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## A STUDY OF PROBLEMS OF SUGARCANE WORKERS IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA AND ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

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### ABSTRACT:

*In developing agrarian democracies like India, the number of unorganized workers is on the rise. Workers and industry have a very close relationship. After 1991, a wave of globalization swept across India, giving rise to new industries. But the exploitation of low paid workers increased. The worker who was working for a low wage avoided taking advantage of the opportunity by accepting the next opportunity because he could not get the education and the opportunity. Therefore, in the current situation, such workers have to go back home as there is no job security. If the worker is not sure of the job or work, the worker may be deprived. For those who have a job or a job security, the worker can truly make a living, not otherwise.*



**KEY WORDS:** Sugarcane workers, political parties.

### INTRODUCTION

Every year for years, they have to be satisfied with the work they get. Similarly, sugarcane harvesters have to move around the factory every year before the start of the factory. When the factory starts, the designated officers of the factory allow the workers to cut the cane through Mukadam and the workers start their cane harvesting work. The worker carries out the cane harvesting in each season till the money is paid to the workers. The worker who is going to cut the cane gets up early in the morning and goes by whatever means he can to cut the cane. Most of the time you are walking. The worker walks towards the factory every season to satisfy his hunger. So the workers have to face many problems. Sugarcane harvesting workers have to face many problems such as financial extortion from the workers, unaccounted for work, treating the workers as per their whims and fancies, working underpaid and overworked. Sugarcane harvesters are an important factor in starting a factory. However, workers are deprived of the benefits of fair wages and other financial benefits. The workers go to the factory every year to harvest sugarcane for their own subsistence but the picture is that every year the factory comes as they have no choice.

Sugarcane is used as a raw material for sugar mills. The new mechanization has made it possible for the workers to get the work they want in the coming modern times. Mechanization has created less employment for the workers. If the workers do not get the work on time, their livelihood will be in question. Sugarcane harvesting workers are an important factor in the economic development of the factory so the workers should be given proper treatment as well as fair remuneration. Unemployment of sugarcane harvesters in particular is on the rise as the workers are unorganized and scattered in many different places. The issue of sugarcane workers has been neglected for many years, so it is

necessary for all the workers in the unorganized sector to come together and work out a solution in order to bring such workers into the mainstream of economic development of the country.

### **PROBLEMS OF THE STUDY:**

Sugarcane harvesters migrate near the sugar mills every year as seasonal workers. The cane harvesters take a certain amount of money from the mukadam to do the organ work but they fail to use the money properly as required. In each cane harvesting season the worker honestly cuts the hard cane but does not use the remuneration properly due to lack of financial planning. So for the next six months, when the cane harvester comes to the village, he seems to have a financial crunch, so he picks it up again. This kind of permanence causes huge losses from its financial component. The children of sugarcane harvesters are deprived of education due to their migration. Due to the large number of sugar mills in the country and in the state, the rural workers get temporary employment but they face many problems.

Workers are permanently neglected. There is no real connection between the worker and the factory. Sugarcane harvesters are recruited through litigation. Mukadam exploits sugarcane harvesters financially, socially, mentally and legally, taking advantage of their ignorance, unemployment, landlessness, child marriage and education debts, superstitions, famines, housing loans, land mortgages, etc. Mukadam does not give an honest account of the work of the carpenters. More work is done in less time and minimum wage is paid to the cane harvesting workers by Mukadam. Mukadam does not maintain transparency in financial transactions. Mukadam's accounts are not audited by the factories.

In the current situation, along with the increase in the number of unorganized workers, their economic inequality is also increasing. In selected villages of Maan taluka in Satara district of western Maharashtra, people go to different sugar mills every year to harvest sugarcane in certain seasons. As a means of subsistence in daily life, cane harvesting has to be done every year. The attitude of the government towards sugarcane harvesting workers is not positive so their problems are increasing frequently. Sugarcane harvesters face many problems such as education of their children, responsibility for marriage of boys and girls, proper accounting of work done by sugarcane harvesters, non-payment of expected work to sugarcane harvesters. As Maan taluka is a drought prone area, most of the people there are subsisting on mercenary labor. Cane harvesting is a major problem for workers, which has a detrimental effect on health and increases costs.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

The main objective of this study is to study the problems of sugarcane harvesters in western of Maharashtra and role of political parties and some specific objectives are given below.

