

of women. All these are indicative of the fact that there has been significant economic marginalization of women in the development process of Kerala. This anomaly between positive social indicators and negative economic indicators of women's role needs special investigation. Hence an analysis of the socio economic characteristics of the female agricultural workers is attempted in the coming chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SECTORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE WORKERS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Women labour is distributed in all sectors of economic activities. However, their status is comparatively low in large-scale manufacturing sector while a greater opportunity lies in the consumer based service industry. In the case of primary sector, however women workers have not only a considerable share but also a comparatively greater dominance. Even in the agricultural sector, the share of women workers under cultivation category is less compared to the agricultural labourer category. This pattern of distribution varies from one area to another. Hence to get a clear picture of the sectoral variation of workers spatially and temporally, a block wise analysis within the district is attempted here.

#### **4.2 Occupational Structure of Women**

Table 4.1 shows the occupational structure of women in Palakkad district in 1971, 1991 and 2001. It clearly brings out the dominance of women workers in the agricultural sector. In 1971 nearly three-fourths of

the entire work force was engaged as agricultural labourers and another 7 percent as cultivators. Nearly 15 percent of the workers are engaged in various activities included under the “Other workers” category.

From the Table it is also seen that there is no change in the share of cultivators between 1971, 1991 and 2001. Similarly Household industrial women workers had the least share among the four categories and they also had an almost stable share of about 3 to 4 percent. The striking point brought out by the Table is the drastic decline of female agricultural labourers from 74.8 percent in 1971 to 70.1 in 1991 and 52.3 percent in 2001. Even here the decline is most notable between 1991 and 2001.

**Table 4.1**  
**Palakkad District – Occupational Structure of Women**  
**1971 – 2001**

Sectors	1971	1991	2001
Cultivators	7.4	7.4	7.4
Agricultural Labourers	74.8	70.3	52.4
Household industry workers	3.6	2.9	3.8
Other workers	14.2	19.4	36.4
Total	100	100	100.0

Source: Census of India; Kerala Series: 1971, 1991 & 2001

**Palakkad District- Occupational Structure of Women**  
**1971 – 2001**

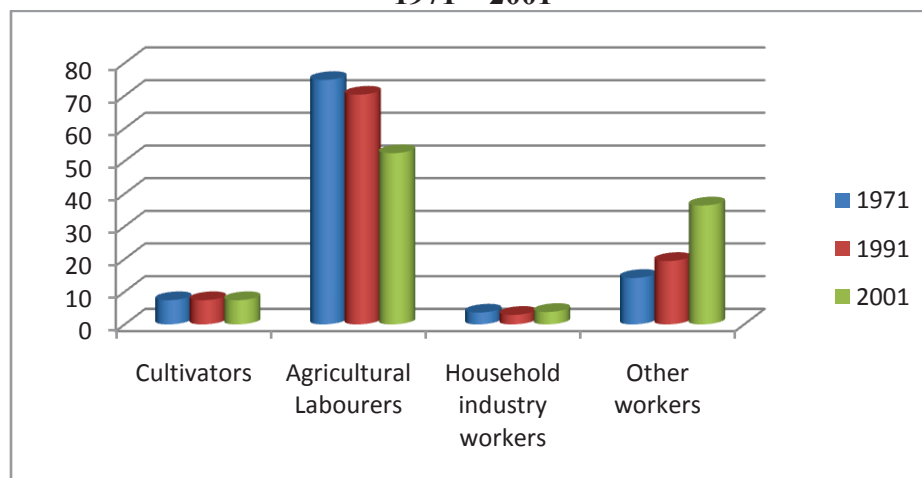


Fig.4.1

A corresponding increase in “Other workers” category is obviously there. In this category also a nearly two fold increase has been noted between 1991 and 2001. Booming of consumer based activities and a general reluctance among women workers to undertake agricultural work may be the major factor for such a sudden increase of this category.

### 4.3 Sectoral Analysis of Women Workers

Having analysed the overall pattern of women workers in different time points a detailed sectoral and intra district analysis is attempted here.

#### 4.3.1 Female Cultivators

Being the granary of the State, cultivation is the major economic activity of Palakkad district. However the percent share of females in the cultivator category was only 7.4 percent for all the three time points. A person is categorized as cultivator when he/she owns the land in his/her name and not giving it for lease. Therefore the prevalence of lower share of female cultivators in the study area indicates that land ownership among women is comparatively low.

