

Chapter VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In the preceding Chapters, attempts have been made to examine the status of women agricultural labour. In context and magnitude, the data and information collected for the study was rich. This Chapter, as such, lists out the important observations drawn from the earlier Chapters and presents suggestions to improve the status of women agricultural labour.

Women constitute half of the global population and one-third of labour force, but receive only one-tenth of world income and own less than one per cent of the world's property. The process of economic development induced several key changes in the structure of the developing economies that includes changes in the allocation of labour in different economic activities. The most important change concerns with the participation of women in the economic activities. The major occupation of rural women lies with agriculture and related activities, thereby contributing about three-fourth of the labour required for agricultural operations. The prosperity and the growth of not only a nation but also the remaining half of the population depend on the status and development of its female population.

Women are the backbone of the village economy of rural India. Women take up different works to eke out their livelihood and the majority of the rural women depend on agriculture, which is the major unorganized sector in India. Many of these labour are landless belongs to lower social and economic status. The role and status of women are altered in the process of agrarian transformation due to the technology of cultivation. The impact of new technology benefited only the rich farmers and not the poor agricultural

labour and as a result, the gap between the poor and rich further widened and agricultural labour was left far behind.

The disaggregated pattern of development has varied impact on women members of every region, group, class and caste. In this backdrop, it is pertinent to examine the status of women. In spite of large number of studies on female agricultural labour, they are confirmed to one or other region. There is no comprehensive study which covers all the regions. Except a few studies conducted here and there, no serious study is done on this phenomenon. The development strategies had their impact differently in different regions. So far there is no comprehensive study on the socio-economic conditions of female agricultural labour in Andhra Pradesh. Therefore, there is a need to make an attempt to study the women labour especially in agricultural sector. Hence, the present study is taken up to make a study on the status of women agricultural labour across various social categories in Andhra Pradesh with the following objectives.

The main objective of the study is to analyze the status of women labour in agriculture within the framework of economic and social perspectives. The study focuses on these specific objectives:

- To analyze the policies support to the women agricultural labour
- To analyze the changing trends of the women work participation
- To examine the socio-economic status of women agricultural labour
- To analyze the factors influencing the poverty among women agricultural labour

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The sample households were interviewed personally to collect the required primary data using structured questionnaire. The household survey was conducted to collect information on the socio-economic status which includes employment, income and consumption expenditure of women labour in agriculture.

A multi-stage random sample is used for the study. The districts are divided into two categories agriculturally developed and agriculturally less developed districts. The districts which are having irrigated facilities for more than 50 per cent of the net sown area are categorized as agriculturally developed districts and districts having irrigated facilities less than 50 per cent of net sown area are categorized as less agriculturally developed districts. From each category, one district is selected randomly. Thus Guntur district is selected at random from agriculturally developed regions and Warangal district is selected at random from agriculturally less developed regions. In the second stage five mandals are selected at random from each district. In the third stage one village is selected at random from each selected mandal. Thus a sample of 10 villages is selected for the purpose of the study. In final stage, the list of landless female agricultural labour is prepared for each of the selected village and a sample of 30 respondents was selected randomly for each village. Thus a sample of 300 female labour' household was selected for the study.

The review of various earlier studies revealed that the economic policies of developing countries had limited effects on socio-economic development of female labour in agricultural sector. The development policies failed to address the basic needs of female labour. Since female labour belongs to the poorer section of the society, they are not organized and do not have political influence and the adverse effects of economic policies fall disproportionate on them though they are playing vital role in agricultural sector.

Andhra Pradesh is situated in a tropical region between the latitudes 13° to 20° North and the longitudes 77° to 85° East and is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in East with a coastal line of 960 k.m. The density of the population is 277 per sq. km. as against the India's density of 312 per sq. km. According to 2011 Census, the total population of the State is 846.65 lakhs. The literacy rate in the State is 67.66 while literacy of the country is 74.04 per cent. Male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate in the State. Red soils occupy over two thirds of the cultivated area and are mostly situated in Rayalaseema and Telangana districts. The total geographical area of the state is 275 lakh hectares, out of which, about 40 per cent of the area 109.58 lakh ha is net sown area (39.80 per cent). The State is endowed with rich water resources and it is appropriately called a river state. Three major rivers, namely, Godavari, Krishna and Pennar drain 70 per cent of State's land area. The State is predominantly an agriculture based economy and around 19 per cent of the state GDP is from agriculture. Agriculture sector in the state provides employment directly and indirectly to

around 65 per cent of the state's population. The state is one of the India's main rice-producing States.