1. To study the economic and social condition of sugarcane harvesting workers.
2. To review the progress of seasonal work of sugarcane harvesters.
3. To study the factors affecting sugarcane harvesting workers.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

The topic chosen for the research is extremely important for the financial management of the cane harvesting workers. Economic exploitation of sugarcane harvesting workers by Mukadam, social problems arising from Mukadam, economic extortion, harassment of work, non-receipt of proper remuneration, untimely accounting, misleading workers in accounting, underpaying workers, fraud Factory failure to properly evaluate workers' work, harassment by cane owners at work, inadequate accommodation facilities, economic and social exploitation of workers by tractor owners, disputes between workers, disputes between tractor owners and cane owners Problems that occur and it is very important to study this issue in order to solve the problem of many factors such as economic exploitation of workers. Sugarcane harvesters are unorganized and it takes time to solve their problems in the current situation.

**SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH:**

For this research, it is a matter of sugarcane workers in selected villages of Maan taluka. For many years research has been done on cane harvesters, new cane harvesters, mukadam bullock cart workers, tractor workers, other tractor workers, gang workers, own tractor contractors, Workers who work on tractors, those who work without lifting, those who work on someone else's bullock carts, etc. are categorized in many ways.

**SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC:**

Some people spend money six months in advance before going to harvest sugarcane and then they go to harvest sugarcane. But when it comes to actual cane harvesting, he is not ready to go for cane harvesting due to many financial difficulties because the money taken is used for various kinds of addictions and some amount is used for household expenses. The researcher has chosen the topic of financial management of cane harvesting workers as the lack of financial planning creates obstacles for the workers to face future problems by spending all the money. Therefore, the researcher has selected the topic of cane harvesting workers in western Maharashtra and the role of political parties.

**PERIOD OF THE STUDY:**

The researcher has chosen a period of three years. In this (2018-19 to 2020-21) the researcher has completed the research based on the information of this period.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

For this research, the researcher has used secondary tools to gather information.

**DATA COLLECTION:**

Researchers have used a variety of tools to do this research. Secondary resources include national and international organizations, annual reports of the milk union, government publications, semi-government publications, various types of university library reports, research papers, research papers, research articles, modern media, Many secondary tools such as reference books, reports, annual circulars, journals, newspapers government records, etc. are used.

**SECONDARY DATA:**

The present researchers have used reference books, Ph.D., textbooks, internet, research articles, research papers, newspapers, project reports, M. Phil., government documents, etc. Many research materials have been used for the present study.

**Research Method:**

The researcher has used descriptive method for this research.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

The problem of sugarcane harvesters in western Maharashtra and the role of political parties are the limitations of this issue. The identity of the unorganized cane harvesting workers in western Maharashtra is unique. There are unorganized workers in all the districts of Western Maharashtra.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

The researcher has done a detailed analysis of the problems of sugarcane workers in Western Maharashtra and the role of political parties as follows.

**ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN MAHARASHTRA:**

Corona's accompaniment in the state began when the last crushing season was in its final stages. This caused great distress to the sugarcane workers at the factory site. Now this year's crushing season is upon us. Corona infection has also increased in the state in the meantime. The number of sugarcane

workers in the state is around 15 lakhs. But fears of a corona are likely to lead to a large drop in this number. Against this backdrop, the mills have also decided to give preference to sawmills as well as local laborers this year. Even so, owning one is still beyond the reach of the average person. The crushing season starts in the state between 15th October. Workers usually start arriving at the factory site about a week before the harvest begins. This year, however, due to corona, the workers have to reach the factory site at least 15 days in advance for swab inspection, segregation etc. Of course, this is the time for sugarcane harvesters to leave their homes. But the workers and their unions are in such a state that the scythe will not take over unless other demands, including the increase in sugarcane harvesting and transportation rates, are met. Until now, the trade union had been accepting the mediation of Jayant Patil and Pankaja Munde. This year, however, the cane-cutting unions have insisted that former Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar mediate.

