CHAPTER 6

INTEGRATED ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Women’s land rights in general are mediated through a number of personal laws and traditional practices. Women’s land rights have been and remain to be a cogent issue in societal development rhetoric in India. The significance of land rights has been explored in the framework of agriculture; reduction in gender based violence; women’s security and bureau. This chapter summarizes the gaps that exist in the actualization of women farmers’ land rights and justifies immediate public action intended at eliminating the structural obstacles in inheritance and joint holding rights of privately held land for women. Debates justifying the demand for giving land rights to women are livid and the difference is made between legitimate and customary rights. The chapter adds to a limited volume of researches that directly look at the link between women’s land rights and their empowerment.

6.2 FINDINGS FROM SECONDARY SOURCE ANALYSIS

6.2.1 Women’s Access to Land

Exclusion from Recognition

The ownership or non-ownership of means of production expressed in amounts of land, is a determinant for access to employment and the monetary yield that it offers in other sectors of the economy\(^1\) (Breman 1996: 179)

While the ownership is an issue, productivity enhancement and the intensification of the production process seem to be constrained also by issues of legitimate control of both land and labour. Esther Boserup (1965), a Danish economist, well known for first

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highlighting women’s role in agriculture and lobbying for women’s recognition in economic policy, was also one of the earliest writers to propose that more intensive farming technologies tended to occur with rising population density. Rural population growth, she held, limits the fallow periods, increases investments in land, induces manuring to maintain soil fertility and promotes specialisation in production.

Hence, the control over land transfers from the hands of women to men. Further, the land governance by state takes household as a unit for decision making on land in which men are considered as head of the household. Here, the customary system of family, kinship, caste comes into play in controlling the land use to maintain the patriarchal structure of the household. As Galbraith says of economic textbooks:

The separate identities of men and women are merged into the concept of a household, the inner conflicts and compromises of the household are not explored: by nearly universal consent, they are not the province of economics. Instead by a distinctly heroic simplification, the household is assumed to be identical with an individual.

Hence, both state system and customary practices organise themselves to make men as decision maker in terms of land settlements and productively using land. This results in exclusion of women farmers in the definition of Farmers.

There was an attempt made by government of India in the year 2007, through releasing a National Policy on Farmers by Ministry of Agriculture, that defines a farmer irrespective of land ownership as follows;

“For the purpose of this Policy, the term “FARMER” will refer to a person actively engaged in the economic and/or livelihood activity of growing crops and producing other primary agricultural commodities and will include all agricultural operational holders, cultivators, agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, tenants, poultry and livestock rearers, fishers, beekeepers, gardeners, pastoralists, non-corporate planters and planting labourers, as well as persons engaged in various farming related occupations such as sericulture, vermiculture, and agro-forestry. The term will also include tribal families / persons engaged in shifting cultivation and in the collection, use and sale of minor and non-timber forest produce”.

However, the above definition does not hold any legally binding effect on the state governments, which hold the subject of Land and Common Property Resources.
This study debates that women’s poor or inadequate access rights and power over land lasts to enable the feminization of gender discrimination – while male society as a whole were claimed to hold primary access and authority over land as the breadwinners of households, women are claimed to have secondary rights as a result of their ‘stranger statuses’ in their in-laws’ families. By and large, the extent of access to land amongst women was argued to be positioned within two wide-ranging contexts, i.e. marriage and inheritance. Despite some hurdles, as farming is the major source of livelihood, some women work together with their husband and even they sell their jewels for additional income of their family. Besides, these respondents agree that land is certainly the source of livelihood for their family. In some cases, woman takes all responsibility if her spouse is bed-ridden or incapacitated by any reason. When land came through family inheritance, the women are not allowed to possess any special rights. Regardless of encouragement to cut off the provision of services from land entitlements, an intense male bias still continues. Associations of the state and the civil society in specific, continue to consider male as head of family and farmers, and females as “collaborative spouses”. This male domination worldview and the power relationship it involves, even consisting of certain context-specific and customary variations, continue to control women’s resource entitlement, regardless of the continuation of a favorable policy context.

