CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS
(QUALITATIVE)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, various criteria based on questionnaires collected from women farmers from each respondent villages are tabulated and analyzed to study on utilization of land rights from access and their contribution to sustainable use of lands. Besides, the available space for empowerment of women in terms of land rights, participation and struggles are also well-documented.

| Social                      | Access and women’s position towards land |
|                            | Potential of using Land Rights within household |
|                            | Resistance to violence and support system used |
| Economic                   | Self-sufficient economic life |
|                            | Impact of marriage on economic conditions |
|                            | Possessing land and its economic benefits |
| Political                  | Participation in public forums |
|                            | Actual position in political forums |
|                            | Women’s representation in political decision-making bodies |

5.2 SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

5.2.1 Right to Exercise Personal Decisions and Mobility at Intra Household Level in Relation to Access to Land

The first question asked to women respondents/farmers was about their level of access to land and the position they have on land and household as well. One of the respondents Rajakumari responded for this question as “We got 1.5 acres of land as part of my husband’s family with a well and pump set. As farming is our major source of
livelihood I co-operate with my husband to work in the farm.” She also added that she used to sell her jewels for additional income and emphasized that family is everything for her. Needless to say, this response highlighted that she has access to her land to a certain extent, but that is only for taking care of land and other agriculture activities. As one of the respondents Selvi reported “women can take care of family, land and she has sold her jewels for the goodness of family and land; she is bound to work equally as much as her husband does but cannot own the land in her name” to be more precise, she could only act as guardian. In patriarchal society like India, there is a lesser possibility for women to own land and other resources, but when they actually do, comparatively size and value of those assets would be lower than that of their counterparts. They are more likely to sell their jewels and other holdings for taking care of land and family as well. But, be it in own house or in-laws home, they cannot own land and other properties in their name. Thus it is evident that there is even now a lack of sufficient provisions for women to hold property or land rights independent of their partners or male relatives. And “some women are allowed to take control of land if her husband is bedridden due to illness,” as one of the respondents Parparammal stated. As women are often the mainstay of household food production, there are generally conventional provisions for indirect access to land with regards to user rights obtained through relationships and their position as wives, mothers, etc. Though, these user rights might not give adequate security for women and other dependants when conventional family structures disappear. And only a small ratio of these women hold protected properties and land rights. Similar to other society women, Dalit women are also facing the same problem. One of the Dalit respondents confided that, she was sent to back to her parents’ home as her husband had illegal affair with another woman. Now her paternal family and brothers are taking care of her; though she is allowed to share equal work in the land, she could not take the land for her own purpose. She could not even fight as her brothers are struggling to meet their financial needs. Besides, she added that woman like her are badly in need of Government support. The truth is that the inheritance is reliant on the marital position; in fact, it creates threats to the status of unmarried women even bigger. Moreover, the brothers in the family might wish their sisters to be sent off earlier to in-laws house, to prevent them from demanding their rights. The widespread concept is that a married woman could ask for her share in her husband’s asset, and consequently does not require land in her parental family. All the social customs and mind-set work together to ensure that land or any other properties will never go to women. The rules and policies that everyone grow up living with also unfairly
accentuate that women are inferior species, that their wellbeing is subservient to the wellbeing of the men in the household. Rural women in specific are largely responsible for half of the globe’s food production. But when it comes to legal right to anything or any property, they are more likely to have least access than man. Most of the women respondents share the burden of their own family, yet no one recognized their service. Thus, “it is essential to know that access to land right to women is most important to a life with self-respect and a base for entitlements that could make sure economic independence and thus, individual empowerment”.

5.2.2 Rights over utilising Land Rights at Intra Household Level

The next question was about “whether they are capable of using land rights within their household”. To this, one of the respondents replied “land belongs to her husband that came through inheritance from his family” so she is not allowed to have any special rights. Besides, she added, she just provides labor support. Women produce almost 80% of the food but their access to land is terrible. Regardless of the point that many women are legitimately allowed to equality in access to property, they still face substantial unfairness in this aspect. Nevertheless, even where policies have been changed to ensure women’s equal rights in the sphere of inheritance, household and societal pressure could make women to relinquish their entitlements. To ensure women’s equal access to property or land, it is essential to highlight at the domestic level the significance of increasing awareness about the amending gender dynamics around land and holding policies responsible for guaranteeing women’s equal access to property and other resources. Very few participants have accepted that they are getting proper recognition from the family and community as well. One Dalit women expressed that, “she got training on land rights and she is capable of influencing her husband on land operation”. Besides, she added “My husband co-operate with me to implement the training skills I received on organic farming.” She went on saying that she, herself produces organic manure and share with other fellow women and she received support for land improvement from RWDS NGO. Another one among the respondents, Muniammal avowed that “yes am the person who takes all decision related to land, as she and her husband purchased land in their village through their hard-earned savings by migrating to Mumbai city”. She added that, she had decided to have their own land as her family suffered a lot from upper-caste landlords. And that she owns the land worth of above one crore now. And some women agreed that they could take decision on land, on what to
crop and how to spend money for the welfare of their family and land as well. Access to land rights is exceptionally significant for women’s economic empowerment. Irrespective of this argument, access to land rights for women society is a cross-cutting concern that influences economic development, civil rights, and access to integrity.