**Table 4.2**  
**Palakkad District – Female Cultivators**  
**1971 – 2001**

BLOCKS	1971	1991	Change between 1971 & 1991	2001	Change bet 1991 & 2001	Change between 1971 & 2001
Alathur	4.5	5.7	1.2	7.6	1.9	3.1
Attappady	37	21.3	-15.7	18.5	-2.8	-18.5
Chittur	5.4	9	3.6	10.3	1.3	4.9
Kollengode	3.6	6.2	2.6	5.5	-0.7	1.9
Kuzhalmannam	7.2	8.3	1.1	8.8	0.5	1.6

Malampuzha	5.1	7	1.9	6.8	-0.2	1.7
Mannarkkad	8.3	7.5	-0.8	5.4	-2.1	-2.9
Nenmara	3.1	4.3	1.2	5.9	1.6	2.8
Ottappalam	11.6	5.1	-6.5	5.8	0.7	-5.8
Palakkad	7.5	6.6	-0.9	5.5	-1.1	-2
Pattambi	10.6	5.9	-4.7	5.9	0	-4.7
Srikrishnapuram	12.4	7.6	-4.8	6.5	-1.1	-5.9
Thrithala	8.3	7.4	-0.9	6.9	-0.5	-1.4
District	7.4	7.4	0	7.4	0	0

Source: Census of India; Kerala Series: 1971, 1991 & 2001

In 1971 Attappady shows a very high proportion of female cultivators (37%), much above all the blocks. Next ranking blocks are Sreekrishnapuram, Ottappalam and Pattambi. In these areas land ownership of females is more and hence the cultivators are more. Nenmara and Kollengode show the lowest number of female cultivators. In 1991 also the highest number of cultivators is found in Attappady, but it has sharply declined from 37 percent in 1971 to 21.3 in 1991 (Table 4.2). However, Chittur, which had a comparatively lower percent share of cultivators in 1971 improved its share and ranked second. In 1991 the lowest percent share of cultivators was seen in Nenmara.

In 2001 also Attappady shows the highest percent share of female cultivators followed by Chittur and the lowest is in Mannarkkad. However Attappady continued to experience further decline in its share in 2001.

From the above explanation it is clear that even though there is no variation over the years in the female cultivators for the district as a whole, there is wide variation among the cultivators within the district in all the three time points. The change between 1971 and 1991 shows that all the blocks in the western part show a negative change and the highest change

is for Attappady in the north (15.7%). The reason for this huge negative change is not because of a reduction in the number of cultivators but because of an increase in other sectors like agricultural labourers. Ottappalam, Pattambi and Srikrishnapuram are the other blocks which show a comparatively higher negative change (Fig. 4.2). The positive change is higher in Chittur with 3.6 percent. This is one of the important rice growing regions and the availability of irrigation facility from Chitturpuzha project may be the reason for higher share of cultivators.

Between 1991 and 2001, positive change is shown in four blocks which have shown positive change in the previous period also. They are Alathur, Chittur, Kuzhalmannam and Nenmara. These are the major paddy areas of the district. The overall change show that positive change is the common pattern in the eastern part and negative change is seen in the western part of the district.

#### **4.3.2 Female Agricultural Labourers**

The maximum number of women workers in Palakkad is found in this category. Around three-fourths of the workers were in this category in 1971. Certain blocks like Kuzhalmannam, Alathur, Chittur and Malampuzha have even more than 80 percent of the female workers as agricultural labourers. The lowest percent of female agricultural workers was in Attappady (Table 4.3). Other blocks like Sreekrishnapuram, Pattambi, Ottappalam, and Palakkad have 60 to 70 percent of agricultural labourers.

In 1991 proportion of agricultural labourers in Palakkad district was reduced to 70.3 percent. The lowest percent of agricultural labourers was in Pattambi, followed by Palakkad, Ottappalam, and Sreekrishnapuram. In

addition to that Thrithala, Malampuzha, Mannarkkad and Attappady also had below the district average of agricultural labourers. Kuzhalmannam continued to have more than 80 percent of its women workers as agricultural labourers in 1991 also. Chittur, Alathur, Kollengode and Nenmara also have agricultural labourers between 70 and 80 percent (Fig. 4.3).