Further, when the families of marginalized communities have limited access to land, particularly the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, women face extreme form of deprivation of land rights despite of their productive role in agriculture.

6.2.2 Women’s Scale of Resistance in Violence

Regardless of acknowledgment of women’s welfare and roles in agriculture, and undeniably legal right, in the lack of important endowments—in this case land ownership entitlements, and also secure access to educational credentials, women experience a handicap in resisting social and domestic violence. With certain material benefits for women, land rights and housing could also lessen the occurrence of violence, giving them a sense of safety, and identity as equal citizen in society. Findings of the study also emphasize that many among the women respondents agree that they are capable of resisting violence unleashed against them. Women in most of the developing countries have tackled with gender discrimination. This inequity is essentially driven by social outlook about women as financially less productive and of less significant value to
parents for the objective of long-standing asset accumulation. Control over agricultural land, which entails the right to utilize land and not absolute rights of land, is imperative for women’s financial independence as land is the source of harness food products and increasing their income. It is extensively noticed that rural women become marginalized as a result of less involvement in agricultural activities and the slow pace with which they get other livelihood options. Structural-level interventions, such as economic empowerment plans that have worked with certain success in lessening violence against women and land rights agenda that have been found to increase women’s relationship control and eliminate violence against women (Grabe, 2010).

6.2.3 Economic Life and Land Rights

With regards to endowments, in agricultural communities land is possibly the main resource. It could be of assistance in reducing the risk of poverty, increasing economic standard and ensure food security as well as facilitate access to secondary sources for example financial and extension services. Land access is indispensable not only for securing their living in economic terms, but increasing their bargaining position at household and in the community as well. Agricultural income being the major source, most of women respondents sell their jewels for additional funds and family support, and also for purchase of land. When farmers struggle to consolidate their financial position, drought becomes the major curse for agrarians since they couldn’t withstand any loss. If they are not able to manage with their agricultural income from land and if input costs go up and farming does not remain profitable, the farmers would be constrained to sell their land to meet other essential family expenses.

6.2.4 Economic Benefits of Possessing Land

Access to land is indispensable for combating economic disaster for every individual, particularly women. Women who are devoid of such access are likely to be deprived, a system that brings about economic powerlessness. Increasing women’s access to and power over financial resources has a constructive impact on different development goals, such as poverty alleviation and economic growth (FAO, 2011b). Many respondents emphasized the point that land is the major source of their livelihood and they get their basic needs fulfilled owing to their land. Apart from economic gains, land rights could empower women individuals to take part more efficiently in their communities and in the
public and political activities of society. Women with land rights are more likely to be effective members of their communities, and community associations themselves are more likely to be receptive to the demands of women as a result. There are both economic and political succor when women have assured land rights. Land rights—whether conventional, official, or religious—give economic access to major marketplaces and social access to non-market organizations, for example family and community-level supremacy systems.

6.2.5 Women’s Participation in Public Forums

Though 53% of the conducted studies are making an effort to evaluate women's empowerment or employment in general, only few studies intended to look at women's empowerment in agriculture index. An index might be positive for inclusive assessment of women's position, but creating indicators of different aspects of empowerment individually might improve the project's capability to attribute development to project endeavors. The interviews with respondents reveal that the accessibility and availability of support system at the rural areas through civil society or government initiative enables their participation and leads to empowerment. Political empowerment of rural women is based on the design rather than chance occurrence in village context. However, women farmers’ participation in public forum is comparatively lower than their counterparts as the existing forums like SHGs are limited to thrift and credit. The non-recognition of women as farmers in government policies and programs results in lack of empowering initiatives. In this context, the respondents feel that insecurity of land rights is the major impediment in such process. Many women respondents of the current study told that they are keen on participating in forums, at least to gain information regarding agricultural activities and development. As findings suggest, increasing women’s participation in political forum or other association will possibly empower them and has a positive impact on many developmental goals.

