

Status of Women Farm Labors of Beda Community in Bellary District

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Abstract: India, being is an advancing country, has adopted both traditional and modern strategy in Industrial sector. The farming system in India has witnessed ancient and modern methods in order to make agriculture sector lucrative.

The Indian economy is classified as primary, secondary and tertiary sector. Fishing, poultry and horticulture is considered primary sector, while mining and industries fall under secondary sector. Banking, transportation, insurance, education, training, medical and technical institutions are regarded as tertiary sector. As per World Development Report 2010, the primary sector contributes 18%, secondary sector contributes 29% and tertiary sector contributes 53% to the GDP.

India as a whole like most of the developing world is rich in Indigenous genetic resources. The author observed that, the agriculture system got improved by the adaptation of new technology but adequate recognition of rights of farming community is lacking. Most of the rural populations are denied of their rights to land or property, water, labor and access to markets, education, information and new technologies. Traditional plant varieties and wild species are disappearing irreversibly due to the flaw of monoculture farming and use of new technologies like biotechnology and the process has resulted in the disappearance of farming know-how. India's agricultural growth in the twentieth century has been low compared to that in other developing countries.

Agriculture sector as a whole has developed and emerged immensely with the infusion of science and technology. But this latest emergence is not capable of plummeting the ignorance of women labour as an integral part of this industry. In developing countries like India, agriculture continues to absorb and employ female work force but fails to give them recognition of employed/hired labour. Women constituted 38% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. It is also estimated that 45.3% of the agricultural labour force consists of women. But a large number of women have remained as "invisible workers". Since there has been concern expressed regarding the gap between women's actual economic participation and public perception of it several researchers have attempted to overcome this invisibility through gendered empirical research studies for using on gender analysis and gender roles. This piece of research is highlighting the trend of female participation in agriculture in Bellary district in Karnataka.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Indian agriculture started dating back to ten thousand years and the agriculture was and is a way of living. In India about two third of its population is dependent on agriculture sector. When we peep into the history of the more developed countries, one can see that agriculture has played a pivotal part in the process of their enrichment. For one thing, if development is to occur, agriculture must be able to produce a surplus of food, maintain the growing non-agricultural force. Since food is more essential for life than the services provided by merchants or bankers or factories, an economy cannot shift to such activities unless food is available for barter or sale in sufficient quantities to support those engaged in them. With the onslaught of liberalization modernization and globalization policies the agriculture sector has hit the agriculture sector owing to competition and volatile market conditions. Also, agriculture prima facie is considered to be a male subjugated activity and females working in the field are treated just as 'helpers'. Women farmers have rich experience about cropping patterns, irrigation, pest control and soil management practices and are also the custodians of unique traditional ecological knowledge. They efficiently carry out agriculture and allied activities and if given opportunity, can play an instrumental role in promoting sustainable agriculture. However, in spite of their immense involvement, they face number of challenges and constraints. If through policy interventions and programme development we are able to address the hurdles faced by women in agriculture, there is a lot of

scope not only for the improvement in living of these women peasants but also for the well being of the society. The current paper throws light on the invisible contribution made by women in agriculture, highlights the constraints that are there and draws attention towards the opportunities available. The paper argues that the number of female workforce in agriculture is increasing and given the opportunities and better resources, issues like food security and poverty can be addressed. The present paper focuses on the social condition of women agriculture labors of Beda Community in Bellary district in Karnataka.

Bellary district has become a major industrial hub in the recent past and many well-known industries such as Jindal, Kirloskar, Kalyani, Baldota and other major industries have their units across this district. Moreso, the district has many mining companies which have direct and indirect impact on agriculture activities. With the entry of major industries operating in the district, rural youths have been successful in securing employment, the burden of taking care of livestock and carrying out agriculture activities has been shouldered upon women. as a result of this, more women are seen working in agriculture lands these days.