In 2001 also the declining trend is continued in all the blocks and the average percent share of female agricultural labourers has been reduced to 52.4percent. However Kuzhalmannam had more than 70 percent share of women agricultural workers and ranked first among all the blocks. Alathur, Chittur and Kollengode have between 60 to 70 percent female agricultural labourers. Lowest was found in Pattambi followed by Thrithala. Only Pattambi had less than 30 percent female workers as agricultural labourers. This shows that there was wide variation in the distribution of agricultural labourers from 29 percent in Pattambi to 70 percent in Kuzhalmannam. Among the workers, female agricultural labourers were prominent in the southeastern part of the district. The proportion of agricultural labourers was very low in the western part of the district.

**Table 4.3**  
**Palakkad District – Female Agricultural Labourers (%)**  
**1971 – 2001**

BLOCKS	1971	1991	Change	2001	Change	Change from 1971 to 2001
Alathur	82.3	76.1	-6.2	61.8	-14.3	-20.5
Attappady	49.9	68.9	19.0	43.0	-25.9	-6.9
Chittur	81.6	77.4	-4.2	67.8	-9.6	-13.8
Kollengode	76.8	76.8	0.0	65.8	-11.0	-11.0
Kuzhalmannam	85.1	80.2	-4.9	70.3	-9.9	-14.8
Malampuzha	80.5	68.3	-12.2	47.6	-20.7	-32.9
Mannarkkad	72.2	66.1	-6.1	39.7	-26.4	-32.5

Nenmara	73.0	73.7	0.7	59.7	-14.0	-13.3
Ottappalam	65.1	63.8	-1.3	43.5	-20.3	-21.6
Palakkad	67.0	60.2	-6.8	40.1	-20.1	-26.9
Pattambi	65.0	59.4	-5.6	29.2	-30.2	-35.8
Srikrishnapuram	65.0	63.2	-1.8	44.6	-18.6	-20.4
Thrithala	75.9	65.7	-10.2	33.2	-32.5	-42.7
District	74.8	70.3	-4.5	52.4	-17.9	-22.4

Source: Census of India; Kerala Series: 1971, 1991& 2001

#### 4.3.2.1 Change between Two Periods

The variation between 1971 and 1991 show negative change for most of the blocks and the district level change was about 4.5 percent. Highest change was observed in Malampuzha with 12.2 percent and Thrithala also recorded more than 10 percent negative change. Lowest negative change of 1.3 was observed in Ottappalam and no change was seen in Kollengode. The positive change is the highest in Attappady (19%). This huge increase may be due to the migration of plantation workers from other parts of Kerala to Attappady. Other than Attappady, Nenmara was the only block which showed positive change and the change was only very low (0.7%). No change was seen for Kollengode and only a nominal change was recorded for Nenmara. Maximum negative change was noticed in Malampuzha followed by Thrithala.

The variation between 1991 and 2001 showed that a very high rate of negative change was noticed in all the blocks including those which reported positive change in the previous period. Average for the district was -17.9 percent. Thrithala and Pattambi experienced more than -30 percent change. Mannarkkad, Malampuzha, Palakkad and Ottappalam also

have a notable negative change. Chittur and Kuzhalmannam have the lowest decline (Table 4.3).

The variation between 1971 and 2001 showed a different picture for Attappady with a minimum change. However this minimum is because of the fluctuating nature of change. The first period showed a considerable positive change and for the next period there is a negative change. The fluctuation of agricultural workers is mainly due to the fluctuation in the plantation sector. Attappady in every sense is different from other blocks. It has maximum area under plantation agriculture. It also has more highland area. Above all it is a tribal block. Kuzhalmannam also has a comparatively lesser change. Thrithala exhibited the highest percent change (42.7%), followed by Pattambi, Mannarkkad and Malampuzha. Even though negative change is the common pattern identified, major paddy growing areas in the east show a comparatively lower negative change.

### **4.3.3 Female Household Industrial Workers**

Household industry is one sector in which generally women are employed largely. However in Palakkad the household industrial units are comparatively low and hence women employment in this sector is generally low. Marketing is the major problem for the products. Globalization plays a great role in the reduction in the importance of household industries. Availability of low priced better quality items in the market reduces market for local products. Marketing strategies of multinational companies also have impacts on the domestic products.



Out of the four categories, workers in household industries is the one in which participation is very less compared to other categories like agricultural labourers, cultivators and other workers. In 1971 female participation in household industries is only 3.6 percent of the total workers in Palakkad. Srikrishnapuram has the maximum percentage representation of females in household industries (6.1%).