5.2.3 Right to Resist Domestic Violence: Utilisation of Land Rights at Intra Household Level

Needless to say, as India is a male-dominated society, women are more likely to get inflicted by violence, within family and society as well. More significantly, rural women have no other option rather than suppress their feelings since they are more dependent on men. When respondents were inquired about this, they came out with the same response. And they have a different life in their in-laws’ house than their parental family. Basically women are not allowed to express their feelings in their in-laws home. One of the respondents expressed that “she was little independent in her parental family, but after marriage everything has changed as she was confined to four walls and though she earned on her own she could not spend without the permission of her husband”. She went on saying “I do get into quarrels with my husband, but most of the time I have to suppress my feelings as I depend on him for my survival”. Sometimes “I resist and sometimes I get suffered. My community women in the neighborhood are my support. I do not have any land to cultivate on my own”, which was the reply from one of the respondents, Selvarani. This statement emphasises the point that, at times women are capable of resisting, but when they are solely dependent on someone and have no other place to go, they abjectly give up the quarrel and start moving on with life as it comes. And due to family values, some women never express the hardship they are facing within the family, as exposed by one of the respondents Jayam. Muniammal expressed that “As she is a bread winner for her family she could be capable of withstanding any violence. Since she has rights over the land, that control makes her to be powerful to withstand any issue within her family and community”. The offender in general uses violent behaviour and the endless impending intimidation of aggression against the spouse so as to keep up control within the family by instilling fear in the mind of the victim. Frequent victimizations take place when the offender finds it right exercise or reassert such control. Women become hapless targets since they might be lacking in terms of physical strength compared to their men. Rani, a respondent says “Am not able to survive with the violence by my husband as he had an affair with another woman. He deserted me, so I came to
refuge in my parent’s family. I do not have land rights in my husband’s family so he abandoned me so easily”.

Access to land rights is related to violence against women, their presence in the political sphere, and women’s voice in the national and global spheres. Women’s access to land and property are therefore important in the quest to generate more democratic societies. In fact, it has been recognised that giving rights to women shall play an important role in the domestic and household essentials of family wellbeing, food security, financial empowerment and poverty alleviation.

5.3 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

5.3.1 Right to Self-sufficient economic life: Household condition related to Land Rights

Land has long been acknowledged as a tool to advancing socio-economic rights and welfare, security of women and their status in society. Yet access, power and land ownership largely continue to be in the domain of male rights, establishing male dominated structures of authority and control over community resources, culture and custom. In terms of rural women’s survival, land becomes a basic resource for increasing survival status and financial and social empowerment, the lack of land and property rights for women destabilizes efforts to endorse gender equity within a male domination social order. In line with this, one of the respondents agreed that “she sells bangles in order to get additional income for her family and income from the land is the most important source for them”. Though, they think for their family, proper recognition is not yet given to the women by the society as a whole. When woman has rights over land, she could be capable of educating her children, take care of cattle and meet all expenses from the land, as Muniammal stated. So it is evident that rights over land or assets makes her to be empowered and stand on her own against any issues and eventually she could take all responsibilities. Ownership of land contributes in boosting women’s organization and giving them prospects to stand up for themselves. There is ample evidence from the current study that women’s property and land rights result in positive results for the well-being and security of women and their families as well.
Maniammal, a dalit woman respondent says, *Our food security is guaranteed with the land. However, during drought condition we face problems. We go for loans from Self Help Group and other informal money lender to meet our family emergencies*. Here the families with inadequate land resources need external support from the state or civil society to meet their basic needs in rural life. Further, dalit women with insecure land access, like cultivating on common land face extreme poverty, in the words of Amaravathi, one of the respondent “*We depend on agricultural coolie work in the upper caste land in our village and neighbouring village. Our land is insufficient as no irrigation support is available.*

The above statements of women who belong to different social groups, express the status of vulnerability in the support system that prevails within and outside of their community, making it clear that socially marginalized women are more susceptible to economic injustice.

