Chapter II

Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

The need and significance of the present study as well as its important objectives are spelt out clearly in the first chapter. Methodology of the study is also given in the first chapter. In this chapter an attempt is made to briefly survey the available literature, which has direct or indirect relevance to the present study.

Although the present study is different from other previous studies, it is imperative to analyse the relevant literature available, which have a direct or indirect bearing on the present study. This thesis is developed on the fact that cropping pattern has changed over time in Kerala and that has produced specific gender impact on employment opportunities in agriculture in the state. It is further based on the fact that shifts in cropping pattern and the resultant changes in gender specific employment pattern changed the consumption pattern of agriculture labour families. Hence the survey of relevant literature covers studies on agriculture performance of Kerala, female labour force participation, as well as on gender issues and household behaviour.
2.2 Studies on Kerala Agriculture

Low level of agriculture growth performance at production and yield of crops in Kerala, for a decade from mid seventies has generated a large number of studies. Some of these studies were overall studies while some others were disaggregated studies by crop and by region. Stagnation in Kerala agriculture was the focal point of these studies (Kannan and Pushpangadan, 1988, 1990, Jeemol Unni, 1981, P.G.K. Panikar, 1980, Joseph C.J., 1983, Narayana D. et al., 1983, 1989, Narayana D., 1990, Kuttappan M., 1979, P.S. George, 1979, Ninan K.N., 1984, Lelithabhai K.N., 1993). The growth performance of Kerala agriculture has been approached dividing the period of performance into two phases viz. pre mid seventies and post mid seventies (Kannan and Pushpangadan, 1988).

However, D. Narayana argued that analysis of trends in growth of production and productivity of agriculture in Kerala has to be based on an understanding of the perennial nature of crops in the state and the consequent production cycle. He identified that the period from early seventies to early eighties, during which area, production and productivity in state agriculture tended to stagnate or even decline as the downward swing phase of agriculture production cycle that characterises the tree crops. The results of empirical data analysed by K.N. Lelithabhai also supported the agriculture production cycle hypothesis.

Although the production cycle hypothesis turns out to be true, the significance of plethora of studies on the constraints on agriculture growth prompted by the agriculture
stagnation during the seventies and eighties does not diminish. A general consensus arrived at about the growth performance of state agriculture was that the longrun growth performance has been relatively lower than the Indian average. This comparatively poor performance of state agriculture is in spite of its rich resource endowments. The state benefits from southwest and northeast monsoons. The southwest monsoon is very heavy throughout the state and it starts in May and lasts till September. The northeast monsoon starts in September and lasts till November. The annual rainfall generally exceeds 300 cm. And average number of rain-days exceeds 125 a year. Even though the rainfall is skewed in distribution, the eastern forest system and network of paddy land valleys, canals and homestead ponds had acted as effective water conservation measures.

The geographic divisions of the state are: a) high ranges, the mountainous land along the Western Ghats, b) high land, the hilly tract on the western side of Western Ghats (43% of land area), c) mid land, the undulating terrain with a number of rivers, hills and valleys (42% of the land), and d) low land, the strip of land along the coasts of the Arabian sea. The soil is suitable for rich vegetation. Given the agro-climatic diversity, Kerala is suitable for a wide variety of crops.

Agriculture of the state is characterised by intensive utilisation of the land and unique pattern of mixed cropping (Report of the One Man Commission, 1981). The system of cultivation in the state is homestead agriculture. Homestead refers to the area surrounding the farmhouse. Coconut is the basic crop in almost all the homesteads and it is intercropped with seasonal, annual and perennial crops. The farming systems followed in
the state are: i) rice based farming system, ii) coconut based homestead farming system, iii) tapioca based farming system and iv) plantation system.

Agricultural seasons in the state are Autumn or ‘Virippu’ (April-September), Winter or ‘Mundakan’ (October-January) and Summer or ‘Puncha’ (February-April). Only the first two seasons receive rainfall from southwest monsoon and northeast monsoon respectively.

Kerala agriculture is benefited not only by rich resource endowments, but also by social reformation through eradication of feudal landlordism, which was an impediment to agriculture growth. The process of land reforms climaxed in 1971 when tenancy was abolished and hutment lands were granted to all agricultural labourers (K.N. Raj and Michel Tharakan, 1983). Therefore the factors standing against the state achieving full growth in agriculture have to be identified yet.

