

SOCIO ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURE WOMEN LABOUR: A STUDY FOCUS ON KUPPAM ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy. Women play a vital role in building this economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. In this paper an attempt has been made to study the socio economic condition of female agricultural laborers.

Introduction

The famous agricultural scientist describes that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fiber and fuel. Women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance
-Swaminathan,

Women employment has become the symbol of economic viability and social status in modern day society. The changes in the demographic background of women in terms of their family nature, educational background, culture and ethnic values, women in occupation has become an indispensable element. India has a predominantly agrarian economy. 70% of her population is rural; of those households, 60% engage in agriculture as their main source of income. It has always been India's most important economic sector. In this important agricultural sector woman plays a vital role, because it is largely a household enterprise. Women in India are major producers of food in terms of value, volume and number of hours worked. Nearly 63 percent of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture as compared to 78 per cent of women. Almost 50 percent of rural female workers are classified as agricultural labourers and 37% as cultivators. About 70 percent of farm work was performed by women. It is observed that women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including, main crop production, live-stock production, horticulture, post-harvesting operations, agro/social forestry, fishing etc.; it is a fact long taken for granted but ignored since ages. The international development community has recognized that agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in countries where it is the main occupation of the poor. But the agricultural sector in many developing countries is underperforming, in part because women, who represent a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy through their roles as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs, almost everywhere face more severe constraints than men in access to productive resources.

Multi-Dimensional Roles of Women

- 1) Agriculture: Sowing, Transplanting, Weeding, Irrigation, Fertilizer application, Plant Protection, Harvesting, Winnowing, Storing etc.
- 2) Domestic: Cooking, Child rearing, Water Collection, /fuel wood gathering, Household maintenance etc.

Mainly rural women are engaged in agricultural activities in three different ways depending on the socio-economic status of their families and regional factors. They are working as:

- (i) Paid labourers
- (ii) Cultivators doing work in their own farms
- (iii) Managers of certain aspects of agricultural production by way of labour supervision and the participation in post harvest operations.

Review of literature

Prasad & Singh (1992) Women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life supporting systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance. Therefore, without the total intellectual and physical participation of women, it is not possible to popularize alternative systems of land management to shifting cultivation, arrest gene and soil erosion, and promote the care of the soil and the health of economic plants and farm animals.

Aggarwal (2003) Studies on women in agriculture conducted in India and other developing and underdeveloped countries point to the conclusion that women contribute far more to agricultural production than has generally been acknowledged. Recognition of their crucial role in agriculture should not obscure the fact that farm women continue to be concerned with their primary functions as wives, mothers and homemakers.

Profile of the study

The Rayalaseema region, consisting of the districts of Chittoor, Kadapa, Anantapur and Kurnool, occupies 27.4 per cent of the State area and lies mostly at an altitude of 1,000 to 2,000 feet (305 to 610 meters) above the mean sea level. The average rainfall of this region is approximately 27 inches (68.5 cm) compared to about 41 inches (104.1 cm) for the Coastal Andhra. Long known as a famine belt, Rayalaseema is the most sparsely populated and economically the most vulnerable part of Andhra Pradesh. The soil is rocky and unyielding and the rainfall is scanty and uncertain. Confronted by frequent famines and draughts, farmers struggle for existence. Majority of the population in Rayalaseema still clings to agriculture due to the lack of opportunities in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. This region has fabulous forest resources and sizeable mineral deposits, but these assets are slow in being exploited. Industrially, the Rayalaseema region is the most backward in the state, although Kurnool district has textile operations and a modest food processing industry. Rayalaseema comprising of four districts of the Southern part of A.P occupies an area of 75.30 lakh hectares, forming 29.86 per cent area of the state. It has about 17.90 per cent of the state's population. The density of population in Rayalaseema, 226.25 per sq.km is the lowest among the three regions of the state. Poverty encourages only migration. The climate in Rayalaseema is mostly dry. The entire Rayalaseema region lies in the rain shadow zone of Western Ghats. Consequently, this area received very low rainfall during the South West and the North East monsoons as well.

Kuppam Mandal of Chittoor district has total population of 120,479 as per the Census 2011. Out of which 60,956 are males while 59,523 are females. In 2011 there were total 27,048 families residing in Kuppam Mandal. The Average Sex Ratio of Kuppam Mandal is 976. As per Census 2011 out of total population, 18.2% people lives in Urban areas while 81.8% lives in the Rural areas

Working Population - Kuppam Mandal

Table No. 1 Working Population

Particulars	Male	Female	Total
Main worker	32,000	18,860	50,860
Cultivators	8,281	4,321,	12,602
Agriculture labourer	10,158	9,579	19,737
House hold industries	367	607	974
Other workers	13,194	4,353	17,547
Marginal workers	3,671	5,252	8,923
Non working	25,285	35,411	60,696

Source: Andhra Pradesh cense 2017

In Kuppam Mandal out of total population, 59,783 were engaged in work activities. 85.1% of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 14.9% were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 59,783 workers engaged in Main Work, 12,602 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 19,737 was Agricultural labourer.