6.3 FINDINGS FROM PRIMARY DATA SOURCE ANALYSIS

6.3.1 Demographic Details

The eight respondent villages are located in Pudupalayam Block in Thiruvannamalai District and Ayothiappattinam Block in Salem District. The land use pattern data collected from the village administrative office show that in all villages,
farming is the major occupation of the households of all the different social groups. Women respondents have been selected randomly from two districts, i.e. Salem and Thiruvannamalai. The majority of the study participants were aged between 41 and 60 years with a relative frequency of 48.2%. The other age groups of the study participants were the ones above 60 years with a relative percentage of 29.6% and those aged 21-40 years with a percentage of 22.2%. In terms of marital status, most of the respondents were married with relative frequency of 93.3% followed by those who were widowed with relative frequency of 6.0% whereas unmarried with frequency of 0.7%. The study includes community class ranging from BC to ST. The study has recorded their education status as well. The study reported illiteracy rate as 20.7% in Salem and 19% in Thiruvannamalai respectively. Among respondents, a total of 39.8% were found to be illiterates. This emphasizes that regardless of education status, women contributed in agricultural growth in the two selected districts. In terms of income, the study shows that majority of the study participants had income from agriculture and animal husbandry sources at 90.1%, while the rest of study participants had sources of income from non-farm occupations by a relative percent of 9.9%.

6.3.2 Food Security and Nutrition Indicators

Since land is the most important resource for agricultural based activities, the shrinking of agricultural land size creates a greater threat to food security. Although there is technical development in the innovations of new ranges of seeds and fertilizers, agricultural activity could not be done without farming land. Therefore reduction of agricultural land as a result of change it into non-agricultural activities, is the most important risk to food security. People in general use agricultural land for food security, as well as financial asset and livelihood asset for household, etc. Among respondents of the current study, 36% reported that land is primarily for food security, while 25% claims land is for livelihood. The level of organizational capacity is measured to be the key determinant for attaining food security in many regions. Lack of incorporation between state policies and implementation methods at the regional level, for example inadequate extension services to make sure allotment by farmers of new farming practices that can increase sustainable agricultural productivity, are instances of significant factors for restricting food security. There is a large debate regarding the recent interest of foreigners in acquisition or leasing landholdings: some notice a chance to influence foreign investment for farming and rural growth, while others forewarn against the threat of
dislocating customary rural societies from their land, thus intensifying food insecurity in nations already in danger (Govindaprasad and Manikandan 2014). In the absence or lack of policies and organizations that afford secure tenure and sufficient protections to internal small landholdings and their societies, large-scale acquisitions of land might have unintentional negative effects for rural regions and small-scale farmers. Agriculture activities not only strengthen the overall growth of the country but as well lessen poverty by generating employment and food security to the greater chunk of the population in nation and therefore it is the most wide-ranging development sector of the Indian economy. Agricultural landholdings, which is the main focal point of this study is significant for increasing agriculture development, food security and livelihoods in the country. It can be reported that tomorrow’s sustainable agriculture development and food security in the country largely depends on the performance of small and marginal farmers. The significance of women in this industry has been gradually increasing. The ratio of rural females in this particular sector was around 83% in 2004-05 (Dev, 2012). Further, the analysis of agricultural census for the past 10 years (1995-96 to 2010-11) shows that there is steep increase in marginal holders (upto 2 hectares) account to additional 3.26 lakh operational holders in which 2.29 lakhs are women. Nearly 1.32 lakh (2%) male cultivators withdrawn from 14.17% of landholding, whereas 2.29 lakh (17% ) women become cultivators of more than 35 thousand hectares additionally over 15 years on record of additional 3.4% land area. Increase in Women Marginal Farmers’ number is the major share in this(1.68 lakhs). however, in the share of total holding the percentage of females remains the same as before. Overall, there is an increase in number of cultivators, i.e. 96346 new holders on record, but there is a reduction in the operational area of 8.75lakh hectares. The above two observations show the feminisation of agriculture in Tamil Nadu. Regardless of their significance, women are recurrently shorn of their land rights and access to other industrious means. Looking after women’s land rights, increasing infrastructure strength to women farmers, and providing legitimate support on current laws, will boost acknowledgment for women as farmers and empower them to access loans, inputs, and markets. And with regards to current study, findings depict that the regression coefficient of food security and nutrition on access to the land rights is 0.156; this statement implies that access to the land rights enhances the level of food security and nutrition of women farmers. The primary threat to food security is the challenges rising from inadequate land resources and mass population. Loss of agricultural land as a result of the country’s rapid urbanization is also another threat that
obstructs food security. As a consequence loss of agricultural land is the most important factor triggering food insecurity. Since it will lessen food production, price of food products and also vegetables will increase and purchasing power will tumble down. Besides, the findings of the current study show that land access ensures family food and nutrition expenses and also 29.6% of the study participants agreed that land access offers Kitchen Garden that assists in supplementing the food requirements. In overall, the study exhibits that land access to women farmers offers food and nutrition security with moderate frequencies of 29.4 and 23.8 percentage respectively

