CHAPTER – VIII

Conclusion and Suggestions

8.1: Concluding Note and Suggestions

Women’s works are generally invisible. One of the main purposes of the present study is to quantify the women’s works. The nature of women’s work is such that they remain unrecognized by investigator and hence official data generally underestimate women’s works. The works done by women are mostly informal and often they perform economic activities along with their household chores at home. So, they remain invisible by the data collecting agencies and consequently the labour / work participation rate for women found low.

Analysis of labour market through NSS data exhibits that both India and Assam have been facing low labour force as well as workforce participation rates. Female labour force and workforce participation rates have found much lower than that of male in both India and Assam. The gender gap in participation rates has not declined over time but instead accentuated. So, gender discrimination is quite visible in the labour market participation.

About equal proportion of male workers are found in rural and urban areas. But there is wide rural-urban difference for female workers. Female labour force and workforce participation rates in urban area are much lower than that of rural area. It is found that both labour force and workforce participation rates for female in urban area are half of the participation rates in rural areas.
Gender difference is much more in urban areas than in the rural areas. The long trend of work participation rates since 1993-94 to 2009-10 shows that whereas male work participation rate has remained stable, the female work participation rate has shown falling trend. It is also evident from the present study that the workforce participation rate of female is much lower in Assam than in India. The male-female difference in participation rates are higher in Assam compared to India. Significantly the workforce participation rates have remained the same throughout the period 1993-94 and 2009-10 in Assam.

Field survey data reflect that the labour force and workforce participation rates in the sample area are much higher than that of India and Assam. The female labour force participation rate (PS+SS) in the sample area (50.37 per cent) has found much higher than the labour force participation rate in India (22.81 per cent) and in Assam (17.67 per cent) in 2009-10. Likewise, the female workforce participation rate in the sample area (49.08 per cent) is also much higher than India (22.8 per cent) and Assam (14.9 per cent). Contrary to India and Assam the female work participation rate in the rural areas of the sample area is slightly lower than in urban areas.

Higher participation of women in the workforce in the sample area compared to national and state level participation rates established the fact that official data under estimate women’s work. Women are often remained unreported as worker to the data collector by the male respondents because of their personal prejudices. Even many women often reported them as non-workers if ‘work’ is meant for ‘wage employment’. However, they will be willing to take up certain
other types of jobs or if ‘work’ could be made available at their households or within their villages (Kundu and Premi 1989). Kundu and Premi (1989) recognized these workers with Bardhan’s (1984) concept of “discouraged drop-outs”. These “discouraged drop-outs” have been found to engage in many home-based activities in the sample area. Since home-based activities of women are tried to recognize in the field survey of the present study, hence the female work participation rate becomes higher than the official rate.

To assess the rate of participation of women labour in the unorganised sector is the prime objective of the present study. It is established through both secondary and primary data that unorganised sector is the main source of employment for the workers. It is estimated that about 94 per cent of the total workers in India and 90 per cent of the total workforce in Assam are engaged in unorganised sector. From primary data also it is estimated that about 94 percent workers in the sample area unorganised.

It is evident from the study that comparatively more female are engaged in unorganised sector than that of male. It is estimated that 97.39 per cent of all female workers in the sample area are unorganised. The proportion of women workers engaged in unorganised sector India and Assam are 95.49 per cent and 83.59 per cent respectively. It is estimated that about 75 per cent of female workers in the sample area are engaged in non-agriculture and only 25 per cent are associated with agriculture.

The different types of work within the unorganised sector in which women workers are concentrated are found as self-employed, regular
wage/salaried employees and casual labour other than public works. Self-employment is the major activity status of women unorganised workers in the sample area as in case of India and Assam. It is observed that 73.33 per cent of all non-agricultural unorganised female workers are self-employed. Self-employed women workers are found as own account workers (93.01 per cent), employers (0.70 per cent) and unpaid family workers (6.29 per cent). Own account workers in the sample area are classified mainly as weaver, spinner, tailor, beautician, private tutor, micro-finer etc.

It is found from the study that women workers are often exploited and discriminated in the labour market. Women’s multiple exploitation and discrimination is visualized by their involvement in the unorganised sector rather than organized sector. Women workers are exploited within the unorganised sector also as they often engage in those informal activities which are considered less profitable or low paid. They are mostly found as self-employed rather than regular wage employees. Male-female discrimination is quite visible as women are found to concentrate more in low paid jobs than that of males. It is proved by the findings of the study that the proportion of self-employed is higher for female than that of male. But the proportion of regular wage/salaried employees and casual labour are higher for male than that of female. Only a negligible proportion of unorganised workers are found as ‘employer’. Although the share of male also lower in this category, still it is higher than that of female. In the low paid jobs like weaving, spinning, tailoring etc. the share of females is much higher than that of males. So, sexual division of labour is quite distinct in the study.
In the present study, several factors are identified that lead to higher participation of women in the unorganised work. Most of the women workers perform informal work to help the main earner of the family. So, earning income is the main cause of joining women in informal works. They perform informal works to lessen the burden of the main earner. Although the average earning of the unorganised women workers is not very high, yet they have positive contribution to the household income. Various factors that have found significant leading to the higher participation of women in the unorganised work are number of children below six years of age in the household, age of the female workers (15-65 years), level of education (below primary and primary) of the women workers and total household income per month.

