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ECONOMICAL STATUS OF AGRICULTURE LABOUR WOMEN IN TELANGANA REGION-AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

The importance of women’s contribution to the achievement of national economic and social goals was initially pronounced at the United Nations International Women’s year conference in Mexico City in 1975. The new industrial organization made women an integral part of new economic order and an important part of its manpower resources. The economic role of women cannot be isolated from development. The governments of developing countries have realized the need for equal participation of women and men in every sphere of national life for the better standard of living. One of the most distinguishing features of rural economy of India has been the increasing the number of agricultural workers, cultivators and agricultural labourers engaged in crop production during last several decades in the year 1981 The number of agricultural labourers were 17.5 million according to the census report of 2011 the total number of persons engaged in agricultural labourers were 50.50 million. This shows that during the first half of the century the number of agricultural laborers has been increased tremendously. This research paper to be discussed about “Economic Status of Agriculture Labour Women in Telangana Region-An Empirical Study”

Keywords: Agricultural Labourer, Gender Gap, Economic Reforms, Economic Development, Disguised unemployment, Process of Development.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

“Empowering women is key to building a future we want”

Amartyasen

A familiar Economist and Noble Laureate

Agriculture is the largest sector of the rural economy and is a family enterprise. The world has witnessed the life and services of female agricultural labourers who have contributed much to the progress and wellbeing of the societies, nations and the world at large in the social, economic, cultural and spiritual fields. Agriculture constitutes through human labour, a primary field of economic activity and an indispensable field of production. The world of agriculture, which provides society with the goods it needs for its daily sustenance, is of fundamental importance.

With economic and social growth, the structure of employment in the economy is expected to shift relatively away from agriculture and towards industry and services. The analytical study of various sources has not indicated any such shift until quite recently. Agriculture is still the predominant activity in rural areas and women have remained very substantially in agriculture, indeed their dependence on agriculture has increased and gender gap is growing.

Women’s participation in the agriculture is determined by her family situation, education, growth in job opportunities and the general level of economic activity. Female work participation in agriculture depends on the intensity and relative growth of agriculture. The incidence of women agricultural labour appears to be connected to factors underlying regional impoverishment. The Alternative Theory places greater emphasis on economic pressures that necessitate women’s earning cash incomes through work

Outside the home. Generally, in poor families, women have to participate in wage labour regardless of child care and domestic work. It appears to be the women from poor regions who appear to predominate regionally as agricultural labourers. Both economic and social-cultural factors determine female participation in rural agriculture sector.

In developing countries, the majorities of the women are engaged in agriculture and related pursuits. Nearly 80 per cent of the economically active women in sub-Saharan Africa and at least half in Asia except West Asia is in agriculture. According to 2011 census, 81.3 per cent of rural women including scheduled castes in India have been reported to be engaged in agriculture. In urban arrears, their proportion is 21.3 per cent. The Indian census categories their engaged in agriculture into two broad divisions-cultivators and agricultural labourers. In general, the labour class especially women occupy a lower and vulnerable status in agrarian hierarchy



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than cultivators. The increasing employment of women as agricultural labourers and their displacement from the category of cultivators means a gradual decline in their status from self- producer to wage earner.

Economic Status of Women in Agriculture

There has been on increase in the participation rate of female labour in agriculture. Particularly rural women play an important role in all stages of crop production from land preparation through harvesting and post-harvesting process. Women in many agricultural countries, form an organic component of the work force. They work along with the male members in agricultural activities on farms. As a labourer, their activities can be broadly divided into two categories: Income producing and Income supplementing.

The major part of the Indian economy including agriculture and its workers continues to be in unorganized sector. The picture of labour contribution by sex in production of rice reports that women perform two -thirds to virtually of all the labour in a wide variety of agricultural activities. The amount of women’s agricultural work was determined mode by type of crop. Cost of the households derives income from rice cultivation by selling their labour of tire members of farms larger than their own. Women are hired as wage agricultural labourers. By employing in agriculture sector as agricultural labourers, women provide livelihood and better opportunities to the members of many poor households and enhance their status in the society.

