CHAPTER VI

Summary Findings & Policy Suggestions
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Nature has designed women to be an equal complement for man in life. Ancient scriptures have revalidated this truth. However in man's long history the condition of women has seen many upheavals caused by temporary social and economic upheavals, only to be corrected painfully in due course. Today it is evident that countries and societies which treat women unequally continue to be backwards not only in economic field but also in technological and other fields as well in relation to other countries which provide equal opportunities to women.

Perhaps the single-most alarming factor in the Indian demography is the drastically falling sex ratio. This statistics is not only a diagnosis of the unequal treatment of women, but also a stark symptom of what is yet to come. It has also compelled the socio-economists to take a hard look at the factors leading to the decline of the female population.

Revised economic estimates indicate that nearly 59 per cent of the Indian population depend on agriculture and that 48.26 per cent of the national population are women. It is therefore logical to conclude that much of the country's progress still rests on women – their status and their contribution. In Karnataka nearly two-thirds of population situated is rural where agriculture continues to be the main means of livelihood. The male to female ratio of the state is only 964 females per 1000 males.
And almost three-fourths of the women population is rurally based. Thus any study purporting to study the status of women in the state would have to be oriented rurally. The present study has been undertaken in Dharwad district, a predominantly agricultural district where 45 per cent of the population is rurally based. The female population per 1000 persons is 949. Most of the rural parts of the district is dependant on agriculture which is mainly rainfeds with pockets of irrigation. The study is undertaken under two contextual frameworks namely – irrigated and non-irrigated and low education and high education both factors have been deemed to have an important bearing on the socio-economic status of the rural population in general and rural women in particular.

The sections that follow summarise the findings of the study and also present the recommendations that can be appropriately drawn from these findings.

6.1 MAIN FINDINGS

1. The age group of the male and female respondents largely fell in the range of 31-50 years, across the villages and categories. The irrigated villages (Navalli and Ballur) showed higher percentage of women in the age group of 31-50 years than the dry land villages. On the other hand dry land villages (Hirebudihal and Vithalapur) displayed a higher percentage of women in the age group of less than 30 years. In the case of men, except Vithalapur the proportion of men below 30 years was very low in the study area.
Thus majority of the respondents fell in the productive age group and were capable of physical work, reproduction rather than education.

2. The dry land village of Hirebudihal (77% men and 70% women) and the irrigated village of Navalli (87% men and 68% women) displayed higher proportions of education among both men and women as well as larger proportions of highly educated men and women. Illiteracy percentage was higher among women across regions compared to men. Vithalapur women respondents had no higher education. Thus irrespective of the irrigated status, the facilities of educational institutions influenced the literacy and higher education levels.

3. Nuclear type of family was predominant in labour and small farm women category. The proportions of nuclear families were in the range of 53-60 per cent in the case of agricultural labour and 60-87 per cent in the case of small farm category. Joint families were more common in medium and large category farm families (40-53 % in medium and 73-87% in large). Thus it can be inferred that, barring agricultural labourers, the family size was directly related to the holding size. Most of the large holdings, irrespective of whether they had individual land holdings or not, preferred to live together as they found that such a system was amenable to cultivate the family land together and for a host of other socio-economic reasons, while agricultural laborers had no such compulsions.
4. Majority of men and women respondents were married in all the villages except Navalli where 13 percent of women of medium category and 13 percent of small and 7 percent of medium category farm men were unmarried. The institution of marriage is indispensable for the farm family and a host of other social and traditional factors rule out single life. Hence marriage was almost universal among the respondents; even the few exceptions were due to widow/widower hoods or else were awaiting suitable alliances. Marriage was found to over-ride land and economic considerations.

5. Agriculture was the main occupation of all respondents of the study area. While the land holders tilled their own soil and the agricultural laborers toiled on a wage basis. For women the primary pre-occupation was invariably housework, over which farming activities were undertaken subject to the availability of time and convenience.

   It was obvious that the sample respondents’ livelihood depended on agriculture. Even the landless labourers depended on the landed category for their livelihood.

