

SOCIO - ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL WOMEN LABOUR IN TAMIL NADU

Dr.N.Krishnaveni,

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics,

Nirmala College for Women, Coimbatore – 641018.

Tamil Nadu,India;

`krish.arvindh@gmail.com`

“There is no change for welfare of the world

Unless the condition of women is improved” – Swami Vivekananda

ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the backbone of the rural India. In India, it constitutes around 56 per cent of its population is dependent on it. Agriculture is important sector which gives more employment opportunities. In accounts for a large part of our National Income, it is the most important sector from the point of view of employment. Women are the backbone of the Indian family plays a significant role in agriculture and allied operations. It is noted that almost 70 percent of rural population of women work in agriculture and its related work. According to Census 2011 data the working woman from rural area is about 81 percentage.

The contribution of women in socio economic development particularly in the rural areas has been of vital significance. Most of the women in rural areas are engaged in household work and many of them also spare time to take part in various economic activities of the family. Rural women are fully engaged in agriculture. Their involvement in agriculture work mainly depends on Socio –Economic status. Thus women at large continue to suffer from social and economic deprivation. Since this paper propose to propagate the inherent component of women status in terms of employment and wage.

Keywords: Agriculture, Wage Discrimination, Work Participation

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of women to agricultural production is far more than that of men, but escapes recognition when calculating out plans for rural development. However the contribution of women to agricultural labour often becomes invisible because women are generally regarded as socially unproductive. The indivisibility of women's work, domestic chores and other tasks, is part of a cultural ideological system which views women as the primary bread-winner. It may also be a hangover of an earlier social organization. In which women were primarily responsible for subsistence. So that women's contribution to the material reproduction of the family is not seen as economically meaningful.

The activities of woman includes working on fields , crop cultivation, looking after animals, collecting water, preparing food, taking care of children, household works and looking after the house. They also help in horticulture and fishing. These activities or the contribution are not being recognized and many things are unnoticed and not given any economical value. These are being ignored in the society. The activities carried out by the woman are not recognized and they are categorized into unskilled labor. According to UN, it has been given that the rural women earn only one tenth of their income and overall one percent of world's total income.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Singh and Vinay (2012) briefed in their working paper about the significance of female labour in agriculture and allied activities. They further stated that the role of women in agriculture as female labour is not highlighted in India. Despite of their presence in activities sowing, transplanting and post harvest operations they are considered as an invisible workers.

S. Gajanan Purohit (1995) analyzed a unique feature of female participation throughout India is that they are workers, laborers, cultivators, producers, traders besides performing all household duties which are considered as „unproductive. The various activities of women can be divided into two broad heading viz. Market Activities which consist of activities of women on farm and non-farm and Non-market which include personal care of children cooking, washing clothes, fetching water, animal care etc. In all these activities women play an effective role. The dual role of woman as paid workers in the outside market and unpaid workers in the household leads to a significant contribution in real terms to the productive system. But throughout the world, the rural women have been under-represented in the development process. The male dominated society has not recognized their proper contribution.

Varma (1992) revealed that during the harvesting season, utilization of women labour is maximal, carrying bundle of harvested crop to the stop where threshing would be done is a heavy task which is performed mostly by women. Each bundle is carried as a head load by women, mostly bare footed, walking over the sharp shrubs of the harvested fields. Men rarely participated in this task. Falling participation of women in employment was first pointed out by Gadgil (1938) in 1924 but effective concern on this issue was shown only after the independence of the country.

Soma (1988) observed that the contribution of the women make as workers. It cannot be recorded because household work has yet not been properly quantified.

Patel (1989) said that due to the invisibility of unpaid work at home, value of their labour is under estimated leading to their exploitation. In other words, they work for longer hours than men (particularly rural women) but are under paid.

Patnaik & Sasikala (1995) study was based on the contribution of employed women to household income. She has given more importance to the burden of work. According to her, about 8 hours a day women are working her place of work and another 8 hours of work at home.

Sethi (1984) also pointed out the near fourfold increase in women work participation rate in the state of Punjab which is in the vanguard of Green Revolution in this country.

There are some other studies, which tried to explain the women labour participation rates, in terms of economic and non-economic factors. Economic factors include wages, technology, irrigation, cropping pattern, farm size, economic development and urbanization etc. And non-economic factors or socio-cultural factors are caste, education, migration, marriage, family size and sex discrimination etc.

