

# A Study on Socio-Economic Status of Women Agricultural Labourers in Manguli Tribal Village

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**Abstract - This study examines the socio-economic status of women agricultural laborer's, focusing on their roles, challenges, and opportunities within the agricultural sector. Women make significant contributions to agricultural activities worldwide, particularly as agricultural laborer's, yet their socio-economic conditions often remain overlooked. Understanding their status is crucial for devising effective policies and interventions to enhance their well-being and promote gender equality in rural areas.**

**Keywords: Agricultural Labor, Socio-Economic, Tribal Village.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the primary occupation of the rural India, and around 56 per cent of the population dependents on it. Agriculture is a significant sector which gives more employment opportunities in rural area. Women are the backbone of Indian families and plays a significant role in income generation through agriculture and allied activities. It is noted that, almost 70 percent of rural population of women work in agriculture fields 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. The contribution of women directly or indirectly towards nation building is immeasurable. The role of women in raising the family and their contribution towards human resource development as well as towards work force in also noteworthy. But still the status of women in rural India especially in Tribal area is pathetic. Hence its vital to know about the ground reality of these population need to be analysed and should find ways to address their needs in order to empower this population for better prospects.

## II. TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA

The tribal population in India is 84.51 million, which constitutes 8.14% of tribal population. There are

about 449 tribes and sub tribes in different parts of India. Half of India's tribal people live in the forests and forest fringes and their economy is linked with the forests. Tamil Nadu has 7.21 lakh tribal populations as per 2011 census which constitutes 1.10% of the total population. There are 36 tribes and sub tribes in Tamil Nadu. Literacy rate of the population is 27.9%. Most of the tribal in Tamil Nadu are cultivators, agriculture labourers or dependent on forests for their livelihood.

## III. THE ROLE OF TRIBAL WOMEN

Women are the centric point of family. Though the role of women is very important and crucial in a hill economy, yet they are the invisible workers who leads a tough life. Women are actively engaged in all the activities right from the household to the fields. Interaction among women takes place during their work in the fields, forest, kitchen, during washing clothes and so on as well as they make courtesy visits to their neighbours at times. There is no strict *parda* (veil) system in the village.

However, the contribution of women to agricultural labour often becomes invisible because women are generally regarded as socially unproductive. 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. There were 32.9 million workers in the State, of which 4.25 million are cultivators and 9.6 million agricultural labourers. In Tamil Nadu, Dalit and landless women farmers grow crops that feed them. "Their first priority is to grow food for themselves.

## IV. MULTI – DIMENSIONAL ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL WOMEN LABORERS

Indian women play 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. 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 different ways on the socio-economic status on their family. They are worked as:

- \* Paid Laborers
- \* Cultivating on their own land

**V. NEED FOR EMPOWER WOMEN WORKERS**

The female agricultural labour despite contributing to the rural economy on par with men encounter innumerable difficulties in the field in the existing socio- economic frame work of India society. Casual nature of employment, discrimination of work, unequal wages, exploitative conditions of work, ignorance and less vocal nature of the workers, unemployment, lack of avenues, commercialization and mechanization of agriculture, sexual exploitation are some of the “dependent” classes in practice helped the dominant classes of the society defeating the very purpose for which they were created. Empowerment of women is the need of the hour so that they are able to absorb the benefits meant for them. The strong inter-linkage between the economic and social development variables is to be stressed.

**IV. RESEARCH GAP**

Attempts were made to locate and review the Studies conducted on the employment, wages, non-farm employment. Till recently the theoretical and empirical literature on rural labour markets had completely ignored studies on tribal agricultural women laborers and these studies have failed to study the socio-economic conditions of tribal agricultural women laborers and their role in making decisions as well as lower wages when compared to their contribution towards agricultural fields. Since this study propose to propagate the inherent component of tribal women status, in terms of employment, income and expenditure, wage as well as work discrimination and their role in decision making.

**VII. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To analyse the socio-economic conditions of the rural women associated with agriculture to address the challenges faced by them.

**Area of the Study**

This study was carried out in a tribal village named Manguli, a village under Naickenpalayam Panchayat, Periyankanpalayam Block in Coimbatore District of Tamilnadu state. Manguli has large the number of households where Irula Tribes exists in this place.

**VIII. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

This study is designed as a descriptive analysis based on primary data. Primary data were collected through field survey at the micro level i.e. collecting data from the respondents in the village through questionnaire method. Out of 38 households 36 were included in this study and 2 were left as the members of the family were only male members. Simple Statistical tools like percentage, cross tabulation analysis will be used to find out the major factors that determines the socio-economic status of agricultural women labourers and the challenges faced by them.