6. The average size of the land holdings were 4.10 acres, 8.75 acres and 16 acres in the case of small, medium and large farm families respectively in Hirebudihal, 4.15 acres, 8.50 acres and 15.50 acres in Vithalapur, 3.00 acres 7.50 acres and 15 acres in case of dry land holdings and 2.0 acres, 4.60 acres and 7.50 acres in case of irrigated
land holdings in Ballur and 3.10 acres, 8.20 acres and 15.75 acres of dry land holdings and 2.10 acres, 4.50 acres and 7.75 acres of irrigated holdings in Navalli. Hirebudihal and Vithalapur had only dry farming, whereas Ballur and Navalli villages had irrigation facilities in varying degrees. The respondents of these two villages owned both dry and irrigated lands and the share of the former was higher.

7. Majority of the respondents across the villages coming under the agricultural labourers category belonged to the income group of less than Rs. 10,000 per annum. The average annual farm income was directly proportional to the holding size. Again, average farm incomes of irrigated villages were higher than those rainfed irrespective of the education status. The percentage of respondents belonged to higher income group was more in irrigated area (37% in the case of Ballur and 40% of Navalli) followed by rainfed area (30% in Hirebudihal and 28% in Vithalapur).

8. Both men and women participated in various farm activities in the capacities of actual worker, helper and supervisor. For some activities both men and women participated simultaneously on equal footing. But in case of large farmers, marketing was solely done by men while grain storage, weeding was almost solely done by women. Supervision was more prevalent in large farmers and to a lesser extent in medium farms. The important farm activities participated by farm women, in the order of participation frequency were storage of foodgrains,
weeding, harvesting, threshing cleaning, and sowing. Women's participation was hundred percent in case of weeding and storage and less in marketing. Most of the activities which were home-bound, repetitive, monotonous, involving dexterity rather than physical strength were done by women.

9. The important activities identified in case of men in the order of participation frequency were ploughing, sowing, fertilizer application, irrigation, watch and ward, and marketing. In general cent percent participation of men was found in case of ploughing and fertilizer application. Most of the activities which were outdoors, strenuous in nature and required physical force, measurement and calculation, involved the use of bullock pairs and machinery, those which involved fearlessness and working in night hours were done by men.

10. Almost all of the farm women (100%) in the study area irrespective of holding size, income and education levels, performed the functions of food preparation, cleaning of house, child care and guest care.

11. The participation of men in household activities was very less except in maintaining accounts and marketing which were undertaken by themselves.

12. Only the large category of men and women performed the supervising activity of household activities and to a lesser extent in medium categories.
13. The dairy activities in which farm women participated were cleaning, grazing and milking followed by the sale of milk and others.

14. Men's participation in dairy activities was very negligible. Men's coparticipation and involvement was seen only in case of cleaning the cattle stalls and cutting fodder. The full involvement of women in household activities across the categories was seen in all income and education groups indicating that such activities transcended education and income and were dictated by tradition which was passed on to each generation. It was noteworthy that none of the men were able to carry on these activities and were thus perceived purely the domain of women and were perpetuated as such. This factor also contributed to the inevitability of the institution of marriage. However where activities involved arithmetic etc., it was the men who undertook the task. Also where holding size was large and led to multiplicity of task, men joined to supervise and coordinate the overall performance of tasks. Strenuous tasks in animal care such as lifting, cutting of fodder, animal delivery were taken care by men.

15. As for the time utilization pattern was concerned, small and agricultural labour category men and women were found to spend more time on on-farm activities compared to their medium and large counterparts. Medium category farm women devoted more time on household activities compared to small, large and labour category farm women. Otherwise, farm size inversely related to the time
utilization pattern of women on farm activities. In general, however, it was observed that there was no clear cut demarcations between the activities, between the work of the two genders, men and women often during exigencies, assisted each other in various works whether on the field or in the house. Time utilization was dictated solely by livelihood concerns in case of agricultural labourers whereas in the case of land holders, the ownership of land also enjoined increased family size, the ownership of cattle which proved to be labour overheads compelling the women to devote a certain amount of time for household activities which were regular in nature. Under the circumstances the small farm category women were able to achieve more off the field besides owing to their better working population while in the case of large women they were only able to supervise owing to the large volume of tasks to be done.

16. Among the material and non-material aspects, gender inequality between men and women persisted in their access to land, buildings, materials, money and in participation in decision making and social activities. The disparity also persisted in certain vital issues and practices which were perceived to play an important role in life.

17. Actual ownership and access (power to use) to land and building were higher among men irrespective of irrigation, education and land holding statuses. Incidence of women ownership of buildings did not
exceed 3 per cent while in the case of land did not exceed 5 per cent, the percent being minutely higher in irrigated villages.