Diwan (1995) Mies (1986), Parmar (1987) pointed out the development attempts made to elevate the status of rural women, they continue to get lower wage than men. A number of studies have tried to gauge of rural women with regard to their wages. These studies have clearly established that women employed as wage labourers of domestic servants were generally paid lower wages than the male labourers.

From the above review, there is no particular study, which is based on agricultural work, wages and economic contributions of working women to household income and pattern of expenditure and savings of agricultural women labour. Some studies are given more importance to women agricultural work and some was showing discrimination of wages. So the aim is (i) to made an attempt to examine the employment and wages of agricultural women labour.

III. SELECTION, JUSTIFICATION AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Women play a dual productive role as unpaid labour at home and in the fields and as paid labourers outside home. Waged workers are often poorly paid, with wages will below those earned by industrial workers, lower even than the amount required to subsist. Agricultural employment is often unstable and temporary. Agricultural women labourers working and living conditions are often poor. In many parts of the world, agricultural workers are denied fundamental human rights: the rights to freedom of association, to organize and to collectively bargain with employers. Agricultural women workers are typically excluded from active participation in decision-making process inside home, and also farms. Agricultural workers have wage discriminations. Women workers are paid less than the men workers. They are dispersed, unorganized and generally have poor bargaining power, due to seasonal work. Circumstances force many of them to borrow from time to time, from private sources either for consumption purposes or to meet social obligations and some of them end up as bonded labourers. Women do work in agricultural operations than what is recorded by official agencies.

Thus, women at large continue to suffer from social and economic deprivation. This calls for evolving some strategies for survival and social dignity, welfare and self-reliance and changes in the economic and social participation of the rural women. Since this study propose to propagate the inherent component of women status, in terms of employment, wage as well as work discrimination and unaccounted labourers.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Considering the multiple roles of agricultural women, the present study is an attempt to explore the significant roles and participation of these women in home and farm, which are studied with certain specific objectives:

- 1) To examine the changes in structure of rural female workforce in recent years.
- 2) To assess the socio-economic conditions of the rural women associated with agriculture.

V. METHODOLOGY

The required secondary data compile from the two major sources, viz, Census data from 1961 to 2011 and National Sample Survey (NSS) data. In addition, other Government Reports, Publications, Working papers, Journals, Annual Reports had consulted to collate the required data.

VI. MODELS USED

Statistical tools like percentage analysis, cross tabulation chart analysis are applied to find out the major factors determines the socio economic status of agricultural women labourers.

VII. MULTI – DIMENSIONAL ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL WOMEN LABORERS

Indian women plays multiple roles can be classifying the work in two categories.

- Within the home
- Outside the home.

A) Domestic Activities:

Within the home, a woman plays various roles like daughter, wife and mother and also takes care of husband, children and family members. She trains her children from birth till they grow up. Apart from these works she does the works like cooking, child rearing, water collection, fuel wood gathering, house maintenance etc.,

B) Agricultural Activities:

In the field of agriculture she does the works like seeding, planting, weeding, irrigation, application of fertilizer, segregating, harvesting, winnowing, storing etc., The women paid for the activities outside the home and not begin paid within the home. They contribute more to the society and the home both physically and economically. But throughout the world the rural women's contribution has not being recognized in the development process as well in the economic contribution. The woman is being dominated by men and also ignores the women's contributions.

C) Allied Activities:

Rural women are engaged in agricultural activities in three different ways on the socio economic status on their family. They are worked as:

* Paid Laborers

* Cultivating on their own land

In our state and our country all household duties are not considered as productive. Even in the agricultural field most of the men does the work of ploughing, irrigating and leveling. All other works in the field are carried out by women. In the agriculture sector, women carries includes heavy works like planting new sapling which required standing in the field for long hours. They work in all difficult climatic conditions. Yet they are not paid as they should have being paid.

The constitution of India provides equality to woman and it has provided measures in favor of woman to overcome the disadvantages faced by them in socio economic, education and political sectors. According to Chauhan 2003 the improvement of woman in socio economic would have following impact.

- The Income of the family increases that helps in improving the standard of living
- Saving will increase
- Productivity of workers improved
- Supply of labour force increases.

VIII. ROLE OF WOMEN IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE

Agriculture sector provides a lot of employment and also it contributed to 41.5 percent of national income. 2011 census shows that only 54.6% of total workers in India are taking part of agricultural sector with a decline of 3.6% as compared to 2001 census. Compared to 2001 census, there has been increase of 44 percent in the male population of agricultural labourers, while for females the number has increased by 24.5 percent. The trends for farming show those 14 percent woman and 3.2 percent of cultivators. As per the census of 2011, 263 million people are engaged in the agricultural sector and over half of them are now agricultural labourers, a trend observed for the first time in the past 40 years.