The importance of women’s contribution to the achievement of national economic and social goals was initially pronounced at the United Nations International Women’s year conference in Mexico City in 1975. The new industrial organization made women an integral part of new economic order and an important part of its manpower resources. The economic role of women cannot be isolated from development. The governments of developing countries have realized the need for equal participation of women and men in every sphere of national life for the better standard of living.

Women hold a significant position of distinct characteristics in the family and society. No society can develop fully without a significant contribution of women towards its development. To contribute to economic development, women must engage themselves in what is called ‘economic’ or ‘painful’ activity. For a full integration of women in economic development, women must enter the labour force on equal footing with men.

The basic purpose of employment is enhancement of income. Employment brings in positive income, contributes to an increase in household income. It is also observed that employment of women has often greater impact on reducing poverty and misery. Women tend to utilise their earnings more on basic needs of the households and particularly on improving the wellbeing of the children. As a worker, women have greater concern and awareness about the future of the family and members. The sector-wise activity also plays an important role in determining women workers’ contribution to socio-economic improvement of household and its members. Women contribute to development not only through remunerated work, but also through a great deal of unremunerated work.

Agricultural labour in India

One of the most distinguishing features of rural economy of India has been the increasing the number of agricultural workers, cultivators and agricultural labourers engaged in crop production during last several decades in the year 1901 The number of agricultural labourers were 17.5 million according to the census report of 1951 the total number of persons engaged in agricultural labourers were 27.50 million. This shows that during the first half of the century the number of agricultural laborers has been increased tremendously.

Classification of working population. (In million)

Year	Population	Cultivators	Agriculture Labour	Other Workers	Total
1901	236.28	51.75	17.26	41.7	110.71
1911	252.12	58.47	24.06	35.9	121.30
1921	251.35	61.60	19.65	43.0	117.75
1951	279.02	57.67	22.11	54.7	120.67
1951	356.86	69.74	27.50	96.6	139.42
1961	439.24	99.62	31.52	100.6	188.68
1971	548.16	78.27	47.49	64.72	180.48
1981	665.16	102.27	64.41	77.93	244.61



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1991	838.60	110.70	74.60	128.83	314.13
2001	1028.73	127.30	106.95	168.0	402.20
2011	121.00	118.70	144.33	218.7	481.7

Source: Various Census Reports of Government of India.

In 1961 the number of agricultural labour was 31.52 million. It rose to 106 and 144.33 in 2001 and 2011 respectively. This shows that during the 21th century the numbers of agricultural labourers shows continuously increasing trends. The table given bellow shows the growth of agricultural labourers in India.

Agricultural sector is still recognized as a key sector in Telangana according to census 2011, there is 63 percent population dependent on agriculture. In total work force agricultural labourer constitute 37.18 per cent. The number of agricultural labour is continuously increasing. All work activities in the farms are done by agricultural labour as well as the women workers considerable doing various activities in the farm. Exception of some work like sowing all their works i.e., Field preparation, manure and fertilizer application, plant protection measures, irrigation weeding transplanting, thinning, harvesting, threshing these all-work activities done by the women labourer.

Women in Social Economic Development Process

The development process of an economy and social development has not only by-passed rural women, but their traditional roles and status in the society has been altered adversely by the nature of development process itself. The role of women labourers in agriculture is presented in a hopeful manner to present and analyse the level of social economic development. The different potential benefits accruing to women from their involvement in agriculture are income, control of valuable agricultural labour and decision making. It is generally an accepted fact that the participation in economic activities and economic contribution is a crucial factor to improve their standard of living. This is further underscored by the fact that her earnings increase the aggregate income level of poor households and women spend much larger share of their earnings to basic family maintenance. The economic contribution of women labourers to their households and thereby to society is never ending.