18. Among the four villages the higher education villages (Navalli 18% and Hirebudihal 15%) displayed a higher proportion of women enjoying the access to money than women of low education villages (Ballur 13% and Vithalapur 5%). Ownership of materials enjoyed by women did not exceed 2 per cent and it was observed only in the case of higher education villages. (Navalli and Hirebudihal).

Ownership of women was alarmingly low in case of women in all situations. Where present, it was slightly more in the case of land, followed by buildings & materials. Only in the case of money women enjoyed considerable access, but not its sole ownership. Only irrigation and education seemed to make a slight impact on the access to money for women. Irrigated farms enjoyed more incomes and education gave skills to women to handle the money.

19. Regarding decision making in farm activities, in general men alone made almost all of the decisions in farming activities in all the categories while women alone made most of the decisions in the activities of care of animals and storage of grains. Joint decision making, observed in slightly higher proportion in educated villages, were made mostly in issues of investment on farm, purchase of land, sale of produce and crop selection. Such joint decision making was also seen in minor proportions in other activities sporadically.
20. Regarding decision making in household activities, women alone decided on household activities like the type of food items to be prepared, catering and child care across the categories while almost no sole decision making was seen in this aspect by men. Sole women decision making was in the range of 45-85 per cent for home management, 18-50 per cent in health care and 17-43 per cent education of children. Women jointly participated more in children’s education decisions in higher education villages. Joint decisions dominated in social and religious functions (83-100 %) deciding marriage alliances and deciding the employment of the children (64-100%), purchase of gold (50-90 %), health care (45-80%) and education (26-43%). Daily household chores were decided upon by women, but these decisions were routine and hence could not be strictly called decisions. Like -wise motherhood was out of the purview of men. Thus men had no part in these. Higher education villages generally exhibited more joint decision making and joint decision making was seen in momentous events like jobs, purchase of gold and in social functions where total family participation was inevitable.

21. The activity of visiting markets was done solely by men across the villages. Women’s regular participation was in the range of 10-20 percent. The percentage of men and women attending the jatras was not less than 83 per cent across the villages and the frequency was
more in low education villages. Both men and women participation
was lower in agricultural labourer category for social functions but it
was higher in land holder category where participation increased
with the holding size in high education village category. In the case of
attending religious functions the range for men was 28 to 43 per cent
while for women it was 32 to 70 per cent. Irrigated villages showed
slightly higher participation than rainfed. Women participation was
higher in high education villages. In the matter of visits to banks high
education villages showed higher interaction and it was done almost
solely by men. Women participation did not exceed 17 percent in this
regard. However, the low education villages showed no such fixed
pattern. Government offices were attended to almost solely by men
and women participation was as low as 7 per cent. Irrigated village
farmers interacted more than rainfed villages. Participation pattern
and visits to various types of institutions indicated that men
participation was higher wherever the event was important such as
those involving money transactions, dealing with authorities. *Jatras*
being a socio-religious events were being participated equally without
any discrimination. Social functions, which often included visiting
institutions such as the local cooperatives, *yuvak mandals* who
conducted such functions were restricted to the land holder class
who had the leisure to pursue them. They also had dealings with
these institutions. Leisure and income usually determined the
participation for religious functions and women generally participated more in such functions.

22. Greater proportion of women (43-82%) and men (45-65%) were against showing discrimination between girls and boys and gave equal importance to them. Education played an important role in eliminating discrimination.

23. Greater proportion of women (95-100%) and men (100 %) were against differentiation between girls and boys regarding feeding them. However there was very minute discrimination in case of labour and small category only under certain rare circumstances.

24. Greater proportion of women (93-98%) and men (95-100 %) were against differentiation between boys and girls regarding education.

25. Greater proportion of women (45-85%) and men (55-78 %) were against providing higher education for women.

26. Cent percent of men and women reported that women were paid less wages than men due to bias and lack of organisation among women.

27. Greater proportion of women (30-62%) and men (40-55 %) were in favour of giving more work to girl child compared to boys.

28. Higher proportion of women (95-100%) and men (100 %) acknowledged that women were getting lesser wages than men.
29. Greater proportion of women irrespective of category and villages were not free to keep their earnings with them and utilize them without the consent of their husbands. Hundred percent of men kept their earnings with them only, whereas in case of women this percentage ranged between 45-65 percent.