**XI. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

S.S.Sundari (2020) analysed the trends and pattern of changes in women's employment structure over

years (1983–2018) consequent upon the structural changes in the Indian economy. It also attempts to analyse the quality of women’s labour in terms of select parameters. The study finds that there is neither quantitative nor qualitative improvement in women’s employment over time on account of structural changes in the economy. Agriculture is still the leading sector in women’s employment. The study further reveals that the quality of women’s labour is poor.

K.M. Singh et.al (2020) attempted to understand the nature of rural landscape change during the urbanization process is vital to formulate rural management plans for sustainable development. In agriculture, the contribution in every operation of agricultural activities are also active in allied sectors like cattle management, dairying, beekeeping, goat rearing mushroom production and poultry farming etc. Women’s contribution in agriculture is significant and plays diverse role, still their wages were found 7.04% less than their male counterparts during 2015-16. To strengthen women’s participation in agriculture and allied sectors and to improve their access to land, loan and other facilities, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has policy provisions like joint leasing for both domestic and agricultural land under National policy for farmers.

Itishree Pattnaik and Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (2020), analysed the key socioeconomic and cultural-demographic factors that determine rural women's labour contributions in agriculture in India, both on family farms and as agricultural wage labourer. Based on the analysis of primary data derived from a survey of 800 households from the two Indian states of Gujarat and West Bengal, it establishes that women's work in the farm sector cannot be homogenized. The paper concludes that feminization of agriculture in India is distress-led where it has both classes defined with income in Gujarat and caste (social groups) connotations in Gujarat, while mainly economic factors influence women's work in the farm sector in West Bengal.

Pattnaik et al. (2017) have examined the trends in participation of women in agriculture in India and its states using Census data. They find substantial variation in dependence on agricultural employment across states. A regression analysis across states shows that women’s participation in agriculture is

negatively related with the size of holding and positively related with poverty levels. They conclude that women’s participation in agriculture is higher when the family and the agriculture are less advantageous for livelihoods.

X. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 3.1-Age, Gender, Religion and Community of the Women Agricultural Labourers

Age, Gender, Religion and Community		Women Agriculture Labourers	Percent
Age Composition	below 30 years	3	8.3
	31-60 years	24	66.7
	Above 61 Years	9	25.0
Gender	Female	36	100.0
Religion	Hindu	36	100.0
Community	ST	36	100.0
Total		36	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table 3.1 illustrates the age composition, religion and social class of the women agricultural labourers. Around 8 percent of the respondents belongs to the age group of below 30 years, whereas nearly 67 percent of them belongs to the age group of 31-60 years and only 25 percent of them were above 61 years. As for as gender is concerned the study is carried out on women agricultural labourers hence all the respondents were women. While analyzing the religion of the respondents, all the respondents were Hindus and they belongs to the social class of Schedule Tribes.

Table 3.2- Family Structure and Type of House of the Women Agricultural Labourers

Family Structure and Type of House		Women Agriculture Labourers	Percent
Family Structure	Nuclear family	23	63.9
	Joint Family	10	27.8
	Individual	3	8.3
Type of House	Kutchha	26	72.2
	Pucca	10	27.8
Total		36	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table 3.2 gives a clear picture about the structure of the family and the type of house of the women agricultural labourers. The family structure is

classified into three categories as nuclear family, joint family and also as individuals. A painful truth is that even in a tribal village, a majority of 64 percent of them belongs to nuclear family and around 28 percent of them belongs to joint family system and only 8 percent of them were residing as singles. While analyzing the type of house possessed by the respondents, a majority of 72 percent of them were residing in Kutcha house and only 28 percent of them were residing in Pucca house.

Table 3.3-Savings Bank Account, Mobile and Electricity Services Accessed by the Women Agricultural Labourers

Access of Savings Bank Account, Mobile and Electricity Services		Women Agricultural Labourers	Percent
Savings Bank Account	Yes	28	77.8
	No	8	22.2
Electricity Connection	Yes	32	88.9
	No	4	11.1
Usage of Mobile Phones	Yes	16	44.4
	No	20	55.6
Total		36	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table 3.3 expressed the details on the savings bank account, electricity and usage of mobile phone services accessed by the women agricultural labourers. A majority of 78 percent of the respondents have the savings bank account and only 22 percent of them did not have the savings bank accounts. Similarly, nearly 89 percent of the households have electricity connections and only a meagre portion of 11 percent of the households are yet to be electrified. Similarly, around 44 percent of them were using mobile phones but 56 percent of them were unable to access mobile phones.

