live in Asbestos houses in this area.
4. Out of the 100 households 18 households have less than 4 members in their family which constitutes 36 per cent, 24 households have come under the category between 4-6 which constitutes 48 per cent and eight households have come under the category of 6 and above which constitutes 16 per cent. This data reveals that most of the families are having 4 to 6 children.
5. The household of landless agricultural labourers earns an annual income of Rs.7,14,200. Non-agricultural sources yield 100 per cent of the total income to the households.
6. The households of landless agricultural labourers incurs an annual expenditure of Rs.6,70,160. Of which the expenditure on food items included in this study is Rs.4,58,820 and this accounts for about 68.46 per cent of the total expenditure. The remaining 31.54 per cent goes to non-food items.

### **Suggestions**

1. The landless agricultural labourers should be encouraged to concentrate more on non-farm activities.
2. The expansion of education facilities is essential specifically for the improvement with the knowledge of family planning.
3. Bank loan and credit can be granted to these landless agricultural labourers with low rate of interest.
4. The Government can conduct training programmes to impart training in non-farm activities.
5. In order to reduce the unemployment, various employment schemes should be introduced.

### **Conclusion**

The poverty among the landless agricultural labourers is not satisfactory in this village. They are not in a position to purchase their essential goods. The remedy is to create job opportunity among the unemployed people. The government must take adequate steps to provide financial assistance and introduce job-oriented programmes to this area of landless agricultural labourers. The government must take necessary steps for landless agricultural labourer to solve the problem of rural unemployment and low standard of living. The credit facilities and employment opportunities should provide sufficiently to the landless agricultural labourers by the government, to give more scope for improving their socio-economic conditions and to provide better chance for exploring the potentiality of resources available in the village. There is no agricultural labour organisation. The political leaders and government should come forward to organise a union for the welfare of the landless agricultural workers in these areas. This will help them to secure fair wages, proper working hours and avoid exploitation.

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