There should not be any gender division and equality for women would be good for agriculture. Even though women work more than man in the agriculture they are not considered for decision making in farm activities. This should change and the woman should be involved in decision making which improves her skills and knowledge and benefitting for her as well as for society. In our country women faces lot of challenges and lot of constraints. Addressing this gap in the field agriculture would increase productivity, reducing poverty and hunger and promoting economic growth. The gap between the roles of woman in Indian agriculture and the man is mainly due to region, age, demography and social class.

Women contribute about three-fourth of the labour required for agricultural operations. Their involvement in agricultural operations is beside their usual domestic work. Most of the contributions made by women to the farm sector also go unaccounted as they are not directly paid. The contribution of female labour is towards agricultural production is always more than the male labour in all types of land holding size. In view of all these things, woman is recognized as a partner of man in agriculture and she is included in the effort of bringing new technology to the farmers because of her intimate involvement in agriculture as a manager, decision maker and labourer. The status of rural women is improving day by day.

IX. TRENDS OF WOMEN WORK PARTICIPATION RATE IN MAJOR STATES OF INDIA

Table 1.1

Women Work Participation Rate In Major States Of India

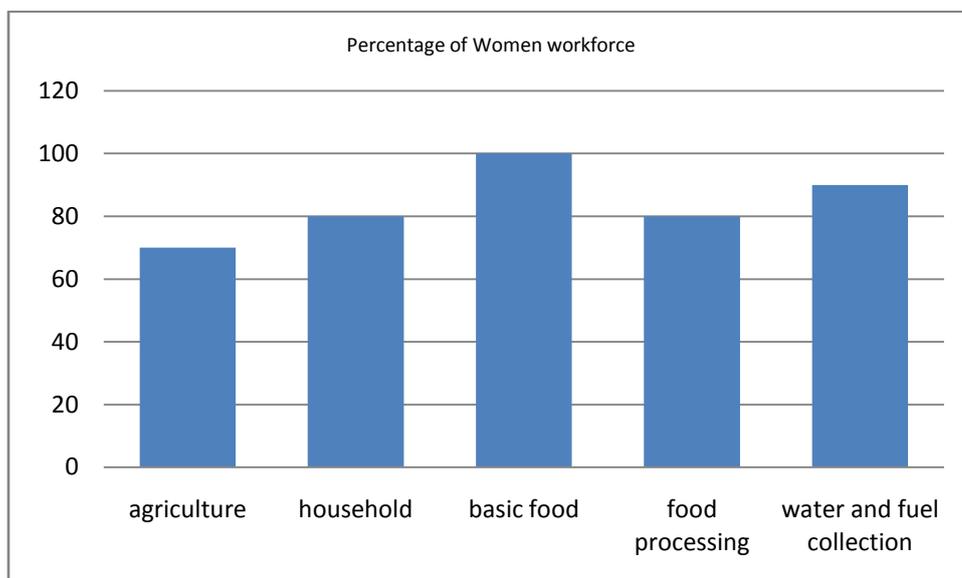
S. No	State	Women Work Participation to the Total Population		Share of Women Agricultural Workers	
		1999-2000	2009-2010	1999-2000	2009-2010
1.	Andhra Pradesh	47.8	48.3	47.2	48.6
2.	Maharastra	43.4	47.4	49.7	50.3
3.	Tamil Nadu	43.0	46.1	41.8	40.6
4.	Karnataka	38.0	45.9	41.6	44.2
5.	Madya Predesh	38.2	36.6	41.8	40.6
6.	Odissa	29.9	32.2	36.6	38.8
7.	Kerala	23.8	25.6	40.0	41.3
8.	Uttar Pradesh	20.1	24.0	32.5	37.6
9.	West Bengal	16.0	17.8	19.2	21.7
10.	Bhihar	17.3	13.8	26.2	23.1
	All India	29.9	32.7	39.2	41.9

Source : NSS Report 409 & 515

The table 1.1 shows the tendency of women work participation rate in total and the share of agricultural workers in selected states of India. When compared to the overall work participation rate in the selected states in India between 1999-2000 and 2009-2010. The work participation rate of women workers shows the increasing trend except in Bihar. Similar trend is prevailed in the case of women agricultural work participation except in Bihar. In 2009-2010 the percentage of overall work participation rate is high in Andra Pradesh, Maharastra and Tamilnadu. The share of women workers in agriculture is very high than the overall women work participation rate in Tamilnadu, Odisha and Kerala.