Although low level of education (below primary and primary) is found positively related with supply of unorganised women workers, the existence of higher proportion of highly qualified (secondary and above) unorganised women workers again signify gender discrimination. With higher level of qualification also they have to rely on unorganised work. As 80 per cent of unorganised women workers in the sample area are literate, it signifies that illiteracy is not a determining factor leading to the higher participation of women in the unorganised sector.

It is evident from our analysis that the socio-economic situation of the unorganised women workers households is more or less similar with all the sample households and other than unorganised women workers households. Women workers households have poor agriculture land holdings than other types
of households. Regarding other parameters like possession of other assets, dwelling units, water facility, toilet facility, fuel and lighting, they have medium status. More women workers households are found in indebtedness than other than women workers households and all types of households.

The expenditure pattern of the sample households shows that major portion of households income is spent on ‘food’ items. Expenditure incurred on ‘other items’ is higher than on expenditure on ‘essential’ items.

The average monthly income of the unorganised women workers households is estimated as Rs. 23232. But, it is found that more than half of the households have monthly income less than the average income. However, the income-expenditure differential is found positive for the households.

The male-female wage differential is prominent in the sample area. The average monthly income of the unorganised women workers is not only low but also an unorganised women worker earns only about half the amount that an unorganised male worker earns monthly. The monthly average income of the unorganised women workers is much lower than the monthly average income of organized female workers.

‘Daily payment’ is the most common method of payment for both unorganised male and female workers. Location of workplace of the unorganised women workers shows that they are mainly home based workers. Comparatively less unorganised women workers (31 per cent) have no written job contract than that of unorganised male workers (35 per cent).
Non availability of social security benefit is one of the main features of unorganised workers. It is found from the survey that about 85 per cent female and 89 per cent male workers do not avail any social security benefits.

The study also throws light on family life and working relationship of the informal women workers. Women workers hardly get leisure time in a day. Watching television is the main leisure time activity of the unorganised women workers. Regarding habits of the husbands it is found that about 47 per cent husbands are regular drunker. Husbands have dominant role in the decision making power of the family. Yet, women’s position in the sample households is far better as about 47 per cent unorganised women workers take part in decision making process along with their husbands and 10 per cent married unorganised women workers take family decisions solely.

Having a large number of women workers in unorganised sector as well as in organized sector as unorganised workers implies their low status in the labour market. Although absolute poverty is not a major problem for the unorganised women workers households, still they are subject to relative poverty. So, along with all disadvantages women workers are found to concentrate in informal jobs.

Thus, the observation made in the present study are relevant for the understanding of our subject of the study i.e., women labour in the unorganised sector. The activities performed by the unorganised women workers are mainly determined by the socio-cultural and patriarchal attitudes. Their work is determined by patriarchal mode of production. Because of the existence of sexual
division of labour they are concentrated in low paid jobs. The work done by these workers are generally considered as women's work in the society.

However, improvement of this exploited, marginalized section is very necessary for the balanced development of the society. It should be notable that the constitution of India grants equal rights to both male and female. It also entrusted right to the Government to adopt policy measures to avoid discrimination against women. Consequently, the Government of India has been adopting various measures for the improvement of the women particularly since Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78).

But unorganised women workers remain, more or less, legally unrecognized as workers. The existing labour laws relating to minimum wages or social security are not applied to them (NCEUS 2007). Although Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 is applicable to women workers, the Act remains inapplicable for the unorganised women workers as there is wide difference in male-female wages. The minimum conditions of work as recommended by National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganised Sector are still out of reach for the unorganised workers in the sample area. National Social Security Scheme formulated on the basis of Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 is yet to implement for the unorganised women workers in the sample area. The new pension scheme ‘Swavalamban’ is yet to reach the women workers in the area.

It is evident from the above facts that the proper implementation of the existing laws and measures is of utmost importance for the development of the
unorganised women workers. As unorganised women workers are victim of social attitudes, people’s mind set must have to change.

It is found from the study that unorganised sector has vast employment potentiality. It is evident that both skilled and unskilled workers are absorbed by the unorganised sector. So, recognizing the mass employability of the unorganised sector comprehensive policy should be adopted for the development of the sector.

8.2: Reference:


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