Women labourers are an integral part of economic and social life and an ingredient for economic development. It is increasingly recognized that a more rational use of the potential of agricultural women could accelerate the pace of economic and social progress and thereby contribute to the overall welfare of human kind. Women play a particularly important role in the agriculture sector of developing nations. Women labour may be interpreted as a resource to be recognized and appreciated and which has to be treated as human resource and not like other material resources. It is assumed that women are a great asset. They can contribute a great deal to the achievement of national goals. It is also realized that participation of agricultural women is necessary to enhance the resource, the more the nation invests in its women the greater the return.

Female agricultural labourers as partners in economic and social development is a well-recognized fact today. Although the female workers in the agriculture sector receive so little from the economy, they perform dual productive economic role as an unpaid labour at home and in the fields and paid labourers outside home. Unfortunately, the major contribution of these labourers has not been recognised and not fully taken into account and quantified. The role of women and particularly poor women labourers is yet to be fully appreciated. The sectoral occupational distribution of women workers in rural areas is typical of the livelihood pattern of underdeveloped traditional and primarily subsistence agricultural economy. By giving right type of opportunities, orientation and encouragement, women members can play a more meaningful role in agriculture and society and contribute to the rural and economic development.

Agriculture Labour Women in Telangana

Women plays a key role in the agriculture sector; they are particularly indispensable in rice cultivation. Women have been the backbone of rural society who is shouldering multifarious responsibilities in household chores. The women agricultural labourers hire out their personal labour on the fields, sweating for lower wages to contribute towards household earnings.

The female agricultural labourers despite contributing to the rural economy on par with men encounter innumerable difficulties in the existing socio-economic framework of the society. Rural female labourers constitute one of the most vulnerable sections of our society. Though women’s participation in the labour market is much lower than that of males, rural females have a much high work participation rate compared to urban families and the rural female work force has shown much faster increase. As far as occupational diversification is concerned, the bulk of rural workers are still in the agriculture sector.



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The status of women is intimately connected with their economic position, which depends upon the opportunities for participation in economic activities. Gender role denotes to the role of women as a sex category are being discriminated socially, economically and politically. The status of women is largely depending on the availability of employment for women. The casual nature of employment, absence of opportunities to improve the skills, segregation of work, unequal wages, exploitative conditions of work, commercialization and mechanization of agriculture are some of the problems that have oppressed the female agricultural labourers. The unorganized and illiterate character of labour force, seasonal and transient nature of agricultural operations is the cause for non-observance of statutory provisions. Concentration of vast number of women in this field also reduced the bargaining capacity of labourers. It also affected the wage pattern of these labourers.

The occupational structure of female work participation shows that most of them are still engaged in agriculture sector. This indicates that working women are mainly employed in low-paid unorganized sector owing to their low literacy level and lack of skill. Hence, a rise in female work participation need not necessarily be reflective of their improved status. The level and occupational distribution of female work participation is a pointer to their continuing low socio-economic conditions in the society. This explains to the growing feminisation of poverty, particularly in the rural areas. The women who suffer from acute poverty join the work force for lessening the discrimination with in the household, but it actually makes them worse off by discriminating more. They are doubly disadvantaged with burden.

Agriculture sector depends on downtrodden women

The depressed earnings of poor women workers in agriculture sector should be a matter of great concern. The quantitative contribution of these women workers to their family incomes not only significant but the qualitative contribution is also of immense value to their families. They spend a portion of their earnings on the upbringing and the betterment of the family members. Wage employment may be a women's only access to an independent source of cash income over which she can have control. Through women agricultural labourers contributed substantially to the family income, they exercised no control over their earnings.

The relative position of the female agricultural labourers to that of cultivators seems to have deteriorated. Agricultural labourers are the weakest among the weaker sections of our rural population and are most unfortunate ones. Among the poor, a high proportion of household income is generated by women's work. Poorly remunerated as it is, and female headed households are fairly common and increasing. Women continue to remain in the secondary position in the family though she makes economic contribution for the upliftment of her family. Due to cultural bondage and traditional norms and ideology, women are ascribed as secondary earners and male earners in the households are regarded as primary or potential earners.