X. WORK STATUS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Most of the time work done by woman is being unnoticed and goes unrecorded. This includes growing vegetables, maintaining animals, collecting fuel water and food for animals. The work done in the family land also not recorded. In rural India, around 80 percentage of women work force depended on agriculture for their livelihood. 75 percentage of women were working on agricultural sector in 2011. They formed about 33 percent of cultivators and 47 percent of agricultural labourers. Work of a women agricultural labourers or cultivators are limited to less skilled jobs in India.



FAO of United Nation

According to the FAO of United Nation, woman contributed to 80 percentage of basic food processing in developing countries and 50 percent of total food production in the world. The contribution made by woman despite unequal access of land and other things is tremendous. There should be process that should benefiting both men and women.

XI. WAGE DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

In agricultural sector woman is getting paid less than men. Women are hired as casual workers. They do not have any job security and wages are also very less. In 2005 it has been observed that the women paid 69% of salary of a man. In 2007 the woman working in agriculture received less than the minimum wage.



Source prepared based on NSS data

As farmers and agricultural labourers, women contribute significantly to food security of the country, but they are paid 22 percent less than their male counterparts (Agricultural Statistics Report). While wages of both male and female agricultural labourers increased during 2006-2017, the wage disparity continues and the women agricultural workers earn less. The wage gap was the highest during 2012-14 when women farmers received nearly 27 % less than the men during the period.

It can be seen that the women continue to get less wage than men. It is noted that around 2012 to 2014 it is seen that around 27% wage difference between men and a women. It is observed that the total women workforce in an organized sector is only 4 percent. A recent study conducted by Women and Population Division of FAO in developing countries observed that in women works in 70 percentage of agriculture sector, around 80 percent in food production, while 100 percent in food processing, 80 per cent in food storage and about 90 percentage in collection of water and fuel wood.

XII. AVERAGE DAILY WAGE RATES IN ALL INDIA 2013-2014

The wage rates for the year 2013-14 report that average daily wage rates varied widely for agricultural occupations. The variations, Rs. 178.82 for male animal husbandry labourers, Rs.304.72 for male labourers engaged in loggers and wood cutters, Rs. 133.80 for female animal husbandry labourers, Rs. 185.39 for female labourers engaged in ploughing activities and Rs. 77.51 for child animal husbandry labours and Rs.150.48 for harvesting occupation. Loggers and wood cutters with the average daily wage rates ranged between Rs. 301.49 to 310.57 which were the highest paid occupations. Plant protection workers with average daily wage rate of Rs.281.67 to 348.00 and Rs.26.85 to 288.94, ploughing and tilling workers fetched the highest wages for women followed by harvesting and sowing occupations. The all-India average daily wage rate for women in ploughing and tilling workers was in the range of Rs. 175.89 to 195.75. Finally this study reveals that main factors responsible for poor condition of agricultural labourers are ignorance, negligence, illiteracy and poverty of labourers. Unless social census is arrived and strict laws are made the exploitations of labourers may not end in near future. Agriculture is the backbone of India; it is a way of life to the mass of rural India. In order to uplift the agricultural activities, the agricultural labourers should be given more weightage especially landless agricultural labourers. Their social status is very poor when compared with other labourers in India. Activities of the government should be always at the aim to improve the landless agricultural labourers. This will take colorful economic development of India.

XIII. INCREASING STRENGTH OF FEMALE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

An important characteristic of the female agricultural labourers in India is that women get wages at lower rates because of the fact that the hired labour can be substituted by the family labour. The wages are not paid even in accordance with the minimum wages act. The wages paid to the female agricultural labourers are much below the prescribed rates. The factors like the casual nature of employment, ignorance of law, low bargaining power of women, fear of losing job and migration have contributed for the wide spread disparities in wages much to the disadvantages of women.

XIV. CONSTRAINS FACED BY WOMAN IN AGRICULTURE

Women have major constraints for participation in agriculture is as follows (Raveendaran, 2006):

- 1) Unequal Land Rights
- 2) Limited Access to Use of Resources
- 3) Lack of Equipment and Appropriate Technology
- 4) Limited Contact with Agricultural Extension
- 5) Lack of Access to Credit
- 6) Lower Level of Education

XV. CONCLUSION

Agriculture is increasingly becoming the preserve of women has important implications for policy. Agriculture policy has been largely blind. In order to formulate policy that is sensitive to women roles and needs in agriculture, it is first of all necessary to improve the measurement of their participation and to recognize their contribution. Women empowerment should imply a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self reliance, to assert their independent right to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination.