As the number of industrial operations is increasing on a large scale, the agrarian community is battered with many problems. Since the agriculture -labors fall under unorganized sector, most of the workers belong to small and marginalized farmers. The women workers are paid very less wages. The agricultural sector is a crucial component of the Indian economy and it accounts for two thirds of the employment. It further provides food, nutrition and employment security. Women are an integral part of agriculture. They contribute substantially from seedling to storage, germ plasma conservation and environment protection round the year. All over India a large number of women are involved in agriculture. Indian women's contribution to agriculture is a significant and crucial way both to agricultural production and the women's household sector. A large number of adult women in India are in fact farmers working on land. However, agricultural policy is still dominated by the false view that 'farmers are men', women are only housewives'. In fact agriculture employs 85% of all economically active women. It is also related to the fact that although women work to sustain their families, most of their work is not measured in wages. Women's work also became invisible, because, women are concentrated outside market related or remunerated work and they are normally engaged in multiple tasks. Yet very rarely do women get the recognition for their perpetual contribution in agriculture in the rural economy. Their work is concerned as secondary by and large by policy makers. The problem for women is exacerbated by discrimination and they are often paid less than their counterpart of the men. The women carry the double burden of poverty and discrimination. They have less access than men to credit, to production resources such as irrigation, water, fertilizers and improved technologies. The new global structural transformation is posing new challenges to the Beda women in agricultural sector. These women, who are already exploited, now suffer under tremendous disadvantages in the contemporary world due to liberalization, privatization and globalization.

This study has selected 12 male and 10 female agriculture labors in Bellary district. They are paid Rs 300 -350 and Rs 150-200 respectively per day as wages besides serving tea and food. Their day starts from 9.30 AM to 5 PM. They are given one hour break for lunch. They are required to work irrespective of scorching heat and heavy rain. Men are required to tend plants, spraying pesticides, and leveling the agriculture ground. While women workers pluck flowers, weeding out the grass, planting paddy saplings and others. The Beda women are paid less wages despite working and toiling the fields hard. They are involved in hard work but still paid less wages and owing to lack of nutritional food they have serious health hazards compared to men. Bellary district is known for extreme climatic conditions and working in fields has further deteriorated their health. In Bellary district, Beda men and women do almost all works from land preparation to seed storage. But at the same time, their role depend more on the family situation than on gender or ethnicity. In a family with more male members, male works in the fields, whereas in families with fewer men, women work equally with men. Purchasing of seed is generally done by men. Men do the ploughing while men and women do the hoeing and digging. Sowing, planting, manure application, harvesting is done by both men and women. Mulching is done mostly by men, although women help as when required. Weeding is done by women.

According to agricultural narratives, it is believed that it was Beda 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 If food, feed, fodder, fiber and fuel. Beda 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. Therefore, without the total intellectual and physical participation of Beda women, it will not be possible to popularize alternative systems of land management to shifting cultivation, arrest soil erosion, and promote the care of the soil and the health of economic plants and farm animals. That Beda women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/ social forestry, fisheries, etc. is a fact long taken for granted but also long ignored. The nature and extent of Beda women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt, varies greatly from region to region. Even within a region, their involvement varies widely among different ecological subzones, farming systems, castes, classes and stages in the family cycle. But regardless of

these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production, except sloughing in which Beda women are not actively involved. In some of the farm activities like processing and storage, women predominate so strongly that men workers are numerically insignificant. Studies on women in agriculture 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 home makers. Despite their importance to agricultural production, women face severe handicaps. They are in fact, the largest group of landless laborers with little real security in case of break-up of the family owing to death or divorce, inheritance laws and customs discriminate against them land reform and settlement programmers usually give sole title and hence the security needed for obtaining production credits to the husband. Agricultural development programmers are usually planned by men and aimed at men. Mechanization, for example alleviates the burden of tasks that are traditionally men's responsibility, leaving women's burdens unrelieved or even increased. The excess burden of work on women also acts as a stimulus to have many children so that they can help out with chores from an early age. Extension workers almost exclusively aim their advice at men's activities and crops. In some regions, this bias may depress production of subsistence food crops in favor of increased production of cash crops in favor of increased production of cash crops so that family nutrition suffers. It may not be out of place to mention here that considering their dual responsibilities within and outside the home, it would be in the fitness of things that more and more in the village training is organized for rural farm women to suit their convenience with due realization that institutional training is important in its own place. Apart from participation in actual cultivation, women participate in various forms of processing and marketing of agricultural produce. In rural India, the prosperity of the household depends on the prosperity of agriculture and allied occupation in any particular point of time vis-a-vis the role of women in innumerable activities connected with farming, dairying, sericulture etc. But the women hands are invisible even to this day, so it is not surprising that the agricultural extension activities are mainly a male oriented pursuit.

