

Impact of Globalisation on Women Workers in Agricultural Sector: An Analysis

Reena Dangal¹

Abstract

This article examines the impact of Globalisation on Women Workers in Agricultural Sector in India. Agriculture sector being unorganised sector it provides direct employment to millions of people including men and women throughout the country. Agriculture is said to be the backbone for the contribution of the economy of a nation where women plays an important role in the development of the economy of a nation. Different types of farming which is practised in India has been mentioned in this article. Further importance of women in agriculture sector and the problems faced by women workers in this sector has been discussed. What are the various Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in India and has also examined about the social security legislation for women. The author in this article has also discussed the topic with some case laws decided by the supreme court of our country. At last the author has concluded the manuscript by pondering some suggestions related to it.

Keywords: *Globalisation; Women Workers; Agricultural Sector; Unorganised Sector; Socio-Economic Conditions; Social Security; Case Laws.*

I. Introduction

The women in India are considered as the back bone of agricultural workforce and are a vital part of Indian economy. Agriculture is known as the science or art of cultivating soil, growing and harvesting of crops, domestication of animals and raising of livestock.² India's agricultural sector has shown its strength amid the misfortune of COVID-19 induced lockdowns. The Agriculture and Allied activities observed a growth of 3.4 per cent at constant prices during

¹ Research Scholar in Law, Session 2019-2020 Department of Law, Coochbehar Panchanan Barma University, Coochbehar. 736101 Contact Number: 8250887841. Mail to: reenedangal25@gmail.com.

² MAJID HUSAIN, AGRICULTURAL GEOGRAPHY, 45 (Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2017).

2020-2021.³ Agriculture sector provides direct employment to millions of people. It is a social sector where non trading concerns like food and nutritional security, employment and income generation, poverty alleviation, gender equity, ecology and environment play a significant role. Agriculture has contributed to the nation's security during the time of economic sanction and in strengthening the national sovereignty. But even after so much of contribution to the nation agriculture has so far remained an unorganised sector.⁴

Agriculture again in its broader modern term includes not only the domestication of plants and animals useful to humans, but also many of the operations involved in marketing them.⁵

II. Types of Agriculture

India is a country where different types of farming is practiced primarily based on nature of the land, climatic condition and available irrigational facilities.

A. Subsistence Farming

All types of crops or livestock are raised in this type of farming. This farming helps to maintain the farmer and farmer's family.

B. Mixed farming

Different agriculture is practised by the farmers in this type of farming like cash crops and livestock together.

C. Shifting cultivation

This system of agriculture is a type of migrating agricultural activities to another land because when a plot of land is cultivated for few years and then later when the crop yield declines due to soil exhaustion and the effects of pests and weeds, as a result the farmers shift their cultivation to another area.

D. Extensive Farming

³ Ministry of Finance, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1693205> visited on 04.02.2021 at 01: 40 PM.

⁴ HAND BOOK OF AGRICULTURE, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, 1(New Delhi 2006).

⁵ MAJID HUSAIN, AGRICULTURAL GEOGRAPHY, 45(Rawat Publications, New Delhi, Reprint 2017).

In this system of extensive farming the farmer uses the limited amount of labour and Capital on a relatively large area for cultivation. Technology is used for farming in this system.

E. Intensive Farming

In this system of farming manual labour is used and the farmers uses a larger amount of labour and capital on a relatively small area.

F. Plantation Agriculture

Cash crops are specially cultivated in this type of farming.

III. Agricultural Labour: A Class of Unorganised Sector

The workers of unorganised sector or informal sector are concerned with their social security issues. The report of the National Commission defines unorganised sector as all the private enterprises which are owned by single person or households whoever are engaged in the production and sales of goods and services by employing less than ten person which are operated on a proprietary or a partnership basis.⁶ The informal sector has defined negatively by indicating the characteristics whichever are not present in the formal sector such as no better earnings, no social security benefits, no protective legislations, no employer- employee relationships, no protections from any unions, that is the reason why the unorganised or the informal workers are home based workers, casual and contractual workers and therefore they earn their livelihood through whatever skill they possesses.⁷

Therefore, rural women worker whoever works in an agricultural sector work as a labourer with low wage of income and even work up to the extended hours just because to earn a livelihood due to poverty, illiteracy and ignorance.