### 5.3.2 Rights of Inheritance in Natal Family: Available Support System

In general, women in the society will never get benefitted from their own family’s property. Instead, they get certain things like jewels and other items in the name of dowry. One of the respondents echoed this. She pointed out that “*I got 15 sovereigns of gold jewels from my natal family*, which later she has to pass on this to her daughter”. And if the woman has male child in her family, she ought to pass on the land to him. The respondent reiterates this “*as I have two sons, land will go to them*”. Another respondent stated “*if they do not have female child, they ought to hand over all their jewels to their son*”. Likewise, for some family, it would be the biggest task to get their daughters married. In that case, the mother *lends her hands to help her daughter by providing food grains*, as one of the respondents reported. Since time immemorial, this is a routine thing in the Indian families. She also added that “*it’s our community custom that girls will get only gold jewels than land as our brothers need to support us during celebrations and festivals by giving ‘thai maman seer’*. Every female child in the family also will have to follow the same tradition. A woman’s status is generally described through that of men specifically in married life. A husband’s asset would bring it up, whereas widowhood or separation from marriage life would lower it. The birth right system in Indian culture has been to protect property, particularly land resource, intact for male inheritors. In real practice, intra-family shares are actually located in a society of male-domination entrenched in patrilocal customs, that describe the role of women in both financial and
non-financial spheres. Women rights are defined through family relationships and intensely inculcated insights that women have regarding these, their concerns and what comprises their security within their families. The upholding of female asset and inheritance rights assists to mitigate effects of adverse and untoward financial crisis faced by women and their families, as well facilitating to uphold women’s economic security and empowerment, thus lessening their susceptibility to domestic violence, and other health vulnerability scenarios. If natal family is poorer they can’t afford any land and properties to women at the time of getting married. Most of the respondents agree to this reality, and emphasized that it becomes difficult for poor parents to get their daughters married; some stated that unlike their own lot, they want their daughters to be independent in every aspect. There are instances when some of them could survive because of the support they received from government, as reported by Govindammal. Though some women send their daughters for pursuing education, other have to send their children to work, such as coolie because of financial burden of their family. Surprisingly, one of the respondents Jayam reported that, “my entire family was struggling hard to survive. With the support of Christian missionaries, we got relieved from bondage and got educated. Now with the support of education, we realized about land rights”. She has also avowed that she decides to give equal rights of inheritance to her daughter and son as well. This emphasized that “it is up to family members’ decision to give land and property rights to women, but because of financial and society burden they are unable to do so”.

5.3.3 Rights to Economic Security through Land Possession

Land rights for women is considered as a tool that strengthens their economic aspect. On the whole, it is recognized to be the essential factor for country’s overall economic growth. Access to land rights could assist women folk have more independence and decision-making power of their own. There is a strong link between women’s land rights and their financial state. As respondent Rajakumari stated “Land gives everything, from food to money. And they also considered it as future reserve for their children. To maintain the family security through supporting my husband I preserve our land to transfer to our sons”. When they have access to land, they put in a larger part of their income to the family and are capable of exercising greater power over farming income. Women with property or land access have better approach to credit since they have the choice of using land as security or as savings for theirs and children’s future. Other
respondent Selvi avowed that land strengthens their security of life. “Land is our food security. And emphasized that, though they do not get good clothes or other expensive items, they never go to sleep hungry, which is basic necessity for everyone’s life. We eat and also share with others. More importantly, we get place to sleep and do whatever we want”. Women’s land and property access have a far reaching influence on eliminating poverty and strengthening their economic empowerment. Some females considered that they could not get any further profit out of it as farmers do not get fair price to their produce, as Thenmozhi reported. Inhibiting women from possessing land puts them at a disadvantage in contributing to the economy. Land is the most important source of credit which gets financing for business. Women receive respect if they get access to land, in line with the statement of Rani. Govindammal expressed that “Land is considered to be a safety and social status in their community. She also added that she feels respected within family and outside of the community. Apart from it doesn’t give much economic benefit, except its value, when we sell”. According to rural women, it is essential for them to own a land as they know only agricultural business, as reported by Maniammal. Apart from this it gives everything, including food, housing and meet their children’s education needs.