Table 3.4-Benefits Availed by the Women Agricultural Labourers

Availing of OSA, MGNREGA & SHG Benefits		Women Agricultural Labourers	Percent
Social Security (Old Age Pension)	Yes	9	25.0
	No	27	75
MGNREGA	Yes	10	27.8
	No	26	72.2
Self Help Group	Yes	16	44.4
	No	20	55.6

Total	36	100.0
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Source: Primary Data

The table 3.4 portrayed the various benefits availed by the women agricultural labourers. The benefits availed by the respondents were classified as Old Age Pension, the employment scheme of the Government of India MGNREGA and the Self-Help Groups. Since the respondents who belongs to above 60 years were 25 percent, they were eligible for receiving Old Age Pension amount of Rs.1000 per month and remaining were unable to receive monetary benefits under the scheme of Old Age Pension.

As for as MGNREGA is concerned only 28 percent of them were engaged in employment activities assigned under this scheme were as a majority of 72 percent of them were contributing to their own fields and also engaged in rearing of Cattles. Approximately around 44 percent of the respondents were active members in Self Help Group out of their own interest and 56 percent of the respondents did not involve in Self Help Group.

Table 3.5-Education Qualification, Occupation and Income of the Women Agricultural Labourers

Education Qualification, Occupation and Income		Women Agricultural Labourers	Percent
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	24	66.7
	Primary Level	3	8.3
	Middle School Level	8	22.2
	Higher Secondary Level	1	2.8
Occupation	Cultivator	14	38.9
	Cultivator and Agricultural Labour	5	13.9
	Hired Labour	8	22.2
	Government Employee	2	5.6
	Cattle Rearing	6	16.7
	Unemployed	1	2.8
Annual Income	Up to Rs.25000	29	80.6
	Rs.25001-Rs.50000	5	13.9
	above Rs.50000	2	5.6
Total		36	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table 3.5 reveals about the education qualification, occupation pattern as well as income of the women agricultural labourers. The educational qualification of the respondents is classified as illiterate, primary education, middle school and higher secondary level. It is painful to know that a majority of 67 percent of the respondents were illiterate and a very less of 3 percent were educated at higher secondary level. Around 22 percent of them have completed middle school level education and nearly 8 percent of them had completed their primary level education. While analyzing the occupation of the respondents, it is classified as cultivators, cultivators cum agricultural labour, hired labour, Government employee, unemployed and Cattle Rearing.

The table reveals that a majority of 39 percent of them were cultivators and nearly 14 percent of them were cultivator as well as agricultural labourers. A small group of 6 percent of them were Government Employee who were teaching in anganwadies in the same village and around 22 percent of them were also hired workers and 17 percent of them were engaged in cattle rearing and also engaged in other activities. Just 3 percent of the respondents were unemployed and stay at home as they suffer due to age factor and their ill health.

While analyzing the annual income of the respondents, a majority of 81 percent of the respondents earned up to Rs.25,000 and nearly 14 percent of them earned within the range of Rs.25,001 to Rs. 50,000 and only a very few of 6 percent of them earned above Rs.50,000.

Table 3.6-Land Holdings and Assets of the Sample Households

Land Holdings and Assets		Women Agricultural Labourers	Percent
Gold	Yes	14	38.9
	No	22	61.1
Livestock-Cows	Up to 5 Numbers	10	27.8
	6-10 Numbers	2	5.6
	Above 10 Numbers	2	5.6
	No Cows	22	61.1
Livestock-Goats	Up to 5 Numbers	15	41.8
	6-10 Numbers	8	22.2

	Above 10 Numbers	2	5.4
	No Goats	11	30.7
Land Holdings	Yes	33	91.7
	No	3	8.3
Size of Land Holdings	Less than 2 Acres	10	27.8
	3 to 5 Acres	15	41.7
	Above 6 Acres	8	22.2
	No Land Holdings	3	8.3
Total		36	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table 3.6 depicts the details of the land holdings and assets possessed by the sample households. As for as possession of assets is concerned, gold is considered as one of the precious metals which has value for ever. A majority of 61 percent of the respondent's households did not possess gold and only 39 percent of them alone had a very less amount of jewels like studs, rings and thin chains.

Regarding the livestock it is classified as number of cows and goats possessed by each individual household. While analyzing the same, it is found that a majority of 61 percent of them had no cow and around 28 percent of them had cow below 5 in number and around 11 percent of them hold more than 6 cows. While analyzing the goat as a livestock, a majority of 42 percent of them possessed goats up to 5 numbers and 22 percent if they owned goats of 6 to 10 numbers and a small proportion of 5 percent had more than 10 goats. Nearly 31percent of the households had no goats in their households.

While assessing the details of the land holdings, a majority of 92 percent of the households possessed land holdings and nearly 8 percent of the households did not possess any land holdings. The land holdings could be classified as less than 2 acres, 3 to 5 acres as well as 6 acres and above and also households of no land holdings. Around 28 percent of the households possessed landholdings less than 2 acres whereas a majority of 42 percent of the households possessed landholdings of the range 3 to 5 acres and nearly 22 percent of the households had more than 6 acres. A meagre portion of 8 percent had no landholdings.