Need for the study

The problems of women in agriculture are more acute and distressing manner. When addressed in a women-centric manner, the potential for increased productivity, restoration of ecological balance, for high positive social impacts like increased status, self-confidence and food security for communities which all are increased much more tangibly than working in a gender-neutral manner. In fact, women have extensive workload with dual responsibilities of farm and household production.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of the agriculture womenlabour inKuppam

METHODOLOGY

The present study is on empirical investigation based on sample interview of female agricultural labour force in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The present study is based on both secondary and primary data and a systematic random sampling method a has been adopted for survey. The primary data has been collected from Chittoor district. The sample size comprised of 55 female workers in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. The present study has selected 55 respondents in Kuppammandal respectively in the district for the purpose of primary data collection.

Analysis

Table No. 1 Socio Economic details of respondents

Variables	Categories	No of Respondents	Percentage
Age	20-30	11	20.0
	31-40	24	43.6
	41-50	13	23.7
	Above 50 yrs	07	12.7
Community	SC	28	50.9
	ST	12	21.8
	BC	08	14.6
	OC	07	12.7

Education	Illiterate	23	41.8
	School level	18	32.7
	High School level	08	14.6
	College level	06	10.9
Marital status	Unmarried	10	18.2
	Married	40	72.7
	Widow	05	9.1
	Others	0	0
Size of family	Small	16	29.1
	Medium	27	49.1
	Large	12	21.8
Type of family	Nuclear	38	69.1
	Joint	17	30.9
Type of house	Hut	10	18.2
	Pucca	14	24.5
	Kutchra	31	56.3
Nature house	Own	37	67.3
	Rent	18	32.7
Size of land	Land less	13	23.6
	Below 1	26	47.4
	1-2	09	16.3
	Above 2	07	12.7

The above table observed that the majority of respondents agriculture labour 43.6 percent respondents are 31-40 years and 23.7 percent of respondents of agriculture labours 41-50 years while 20.0 percent respondents age group 20-30. The remaining 12.7 percent respondents' age group 50 and above. The age group 30-40 respondents were also in the agriculture labour and their role is also important for cultivator. Most of the middle age women only face problems managing their household and family responsibilities.

The above table reveals that the majority agriculture labour activities belong to SC accounting for 50.9 percent, while 21.8 percent of respondents ST. The remaining 14.6 and 12.7 percent respondents are BC and OC categories respectively. The study area is high which is due to the fact that they are the most economically appraised class and agriculture labour aim to improving their living status and standard of living.

From the above table it is clearly indicated that most of the agriculture labour respondents' 41.8 percent illiterate and 32.7 percent were school level and 14.6 percent high school level and only 10.9 percent respondents are college level. The data reflected that educational qualifications do not influence to agriculture. Illiterate respondent's shown more interest to develop themselves and their family through agriculture.

Form the above table reveals that the majority agricultural labourers 49.1 per cent of were found in the Medium. The remaining small and large families who formed 29.1 per cent and 21.8 per cent respectively. The highest percentage of agricultural labour in the Medium size family.

The above table shows that majority of the sample agricultural labour, i.e., 69.1 per cent live in nuclear families of agricultural labourers and joint families form 30.9 per cent in the in respect of agricultural labourers.

From Table it is found that over 56.3 per cent of agricultural labour kutchra type of houses. The agricultural labour with pucca houses formed 24.5 per cent, 18.2 per cent of labourers owned hut in the agricultural labour.

The above table it is clearly that in agricultural labour, highest percentage of agricultural labour was found in the owned houses i.e. 67.3 per cent and rented houses 32.7 per cent agricultural labour living houses.

Form the table shows that the among the agricultural labour 23.6 per cent are landless. 47.4 per cent of owned land below 1 hectare, 16.3 per cent owned land between 1-2 hectares, 12.7 per cent above 2 hectares.

Conclusion

Women play a vital role in the rural societies and their role in agriculture is still more important. Survival in the developing countries and regions depend on the workwomen do. Agriculture sector is the backbone of the rural economies and majority of the females depend upon agriculture as labourers. Indian economy is an agrarian economy. The rural agricultural system and female labourers are closely associated with each other mainly through the supply of their labour power throughout the production process, except during ploughing and sowing. Even though they work hard, their socio-economic status is very low. Their dependence on labour has aggravated this situation. Female workers contribute significantly to household income and their earnings are crucial especially for landless and marginal farm households. The proportionate contribution of females is, however, found to decline with increasing farm size. This is because the participation rate of women in agriculture is mostly governed by the economic condition of their family. Women from poor families accept any economic work to assist their family even under very inferior working conditions. They are mainly supplementary earners and their stay in labour force is of temporary nature, which declines with the improvement in the economic conditions of the family.

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