Guntur district selected for the present study occupies an area of 11,391 square kms. The black cotton and red loamy soils are predominant in the district. The district was created in 1904 separately from Krishna district. The district is predominantly rural with nearly 75 per cent population living in the rural areas. The literary rate is increasing steadily from 62.54 per cent in 2001 to 67.99 per cent in 2011. The male literacy rate is higher than female literacy rate in the district. District is well known for its commercial crops like Chillies, Tobacco and Cotton etc. The district has a sound system of canal irrigation since the construction of Nagarjuna Sagar Dam. Food crops accounts for a lion share of the cropped area. Mechanization of agriculture took place in the district over a period of time. The agricultural development in the district has also given boost to its industrial growth. The nature of industrialization in the district is agro based as the manufacture of food products out numbered all other industries. The main source of income of female households in the Guntur district is cattle and their milk products.

The other selected district, namely, Warangal, occupies 12846 sq. Kms in the geographical area. In the population the district occupies 13th place in the State and 12th place in area. In the district female literacy rate is low compared to male literacy rate and also the literacy levels in the district are lower compared to other districts. The district occupies 4th place

in rice production in Telangana region and 11th place in Andhra Pradesh. Main source of irrigation is tube wells. The major agricultural usage is electric pump sets and wooden ploughs. Livestock is additional income of the female agricultural labour in Warangal.

Major findings of the Study

- An analysis of various developmental programmes and policies of the government for the welfare of the women reveals that since independence, the government of India is implementing various developmental programmes through its Five-Year Plans for the development of rural areas as well as rural women. The emphasis of these programmes is on the economic betterment of women by providing them employment and income generating assets. These plans have accorded highest priority to the health and educational development of the women so as to improve their social and financial status and make them aware of their rights guaranteed by the constitution. Upto 5th five year plan, the concentration is more on education and health programmes of the women.
- After implementation of first five five-year plans, it is realized that the status of women remained backward and the goal of gender equality was far away and also the share of women in the benefits of planned development was very meager. Hence, focus is shifted from welfare to development in the Sixth Five-Year Plan. Thus, from sixth five year plan onwards the main objective of the Five Year Plans is economic

prosperity and empowering the women for bringing them into national activity as equal partners along with men. In accordance with this objective, the subsequent Plans focused on the empowerment of women, both politically and economically.

- The Eighth Five Year Plan strengthened the strategy already laid down in the Sixth and Seventh Plans for the development of women. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) evolved certain new and novel strategies for the promotion of welfare as the agents of social change and development is adopted as the main strategy for the development of women. The tenth five year plan (2002-2007) emphasizes on the empowerment of women by taking the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into action and ensuring survival, protection and development of women. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) is entrenched in a right framework that views women and children as agents, not recipients and they find place within all sectors, ministries, departments and schemes. This alone can ensure that the status of women and children grows exponentially by the end of the eleventh Plan.
- An examination of results of various developmental programmes under various five year plans discussed reveals that policies and plans always helped the non-targeted sections of the society instead of benefiting the poor. The share of women employment generated under the schemes was low and there were wage differences between male and female workers. Except a few schemes, all other schemes were not

women oriented schemes and also only the privileged sections are benefited.

- The planning process for the last 60 years failed to address the removal of poverty among women agricultural labour. The policies could not help the female women agricultural labour to overcome the biological disadvantages associated with the life of women labour both at the time puberty and at the time of reproduction. Standard of women labour are found to be poor as a consequence of prevalence of low income and consumption levels. Low levels of living of the women labour are accompanied by low level of education, poor health, unhygienic living conditions and low income.
- As regards female participation in the workforce, it is found that female participation rate is high as compared to males in rural area especially in the case of total workers and main workers in the country. The marginal workers increased more than the main workers in Andhra Pradesh. Over the period, female labour in the rural areas are increasing than the male labour in the sample districts. Throughout India and Andhra Pradesh in all the Census years, among males, large numbers of workers are cultivators and in the case of female workers, agricultural labour are more. In Guntur and Warangal district of Andhra Pradesh the female labour participation is higher than the male labour participation in rural areas. There is a shift from cultivators to agricultural labour in Andhra Pradesh. This

shift is not significant at all India level. The proportion of female agricultural labour force to the total workers has increased significantly in the study area.