Table 3.7-Participation of the Women Agricultural Labourers in Decision making

Decision making/ Discrimination		Women Agricultural Labourers	Percent
Participation in Decision making	Male	33	91.7
	Female	3	8.3
Women Discrimination in Family	Yes	33	91.7
	No	3	8.3
	Decision Making	15	41.7
	Household Activities	10	27.8
	All the above	8	22.2
	No	3	8.3
Total		36	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table 3.7 furnishes the details of participation of women agricultural labourers in decision making and situations of women discrimination in their families. The table reveals that in majority of 92 percent of the households, the decision-making authority is the male and in only 8 percent of the households the women were making decisions.

While carefully analyzing the areas of discrimination, it is observed that around 42 percent of them were discriminated in decision making and 28 percent of them reported that discrimination is shown in sharing in their household activities and around 22 percent of them stated that they were discriminated in both decisions making as well as household activities. It is painful to note that, a majority of 92 percent of the households has discrimination in the family and preference is enjoyed by the male and only a small group of 8 percent of the households had no discrimination.

Table 3.8-Problems Faced by the Women Agricultural Labourers

Problems Faced	Women Agricultural Labourers	Percent
No Individual Identity	6	16.6
No Self care	10	5.6
Early Marriages	14	38.9
Health Issues	6	16.7
Total	36	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The table 2.8 portrayed the various problems faced by the women agricultural labourers. Around 17 percent

of the women agricultural labourers revealed that they have no individual identity and face health issues respectively. Around 39 percent of them shared their problems faced by them due to their early marriage and around 6 percent of them said that they don't find space to care them.

#### XI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Majority of the women agricultural labourers belongs to the age group of 31-60 years (67 percent). The contribution of female income plays a vital role in their household earnings. It is observed that all the respondents belong to Hindu religion and Schedule Tribes community. All the respondents were women since our study focused on Women agricultural labourers.
- A painful truth is that even in a tribal village, a majority of them belongs to nuclear family (64 percent) and, a majority of them were residing in Kutcha house (72 percent).
- A majority of the respondents have the savings bank account (78 percent) as well as most of the households have electricity connections (89 percent) and around 44 percent of them were using mobile phones
- respondents who belongs to the age group of above 60 years where they were eligible for receiving Old Age Pension amount of Rs.1000 per month (25 percent).
- Regarding MGNREGA scheme only less proportion of them were engaged in employment activities (28 percent) because the male counterparts of the households take up the activities under this scheme and hence the left-out females work in their own fields and also engaged in rearing of Cattle. Around 44 percent of the respondents were active members in Self Help Group out of their own interest.
- It is painful to know that a majority of the respondents were illiterate (67 percent) as well as (39 percent) of the respondents were cultivators and a majority of the respondents earned less than Rs.25,000 annually (67 percent).
- A majority of the respondent's households did not possess gold (61 percent) as well as it is found that a majority of 61 percent of them had no cow, whereas a majority of 42 percent of respondents possessed goats up to 5 numbers and 42 percent

of the households possessed landholdings of the range 3 to 5 acres.

- It is painful to note that, decision making authority of the households were dealt with male (92 percent) as well as a majority of the households has discrimination in the family and preference is enjoyed by the male.
- Most of the respondents emphasised that their early marriage is one of the major reasons for all other difficulties.

## XII.CONCLUSION

Women has special significance in bringing up the Family in the society. They play a vital role in generating household income and improving the economic status of the family. The socio-economic conditions of the women agricultural labourers in the study area appears to be vulnerable both in their households and agricultural fields. Most of the decision are made by the male counterparts in the households. Since majority of the respondents were illiterate and lack of awareness among women drain their status to vulnerable and pathetic condition in the study area.

## XIII. SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Women empowerment is the need of the hour for which education plays a vital role. Hence female has to be educated.
- ❖ Need to provide skill-oriented training programs to enhance their earning capacity.
- ❖ Motivational as well as awareness programs has to be provided in order to know their rights and privileges in the society.
- ❖ Early marriages of the female have to be compulsorily forbidden since it cramps their ability, potential efficiency and their talents and make them hamper with only household works.
- ❖ Women health need to be improved for which proper sanitation facilities has to be provided.

## XIV.PROJECT OUTCOME

This study is a steppingstone to understand the socio-economic status and the challenges faced by women agricultural labourers of Manguli tribal village. It portrays the ground reality of the female agricultural

labourers in both family and in agricultural fields. This study probed to find the ways and means to empower tribal women to attain economic independence of individual as well as social enhancement.

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