5.4 POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

5.4.1 Right to Participation in Public Life: Forum to express Issues and Concerns

The Forum in general held as part of a practice towards strengthening equitable contribution and opportunities for women in growth, specifically in agriculture, wherein women continue to be mostly marginalized. There is currently an increased stress by public and private organizations towards greater emphasis on female empowerment in the agricultural occupation. Self-help groups and associations, rural micro-finance organizations, frequently encompassed solely of women - are contributing an important role in endorsing a shared programme around wellbeing, education and agriculture. It can be said that these groups will certainly change the lot of women at the grassroots level. For some women, family becomes everything for them and hence they do not have enough time and courage to participate any forum or association related to land rights and agricultural development, as Rajakumari responded. They let their husbands to take part in forum and they strongly believe that those things are men’s responsibility. Other respondent Selvi stated that “I participate in self-help group, but only savings and
government schemes are talked about there. I didn’t receive any support from the government or any other agency”. Further, civil society groups like NGOs engaged in development and advancement activities have the perspective to empower them through the provision of education, skills and competencies that strengthen sustainable agriculture. These groups are innovative organisational initiatives in India for women’s wellbeing and security. All women in the state are given opportunity to associate with any one of forums for training and development, in order to be potential partner either in SHG or NGO Group. These groups eventually build confidence for the financial independence of rural people, mainly amongst women who are generally imperceptible in the social system. These groups facilitate them to work together for common purpose and draw strength from one another to cope with exploitation that they are going through in certain forms. Paraparammal stated that “Yes. I am one of the leaders in the collective farming group and also leader in dalit women’s movement. We do submit petitions with collector and VAO asking for allocation of waste land in women’s name, but get no response”. In contrast, some people are even not aware of those community forums. In line with this, Thenmozhi asserted that “I am not aware of any land rights. I am aware of the thing that government brought a law for women’s property rights. But it cannot be implemented in our culture as men in the family hold all economic matters. We don’t have such forums in our village”. This is clear from this point that still patriarchal domination is running in the rural region.

5.4.2 Right to Position self with dignity: Enabling Political Conditions at Household/Community/Society

Unless, a woman is ensured of land rights or tenure, these could be snatched away at the time of financial or political chaos, leaving her impoverished, poor and landless. “I never participate in politics except go for voting. In my family women are not allowed to go in public. I do sell bangles and earn money and come back”, Rajakumari reported. At times, the women who belong to villages have poor access to information and face incapability to gain access to such information. Besides, as an addition to bargaining power within the family, land rights might give power to women to contribute more efficiently in their immediate communities and in the social and political movement of society. Women in some part of India are these days do take part in family decision making and also in national and global political development. One of the respondents, Paraparammal reported that “She is one of the leaders in women’s movement. She
receives all support from her family and she is the head of the household”. Surprisingly, one of the Dalit respondents reported that “I do participate in our Dalit women’s movement. I attend all the meetings, trainings on women’s rights”. And another Dalit respondent asserted that “I participate when all are mobilised for any issue affecting women, particularly dalit women and she receives her family support for participating in such activities. When survival becomes a concern for them, they are not allowed to take part in any forum, as reported by Amaravathi.” By tradition, women in rural regions have been considered as humans who belong at home, likely to look after their family members, but in terms of making decisions on financial and political problems, males in the family take the lead. But it is evident from the study that at least some of the Dalit women have changed this scenario. The forum or association posits that the accomplishment of equal rights by women in social and political movements should become a fundamental aspect of an independent and participatory system of development.

5.4.3 Right to Representation in Political Decision Making Bodies: Freedom of Political Participation for Rural Women

It is a recognized phenomenon worldwide that ‘women’s empowerment’ is at the center of accomplishing development objectives, basic for the understanding of civil rights, and an input to efficient and sustainable development effects. Though, in contrast, regardless of their “proven capabilities as leaders”, from the national to the world level, women’s political participation is largely controlled. This is even worse for some Dalit women. Though, few Dalit women step out for their self-esteem, as one of the Dalit women stated “they could not imagine about any political ambition. Our life is at stake until we get our land rights in full and get support from the government for irrigation and loan provisions. We cannot even claim anything from crop loss scheme as land is not titled in our name”. There is call for policies that engage authorizing local authorities and societies to set up strategies that blend the empowerment of societies and rural women. Women’s participation in political system at the local government is the most important key to their empowerment. Besides, it is at the local level wherein there is a greater scope of direct impact of women in political system on account of its proximity to the society. However, an effective contribution could not be legislated. It entails the conception of a political and societal environment wherein women attain the awareness, information base and conviction to speak about their concerns, and an organizational environment which is open and receptive to such expressions. One of the respondents suggested that “women need their due space in political organizations. But government
should bring law to guarantee it”. She also feels that women farmers are not recognized by the government and there is no government scheme for them. One of the Dalit women respondents expressed, “Dalit women should become leaders to address our issues, as Dalits are the most marginalised in agriculture and there is no space in the government and political parties to address our issues. We depend on government for all issues affecting our lives” Participation is a development strategy that acknowledges the demand to engage disadvantaged sections of the people in the design and execution of guidelines concerning their security and well-being. The strengthening of women’s contribution in every sphere of life has become the most important concern in the development discourse.