A very first point of concern that emerges across the studies is that women are extremely keen to gain knowledge about their land rights. This is because of a lack of information, unquestionably, but might as well be an effect of women’s prohibition from the public domain and their position in the family based on gender-specific functions and responsibilities allocated to them. Women lack awareness since they do not contribute in the public realm, and are not receptive to regulations and policies, a field which is even now considered the male domain. Women experience obstructions when they intend to present at meetings in most setting, as a result of cultural limitations on women contributing in a meeting with their counterparts, but as well as from their domestic workload, which does not let them attend a meeting. This is why women are not well-informed about everything that takes place outside their family, and probably also less alarmed about such issues, since they are customarily “men’s business”. This interest for obtaining information, for knowledge about their rights refers to that there is great prospective for acting with women on forming their legal awareness (Pallas, 2010). All through the world, gender discrimination when it adds up to land and other dynamic resources thoroughly lead to women’s poverty and elimination. Positive link between assuring women’s individual ownership to land and other dynamic resources and increased household wellbeing, and also increased gratification of a extensive scale of rights for women. This is almost true about both rural and urban regions. Accordingly, women obtain more authority and independence in their household and communities, and also in their financial and political associations. The findings of the current study emphasize that rural women as well feel that protected land rights in specific improve their societal and political status, and recuperate their sense of self-assurance and security. By lessening the risk of forced evacuation or poverty and land rights strengthen women’s power in the home and enhance their levels of public contribution. The land use priority perceived by women farmers has a major influence in their households as they share equal breadwinner position as well as protection and care of their family. Women’s land
rights are specifically critical, as safe access to land and other reserves is a base for sustainable occupations and a main factor in ensuring food security. The current study emphasize that there are no enabling factors for rural women who depend on land as their livelihood, food security and economic needs to represent their concerns in the local governance which is in their close proximity. This is the situation in spite of 50% reservation for women in local governance institutions irrespective of their economic and education status. Women’s contribution in the practice of developing a land policy is essential to putting in place women’s right to land. Many different laws legalize and direct women’s individual ownership to land. Assuring equal rights might start with assessing how current land legislation, marital law and inheritance laws communicate with regards to women’s entitlement to land and how constitutional law could endorse women’s rights regardless of their marital status. Laws alone are not enough to secure women’s right to land. The efficiency of laws relies on awareness about, the capabilities to appeal to, and societal recognition of them, including to how far social rules and customs are carried out and followed in place of formal regulations (UN Rights, 2013).

6.4 SOCIO-CULTURAL CAPITAL INDICATORS

6.4.1 Individual Level – Perceived Changes in Self-Worth

Equitable land access and rights are fundamental and undoubtedly strengthen women’s empowerment and livelihood sustainability. Control over agricultural land or land in any form refers to power. Politically, land is employed as a mechanism for protecting and employing political support. In the financial context, resources produced from the land and land-based sources bestow the individual, who has power over that land, the capability to secure evident control over other means; and in the social context, the controllers of land also steer family and social systems and contribute in decision-making. Findings of the study conclude that access to the land rights enhances the level of socio-cultural capital of women residing particularly in rural parts of Tamil Nadu. In general, it is strongly believed that access to the land rights enhances the socio-cultural capital of women. Accordingly, around 34% of the women respondents in the study agreed that working on land enable them to be leaders in fight against hunger, whereas, 31% of women farmers agreed that they are active participants in land rights and farmers’ rights forum (where civil society is active). Most of the women respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they had perceptions that they were owners of the land and farmers with a frequency of 44.8%, whereas 46% of respondents did not perceive anything concerning land ownership and access.
6.4.2 Power of Choice: Women’s Decision-Making Power