Women Cultivators Labourers

Rural participation rate of potential workers is an important determinant of total workers in agriculture. Women constitute nearly half of the total population of our country. Women since time immemorial have formed an organic segment of the working force and played a considerably equal role in agriculture. They along with male workers have not only been attending to the various field operations like transplanting, weeding, but their contribution is in no way lesser in many harvesting and post-harvesting operations like harvesting, threshing, winnowing and storage. They have provided much of the unpaid family labour in agriculture. In developing economies, the growth of population is always reflected in the agricultural workforce, as agriculture does not require any special skill or training. Within agriculture labour force, the proportion of women is more compared to men and their contribution in agriculture and farm activities is also greater.

Agriculture is the most essential and integral part of the life of female labourers. Agriculture can affect every aspect of their life. Female agricultural labourers have an even more direct and intimate link with the productive process of agriculture. The status of females as labourers is very low, they contribute as much as 75 percent to subsistence and in societies, where the status of women is high, they contribute at least 30 per cent to subsistence. This present research study of the performance and contribution of female poor labourers in the field of agriculture and as well as their economic and social development has to be revealed their significance in an agrarian economy and development. Their role and contribution cannot be separated from the contribution of other labourers of an economy developer.

Effective Participation in Agriculture

A rural woman, though in reality is an equal partner of man in agriculture, suffers from many handicaps, which stall her effective participation in the development process. The society itself is not conscious of the impact of the role she plays as a homemaker and as an agricultural producer. In view of these problems stated above, there is an imperative need to study arid analyse in detail the condition of workers especially the women labourers in unorganized agriculture sector. This special



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consideration is a help to raise their status in their own communities but also to bring them socially at par with other women in all spheres of life. Thus, this socio-economic study is necessary and meaningful to understand the emerging pattern of status and role of female agricultural labourers in rural areas as a person, as a family member and as a member of society. The present research study is more concentrated on the female labourers who are engaged in agriculture especially in rice cultivation. Within primary sector, female workers predominate as agricultural labourers in terms of occupational structure, this district has witnessed the importance and role of female agriculture labourers. A huge reservoir of labour is trapped in a slow growing, primarily agrarian economy with negligible possibilities in the non-agricultural sectors.

The survival of the poor people depends upon the level of employment opportunities. The employment is a means to raise the standard of living and to reduce the level of poverty of the working households. The contribution of female agriculture labourers is many, at the same time, the benefits received by them from the economy is less and make them backward in economically and socially. It is a fact that the development in economic position of these labourers should change the economic structure of the rural economy.

The absolute majority of work in agriculture have put millions of women in a disadvantage position and made them vulnerable. As a direct result of their predominance in agriculture sector, women's contribution to production and growth is not adequately accounted and recognized. The labour participation of women and other proportional contribution to total family income are the highest in households with the lowest economic status. The poorest families are the most dependent upon women's economic activity. Women play a vital role in socio-economic development of our country. Their contribution to agricultural development is quite significant even as they work under severe limitations.

Conclusion

The problem of rural agricultural labour is a problem of women. The scheduled caste women have lagged behind in educational attainment and consequently in the process of modern change. The relatively high participation rates of scheduled caste women as agricultural labourers were largely the outcome of economic compulsions. The basic objective in the case of this socially and economically backward section of rural society was for survival and sustenance. The factors like less education combined with low earning and low employment occupations such as casual labourers in agriculture have provided a great chance of being poor and make the women socially and economically backward. Several studies conducted on female labour in agriculture have stopped short of a systematic attempt to look into socio-economic dimensions of the problem. Thus, it is hoped that it would help in working out measures for reducing the magnitude of the problem faced by female agricultural labourers.

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