



A Critical Analysis of Sugarcane Cutting Workers and Historical Background in Western Maharashtra

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Abstract

In developing and agrarian democracies like India, a study of the historical background of sugarcane workers in western Maharashtra, sugarcane cutting is a traditional way of providing livelihood for workers as it is very closely related. The sugarcane workers should be accepted by the factory as permanent workers and not as migrant workers because the sugarcane workers are the children of their families who leave their responsibility to the old person and migrate to the countryside to cut sugarcane. Many times sugarcane workers should be treated as their workers permanently with the view that sugar school should be provided for the children of sugarcane workers and the basic facilities of sugarcane workers should be met. Pension facilities should be provided for the sustenance of the sugarcane workers in their old age, and if there is a factory clinic near the sugar factory, the workers can take care of their health, and if there is electricity or adequate rations, the factories can provide them with proper sustenance.

Key words: Sugarcane workers, employment, historical background, responsibility, Western Maharashtra, migration, factory etc.

Introduction:

India ranks second in sugarcane production in the world after Brazil. Apart from that, sugarcane is grown in Europe, China, Thailand, Russia, America, and Mexico. In some places sugarcane harvesting is done by a machine. Sugarcane is harvested by machine in many places in India, but most of the sugarcane is harvested by workers. From a work or business perspective, sugarcane work can be considered the same everywhere. Cutting the sugarcane by hand, tying its bales, lifting and carrying them in a big vehicle and transporting them etc. Although there is some variation across countries in these tasks, workers play a key role, from cutting the sugarcane to loading the vehicle. It is not that sugarcane workers have problems in India and not in other

countries. But there are some positive and important things in foreign countries. Imitating them can be helpful in solving some of the problems faced by sugarcane workers in India, especially in Maharashtra.

Problems of the Study:

Apart from India, dangerous work like sugarcane cutting is also done on a large scale in other countries. The number of sugarcane workers in Maharashtra is large because the majority of migrant sugarcane workers are uneducated or semi-educated and poor. Women participate almost as much as men. But in other countries, the number of women in sugarcane work is very low. In some places, not at all. None of the studies specifically refer to the involvement of pregnant or new mothers. A review of the available research in Maharashtra and other countries reveals a very important difference. That is the research approach to this labor issue and the change in it. For many years we have been increasing our understanding of the poverty, social background, labor rights, wages, and living conditions of sugarcane workers.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of the research is to study the historical background of sugarcane cutting workers in Western Maharashtra and some specific objectives have been given by the researchers as follows.

1. To Study the historical background of sugarcane workers.
2. To Study the socio-economic condition of sugarcane workers.
3. To Study the standard of living of sugarcane workers.

Significance of the Study:

The issues of this study in Maharashtra are limited to socio-economic issues of workers and their livelihood. There is no purpose to underline here that this is of no importance. It is also important to study from this perspective, because the questions are still as burning. But if we consider sugarcane work to be dangerous, it is equally important to see to what extent it can go to the workers. Countries like Brazil, Costa Rica, and Salvador etc. seem to have thought deeply about sugarcane workers. In particular, protective gloves for workers, measures to reduce heat stroke or heat stress, supply of protein and energy to maintain nutritional status of workers, quality of life of workers before and after sugarcane harvesting, effects on kidneys, water, rest, energy drinks and nutritional measures for workers etc. were prioritized.

Scope of the Study:

While studying the historical background of sugarcane workers in Western Maharashtra, the researchers have included the districts of Satara Sangli Kolhapur

Solapur etc. In real sense sugarcane workers from different places like Osmanabad, Beed, Latur, Jalna, Parbhani Shelu, Parthiv come to Sangli, Satara, Kolhapur in Western Maharashtra to cut sugarcane but the researchers have considered in this research the areas like Sangola, Sangli, Satara, Kolhapur etc. Sugarcane harvesters are scattered in many places in Western Maharashtra but the researcher has studied the migration history and historical background of sugarcane harvesters in Satara, Sangli Kolhapur and Solapur district so the scope of the research can be seen in four districts.