Women in general are discriminated against when it comes to right to use, possess and/or exercise power over land and other assets. This not only perturbs them financially, but as well lessens their self-respect and impairs their rights to food, security, access to savings and investments and extension services, whilst also shrinking their space to contribute in the process of decision-making. Whilst conditions differ in each context, there are traditional laws and rules, and legal limitations that marginalize women, denying them access and ownership to land and an influence in public decision-making. For instance, frequently, women could not become involved in decision making in terms of livestock that are generally the rural households’ most important source of wealth. The study sought for information regarding decision making power of women particularly when they have access to land. For this, 54.9% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they are in decision making on the matters related to land in their families. Also, 44.8% neither agreed nor disagreed that they take independent decisions and act independently in certain aspects. Around 51% of people were silent whether that they had power of choice. The current study analyses the leadership and community forum that have participation by women respondents. Leadership and community forums vary in size and are adaptable, grassroots associations. They are meant exclusively of women, with associates and leaders democratically chosen by women in the village. Women leadership forums have assisted women shift from being mostly spectators in communal decision-making, such as on land problems, to being influential or authorised person in what seems to be a developing proletariat social movement for land ownership. Their impact has been larger and far-reaching than expected. With leadership forum, women have undertaken leadership roles and increased self-assurance in their own leadership capabilities. These forums are playing an important role in community-level women’s revenue-making groups by giving a focus for knowledge sharing, fiscal management, and gain access to information on land ownership. Besides, they are employing their awareness of their rights to put stress on decision-makers to increase women’s financial opportunities and girls’ right to education. Leadership and community forum are exemplifying the huge potential for transformation when empowered and spirited women work with and support direct their communities (Maliasili Report, 2014).
6.4.3 Women’s Empowerment and Decision-Making in Agriculture

Women comprise 43% of the agricultural workers in developing regions and a little more than 30% in India (FAO, 2011). Though, their right to dynamic resources, for example land access and livestock, inputs (seeds), and services (credit) for agricultural activities replicates a “gender gap” that most frequently is deep-rooted in societal norms exclusive to a given natural features and traditions. It is in the similar framework that women perform more accountability within households, besides agricultural workers. The nature of the agricultural contexts wherein women practice agriculture might be fairly significant for defining the extent of the differences obtained through this gender gap. Though, women are largely in the position of taking care of land and household, they are still lagging behind in terms of decision making process, be it for household or family and for their children. Some respondents in the current study acknowledge this as 54.9% of them neither agreed nor disagreed that they are in decision making on the matters related to land in their families. Women are largely disempowered into two most important aspects of agriculture, which include decision-making and leadership. This difference in access to productive resources and services might negatively influence women’s agricultural productivity and poor control of family decisions and income, and also obstacles to implementation of new technologies and methods. With a minimal access to education and technologies, a host of socio-economic elements have had an unfavorable effect on the existences of women farmers in these days. The limitations and opportunities that women come across in agriculture vary across states and countries, based on the socio-cultural contexts. Regardless of a number of policy interventions both at the macro and micro level, women do not have the level of awareness on empowerment they ought to have.