Other blocks with more than the district average are Pattambi, Palakkad, Alathur and Malampuzha. The lowest share is seen in Attappady with only 0.41 percent females in household industries (Fig. 4.4).

In 1991 there is a reduction in the female workers in household industries to 2.69. Similarly most of the blocks also show a reduction in the female workers in household industries. Highest percent of female workers was found in Malampuzha (3.8%) followed by Alathur, Palakkad and Srikrishnapuram. All blocks except Mannarkkad show a negative change between 1971 and 1991.

In 2001 there is a slight improvement in this sector in Mannarkkad, Palakkad, Pattambi and Alathur. Mannarkkad has recorded a continuous increase from 1971 to 2001. Another notable fact is that all the blocks show positive change from 1991 to 2001. Chittur, Kuzhalmannam, Attappady, Ottappalam and Nenmara have a comparatively low percentage of household industrial workers in 2001.

**Table 4.4**  
**Palakkad District -- Female Household Industrial Workers**  
**1971 – 2001**

Blocks/District	1971	1991	Variation	2001	Variation
Alathur	4.05	3.70	-0.35	4.38	0.68
Attappady	0.41	0.29	-0.11	2.38	2.09
Chittur	2.03	1.27	-0.76	2.15	0.88
Kollengode	3.37	3.33	-0.04	4.74	1.41

Kuzhalmannam	2.21	2.10	-0.12	2.82	0.72
Malampuzha	3.41	2.69	-0.71	4.40	1.71
Mannarkkad	3.23	3.78	0.55	5.67	1.89
Nenmara	3.65	2.30	-1.35	2.51	0.21
Ottappalam	3.28	2.18	-1.10	2.95	0.76
Palakkad	4.42	3.63	-0.78	4.55	0.91
Pattambi	5.28	3.01	-2.27	4.69	1.68
Srikrishnapuram	6.07	3.58	-2.49	3.76	0.18
Thrithala	2.74	2.63	-0.11	3.66	1.03
District	3.6	2.9	-0.78	3.75	1.06

Source: Census of India; Kerala Series: 1971, 1991& 2001

#### 4.3.4 Females in ‘Other Worker’ Category

There is a continuous increase in the female workers in other sectors over the years from 1971 to 2001 in most of the blocks. The female participation in tertiary sector especially in service sector increases, mainly in low paid private enterprises. The number of textile shops, fancy shops, shopping malls, margin free markets, petrol bunks, etc are increasing day by day. Mainly females are the service providers of these establishments. Most of them are qualified with a minimum of High school or higher secondary level education.

In 1971 there were only 12.6 percent of the total women workers in the ‘Other worker’ category. Nenmara and Ottappalam have the highest percent share in this category with about 20 percent each. Pattambi ranks next with 19 percent. Kuzhalmannam (5.47) shows the lowest share of women in ‘Other worker’ category. Other blocks with less than 10 percent women workers in this category are Chittur, Palakkad and Alathur (Table 4.5).

In 1991 the average for the district is 16.6 percent and six blocks have less than this. Chittur replaced Kuzhalmannam as the lowest ranking block in 1991. Along with Chittur, Attappady and Kuzhalmannam also have less than 10 percent women workers in this category. Six blocks have above 20 percent share. Highest share is noticed in Pattambi (26.4 percent) and Srikrishnapuram (25.6 percent).

In 2001 variation among the blocks is very wide, which is between 15.1 percent in Chittur to 56.2 percent in Thrithala. Pattambi also shows a very high percent of 55.5 percent. Kuzhalmannam has less than 20 percent women workers in this category. Even though there is an increasing trend in the workers, Attappady, Kollengode and Nenmara record declining trend for 1971-91 period. When considering the rate of increase, between 1971 and 1991, Malampuzha record an 11percent increase, when the district average is only 3.6 percent.

However for 1991-2001 all the blocks show a positive trend in the rate of change. Thrithala record the highest change with 33.3 percent, followed by Pattambi and Mannarkkad with 29.11 and 28.22 percent respectively. Hence, it is clear that higher representation of females in other sectors is generally low in regions with high work participation, which is explained in the previous chapter.

