CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Land rights equity is considered to be the most important tool for encouraging empowerment and financial wellbeing for women in developing regions. In view of this, underlying principle, this study aimed to assess the land rights utilisation empirically on the aspects varying from rural women access to land and property, either individually or jointly, as a means of increasing their intra-household bargaining power in the sphere of own healthcare and major household purchases and contributing in decision-making process within the household and community as a whole.

7.2 EVOLUTION OF LAND RIGHTS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON WOMEN BELONGING TO DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS

It will be quite tough to present an inclusive Bradshaw that exists on primeval historical views on gender and women with special reference to their land rights. Women came to be known as a separate interest group in the 19th century largely on account of the bourgeoisie self-governing revolutions of previous centuries that excluded women from their conception of equality. This difference was largely based on gender. Later, women as a group had instigated struggle for acknowledgment of their human and civil rights as an individual. Women’s carry out many roles in the society such as a breadwinner of her family, as a spouse or daughter and as well service provider to the entire society. Post-Independence period has evinced a number of progressive restructuring in the land holding guidelines with a concentration on redistributive integrity and gender equity. Land is a common issue in India and a number of states have progressed with standard initiatives to guarantee gender integrity in land authority structure. Regardless of this, the increasing inconsistency in land possession is a cause of trepidation for many. The inadequacy of any official mechanism to oversee the evolution of land restructuring in India by and large and around gender equality in specific might be one of the source
behind this embedded inequity in land occupancy norm. Historical land revenue structures have considerable influence on the pattern of land possession and land dispersal in India, as evinced from number of studies, regardless of post-Independence restructuring. Specifically, British land revenue policies appear to have intense effects on land rights of women in India. In pre-Independence period, agricultural land was governed under three major categories of land occupancy systems, such as, the zamindari, ryotwari and mahalwari system. Land rights of women in India are largely administered by inheritance laws, related to various religious communities such as Hindus, Muslims and Christians. As Hindus comprise 79 percent of the overall population, the Hindu Succession Act (HSA) has a large impact on gender equality in land rights in the country (Choudhury, et al., 2016).

However, these provisions have no major impact on rural women farmers. The source of land rights for large number of rural women continues to be dismal both in their natal families and marital families. Further, the recent emergence of feminisation of agriculture and land alienation for large development projects which brings pressure on the marginalised sections like Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes who largely depend on agriculture is also the major cause of concern that continues to be neglected in the state policies.

The study finds that the women with more land area households with irrigation support in addition with caste status are performing economically better than the women with marginal holdings with non-irrigated holdings. However, their political participation is very minimal and, in many cases, it is almost nil due to the roles and responsibilities they play to protect the family and private property. The status of landless women is nowhere reflected in the empowerment indicators except their political participation in gram sabhas and women’s movement with the support of civil society organizations. However, this political participation has not made any significant reflection in their socio-economic status, except petitioning for land assignments and titles in few cases. There is also inter-mediate situation prevailing among the women of marginal and small holders’ families, where the livelihood status dependent on land has more equal space for women’s decision on all matters. The leadership of such women in family and community and identity recognition as part of group of women farmers is realized compared to the above mentioned two extreme groups of women farmers. (i.e. women members of landlord family and women of absolute landless family). This applies to all communities
irrespective of the social group they belong to. *Thus, the study findings arrive at that the ‘land for livelihood’ status brings certain amount of balance in gender equality and improved status of women in terms of identity, mobility, economic security and political participation.*