6.4.4 Overall Power within Community

The current study also intended to identify whether women withstand domestic violence and resist inter-communal violence and discrimination. In most of the countries, there is even now a lack of sufficient provisions for women to have land rights independent of their husbands or other male relatives. Constitutional law generally does not provide for women’s independent civil rights and when such law does subsist, methods to implement it are often lacking. And even violence meted out to them is still not eradicated from the society. As many as 54.9% of women farmers in this study in
Tamil Nadu neither agreed nor disagreed that they were able to resist any injustice against themselves in their families. The research also found that 31.8% of women farmers agreed that they were able to resist violence against other fellow women in their community. Similarly, 37.8% of them agreed that they were able resist inter-community violence. The fact remains that more and more women in India are denied of their basic right to self-respect itself, leave alone the issue of gender equality. Thus, the current study looks at the issues essential to women’s right in India that is primarily male dominated in nature. Concerning dignity and status in the society, 41.8% of women farmers agreed that they were able to feel confident about themselves in terms of dignity and status in their society. In overall terms, the study realized that about 30.5% of women respondents had social and cultural power in their community. In customary societies, women’s independent access to land by purchase or inheritance is often restricted, in spite of that they might have better management and employment rights than men. As women are often the main household food producers, generally there are traditional requirements for indirect access to land with regards to the rights obtained through inheritance or as wives, mothers, or daughters. Rural women in specific are accountable for almost half the world’s foodstuff production and deliver between 60 and 80% of the foodstuffs in most developing regions. In Asian countries, between 50 and 90% of the works in the agricultural activity are done by women (FAO, 2002). After the reaping process, rural women in developing nations invariably take charge of storage, stocking, promoting and processing. Giving access to land more even-handed does not mean dealing with only the measure of ownership rights. To use the rights and prospects, access to land should as well be enforceable or protected. As well, equal access to land should be effective, i.e., by comprising equal access to transport, credit, marketplaces, and so on.

6.5  ECONOMIC CAPITAL INDICATORS

Regardless of the point that the women’s contribution to the nation’s growth is similar to that of their male counterparts, even now they go through many obstacles that hold them back from understanding their prospective for expansion. It was amenable to this context that the governments across the world recognized the demand to prioritize the wellbeing of women and their contribution at each phase of the growth process. The word women’s empowerment refers to the potential of the women to independently take all the significant decisions pertaining to her all through her life span that will ensure her accomplishment in every aspects of life. Though, these objectives are a long way from
being realized in a nation like India. The Indian women are placed at the receiving end largely since they have continued to remain uninformed of their basic human and constitutional rights. In such circumstances frequently a majority of them are enforced to agree to the customary practices which are unfavorable for both themselves and their children’s growth. Only, 29.6% of women respondents reported that they have full access to land. However, the study through the results found that 54.9% of women respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that their access to land was tokenistic. Though women have obtained a level of economic and political independence and awareness about their constitutional rights, yet they face challenge in achieving fundamental changes for eradicating gender disparities and other inequalities from the society. About 45.9% of women respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that they get any benefit out of Land. The study realized that generally, 40.9% of women farmers neither agreed nor disagreed that economic benefits for self and family were tenable through access to land.

In the Western world, the legal right to a private property implies that the proprietor or landlord will be capable of exercising that entitlement and to have unconstrained access to that property. In this case, the current chapter looks at some of the significant issues in women’s land rights and debates that for women’s empowerment in India, the potential to implement property rights is more significant than ownership to land rights. Besides, the property right should be looked at in the wider perspective of women’s financial independence and that the directed participatory policy could significantly strengthen women’s empowerment. Ownership of property signifies that the individual’s income will be higher and the ability to expend on use of food, other requirements for example education, healthcare and accommodation and etc. will be enhanced. For sustainable growth of agriculture and other natural resources, the facilitating women land rights is extremely important. And, usage on land differs with each respondent. Concerning how women farmers prioritise on the land usage, the research realized that 44.8% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that access to land is a food security asset, whereas 41.5 have been particularly using this for financial asset. It is obvious that rural people consider land as their financial asset, since they do not possess any other skill than agricultural activities. They are solely relying on land for their every basic need such as food and shelter. The research also found that similar percentage of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that land gave access to certain trees, plants, medicinal plants and herbs, inland fishing source. As these people do not have any financial assets like fixed deposits, shares and financial plans at their disposal,
rural families are enforced to consider physical assets that will eventually give them old-age safety, amongst other objectives. And land as a property or resource has many aspects. Accordingly, 37.8% of women farmers agreed that access to land was a livelihood asset and 41.8% of study respondents agreed that access to land guarantees housing. Generally, the results point out that around 34.8% of the respondents agreed that they have overall priority of the land usage.