**Table 4.5**  
**Palakkad District – Females Workers in ‘Other worker’ Category**  
**1971 – 2001**

Blocks	1971	1991	Change 1971-91	2001	Change 1991-01	Change 1971-01
Alathur	9.22	14.46	5.24	26.29	11.84	17.08
Attappady	12.73	9.57	-3.16	36.08	26.51	23.35
Chittur	6.31	7.95	1.64	15.10	7.15	8.79
Kollengode	16.20	13.67	-2.53	23.96	10.29	7.76

Kuzhalmannam	5.47	9.35	3.88	18.09	8.74	12.61
Malampuzha	11.03	21.97	10.95	41.17	19.20	30.15
Mannarkkad	16.33	20.99	4.65	49.21	28.22	32.88
Nenmara	20.29	19.75	-0.54	31.87	12.12	11.58
Ottappalam	20.04	23.11	3.07	39.63	16.51	19.59
Palakkad	8.99	14.46	5.47	31.97	17.51	22.98
Pattambi	19.08	26.36	7.28	55.47	29.11	36.39
Srikrishnapuram	16.46	25.56	9.09	45.21	19.65	28.74
Thrithala	13.04	22.89	9.86	56.20	33.31	43.16
District	12.64	16.58	3.94	33.00	16.42	20.36

Source: Census of India; Kerala Series: 1971, 1991 & 2001

All the blocks present a positive change between 1971 and 2001. Average for the district is 20.4 percent. More than 40 percent increase is seen in Thrithala. Another three blocks namely Pattambi, Mannarkkad and Malampuzha also show higher rate of increase of more than 30 percent. Srikrishnapuram also show high increase in female workers in other sectors of about 28.7 percent. In the case of Kollengode and Chittur, increase is only less than 10 percent. Similarly, Nenmara and Kuzhalmannam also record lower changes of around 12 percent. A general pattern of very high rate of positive change in the western part of the district to a very low rate of change in the southeastern part of the district is notable (Fig. 4.5.).

#### **4.4 Females in Agriculture**

So far explanations about each of the four categories have been given. From this it is clear that there is a tendency to shift from agriculture to non-agriculture. To get a better picture, the two categories under agriculture added together to make workers in agriculture and the other two categories added to make non-agriculture and to analyse the importance of one over the other in providing employment.

In 1971 Palakkad district had more than four-fifths of the females in agriculture (Table 4.6). In Kuzhalmannam and Chittur have even more than 90 percent of the female workers were directly involved in agricultural activities. Only four blocks namely Pattambi, Nenmara, Ottappalam and Sreekrishnapuram had less than 80 percent of the females in agriculture. However even in these blocks more than 75 percent of the workers are in agriculture. This clearly gives the importance of agriculture especially as far as women workers are concerned. This clarifies the fact that agriculture is the main source of employment for women

In 1991 also more than 80 percent women workers were in agriculture in the District. In Chittur and Attappady more than 90 percent women are still in agriculture. The lowest value of 70.8 percent was in Sreekrishnapuram.

In 2001 the rate of women in agriculture reduced to 63.3 percent for the district. Still Chittur had 82.8 percent of the females in agriculture. Kuzhalmannam, Kollengode, Alathur and Nenmara also had more than the district average rate of females in agriculture.

**Table 4.6**  
**Palakkad district - Sectoral Shift of Women Workers from Agriculture to Non-agriculture 1971-2001**

BLOCKS	1971		1991		2001		Change 1971-91	Change 1991-01	Change 1971-01
	In agriculture	In non-agriculture	In agriculture	In non-agriculture	In agriculture	In non-agriculture			
Alathur	86.7	13.3	81.8	18.2	69.3	30.7	-4.9	-12.5	-17.4
Attappady	86.9	13.1	90.1	9.9	61.5	38.5	3.3	-28.6	-25.3
Chittur	91.7	8.3	90.8	9.2	82.8	17.3	-0.9	-8.0	-8.9
Kollengode	80.4	19.6	83.0	17.0	71.3	28.7	2.6	-11.7	-9.1
Kuzhalmannam	92.3	7.7	88.6	11.5	79.1	20.9	-3.8	-9.5	-13.2
Malampuzha	85.6	14.4	75.3	24.7	54.4	45.6	-10.2	-20.9	-31.1