IV. Significance of Agricultural Sector Women in India

Food is a fundamental life support, which is very much essential for the consumption. Women plays an active role as a labour in agricultural farms and even in household activities. In the field she works as a cultivator, sowing of

⁶ Neetha N., *Invisibility' Continues? Social Security and Unpaid Women Workers*, Vol. 41, No. 32 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, 3497 (2006).

⁷ Mridul Eapen, *Women in Informal Sector in Kerala: Need for Re-Examination*, Vol. 36, No. 26 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, 2390 (2001).

seeds, weeding and within house hold apart from the responsibilities as a mother, wife she keeps poultry, livestock production. She even does the cattle management all alone like cleaning the cattle shed, fetching the cattle's, cutting grass, collecting foddors, milking, and also makes manure for the production in the field.

From the rural areas male members of the family migrate from village to cities in search of job for their livelihood, at such period of time the female members manages everything at home from rearing cattle to the agricultural production of crops at her village.⁸

Women produce around 60 to 80 percent of the food in most of the developing countries and women's are responsible for half of the world's food production, hence, women's role in food production ensures the survival of millions of people in all regions. Women's livelihood strategies, and their support and means of ensuring food security are diverged and complex, from cultivating field crops to livestock rearing.⁹

There is the growing dominance of women labourers in agricultural production and the decrease of men labourers in the agricultural sector in many regions and countries due to the trend of feminization of agriculture. This trend makes it more imperative than ever to take action to enhance women's ability to carry out their tasks in agricultural production and their other contributions to food security. This development goes hand in hand with the increasing number of female-headed households around the world.¹⁰ Apart from food production by women they also contribute to food security in the country.

⁸ Women - The unsung warriors of Indian Agriculture, <https://www.dhanuka.com/blogs/women-the-unsung-warriors-of-indian-agriculture> visited on 04.02.2021 at 01: 15 PM.

⁹ Nishi Slathia, Participation of Women in Agricultural Production, https://www.krishisanskriti.org/vol_image/07Sep201505094127.pdf visited on 04.02.2021 at 01: 55 PM.

¹⁰ Women's contributions to agricultural production and food security: Current status and perspectives, <http://www.fao.org/3/x0198e/x0198e02.htm> visited on 04.02.2021 at 02: 16 PM.

V. Impact of Globalisation in Agriculture in India

World has now become a global village due to the introduction of new technologies. The Growth in agricultural production in India up to the year 1965 was very low, with severe famines. Agriculture failed to meet the needs of India from the time of independence in 1947 until 1965 which reflected a neglect in favour of the industrial sector, this failure should be contrasted to the deplorable agricultural situation in India during the British colonial regime. The stagnation of agriculture during the colonial period left behind a worsening food situation in India. Disastrous droughts combined with relatively little technological change and sluggish land reforms brought India to the brink of famine in the mid-1960s. Famine was averted only by massive shipments of subsidized food grains from the United States of America. Due to this the policy makers were compelled to think about the development to increase cereal productivity by inducing changes in agricultural technology in our country.¹¹ High-yielding varieties (HYVs) of seeds were introduced then after. In India the Green Revolution brought about a modern approach to agriculture by incorporating irrigation systems, genetically modified seed variations, insecticide and pesticide usage, and numerous land reforms. It brought about a transformation in agricultural productivity in India and turned the country from a food importer to an exporter.

In order to note the impact of technological change in agriculture it is important to note three types of impacts:

- (1) Impact on employment and productivity,
- (2) Impact on income and expenditure, and
- (3) Impact on quality of life.¹²

VI. Problems of Women workers in Agriculture Sector

The problems which are faced by the women working in agricultural sector are many to be mentioned. First of all, it is the social hierarchy of rural society which has imposed different types of constraints upon the labourers. The women

¹¹ Govindan Parayil, *The Green Revolution in India: A Case Study of Technological Change*, Vol. 33, No. 4 TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE, 739 (Oct., 1992).