The study has surveyed the condition of Beda women in Kudligi taluk in Balalri district. Kudligi is an arid land and the agriculture is dependent solely on monsoon. The Beda women in Kudligi taluk are expected to collect wood from fields. This wood is being used as a major fuel source for cooking. Because of the increasing population pressure, over grazing and desertification, women face difficulties in searching of fire wood. Clean drinking water is another major problem in rural areas. Like collection of wood, fetching water from remote areas is also the duty of women. Because a rural Beda woman is responsible for farm activities, keeping of livestock and its other associated activities like milking, milk processing, and preparation of ghee are also carried out by the women. Livestock is the primary subsistent activity used to meet household food needs as well as supplement farm incomes. The majority of farms own some livestock. The pattern of livestock strength is mainly influenced by various factors such as farm size, cropping pattern, availability of range-lands including fodder and pasture. It is common practice in the rural areas to give an animal as part of a women's dowry. Studies have revealed Beda women earn extra income from the sale of milk and animals. Mostly women are engaged in cleaning of animal, sheds, watering and milking the animals. Beda women are also responsible for collection, preparing dung cakes an activity that also brings additional income to poor families. Evidently, Beda women are involved in almost all livestock related activities. Except grazing, all other livestock management activities are predominantly performed by females. Majority of women are involved in shed cleaning and collection of farm yard manure. Males, however, share the responsibility of taking care of sick animals. It is evident that the women are playing a dominant role in the livestock production and management activities.

The study also noted that majority of the Beda women are uneducated, unskilled and tradition bounded, therefore their productive capacities are also low, and counted as unskilled labor. Though Beda women also help to produce the staple crops like rice, and maize, but her contribution is secondary in staple crop production, however, in legumes and vegetables, her role is instrumental. Beda women have very hectic life. Her work starts from dawn and ends at dusk. The daily routine work begins from house cleaning, fetching drinking water, dish washing, laundry, preparing food for family, care of children, tailoring and sewing clothes. She manages these activities very smartly. Even though Beda women supply half of the food production in Kudligi, yet her own food security is always at risk. Beda women farmers are frequently ignored in development strategies and policies. In most part of Bellary district Beda women farmers do not have access to adequate resources, but women's are even more constrained because of cultural, traditional and sociological factors.

The agricultural laborers can be classified into mainly four categories. 1. Landless agricultural laborers - 2) Permanent Laborers Attached to Cultivating Households, 3) Casual Laborers. 4) Very small cultivators whose main source of earnings due to their small and sub marginal holdings is wage employment. Permanent or attached labourers work on annual or seasonal basis and they work on some sort of contract. Their wages are determined by custom or tradition. Temporary or casual labourers are engaged only during peak period of work. They are paid at the market rate. Under the second group come small farmers who possess very little land and therefore, have to devote most of their time working on the lands of others as labourers.