- As regards determinants of female participation, the estimated regression equation reveals that economic factors such as ratio of male agricultural workers, cropping intensity, agricultural output are influencing the female participation. The social factors like presence of Scheduled Caste population, presence of children and female literacy are influencing the female participation rate. However, economic factors are found to be dominating in comparison to socio-cultural variables in determining the female participation in agriculture.
- With regard to socio-economic conditions of the sample respondents, it is evident from the study that poverty and lack of skills had compelled the female and male agricultural labour to join the work force in their early age. This is clearly seen in the case of the Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe respondents.
- Regarding social categories of the respondents, it is found that majority of the sample women agricultural labour belong to backward castes, Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes.
- With regard to literacy level of the sample respondents, it is obvious from the study that majority of the sample women agricultural labour

are illiterates and have not attended school even for a short period in their life.

- An analysis of type of family and residential accommodation of the sample respondents shows that two thirds of the sample respondents are living in nuclear families. Of the sample surveyed, nearly half of the female labour possess Katcha houses. Majority of the Scheduled Castes women labour live in Katcha houses, in which proper ventilation and adequate accommodation are not available and the reproductive and domestic functions of the women are badly affected.
- As regards availability of drinking water, it is found from the study that majority of the sample Scheduled caste and Backward Caste respondents didn't have access to drinking water nearby their house. More than three fourths of the sample respondents are depending upon other houses having drinking water facility or public tap or public hand pumps which are one Km away from the house.
- With regard to drainage facility, it is found from the study that most of the sample respondents did not have any drainage facility, which shows poor living condition of the respondents.
- As regards sanitation facility, majority of the sample respondents reported that they didn't have sanitation facility. This clearly shows the poverty level of the sample respondents.

- Regarding additional sources of income, it is found from the study that livestock is the additional source of income of the sample female agricultural labour households.
- An analysis of man days of the sample women agricultural labour reveals that majority of the sample women labour are working 104 days in agricultural activities. A significant percentage of the sample respondents are getting employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The average number of working days attended by the sample respondents under the programme found to be 21 days only. Across the social groups, it is found that majority of the Scheduled Castes and Backward Castes female labour are working under the scheme.
- As far as income and expenditures of the sample respondents are concerned, it is found from the study that average monthly consumption expenditure of the sample household amounts to ₹ 2241/-. On an average, the female sample labour' households are spending 58 per cent of the total expenditure on food and 42 per cent on non-food. The monthly consumption expenditure is found to be higher than the household income. Nearly 48 per cent of the income of the household is from wage labour in agriculture.
- Regarding debt of the respondents, it is found that all the sample respondents are indebted in the study area. Most of the respondents borrowed money from non-institutional sources.

- An analysis of wage of the sample respondents reveals that sample respondents are getting 50 to 60 per cent of men wage. It is noted from the study that sample female agricultural labour have to collect their wages and have to meet their household expenditure from their wages. Differences in wage rates between activities are also reported by the sample respondents.
- With regard to decision making in the family, it is found from the study that majority of the sample respondents reported that they didn't have any role in the decision making.
- With regard to healthcare, it is found from the study that majority of the respondents depend on indigenous treatment at village for common diseases, they never attend any health care centre for treatment.
- Regarding determinants of poverty among female agricultural labour, composite index of standard of living reveals that the index levels were lowest in Scheduled Tribe category households and it was higher in forward caste category household followed by Schedule Caste category and Backward Caste category. Huge percentage of the scheduled tribe and backward caste classes have low standard of living both in terms of economic and social aspects. The Index of deprivation computed using the scoring technique reveals that around 43 per cent of the total sample female labour' households are most deprived state. It is also found that 75 per cent of the Scheduled Tribe female labour

households and 48 per cent of the Scheduled Caste female labour households are found to be in most deprived state. The estimated regression equation reveals that the probability of respondents being poor is influenced by the variables like age, literacy, social status, income and man days.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the present study evidences the socio-economic conditions of the female labour' households are low and poor and status of women in rural community has not been changed. Maximum number of female agricultural labour' household are living below the poverty line and they are not getting proper wage for their work. Very few women labour are receiving the benefits from the government schemes. The social conditions in which they live continue to be traditional, exploitative and anti-women in character and impeding the development of the agricultural labour in general and of the female agricultural labour in particular.