¹² Nata Duvvury, *Women in Agriculture: A Review of the Indian Literature*, Vol. 24, No. 43 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, WS 99 (Oct. 28, 1989).

of upper class stores the agricultural products at their homes and feed the labourers. The landless lower-class women work as a wage labour and they are the sufferer of poverty, malnutrition, overextended hours of work and as well have no social security benefits. The Agriculture, household industry, and locals whoever have formed their main sources of livelihood traditionally are as well affected due to the globalisation from the shift of their traditional occupations.¹³

It has been estimated that 52–75 percent of Indian women whoever are engaged in agriculture sector are illiterate, an education is the key obstacle that prevents women from participating in more skilled labour sectors. There is an average gender wage disparity, with women earning only 70 percent of men's wage. Additionally, many women participate in agricultural work as unpaid survival labour. The lack of employment mobility and education contribute the majority of women in India vulnerable, as dependents on the growth and stability of the agricultural market.¹⁴

In early period irrigation was based on water harvesting and water was transferred from the small ponds to the land through the bucket system operated manually, and women participated actively in this work. Later when there was the introduction of diesel pumps in irrigation male workers started their monopoly. This has not reduced women's workload. Many women's access to resources including energy is actually declining, while their need for food and income is increasing.

With the introduction of green revolution in India there has been an increase in the production of crops using technological methods like monocultures and multicropping and the High yielding varieties methods have increased women's work in agriculture.

VII. Socio-Economic Conditions of Women Workers in Agriculture Sector

Our country India faces various socio and economic problems. The socio economic problems continues to prevail as our country have not been able to change our traditional socio economic structure and value system. Our country

¹³ Mazumdar, V., *From Research to Policy: Rural Women in India*, 10(11/12), STUDIES IN FAMILY PLANNING, (1979).

¹⁴ Women in agriculture in India, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_agriculture_in_India#Gender_division_of_labor visited on 05.02.2021 at 09:50 PM.

is devoted to the principle of economic growth with social justice. This devotion can be materialize only if the women workers who form almost half of the population are brought into the mainstream of national life not only as beneficiaries of the socio economic growth but also as its agents.¹⁵

The socio economic condition of women working in agriculture sector is poor as can be seen. As I have already discussed above that agriculture is an unorganised sector and therefore, the workers of this sector are paid low wages that are often insufficient to meet minimum living standards, their work are seasonal and they do not have a fixed salary. The women working in agriculture sector are illiterate and due to the introduction of technology in the era of globalisation the women workers lack some skills as compared to the male workers in this sector.

The work participation of women in unorganised sector has grown in many developing countries in the 1980s and 1990s as economic crises and structural adjustment have reduced job opportunities in the formal sector and increased the need for an additional source of family income. One of the leading reasons for women's limited access to income and economic opportunities lies in their work being at the margin of major development efforts and programmes. Men dominate such assets and inputs as land, credit, seeds, livestock, technology and infrastructure. And the enormous potential contribution of women remains underused.¹⁶

India being a predominantly agricultural country, women do more than half of the total agricultural work. But their work is not valued. Although the technological development does not result in improving the economic activities among women. Pattern of women's activities are affected by prevailing social ideology and are also linked with the stage of economic development.¹⁷

¹⁵ MEDHA DUBHASHI VINZE, WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA, (A SOCIO ECONOMIC STUDY OF DELHI- 1975-76), 95 (Mittal Publications Delhi, 1987).

¹⁶ Human Development Report 1995 at 39.

¹⁷ M. Kamraju, M. Vani, Mohd Akhter Ali, *Socio- Economic Status Of Working Women In Shamshabad*, Vol. 2, Issue-IV April , AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY E-JOURNAL, 143 (2017) .

VIII. Right to Work and Social Security

During the ancient period, when livelihood of a people were primarily based upon agriculture through the system of joint family, religious institutions, philanthropy, charitable institution, securities were provided to the needy during the spells of misfortune.¹⁸ Now in the era of globalisation technology came up, industrial system has been set up and it has now become easy to earn at less expenses due to many technological upgradation like hybridisation of seeds, monoculture and so on and can make good profits out of it but there is always an issue relating to wages of the women workers.