As per the study from 1991 to 2011, it is estimated that the total agriculture labourers has been reduced to 118.6 million from 1273 million. More than 59% men and 75% women in rural areas are dependent on agriculture. The total number of agriculture labourers are 74.66 million in 1991 and the numbers have increased to 1068 million in 2001 i.e., an increase of 26% in ten years. as per 2011 census, 49.28% people in Karnataka are working in agriculture sector. Yojana of March 2004 has estimated that a total of 486 lakh of women are agriculture labourers and rural women constitute 427 lakh rural women and 60 lakh urban women. Out of the total Indian population, 31.39 per cent are main workers and 3.49 per cent marginal workers. The percentage of female main workers and female marginal workers is 16.8 and 6.26 respectively of the female workers, 34.55 per cent are cultivators, 43.56 per cent are agricultural labourers, and 4.65 per cent are engaged in livestock, forestry and fisheries. Of the female marginal workers 47.91 per cent are cultivators 41.43 per cent are agricultural labourers and 1.64 per cent are engaged in livestock, fisheries and forestry remaining 17.62 per cent female main workers and 9.02 per cent female marginal workers are in non-agricultural sector. Thus in India women forces are overwhelmingly engaged in agriculture both as main and marginal workers and played a pivotal role from ancient time. There is no denying the fact that women do not have equal access to beneficial change and status in society is not identical to that of men. This is especially true in villages. Several studies have shown that the woman employee – whatever job she holds – is equal in efficiency and performance to the male employee in identical employment situations. Some of the studies even indicate that in certain aspects of the woman employee is even more efficient. In the matter of reliability, promptness and punctuality she had been found to have an edge over her male counterpart. Globally women constitute half of the world's population and produce half of the agricultural products according to a UN report. This indicates the contribution of women in the economic prosperity of the nations, whose lifeblood is agriculture, through their participation in agriculture as cultivators, agricultural labourers and casual helpers. It is to be noted here that one third of Australian farmers and workers are women. Women suffer from womb to tomb in the male dominated society. Their labour plays a key role in the survival of millions of families. The problem of poverty cannot be tackled without providing opportunities of productive employment to rural women. Women are important economic agents in India, particularly in the context of poverty. Women's income in the poverty groups is critical for household survival. Three quarter of women all over to world live in rural areas and most of them work in agricultural sector and a wide range of related activities.

As per the census reports, there is an increase in the percentage of participation of rural women in economic activities along with doing household duties, though participation of women in agriculture contribute a lot for the economic growth and progress of the country, their problems are shown least concern. Woman's role has biologically and socially combined to create four distinct functions that of mother, wife, homemaker and worker. The role of worker is equally important as that of the other three roles. But her role as an active worker-producer is rarely acknowledged though it is significant for the family's survival. These unknown and unacknowledged beings are responsible to keep the economy at a steady pace and helped the nation to occupy a significant place in the world. Women's involvement varies widely among different regions, ecological sub zones, farming system, caste, class and stages in the family cycle. Generally, the poorer the family, the greater the involvement of women in agricultural activities. Women have extensive workloads with dual responsibility for many of the farm operations and household management such as fetching water, cooking and taking care of children. Despite women's significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields, they have virtually no access to agricultural information, services or production assets and have very limited control over their earnings. Though agriculture technologies enhanced agricultural productivity, they also widened economic disparities and deepened gender discrimination in community life. The introduction of capital intensive technologies in the agricultural sector has had differential impact on men and women and women have been adversely affected due to lack of access to technology.

The study has noted that in Kudligi taluk women workers in Unorganized Sectors. The problems of the women workers in the unorganized sector in particular deserve special emphasis because of their marginalized position within the class of workers. The double burden of work is even more arduous when they have to perform a reproductive role at home front as well as long hours to obtain a subsistence wage at the centre of employment. A reproductive role of women is less visible and less recognized by the society.

Agriculture is the largest sector of the rural economy and is a family enterprise, since 75 per cent of its population is dependent on it in India. India's economic security is heavily dependent on agriculture. In terms of employment, it is the most important sector. Women in India are the backbone of the society and important human resource. They play a significant and crucial role in agriculture and allied operations and household activities. Traditionally, women have always played an important role in agriculture – as farmers, co-farmers, family labour, wage labours and managers of farms. The selection, preservation and maintenance, the development and sharing of seed stock has long been preserve of women. They have been active not just in crop cultivation but also in allied areas such as horticulture, livestock and fisheries. The fact is that women's contributions in these sectors have either been largely ignored or inadequately acknowledged. Women constitute nearly half the population in any country either it is developed or developing country. Accordingly to U.N.

Reports, "Women are almost half of the adult population. They constitute one-third of labour force but consume two-thirds of the world's working hours and yet earn only one tenth of the income and own only one per cent of world property. Women constitute in innumerable way to the development process. Broadly their contribution to socio-economic development has two fold i.e., i) in the home ii) outside the home. In the home, women's role as daughter, wife and mother cannot be under estimated. A woman as a caretaker of the members of the family attends to food requirements. She looks after the health of her family. Woman is also the first teacher. The training imparted by her to the child forms the basis of future skills formation among the work forces.