1. It is need to intensification of agriculture through adoption of double and multiple cropping practices. It would be increase prospects of employment on the form. We should encourage labour intensive techniques in these activities and should not go for higher mechanization in the above activities, especially in dry areas.
2. Minimum and equal wages should be fixed by state Government for agricultural labour and the rates should be reviewed periodically.
3. There is need to make available cheap credit to needy agricultural women to start self - employment and as a result of that our rural women may get additional opportunity for gainful employment.
4. Conscious efforts are needed for training of female work force in the rural areas in alternative skills.
5. Development of Small Scale and Cottage industries and handicraft sector and expansion of rural welfare services would enhance employment opportunities for women. Hence, these are needed to be developed on the right lines in rural areas.
6. The women in rural areas should be educated.
7. There is need to bring about some attitudinal and institutional changes to remove the prejudices, against women and to remove the general feeling that women are good just for house and unskilled work.
8. Addition to above, some alternative employment programmes and opportunities should be provided to agricultural women labour in rural areas.

REFERENCES

- [1] Agarwal & Bina., *“Work Participation of Rural Women in Third World - some Data and conceptual Biases”*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol - XX, Dec – 21-28, 1985, P.A. 155.
- [2] Begam & Meharlaj *“Women Rights and Rural Employment”*, Kurukshehra, April 2000, PP. 61-62.
- [3] Chatterji & Soma., *“The Indian Women’s Search For An Identity”*, Vikash Publishing, Delhi, 1988.
- [4] D.R. Gadgil, *“The Industrial Evolution of India in Recent Times”*, Oxford University press, Bombay, 1938.
- [5] Diwan & Ritu, *“Gender in Neoclassical Economics: Conceptual Over view, Economic and Political weekly”*, Vol. XXX, No.17, April 29, 1995.
- [6] Krishna Rao. E., *“Role of Women in Agriculture: A Micro Level study”*, paper presented at Nation Conference on Empowerment of Women, Organized by Sarojini Naidu Centre For Women’s studies of Mahatma Gandhi National Institute of Research And Social Action, March 2006, P. 100.
- [7] Lalitha Devi. U., *“Status and Employment of Women in India”*, B. R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1982, P. 25.
- [8] Mies & Maria., (Assisted by the Lalitha Kumari and Krishna Kumar) *“India Women In Subsistence and Agricultural Labour”*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1986.
- [9] P. K. Chauhan, *“Women Employment in Agriculture: A case study of Nalgonda District”*, Ph.D., Thesis submitted to Osmania University, Hyderabad, 2003, PP. 1-2
- [10] Padma Vathi & Karne *“Wage Discrimination of Agricultural Women Workers in Un organized Sector”*, paper presented at National Conference on Employment of women, Organized by Sarojini Naidu centre for Women’s studies of Mahatma Gandhi National Institute of Research And Social Action, March 2006, P. 40.
- [11] Parmar. B. D., *“Rural Labour Market: An Impirical Study of Farm Wages in Savrashttra Region”*, Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 23, No.2, 1987.

- [12] Patel.V., "*Problem pertaining to Women's Work paid, Unpaid, Employment, Unemployment*", A collection of Papers presented at the UN-INSTRAW – GOIDWCD – SNTD – National Workshop and Indicators, changing perspectives 1989.
- [13] Patnaik & Sasikala., "*Economic Contribution of Employed Women to Household Income A Case Study of Bhubaneswar*", Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies, Bhubaneswar, 1995.
- [14] S. Gajanan purohit, "*Planning and Women in Rural India: An Impact Study*", Ph.D., Thesis submitted to Karnataka University, Dharwad, 1995, PP. 23-24.
- [15] Sethi, Raj Mohani, "*Changing patterns of Female Labour in Agriculture: The case of Punjab*", Social Action, Vol. 34, N.4, 1984.
- [16] Shashi Kanta Varma, "*Women in Agriculture – A Socio – Economic Analysis*", concept publishing Company, New 1992, P.13.
- [17] <http://www.censusindia.gov.in>
- [18] <http://www.mospi.gov.in>
- [19] <http://www.fao.org>