30. Only women of agricultural labour, small and medium category women had taken loans to some extent from banks and other persons and large farm women were not involved in any borrowing. A very small percentage of women of Hirebudihal (7%), Ballur (3%) and Navalli (5%) had taken loans from banks, whereas a greater percentage of men of all the villages except Vithalapur, depended on bank loans.

31. Across the villages, the higher proportion of men (40-62%) and even women (33-62%) pleaded against giving equal property rights to their girls of the family since they considered that girls would carry the property to their in-laws house after their marriage and would not take the responsibility of their parents as the sons of the house did.

32. Irrespective of gender, across the sample the proportion of respondents preferring both girls and boys was higher than those preferring only boys or only girls.

33. Higher proportion of men opined that they agreed with the decisions of women whereas women respondents (77-88%) indicated that the
question of disagreeing with the decisions of male members did not arise as they considered decision making as the sole purview of males by tradition.

34. Majority of women (95-100%) expressed that they were unwilling to become the head of the family and were content under the patriarchy of men.

35. The prominent problems faced by women respondents were inadequate wages, working under inclement weather, strenuous nature of operations, lack of proper implements and work harassment. Very little proportion of male respondents complained of on-farm problems.

36. The major problems faced by women in household matters were lack of rest and neglect of personal care, lack of assistance in housework, heavy domestic workload, continuous workload, non-co-operation by family members in housework. Men had no problems as regards to housework.

37. More than half of the women respondents showed interest in participating in the government programmes which would help them to earn additional income and provide opportunity to learn new things.

38. The proportion of women who participated in government measures was less due to women illiteracy, lack of awareness of such
programmes, family restrictions and lack of encouragement or opportunity in the family.

39. Majority of the respondents suggested equality in wages for both men and women, equality in participating in training programmes, social organizations, taking of farm and household decisions and equality in property rights and higher education.

6.2 POLICY SUGGESTIONS

1. The sharp disparity in the knowledge level of respondents belonging to different categories is a clear pointer to the local extension agency to initiate separate and specific extension programmes for the different groups suitable to the aptitude of that group and to be conducted at times when they are free. It should also be an indicator to all extension agencies that training programmes be designed to suit uneducated women and should involve the use of graphics, audio and video equipment.

2. The incomes appear to have curtailed family size. However the small family norm needs to be more actively propagated among the larger farm families.

3. Among farm women whose main vocation was agriculture, it was observed that, among the smaller holdings, the family members supplemented their incomes from casual work in farms etc. Incomes in non-irrigated areas were remarkably less than those of the irrigated
ones. The per capita incomes were decided by the extent of land held and the irrigation capabilities of the land. Most of the annual incomes ranged between 21,000 to 30,000 for a family of average size of 5 members. It indicated that most of the families were surviving at very modest levels of income and that there was an urgent need to improve the employment levels of the study area.

4. The analysis on the time spent by the farm men and women on both the farm and household front indicated that men and women devoted equal amounts of time on the field. But on the household front the women contributed more than the men. The dairy sub-enterprise, found invariably among the sample households, added to the workload of women in the household. Unlike field activities, household activities were invariably and unfailingly performed by women around the year. Thus women performed dual roles as a farmer and as a housemaker. These roles need to be taken into consideration before designing any programme for the farm women.

5. The findings regarding the involvement of women in household and farm activities indicated that considerable percentage of farm women of rainfed and irrigated areas performed the activities both at home and on the farm which consumed a greater portion of their time. This implies the need for developing appropriate technology and tools and also train the farm women on the use of such technology so that their adoption will help to improve their efficiency and productivity, and in
the process, save some time for the personal development of farm women.

6. Women were observed to be involved mostly in the capacities of actual performance and assistance of agricultural operations. In the case of agricultural labourers the contribution of women is measured, but not rewarded appropriately. That is the statutory wages prescribed by the Government has not been implemented. This needs to be rectified by the government which can itself also create alternate employment at statutory wages in the villages. Such a measure will also keep the domestic wages at a check. On the other hand, the contribution of family women as an agricultural labourer has gone completely unmeasured since they are not paid any wages.

7. The role of women in agriculture needs to be enhanced at the level of decision making. Thus, there is a need to equip the women with education and training so that she can understand current agricultural technology better and participate or contribute in decision making.