Period of the Study:

While studying the historical performance of sugarcane workers in western Maharashtra and the historical background of sugarcane workers, the researcher has studied the background of sugarcane workers in the year 2021.

Limitation of the Study:

Various studies on the work and health of sugarcane workers in Brazil shed light on many things. There sugarcane workers live in the area of sugarcane. They are provided transportation facility to go to work place every day. Each worker is transported to the workplace by vehicle. After eight hours of work in the field, he is taken back home by vehicle. Workers are provided with fridges, purified water, snacks, salt and energy drinks containing electrolytes. The purpose behind it is to prevent water loss from the workers' bodies due to the heavy work of sugarcane cutting. Sugarcane workers have protective equipment such as gloves, safety glasses, knee-high leather boots etc. It is equally true that sugarcane workers there also suffer from various health problems, but they receive treatment.

Research Methodology:

While studying the historical background of sugarcane cutting workers in western Maharashtra, the researcher has used many secondary researches. Also in this the researcher has studied the quality of life of sugarcane workers, their social conditions, economic conditions, historical background and their status in society through secondary research using descriptive analysis method.

Research Method:

While studying sugarcane workers in western Maharashtra and their historical background, the researcher used descriptive analysis method and sugarcane workers are paid from Mukadam for six months to support themselves and for the remaining six months they have to migrate to cut sugarcane.

Results and Discussion: One thing that is clear from this gross comparative review of sugarcane workers is that we have not fully looked into the issues of sugarcane workers

even at the research level. Along with the socio-economic issues of these workers, there is a need to study every impact of this work on their health. e.g. it may be important to prepare a scientific guide on how many hours cane workers should work, how to work, when to take leave, when, where and how to conduct health checks. If we want to go deeper, physical examination of the workers before the sugarcane harvesting season can be done by checking the changes in them after the season.

Sugarcane Cutter and Transportation:

Sugarcane workers in Maharashtra have no access to work place. One has to walk up to two kilometers for sugarcane cutting. Hence, these workers have to expend physical energy both by doing hard work and commuting to and from the workplace. We have snacks, energy drinks, proteins for the workers, it's a dream. Processed water is also a long way off. Even simple drinking water is not provided to the workers. Sometimes the workers look around for drinking water with a bucket or bucket after the afternoon work. Water from farm well or river is used for drinking. That water is not necessarily clean.

Fundamental Rights and Sugarcane Workers:

In short, the basic needs of these workers are neglected in such a bad way. Apart from providing these workers with protective equipment, the gang owners also collect money for tarpaulin for accommodation and coyote for cutting sugarcane. These workers work in tattered and old clothes. Their children often walk around in the sugarcane field without clothes and bare skin with cuts from the sugarcane field. Neither the gang owners nor the sugar mills think about incidents like scorpions, snake bites, falls, falling down while hiring a vehicle, vomiting and death. All these things are considered personal problems of workers. Therefore, their responsibility is pushed on the workers themselves. There are many studies in foreign countries that say that 'cane harvesting can cause dehydration and adversely affect workers kidneys, because it is very common for workers to lose water during sugarcane harvesting. Hence, it is urgent to consider its adverse effects on workers' health.

Standard of Living and Historical Background:

In Maharashtra, the standard of living of these sugarcane workers is so taken for granted that even simple drinking water is not provided to them. They are not provided with any solid source of drinking water or treated potable water. These workers have to change many villages for sugarcane harvesting. As a result, the sources of available wastewater also change. Many times due to water change, the workers and their children suffer from colds, diarrhea and vomiting. It would be advisable to see from

research what effect this has on their kidneys or not. There is research evidence that kidney disorders among sugarcane workers in the US have killed many workers. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that these problems will be among the sugarcane workers in Maharashtra. Many researches have revealed that sugarcane harvesting affects the respiratory system of the workers. Along with this, they have to go through physical, mental and emotional stress. Many studies have also revealed the effects on workers while cutting burnt sugarcane.