Women in the labour force have been widely researched since the mid seventies. A number of studies have highlighted their status, visibility and importance in the economy. There are, however, many problems related to the definition of work, more working works, and invisibility of work (household or domestic work), enumeration and coverage of workers which is effecting the work participation of women. 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 labourers are land less, homeless and belong to the socially depressed class of the society. Despite the seasonal nature of employment in the field of agriculture enormous growth is witnessed in the size of the agricultural labourers since the beginning of this century. The same can be said about Beda women agriculture labours.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To Study the background of female agri-labours.
2. To analyses the problems and challenges faced by women agri-labours.
3. To assess how the agriculture labour sector is empowering the women labours.
4. To make a comprehensive analysis of Beda women agri-labours.
5. To examine how the government schemes have become instrumental in enhancing the social and economic status of women agri-labours.

Study Area

The present study focuses on Beda community of Kamayyana Hutty village in Kudligi taluk, Bellary district.

III. METHODOLOGY

The authors of this study have collected information from primary and secondary sources. Data has been collected by conducting interviews and questionnaire. Reports, research articles and books have also been referred to substantiate the data and information

IV. FINDINGS

1. The Beda women farm labours have no job security.
2. The agriculture sector and its allied industries follow rampant gender discrimination as a result of this is huge wage disparity.
3. The Minimum Wages Act is not fully implemented in this sector.
4. It is unfortunate that women agriculture labours are ignorant about laws that protect their welfare.
5. The Beda women workers have been subjected to economical exploitation.
6. The illiteracy rate among Beda omen workers is comparatively high.
7. There has been a considerable decrease in the participation of males in agriculture activities.
8. The agriculture lands are being sold for mining and industrial activities.
9. The rain based agriculture is uncertain and causes anxiety and insecurity among famres.
10. Most of the farmers in the study have raised huge loans
11. Famers often become prey to the cheating tricks of agriculture middlemen while buying and selling agriculture produces.
12. Since the ground water table is fast depleting, men are searching for alternate employment methods while women have inevitably involved in agriculture activities.

V. CONCLUSION

The unorganized sector is larger in rural areas as compared to urban areas. The female participation in this sector is more than male. Women worker face grave problems. Their condition is highly unpredictable and have constraints related to their work such as insecurity, wage discrimination, absence of medical and accidental care, lack of continuity etc. this is due to their seasonal intermittent nature of work, low level irregular patterns of earning and employment, absence of employer-employee relationship and weak administrative structure. It is also clear that self-awareness and education are the magic wands which will fuel the revolution.

Even though there has been an evidence of progressive transformation in the society and the status of women in workplace, still the trends in this direction are not satisfactory. A professional women of today still struggles with the harsh realities of discrimination, exploitation and violence in organizations, societal and family pressures and suffers from the bitter effects of the balancing act which she is expected to perform for handling work place and household chores. In this article efforts are made to unfold the extent of plight of female workers in general women working in the unorganized sector in particular. Globalization is a multi-dimensional process of economic, political, cultural and ideological change. It has led to increasing violations of women's economic, political, cultural rights in large measure due to withering away of the welfare State, the feminization of poverty, the expansion of religious fundamentalists and new form of militarism and conflict. Often being unorganized, facing recurrent inequity in employment and harassment at work and violation of their human rights, with low levels of education, limited technological skills, women workers easily become marginalized and hardly derive any benefits from the ever new opportunities emerging in an open and competitive world trade. The

It is a strong perception that women's economic dependence on men is determining factor as to their power within the family. With increased participation in income earning activities, not only will there be more income for the family, but gender inequality could be reduced. This issue is particularly salient in India because studies show a very low level of female participation in the labor force. This under-reporting is attributed to the frequently held view that women's work is not economically productive. If all activities including maintenance of kitchen gardens and poultry, grinding food grains, collecting water and firewood, etc. are taken into account, then 88 percent of rural housewives and 66 percent of urban housewives can be considered as economically productive. Women's employment in family farms or businesses is rarely recognized as economically productive, either by men or women. And, any income generated from this work is generally controlled by the men. Such work is unlikely to increase women's participation in allocating family finances. As far as the impact of technology is concerned, there is shift from subsistence to a market economy which has a dramatic negative impact on women. Where technology has been introduced in areas where women worked, women labourers have often been displaced by men. Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world today.

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