8. The contribution of women in household activity is even more pronounced than in that on field. Here also the contribution of family women as an household worker has gone completely unmeasured. Unlike farm activities women possess relatively more decision making in household activities but these are restricted to routine activities.
Important household decisions are at best joint decisions involving both men and women. This trend needs to be encouraged.

9. There is a need to measure this contribution of women both on the field as well as in the household for policy purposes.

10. The study demonstrates that there is much imbalance in the access to material and non-material resources by women. Negligible proportion of the sample women had any actual ownership to land or houses even though the former was an important source of income in the study area. The same trend was observed in the case of money and materials. Even where access was observed, it was under the discretion of men. Thus there were strong traditional forces which ruled out access of women to these sources. This bias was aggravated further due to the low educational level of women, poor implementation of statutes endowing equal property rights to women. Thus establishment of equal rights to women regarding property would require a long, sustained campaign by the government which would require implementation of equal property rights to women, persisting on compulsory education for the girl child, awareness campaign of women's rights in the mass media.

11. The socio-economic involvement of women like dealing with official institutions, participating in social functions was also dismal. Patriarchy and low women educational levels prevented them from
dealing with official institutions and functions while in the case of religious functions women participation was good. Here also there was need to educate women and for media awareness campaigns emphasizing women equality. Women should be motivated to participate more in group activities of their own sex and later on with the other sex to gain confidence. These two were essential to create an attitude change in the society, particularly men, so that changes would be enduring.

12. Analysis of socio economic involvements indicate that women faced discrimination of attitude as well as in practice starting from the preferred choice of the baby as male, general treatment, higher education and lighter workload for boys. The women did not even visualize themselves as disagreeing with the men even when they felt they were right nor did they conceive themselves as becoming heads of families. This points to the strong need for the correction of attitudes both among male and female by government media, Non-Governmental Organizations. Even in practice women were discriminated in the matters of equal wages and property, obtaining credit from banks. These too require decisive action by the government.

13. It is observed that the women participation in extension activities training programmes on modern farming programmes and in other vocations is poor. This tendency needs to be corrected and the
involvement of women in such programmes need to be intensified. Training should be given in dairy, foodgrain preservation which were observed to be the most common sub-vocations in the study area. Short courses in baby care, domestic hygiene, home economics (for literate women) should be conducted in the very settings these women operate. Men should also be involved in these courses to create awareness. Kitchen construction designs should be disseminated so that work becomes easier for women and proper structures such as seats, shelves should be popularized for women. They should also be given training in maintaining proper posture during working especially for operations involving bending such as weeding, lifting, transporting, pruning etc. The same training should also be given for commonly performed domestic operations like carrying heavy objects, continuous standing, washing of clothes, sweeping and farm waste disposal etc.

14. Improved tools for harvesting contribute a lot towards the productivity either in the house or on the farm. Daily use tools need to be replaced by improved tools. It is observed that in the study area, introduction of serrated aluminum knives and sickles, plastic baskets, appropriate footwear, and hand gloves for women are some of the areas which would contribute greatly towards alleviating the distress of women and improving productivity. Introduction of smokeless ovens, solar ovens, introduction of improved cutlery, water
trolleys will also greatly alleviate the tedium of kitchen work and also improve the working environment.

15. The farm women should be educated to interact with other family members so that it is possible for the family to collectively involve its resources, time and energy to uniformly conduct house and farm activities.

16. Woman is viewed as property and not a human being with likes and dislikes of her own. Opportunities for self development or for an outside career are denied to her. Therefore encouragement should be given to develop her career. Hence the outlook of men towards women has to be changed.

17. Men should develop a sense of appreciation and co-operation and there should be attitudinal change in the society. Men should be enlightened to understand the various problems of women. A sense of respect towards women should be created in the minds of all men which will lead to a change in the socio-economic frame work of the society. Women should be considered not as beneficiaries but as a part of development process.

The study reveals that women are playing a predominant role in agricultural development and their work burden is much higher than their male counterparts. According to the findings of the study women are not having any control over material and non-material resources.
Therefore it is recommended that women should receive equal share in decision making, property, wages and education and their role should be recognized and identified. The implementation of the suggestions will go a long way in increasing the status and conditions of women, help to achieve gender equality and to sustain long term progress.