Doubling the current rates of Cane Harvesting and Mukadam Commission including insurance protection, abolition of 2% income tax on harvesting and transportation business, starting residential ashram schools for children of workers in their area, provision of clean water, electricity and toilet facilities is the main demand. Prior to 2011, the rates for sugarcane workers were fixed every three years. These agreements have been extended in the last nine years since 2011. Meanwhile, once in 2015, sugarcane harvesting and transportation has been increased by 20 per cent. Therefore, the trade unions are demanding a doubling of the rate by signing a new agreement this year. Over the last few years, sugar mills have been facing financial difficulties due to low sugar prices and rising production costs. In such a case, the factories, sugar unions and trade unions should come up with a solution as soon as possible. Other demands of the workers, while quite reasonable, were consistently ignored by the sugar mills and the state government. Sugarcane harvesting, accidents while transporting, disability of workers, sometimes even death. In such a case, they should get insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh. The education of their children is hampered every year due to migration of sugarcane workers. As a solution to this, some factories had started sugar schools. But some of them did not work. In such a case, for the education of the children of the workers, a residential ashram school should be started in their native village. Clean drinking water, light; toilets are the basic necessities of life. Therefore, these facilities must be available at the place of work. Corona is also in crisis this year. In such a case, the health of the cane workers will not be endangered under any circumstances, the concerned factories and the administration should also take care of this. As the crushing season approaches, the workers and their unions are determined not to take up the matter unless other demands, including a hike in sugarcane harvesting and transportation rates, are met.

### **CRITICAL EVOLUTION AND POLITICAL PARTIES:**

There are several organizations affiliated to political parties of sugarcane harvesting workers. In all these organizations, the workers are included only in name and their place is secondary. With the exception of left-wing unions, the majority of office-bearers are from all other unions. Fifty per cent of the cane harvesting workers are women and women have been given a place in any of the unions, so Mukadam's unions are being run on behalf of the workers. As a result, these unions prefer to place demands of Mukadam at the center rather than the interests of the workers and to accept those demands themselves. During each strike, it is decided to accept only two demands, namely increase in cane harvesting wages and increase in Mukadam Commission. The welfare benefits of the sanction are ignored by the politicians. As the term fixed by the arbitration expires in the season of the year, meetings are being held on behalf of the workers in the place by the political leadership with the office bearers of various organizations and the Mukadam. Only if the political leadership takes these strike numbers party wise will the problems of sugarcane harvesting workers be solved. Meetings are held by various political parties on the issue of carpentry workers and the carpentry workers are misled. The public relations campaign has been started from the point of view of sugarcane harvesting workers but the maximum benefit of this campaign is being reaped. One is a 150 per cent increase in wages for cane harvesting workers with an interim increase of five per cent in the last five years and the other is a 37 per cent increase in litigation commission.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

1. To provide accommodation to the cane harvesting workers during the cane harvesting season.
2. To bring transparency in the financial accounts received by sugarcane harvesters from Mukadam.
3. To reduce the inconvenience caused to sugarcane harvesting workers by Mukadam.
4. To provide suitable facilities to the sugarcane workers through state government, factories as well as NGOs.
5. Trying to resolve disputes between sugarcane harvesters and mukadams.
6. To try to solve the problems arising between sugarcane harvesters, mukadams, tractor owners, tractor drivers, and sugar mills.
7. To strive for the educational advancement of the children of sugarcane harvesters.

**CONCLUSION:**

Political parties need to make efforts at the government level to strengthen their livelihood without looking at sugarcane harvesters as politics. From the above discussion it can be seen that the problems of sugarcane harvesting workers are increasing day by day. Sugarcane harvesters in Maan taluka migrate in large numbers during the cane harvesting season as it is difficult for them to support themselves and their families due to water scarcity in their native. In order to solve the problems of sugarcane harvesters, it is imperative that all sections of the society come together as well as at the government level to take notice of these sugarcane harvesters and make efforts to solve their problems.

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