### 7.3 WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION IN SUSTAINABLE USE OF LANDS

In rural families, nature and size of the family, social group, size of land holding, socio-economic condition of the household, education status of rural women, and their employment status influence their contribution in decision-making process. Illiteracy, poverty and joblessness are the most important issues form any developing regions, of which India is no exemption. As women’s contribution to economic growth is fundamental, there is a requirement of quantum increase in her contribution in decision making power, since the success and advancement of any production is based on the plans formulated and decisions taken. It has to be highlighted that access to land and property does not essentially mean a right over land. Access generally denotes “the capability to attain benefits from things”. As per this definition, access has a lot to do with a “set of authorities” than with a “set of officially recognized ownership”. In terms of land, “one could have the right to profit from land, but find them unable to doing so if they do not have resources to support activities on land. Accomplishing equality between men and women calls for a change in women’s right of entry both to property and to authority, which consecutively relies on women’s empowerment. While land is kept as property alone, its transformative value remains within the control of dominant force, but if its value enhanced as Livelihood Source it becomes authority of people who operates on land for its betterment and for the benefit of others. Rural women obtain sustainable use of land through their labour, safe guarding biodiversity and protection of common property resources, but continue to be denied their authority. Simultaneously, this method transforms gender relations and is accordingly a prerequisite for lessening discrimination between men and women. Empowerment, in this context, denotes power as a societal relation; consequently, the bargaining power becomes a tool to strengthening empowerment. The official law intensifies women’s property rights, but societal norms restrict their readiness to enforce the law. In India, though women have the equal legalized rights to possess land as men, less than 10% of privately-held land is in women’s name. One cause for this is dowry, which is forbidden by conventional law but is nevertheless broadly practiced. The daughter’s dowry is being considered by her family
as her part of the birth right, although it is usually given to her new spouse and his family. Consequently, though women have formal rights to take over land, these ownerships are trumped by the societal knowledge that women’s dowries signify their inheritance. In the same way, in many developing region, women hardly ever hold title to land, regardless of the point that formal law provisions for women to employ land rights and makes joint rights of properties by husbands and wives the defaulting property management. This is largely ignored since majority of rural marriages are not recognized and these provisions never relate to marriages which are not registered. Besides, usually women only have access to their dowry of moveable assets, have no access to family’s property, and could only possess land if they have been separated from husband legally, widowed, or neglected. Also, there are institutional obstacles for example insufficient authorizations, budget and human resources that as well, which act as an obstruction for women to essentially recognize their rights. Consequently, besides the establishment of a legitimate outline and strategies with a gender insight, it is equally significant to explore cultural elements that obstruct women’s access to property and land.

7.4 CHANGES IN THE STATE POLICIES, LEGISLATIONS AND PROGRAMS OVER A PERIOD WITH REGARD TO LAND RIGHTS

The relationship of women with Land and natural resources in Tamil Nadu, is historical as well as contextual. Though the state is moving towards urbanisation (more than 40%), the agrarian sector is getting more feminised due to fragmentation of landholdings and still large sections of middle age group is dependent on land for livelihood and food security.

Though women’s empowerment, particularly Rural Women’s Empowerment has been envisaged by planners through various rural development schemes and welfare programmes like livelihood schemes, the non-recognition of Land Rights of women is the major impediment in realizing the full potential of women to improve the rural livelihoods. The rural social structure of caste based patriarchy and its relationship with economic sources prevents women to mobilize them to claim their land rights. Further, the land governance system, which is derived its core structure from British on the notion of Private Property further strengthened the patriarchal structure of rural society at all levels from household to community to state. At the policy level, considering household as unit and neglect of women as independent decision maker in
the socio-economic system, and powerless representation in the local governance all add up to the subordinate situation of women.

In case of agricultural land, women often compromise for the benefit of the male heirs in their family. Thus, they depend on the husband’s land share in their matrimonial property. Unfortunately, nowhere in India except Goa, and even the very progressive women literate states like Tamilnadu and Kerala, women have matrimonial property rights. Only when husband dies, woman gets a share along with the children.

In reality, if the women who lost their husband have only daughters and not sons, she will be deprived of the rights from her husband’s property if it is undivided and group title, as families prefer to share the land to male heirs not respecting the law. Her in-laws would decide whether to share the compensation or not. The field interviews reveal that in most of the cases of woman who lost their husband without children or only female children were denied land rights in their marital as well as natal families. However, their labour is utilised to farm the field and they would be accommodated in the joint family households. Women who raise voices against this injustice would be thrown out of the house. There are no laws to guarantee women’s rights to marital property when husband is alive.

The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2005), provides scope for right to reside in the matrimonial house, however its enforcement depends on the local legal administration and the victim needs to file a police complaint to access justice under this provision. The implementation of both the laws in reality is far from near.

As long as women’s labour and contribution to the productivity of land and economy of the state is recognised by the state and society, justice is denied. In a competitive land market system, poor women and marginalised sections do not have any legal hold to claim their land ownership in Tamil Nadu, except petitioning the state for two cents of housing land.