6.6 POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT INDICATORS

6.6.1 Impact of Land Rights on Women Empowerment

It might be accentuated here that women land rights in India is not an alternate tool to recuperating their education or increasing their revenue. It could, though, enable women’s right of entry to other such socio-economic resources known to have a constructive effect on women’s wellbeing, security, nutrition and self-determination. Land rights frequently provide women the authority to look for these impacts. In addition, as history denotes, land rights being basic to directing the social order, women’s equal share in land ownership has the influence on societal transformation. Existing studies in this subject have mostly overlooked the potential endogeneity of land rights. As evidenced in many experiential researches, the intensification in women’s bargaining power could consecutively transform into a redirection of means toward women’s inclinations, entailing higher asset in human capital of the household for example education, wellbeing, and sustenance. For that reason, the study points to that in places wherein agricultural activity is the most important source of economy for women, procedures improving land rights justice have the potential to enhance women’s empowerment and related favorable wellbeing effects. The research sought for information regarding whether access to the land rights helps towards the political empowerment of women in rural areas. The women respondents were invited to express their own impressions of the empowerment associated with their access to, authority over or rights on land. The women were imparted certain indicators of change related to: food security and nutrition, for example authority over food consumption and nutrition on their own; social indicators, which refer to control over individual decisions; economic empowerment, for example their potential to influence land rights for loans, credits and other financial catalysts and capability to make choices over what they have produced and last one is political indicators, which refer to contribution in political processes and leadership forums at various levels. The study found that 31.8% of women residing in
rural areas agreed that as farmers they are able to be members in many political forums. A similar proportion of women residing in rural areas felt that they were comfortable speaking up in public to help decide on infrastructure (like small wells, roads, water supplies) to be built in their community. In rural parts of the country wherein agriculture is the most important source of revenue, women are erroneously professed as lesser partners, mostly involved in household work and less so in revenue-generating roles. Intensifying this insight in rural regions is the centrality of land rights, since women usually have limited access to land. The potential to access land and to demand, utilize, and protect land and other natural resource ownership rights of individual person and groups are dependent on process of empowerment. Women experience more obstacles to empowerment, ranging from their position within the family and society to their position under customary or legal law. Even in the current study, only 26% of women have association with the farmer’s forum or market association. Rest of the women are not member of any such association. Among the 26% of women, illiterate women and school level educated women represent equally to the tune of 13% in each category. Thus, it is essential for women to engage in more market association or forums to facilitate their empowerment. Finally, 29.6% of women agreed that they are comfortable to speak in public to protest the misbehavior of authorities or elected officials. In overall terms, a proportion of 31.3% of women agreed that they had the ability to participate in public processes.