Social security is a basic requirement of the people regardless of the sector of employment in which they work and live in. the Constitution of India has guaranteed the equality of both the sexes. The preamble of our Constitution is a sole repository of social security measures and provide for establishment of socialist state. The principle aim of socialism is to eliminate inequality of income, status and standard of life and to provide a decent standard of life to the working people. Further it is designed to secure social, economic and political justice to all its citizens. Social justice is said to be signature tune of our Constitution. The objectives can be achieved through various Directive Principles of State Policy as enumerated in Part III of the Constitution of India.¹⁹

The right to maternity protection is enshrined in various human rights treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Maternity protection is necessary in promoting the health, nutrition and well-being of mothers and their children, for achieving gender equality at work, prevent and reduce poverty and to advance decent work for both women and men. This makes maternity protection the first key step of the comprehensive set of care policies that promote women's economic empowerment.²⁰

¹⁸ J.Mahalakshami, *Social Security of Workers in India- A Human Rights Perspective*, 32 *IBR*, 390 (2005).

¹⁹ Suresh V. Nadagoudar, *Social security for Workers in the Unorganised Sector*, 28 (1) *IBR*, 120 (2001).

²⁰ Maternity cash benefits for workers in the informal economy, International Labour Office, Social Protection for All Issue Brief, November 2016 at 1.

VIII. Judicial Pronouncement

The Supreme Court in India has played an active role in recognising the rights of the workers of unorganised sector and has placed a landmark judgements in several cases decided by them. The Supreme Court held in a case²¹that whenever the public interest litigation if initiated alleging the practice of bonded labour, the government should welcome it as it may give the government the opportunities and to examine the issues or problem of labour and make efforts to eradicate the practice of bonded labour and protect the labours. Article 23 of the Constitution of India, prohibits the practice of forced labour. In the year 1976 Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act was enacted to give effect to Article 23 of the Constitution of India with a view to prevent the economic and physical exploitation of the weaker section of the society. It is one of the landmark decision of the Supreme Court where several basic rights of the individual specially to safeguard the workers working in unorganised sector.

A petition was filed in a case²²for the purpose of remedying gross violation of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 as well as the violation of Article 23 of Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court held that Article 23 of the Constitution sanctions that no person shall be required or permitted to provide labour or service to another on payment of anything less than the minimum wage and if the Exemption Act, by excluding the applicability of the Minimum Wages Act 1948, provides that minimum wages may not be paid to a workman employed in any famine relief work, it would be clearly violative of Article 23.

Another Petition were filed on behalf of persons working as daily rated casual labour in the post and telegraphs department. The daily rated casual labour includes three broad categories of workers, namely, unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled. The main complaint of the petitioner in this case was that even though many of them have been working for the last ten years as casual labourers, the wages paid to them are very low and far less than the salary and allowances paid to the regular employees. The Supreme Court held that Different rates of wages laid down therein are equally untenable. This is clearly violation of Article 14 and 16 of the Indian Constitution.²³

²¹ Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India, AIR 1984 SC 802.

²² Sanjit Roy v. State of Rajasthan, AIR 1983, SC 328.

²³ Daily Rated Casual Labour v. Union of India, (1988) 1 SCC 122.

IX. Conclusion and Suggestions

Therefore, agricultural growth has played an important role in the process of economic development. Economic growth originating in agriculture can have a particularly strong impact in reducing poverty and hunger. For the development of the economy of a country no doubt there is a need of improved technologies throughout the agrifood production, processing, and distribution chain, skills transfer, foreign capital, and increased export earnings. So the women workers working in this agriculture sector should be promoted in the rapid changes taking place, and are not left behind. The women workers of this sector must be benefitted through the wages and should be provided with social security.

The government must take necessary steps in increasing agricultural production with the help of the workers and create additional employment facilities for women labourers in agriculture sector and eradicate the problems between male and female workers. Therefore, globalisation stands for challenges and opportunities and I would like to say that our country should ensure rapid development for the progress and prosperity of our nation.