Non-price factors like technology influences productivity more than price factors (Kannan and Pushpangadan, 1988, 1990). The problems associated with new technology is not introduction of technology but of providing critical inputs to help farmers to adopt new techniques. Water and farm management had been identified as critical inputs. Water logging in low lands also is a problem.

The cause of decline in yield per coconut tree has been identified as low input use, especially that of irrigation, which aggravates the adverse effect of root-wilt disease and/or
increasing proportion of old palms per hectare, concluded after analysing the trends in area under crop, production and productivity of coconuts in Kerala (Narayana, D. and Nair, K.N., 1989). The impact of irrigation in stabilising and increasing yield of paddy crop in Kerala was studied and the major findings were: 1) the impact is only marginal, and 2) the management of irrigation water is far from satisfactory (Nair, K.N. and Narayana, D., 1983). The yield rates of HYVs were less than their experimental yield potential, as found from the survey conducted in Kuttanad areas and Palakkad (Panikar, P.G.K, 1980).

2.3 Issues in Female Labour Force Participation: A Selective Survey

Role of women in economic activities was not a concern for scholars and development specialists till the mid of second half of the 20th century. The women liberation movements of the western countries led to the production of a number of articles and books on women and work. In 1970s women’s economic role was thought positively and the U.N. declared ‘Women’s Development Decade’ from 1975 to 1985 accentuated this perception. Labour force participation in U.S. and many other developed economies as well as developing economies had been studied and theoretical and econometric models for the same had been developed (Mincer, 1962, Collver and Langlois, 1962). Collver and Langlois found that female labour force participation in developed countries was positively related to economic development and that the developing economies didn’t establish such a relationship.
Major causes of variations in economic behaviour of women in developing countries and third world had been researched (Boserup, 1970). The Women in Development approach was developed during this time. This fostered the view that women's involvement in the projects that would help them to improve their economic conditions and that of their families. Women in Development approach focuses only on women. More appropriate is a gender issues approach, which emphasises not just women, but both men and women and the dynamics of men-women interactions.

The issues and concerns specific to women in developing countries had been attempted in various studies (Tinker et. al., 1976, Rogers, 1980, Smoke, 1981, Charlton, 1984. The data relating to female work in several industrial nations had been studied and found that the human capital theory, which emphasises training and job commitment, was not adequate to explain female labour force participation (Roos, 1985).

Country specific case studies on female labour force participation had introduced different results. In Guatemala females joined labour force at a faster rate than men since 1950 (Chinchilla, 1977). Tremendous increase in female labour force participation in Mexico (Lustig and Rendon, 1979), and in Venezuela (Acosta, 1980) was proved. The World Bank (1985) study on Latin American women gave a cross-national study on female labour force participation.
Studies on Japanese women (Hill, 1981), on Philippino women (Gonzalez, 1977), and on Sri Lankan women (Kiribanda (1981) have concluded that women in Asian countries also have become economically active.

In spite of the tremendous growth in female labour force, irrespective of the country characteristics, the women’s employment status remains specific such like women hold traditional jobs, have low status positions, and earn comparatively very low income than men. Sex-typing of jobs is observed by various studies (Deitch, 1980, Miller, 1980, Barrett, 1979, Malik, 1981). Even with same educational background or work experience as that of men, women have to work at low pay scales because of sex-typing of jobs (Waite 1981, Ehlers, 1980).

Conventionally women were treated as beneficiaries of social services provided by governments. They had little say in matters affecting their lives. In the Third UN International Conference for Women in Nairobi, in 1985, India and Netherlands signed and ratified the Forward Looking Strategies (FLS) whereby the approaches to women in development changed to women as contributors to development. The impact of development had been different on men and women. The impact on the relationship between men and women also is different. Therefore, development has to be approached with a gender consideration rather than women specific (Mary E. John, 1996). The Institutionalist theory reinterprets the debate between the two approaches to gender and development. It focuses on the evolution of social institutions in which individual decisions are made (Nancy Folbre, 1995). In spite of imperfections and lags, social institutions are
evolving towards an efficient, Pareto-optimal equilibrium. Earlier, agrarian economies were male dominant and wage difference existed because of physical strength of men. Women's high fertility made her depend on men. But as technology improved, mental skills got importance than physical strength and fertility decline was encouraged. Thus male dominance became less efficient. But traditional social norms hindered the adjustment to modern egalitarian norms.