It can be concluded that the number of rural male total workers is slowly decreasing, while the number of rural female total workers is steadily increasing at the national, state as well as at the districts level, Thus, though the chunk of women labour are increasing, there are only a few government developmental programmes, which are of women specific, in the country as well as in the State. It is found that only privileged sections are benefited from these developmental programmes. The weaker sections are benefited only to a limited extent. Lack of awareness about various

developmental programmes is found. The present study reveals the low socio-economic status of these sections in spite of various developmental programmes of the government.

The estimated regression equation reveals that the economic factors such as ratio of male agricultural workers, cropping intensity, agricultural output are influencing the female participation rate. The social factors like presence of Scheduled Caste population, presence of children and female literacy are influencing the female participation rate.

Majority of the sample female labour do not have any formal education. Housing status of the sample respondents clearly indicates their low standard of living since nearly half of the sample respondents are living in Katcha houses. More than three fourths of the sample women labour depend on public tap or public hand pumps and other houses which are one Km away from the house for drinking water. Nearly three fourths of respondents do not have drainage facility, which indicates the poor living condition of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are not going to hospitals for treatment of diseases. Almost all the sample women labour' households are in debt trap. Most of the respondents borrowed money from non-institutional sources.

Female agricultural labour' households are getting employment on an average less than 104 days in agriculture per year. On an average in agriculture male labour getting more wage than female labour. The difference of wage rates between male and female labour shows that female

labour are not getting proper remuneration for their work. The women labour found to be getting 50 to 60 per cent of men wage. Majority of the sample respondents reported that they did not have any role in decision-making in their household.

Composite Index of Standard of Living reveals that the Index levels were lowest in Scheduled Tribe category households and it was higher in forward caste category household followed by Schedule Caste category and Backward Caste category respectively. Nearly four fifths of the Scheduled Tribe respondents and more than two thirds of the Backward Caste classes have low standard of living both economically and socially.

The index of deprivation reveals that three fourths of the Scheduled Tribe female labour households and nearly half of the Scheduled Caste female labour households are found to be in most deprived state. However, Scheduled Tribe households are found to be more deprived. Social backwardness, illiteracy and under employment are found to be determinants of poverty among women agricultural labour.

Suggestions

In view of the above findings, the following suggestions are offered to improve the status of women agricultural labour.

- In order to improve the status of agricultural women labour, education and training are essential. Education and training must be based on participatory approaches to development. Compulsory

training and educational programmes should be launched for the benefit of the women agricultural labour to disseminate information on labour standards, employment rights and the content of codes of conduct.

- Education is an important variable of women development. Efforts should be strengthened to educate women in general and adult women in particular as it is found from the field survey that adult literacy programmes failed to educate the adults in the rural areas. A strict adult literacy programme should be launched in order to enhance the skills among women labour.
- Women specific employment guarantee programmes should be launched to provide sufficient employment to the rural women. Government should ensure transparency while selecting women beneficiaries for various developmental programmes.
- Non-farm employment opportunities should also be provided in the rural areas by establishing agro-industries. Development of small scale and cottage industries and handicraft sector would enhance employment opportunities for women.
- Loans should be provided at free of interest to the rural women to start self employment programmes like poultry, livestock, etc.
- Initiatives should be taken by the government to pay uniform wage rates for both the sexes.

- Women agricultural labour must be encouraged to form into labour unions in order to bring greater awareness on various issues and to resolve various problems like wage gaps between genders.
- Awareness programmes about health should be conducted in order to make women fully aware about healthcare as it is found from the study that majority of the sample women are not going for any treatment for diseases and are depending upon home treatment.

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