Sugarcane Workers and Health:

Overwork in sugarcane workers leads to physical stress, dehydration, and muscle weakness. It is well known that they require special nutrition. A study in Salvador, Central America, found that sugar cane workers who were given water, rest, and shade reduced their body's water loss, while also significantly increasing their productivity. Prior to this study, workers normally cut five tons of sugarcane per day, but with the experiment of water, rest and shade, workers began to cut seven tons of sugarcane per day. This means that the sugar industry also benefits by safeguarding the interests of the workers.

History of Sugarcane Workers:

In the research of some places, by recording the physical activities of the workers during sugarcane work, which parts of their body are subjected to more stress, how can it be reduced or how can the stress on them be reduced. But we see the opposite. In Maharashtra, it is sometimes heard that the more the workers work, the more they benefit financially. But the truth is the contractors and gang owners and thereby the sugar mills benefit more. Sugarcane workers get advance money before work, get work in sugarcane, get accommodation and free drinking water; somehow they are satisfied as six months go by. But they endanger their health by doing life-threatening work like sugarcane cutting.

Migrant Workers:

Of course, this is possible only when the interest of all the workers is considered by the sugar mills. While the sugarcane belt provides employment to the hands of seasonal, migrant workers, there are many negative aspects such as the status of these workers, their remuneration, exploitation and the health effects of this work. They need to be considered.

Unorganized sector and Workers:

Workers in unorganized sectors and their problems are increasing day by day. Today, the proportion of unorganized workers is significant in every sector of the

economy. According to government statistics, nearly 93 % of the total workforce in the country is in the unorganized sector. They are entitled to job security, wage guarantee, casual leave, health facilities, insurance facilities, pension, etc. as per labor laws. Social security benefits are not available. Hence they are called unorganized workers. It has the highest proportion of workers engaged in agriculture. These unorganized workers also include stood workers. Sugarcane workers like other unorganized workers are found trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, unemployment, substandard living conditions. Today, almost one-fourth of the sugar factories are running in the state. Sugarcane workers cut sugarcane and supply it to these factories.

Social life of sugarcane workers:

Due to low rainfall in Marathwada, sugarcane production is low, so the farmer opts for sugarcane cutting. If a man is a work, half a poem is two, a full poem is a group, and if it is a group, then the wording is used. The profession of sugarcane workers has started to migrate from one generation to the next in the present scenario. Sugarcane cutting is a traditional profession. As the historical background of the sugarcane workers is very poor and destitute, they settle a certain amount from Mukadam for six months and migrate to Pargawi to cut sugarcane. Farming is not possible during low monsoons; so many laborers migrate for many years to cut sugarcane.

Conclusion:

The life of the sugarcane workers is the misery of a scorpion. The welfare schemes have not reached these elements who take the family to the workplace. As a result, from insurance, health facilities to Ujjwala Yojana, gas has reached them only because of lack. Sugarcane is a major source of sugar as it is an important industrial crop. As it is a perishable crop, sugarcane is not directly traded but the sugar produced from the crop plays an important role in the economy of the countries. Sugarcane is required as raw material for sugar factory. 24 hours day and night supply of sugarcane in bulk to the sugar factory is important for the workers. Sugarcane harvesters cut the sugarcane and transport the sugarcane by means of a vehicle i.e. tractor or bullock-cart to the sugarcane factory and sugarcane is produced from sugarcane by crushing the sugarcane and transporting it. The process from sugarcane planting to sugar production is a big challenge for a farmer. Sugarcane counts as a very important sector in the Indian sugar industry. As a result of the green revolution in India after 1960, irrigation facilities were created in most areas in western Maharashtra. Arable farming was transformed into horticultural agriculture and Pune Sangli, Satara, Kolhapur became famous as an area with some Kshatriyas in Solapur district coming under irrigation.

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