Mannarkkad	80.4	19.6	75.2	24.8	45.1	54.9	-5.2	-30.1	-35.3
Nenmara	76.1	23.9	78.0	22.1	65.6	34.4	1.9	-12.3	-10.5
Ottappalam	76.7	23.3	74.7	25.3	57.4	42.6	-2.0	-17.3	-19.3
Palakkad	86.6	13.4	81.9	18.1	63.5	36.5	-4.7	-18.4	-23.1
Pattambi	75.6	24.4	70.6	29.4	39.8	60.2	-5.0	-30.8	-35.8
Srikrishnapuram	77.5	22.5	70.9	29.1	51.0	49.0	-6.6	-19.8	-26.4
Thrithala	84.2	15.8	74.5	25.5	40.1	59.9	-9.8	-34.3	-44.1
DISTRICT	83.9	16.1	80.7	19.3	63.3	36.8	-3.2	-17.5	-20.6

Source: Census of India; Kerala Series: 1971, 1991& 2001

These are the major rice cultivating areas of Palakkad district. Rice being one of the major labour intensive crops, the larger number of women are getting employment. At the same time, in Pattambi and Thrithala the percent of females in agriculture is almost half to that of Chittur, that is only around 40 percent workers in agriculture. Mannarkkad is another block with less than 50 percent workers in agriculture. These are the blocks in the western part of the district where other economic activities are prominent than agriculture (Fig. 4.6).

#### 4.5 Sectoral Shift of Women Workers from Agriculture to Non- agriculture

Table 4.6 exhibited the general pattern of sectoral shift of women workers from agriculture to non-agriculture. Between 1971 and 1991 shift from agriculture to non-agriculture was not very prominent. Only 3.15 percent change in favour of non-agriculture is the average for Palakkad district. Mannarkkad and Thrithala show higher change of 10.23 and 9.75 points respectively. At the same time change towards agriculture was recorded in Nenmara, Kollengode and Attappady.

The period between 1991 and 2001 recorded a very high change compared to the previous period. The average change for the district is in

favour of non-agriculture, it was about 17.5 percent. Thrithala, Mannarkkad and Pattambi record more than 30 percent change. However, Chittur and Kuzhalmannam show less than 10 percent change.

Average shift from 1971 to 2001 for the district is 20.6 percent in favour of non-agriculture. There is much variation among the blocks in this shifting of women workers from agriculture to non-agriculture. Higher shift above the district average is found in the western part of the district with Thrithala (44.1), Pattambi (35.8) and Mannarkkad (35.3). Malampuzha and Attappady in the northern and northwestern part of the district also record higher shift of 31.1 and 25.3 percent respectively. Kollengode and Chittur in the east and southeastern part show less than 10 percent change.

#### **4.5 Employment Potential of Agriculture and Its Effect on Female Work Participation**

Agriculture is the most significant channel of female employment in Palakkad. Even though it shows a drastic decline, it provides employment to more than sixty percent of the workers in 2001. Agriculture has been historically the mainstay of the economy of Palakkad and traditionally the most significant sector of female employment, especially in the rural areas. However, it is evident from the census figures that women cultivators and agricultural labourers together account for 81 percent of the female workforce in the main category in 1991, which has fallen from 84 percent in 1971. More than four fifths of the workers are in agriculture until 1991. Since then the importance has reduced drastically in the last decade. The decline was very much prominent from 81 percent in 1991 to 63 percent in 2001. Such a structural transformation of the economy in terms of relative

importance of providing employment, particularly female employment, has great implication for the women workforce in Palakkad.

The volatility of international prices of agricultural commodities has affected agricultural workers adversely. Particularly during the last few years or so, most of the agricultural commodities have lost international competitiveness due to low international prices. The exports of agricultural commodities have fallen. Simultaneously there has been increased import of edible oils, which have depressed the domestic prices of these commodities.

It is apprehended that the process of economic liberalization will ultimately result in a situation in which multinational companies will dominate the agricultural scene and small farmers may lose their grips over agriculture, posing a risk of livelihood security for millions of agricultural workers and rural women.

In the wake of WTO not only agricultural exports have declined but also the rate of growth of agricultural output and employment. Consequently, both cultivating households as well as landless particularly women labourers have suffered a loss of income and employment.

In the wake of economic liberalization, cultivators as well as agricultural labourers look depressed because of deterioration in their income levels as well as uncertain future. In addition, the gap between agricultural and nonagricultural workers is widening. This indicates that the present and future generation is not showing that much importance in agriculture and other allied activities, which will be a great threat to our food security, which needs special attention.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**