6.6.2 Women Leadership in Agriculture

The changing political context in India has increased some hopes in protecting women’s rights and endorsing women's leadership. The delay in ensuring legitimate provision of making sure a minimum of 33% of women in all the state policies and the proposal for 33.2% representation of women in Parliament and state Assembly is one of the major blocks in positive phases of the political transformation. The provision could have important contribution to transform the setting of under interpretation of women in both political and managerial systems. Although women's role in growth has been legitimately recognized since the sixth periodic development plan, particularly on joint title and later 40% of title in the name of women, its percolation down at the state and grassroots level is not adequate as the attempts in leadership development are yet to bear results. The professionals in private sectors emphasized that out of the total women farmers, only 4-5 percent women could turn out be an entrepreneur as greater part of them are restricted by limited access to economic resources, knowledge and abilities to contend
with marketplace, family support system and contributing to policy specifications (Ghale, 2008). Variations in agricultural practices, for example growing mechanization and changing from survival to commercial agriculture have changed the gender division of workforce and gender relations. The most important responsibility for food production, therefore the food security for deprived households, is undertaken by women. Regardless of women’s significant part in agricultural production, women are even now largely held in the background. The quest for land access is a significant issue when exploring agricultural productivity, although it is simultaneously a greatly controversial question. The current study highlighted that women’s contribution in agriculture and in the households makes a difference with regards to their economic status. The decisions in terms of savings purchase of agriculture implements, livestock, and so on and day to day expense on food consumption is managed by women agriculturalists themselves. In addition, they are able to take decision on usage of their own land. FAO (2002b: 2) highlights that ownership of land is significant when intensifying agricultural productivity, since it acts as a aggregator of other resources like bank loans, water and electrical energy. It is significant to acknowledge that access to land could entail both private ownership and the land rights. Research also intended to identify whether women farmers are aware of issues faced by the farmers / peasants with respect to land reform policies. For this, 31.8% of the respondents agreed that they are aware of the issues faced by the farmers and peasants with respect to land reform policies, subsidy loans linked with fertilizers and seed. A similar fraction of women (31.8%) agreed that they have even met their panchayat president and represented land rights related issues to him. It is extensively noticed that rural women become marginalized as a result of less investment in agricultural activities and the slow pace with which they get other livelihood options (Arun, 2012). This is also evident in the current study that only few respondents recognize their leadership role and taking part in community forums. While few women respondents agreed that they are willing to participate in forum for their problems to get resolved, some hesitate to even step out of the house. This is because the unending gender issues prevalent in the country. The WEAI is a recently developed tool employed for examining gender gaps in agricultural production. This domain deals with empowerment by means of social capital. The main objective is to examine the gendered differences in societal group membership. When women are encouraged to participate willingly in agricultural forum or other association, they might have the potential to step out and take part in political or other such activities. In terms of political participation, 31.8% of women agreed that being members of various forums helps them to participate in elections. In overall terms, the study realized that 39.6% of women residing in rural areas
neither agreed nor disagreed they had perceptions on their rights about governance opportunities. Women in India have tackled well with gender discrimination. This inequity is essentially driven by social insights of women as financially less productive and of less significant value to parents for the objective of long-standing asset accumulation. Since they are largely dependent on their family, women are more likely to inhibiting themselves from active participation from forums. Accordingly, 31.8% of the respondents agreed that they see family as the major impediment in participating in electoral politics, while 29.6% agreed that they see community and the caste members as the major impediment in participation in electoral politics. As findings suggest, in order to put full stop to such obstacle, it is essential for government to give source of land to women, which may eventually empower women in every aspect.

6.7 FINDINGS OF TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Table 6.1 Results of Hypothesis Testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Significance value</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1.1 Access to the land rights enhances the level of food security and nutrition of women residing in rural areas of Tamil Nadu.</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>Null hypothesis rejected. Alternate Hypothesis accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1.2 Access to the land rights enhances the socio-cultural capital of women residing in rural areas of Tamil Nadu.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Null hypothesis rejected. Alternate hypothesis accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1.3 Access to the land rights enhances the economic capital of women residing in rural areas of Tamil Nadu.</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>Null hypothesis rejected. Alternate hypothesis accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1.4 Access to the land rights helps towards the political empowerment of women residing in rural areas of Tamil Nadu.</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>Null hypothesis accepted. Alternate hypothesis rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Social Group of Women moderates the relationship between access to the land rights and empowerment.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Null hypothesis rejected. Alternate hypothesis accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3.1 Size of land holding moderates the relationship between access to the land rights and empowerment.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Null hypothesis rejected. Alternate hypothesis accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3.2 Source of land moderates the relationship between access to the land rights and empowerment.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Null hypothesis rejected. Alternate hypothesis accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3.3 Landholding status moderates the relationship between access to the land rights and empowerment.</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>Null hypothesis rejected partly. Alternate hypothesis accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship between women empowerment and land rights has been assessed. The study concluded that access to the land rights enhances the level of food security and nutrition of women. Pallas, (2011) concluded the same statement that women’s land rights facilitate women’s empowerment. One of the hypotheses of the study reported that *the land rights do not enhance the level of food security and nutrition of women; however the study concluded that* access to the land rights enhances the level of food security and nutrition of women, which was in line with the findings of Giovarelli, (2013). The study reported that access to the land rights enhances the level of socio-cultural capital of rural women and Giovarelli, et al. (2013) pointed out that socio-cultural factors restrict women’s access to and land rights over other resources. The social group of women moderates the relationship between access to the land rights and empowerment of women is what the current study reported and same statement has been agreed by Rao, et al. (2010). Her findings emphasized that around 75% of SC women are landless and 47% of women are given access to land, which shows the status of social group and empowerment of different class groups.