"The investigations of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1971-1974) (CSWI) represent the watershed in the field of Women's Studies in the country. Starting with a new perspective, these investigations collated, for the first time, a large body of data on different aspects of women's lives and identified unexpected trends in women's situation such as declining sex ratio, declining economic participation rate and growing gaps in life expectancy and mortality rates between men and women". (quoted from UNESCO Women's Studies and Social Sciences in Asia, Report of a meeting of Experts, Bangkok, 1983, p.47)

Indian women's position worsened with certain exceptions of some middle-class women gained some employment and education. Seeing the uplift of middle-class educated and/or employed women, who are the visible sections of the society, a myth was generated that unlike some of the Asian Societies, women's status in India is very high (Neera Desai and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, 1990). Women have less access to better paying jobs in the formal sector and are disproportionately represented among unpaid family workers and in the informal sector (World Bank: World Development Report 1995).
Explanation to the U-shape hypothesis showing the relationship between economic development and female labour force participation using a U-shaped curve is given in Youssef's study (1974). The study concludes that in the beginning stages of economic development, due to modernisation and mechanisation of agriculture and traditional non-agricultural sectors, the employment opportunities for female labourers decline and development in secondary and tertiary sectors, succeeding the development of the primary sector, introduces more opportunities for female labourers. Studies on female participation in developed countries gave results in conformity with the U-shape hypothesis.

Factors affecting female labour force participation have been identified as presence of young children (Presser and Baldwin, 1980), and household's economic structure (Mason and Palan, 1981).

The interrelationship among economics, gender and household variables has been researched only by early 1980s. Studies have concluded that generally women have provider obligations to their families, especially to their children (Dwyer and Bruce, 1988, Blumberg, 1991).

2.4 Gender Issues in Household Consumption Behaviour

The importance of relative male/female control of income and other resources has a major role in household decision-making (Blumberg and Coleman, 1989). The analysis of
third world data concluded that men and women have distinct expenditure pattern and that women spend more on the family’s sustenance and upbringing of children (Blumberg, 1991).

Gender differences in control over land and labour in African agriculture was found attributed to economic history (Lockwood, 1992). Studies on African agriculture concluded that economic processes associated with structural adjustments, seems to be accentuating the gender biases (Collier, 1992, Palmer, 1991). Although neoclassical economists are optimistic about the ability of markets to prove gender equity, Feminist economist Elson (1993) is sceptical about the same.

Attempting to fill the gap between the neoclassical models, which treat the household as a single unit, and other models that treat men and women within the household separately, Whitehead (1990) challenges the view that economic separation between husbands and wives is total. The gender efficiency approach points out the importance of directing economic resources to women and the need for action oriented political strategies to bring about women’s empowerment (Kabir, 1991, Young, 1993). Collective consciousness among women workers was generated and reproduced by the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in India (Westwood, 1991).

Ernest Engel (1857) studied the relationship between household income and expenditure on different commodities and the result was later known as Engel’s Law. Other empirical studies on consumption pattern and consumer behaviour, on the basis of family
expenditure data, also were done (Working, 1943, Prais and Houthakker, 1955). Consumption pattern in India has first attempted to be studied by Roy and Laha (1954). Their study focussed on demand elasticities with respect to per capita household expenditure, and they used National Sample Survey data on consumer expenditure.

Iyengar (1968) and Gupta (1969) studied the effect of household size on consumption. Inter regional variations in the consumption pattern in India was also studied and worked out elasticity coefficients separately for rural and urban households (Gupta, 1970). Rural-urban differences in consumption habits, also was studied (Mahajan, 1971). Although a number of studies on consumption behaviour were brought forth in India, none of the earlier studies examined the household consumption pattern introduced by women’s income. Recent studies have concentrated on the influence of women’s income on household consumption pattern. Some of the studies found that women spend differently from men, and household expenditure pattern are influenced by share of household income earned by women holding household income constant (Guyer, 1980, Dwyer and Bruce, 1988, Horton and Campbell, 1991, Thomas and Chen, 1993). These studies supported the view that household expenditure pattern with same income, with female earners and without female earners differ. They found that women’s income leads to increased spending on food and children’s education and nutrition needs.

Increased participation of women in labour force brought changes in household food production type, such that food away from home became an attractive attribute to the households. Many studies in western countries analysed the expenditure on food away
from home (Byrone, Capps and Saha, 1996, Mc Cracken and Brandt, 1987). Food spending patterns of female-headed households in the U.S. was studied (Frazao, 1992). These studies concluded that wife’s employment status leads to higher share of restaurant food consumption. In Canada couples working outside home spent more than 50 per cent on restaurant food than wife work full time in the home (Barewal, 1987). The literature showed that wife’s employment status and income has important economic effects. Mainly, it is the influence on the household consumption pattern, which has not been studied in detail at grass roots level in India, except Subramaniyan and Deaton (1991), the study which examines the gender effects on consumption pattern in India using data from NSS 38th round for Maharashtra, and Pillai (1999), the study which focussed on impact of women’s income household consumption pattern using micro level sample data.

Several studies originated in India in last few decades, regarding women and work. The studies on female labour force participation are limited. Study of Datar (1958) gives an analysis of female employment during the period from 1901 to 1951. An analysis of trend in female employment during the period 1881-1951 (Thorner, 1962), analysis of trend in employment of men and women over decades, using Census data (Ambannavar, 1975), and a trend analysis of occupational changes using census data (Prakash, 1975) also are noted studies in the field. Ambannavar also identified the women absorbing and the women reflecting industries. Reasons for declining sex ratio in India was studied in relation to female work participation (Dandekar, 1975). Technological change was identified as the major reason for decline in women’s employment in modern organised industries and in some services (Acharya, 1979, Sinha, 1961). Shift in occupation during 1961-71 and the
status of women in the Indian economy was studied (Mitra, Pathak and Mukherjee, 1980). The reasons for declining female labour force participation in India, has been studied by a number of scholars (Parthasarathy and Rao, 1981, Reddy, 1977, Paul, 1982, Moorthy, 1982, Mukhopadhyay, 1982).

Married women's labour force participation was studied using data related to Madras city (Malathy, 1983). Women agricultural labourers, was the focus of the study of Sen (1983), using census data. Women's involvement in rural transformation (Mehra and Saradamoni, 1983), and the process of transformation of women labour in Indian agriculture been transferred into wage earners (Chatterjee, 1984) are the other major aspects studied. Women workers in the unorganised sector in India, was studied (Banerjee, 1985). Bardhan's (1985) study on how the forces of tradition and change in India affected the female labour force participation, Agarwal's (1986) study on the inter-relationship between female employment, poverty and agricultural growth in India and Mies's (1986) study on how the Indian women in agriculture subsist also give manifestations of issues of female labour force participation in India.

National Institute of Urban Affairs (1987) examined the gender bias in employment in India referring to the urban informal sector. Work participation of women in India during the period 1961-81 was explained in the study of Duvry (1988). Women in labour force in India, was examined in Kalpagam (1988). Her study used NSS data. Female poverty and women's contribution to household maintenance was studied in Mencher (1988). She used data from two regions of South India. Bhalla's (1988) study examined the


Higher levels of female labour force participation is admired due to that having important effects on social institutions (Dreze, 1997) and independent income earning reduce the economic dependence of women on men (Sen, 1990). Low female-male ratio in India led Dreze and Sen (1996) to conclude that gender inequality is high in the country.

The studies on women and work in Kerala also are mainly based on secondary data. The pattern of female employment in Kerala was studied in recent decades (Prakash, 1988, Devi, 1995). The impact of structural changes in the state on demand for female labourers was studied (Kumar, 1994). Casualisation of employment and impact mainly on female labourers due to their limited mobility was concluded in the study of Eapen (1994). Major reason for female unemployment in the state was found due to lack of mobility (Richard
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