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) emphasized the demand to reinforce the entitlements and encourage women farmers, for the sake of nutrition and food security, and material welfare, if not openly identifying emotional security and societal acknowledgment. Recognizing the changes occurring within farmers’ livelihoods patterns in India, both the feminization of farming and the division
into non-agricultural rural and urban endeavours, and its gender aspect, the New Agricultural Policy recognized the demand to facilitate the positions of women farmers. It restated the commitment towards mutual land right to husbands and wives, with the intention of improving food security at the family level. The most important obstructions to rural women’s access to asset, land and other resources and their potential to increase productivity are organizational obstacles to their social recognition. In India, whilst asset control could result in certain improvement in working status and contribution in household decision-making methods, it does not essentially become conducive to better individual wellbeing. Land, being a societal resource, is concurrently handled by many rules, norms and policies – those forced by the state, but evenly by societies and families.

One general aspect across these levels and across nations in the region is the exclusion of women from decision-making, administrative and leadership roles, at times even contribution. Women are insufficiently represented in village boards, conventional councils and indeed state organizations, specifically legal bodies. As current study suggests, legal equality is inadequate to make sure women’s right to and authority over productive resources, in specific, land. Women’s essential position in financial productivity, accomplishing food security objectives and addressing family nutritional demands varies with the methodical discrimination they experience in access to and authority over the fundamental assets required, if they are to contribute completely in recognizing the region’s financial growth potential.

Despite suitable mechanism available at local level through Panchayat Raj system for re-distribution and representation of women for better and equitable access to resources, the system is not adequately empowered to address the gender gap in land governance. Women are seen as wage earners and family care givers, not considered as equal citizens in the socio-economic and political progress of the village or state system. On the other hand, the field research reveals that besides the role of women in preserving the livelihood system as marginal holders, sustainable agriculture and climate resilient agricultural practices are also the contributors of sustainable development and food security of the families and communities.
7.5 PROCESS OF EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN RELATION TO LAND RIGHTS

Women’s empowerment refers to establishing the circumstances for women to be capable of making decisions, which signifies that women might have distinct inclinations than men, but as well distinct abilities to make decisions on account of gender discrimination in bargaining power and access to land and assets. Social empowerment denotes women’s position in society that is based on social norms, gender responsibilities within the family and the society as a whole and social capital. The WEAI Index exhibited poor leadership and impact of women in the society as indicators of women’s political and economic disempowerment. Public action in the ambit of farmer groups could be a significant tool for women members to reiterate their political power. The structure of women’s groups to progress rights and right to use services is a deep-rooted means of social and political empowerment wherein members multiply productivity and revenues collectively. Village women could organize large networks and association of networks to effectively demand increased services and emphasizing land and water use as constitutional rights. In general, capacity building is essential to make sure that women continue to be active members and assume significant positions in leadership and decision-making process. When administered on a large scale, community groups amplify women’s political impact and build scope for their dynamic contribution in political aspects. The most important development impacts have been accomplished by group organization which concentrate on profits significant to women. Encouraging women’s participation in agriculture doesn’t just signify welcoming them to training, it signifies guaranteeing training goes well with their demands and promoting women society to continue emerging so they could become influential leaders in their communities. Women, for instance, might represent 30–50% of the total number of associates but have an inadequate presence in leadership of community farmers’ groups (FGs) that renders their potential not fully realized and their particular demand not addressed. The low contribution of female society in leadership is further replicated at domestic level wherein it is seen that some women leaders successfully signify the interests of proletariat women. Nazaki, et al. (2017) surmised that around 90% of the farmers that have been involved in groups’ activities have completely increased and strengthened those potential of leadership. Political and economic empowerment of women is found to be fundamental condition to progress leadership of women farmers (IFAD, 2010). This also applies to the farmer groups that empower women economically
through access to property and land, productive resources, technologies, knowledge and markets as well as provide them the competency and motivations to vie for leadership role.

7.5.1 Role of Women in Decision-Making Process in Agriculture Sector

By understanding the fundamental role of women in agriculture sector, the government becomes highly sensitive on rural poverty mitigation like never before as a means of intensifying the economy. *Per se*, focus is on putting considered and required changes in place for the rural communities in the form of agricultural growth. The accomplishment of these strategic change program is achieved principally on the realistic decision making power of the women. Many a literature have highlighted the extent of contributions of women to agricultural growth in India. *However, the role and function of women in decision- making power in agriculture sector has not broadly been explored from governance perspective*. Decision-making is a basic and essential process that integrates all the activities of family resource management. Rural women carry out every tasks of household, dealing with farm labor, looking after domestic cattles but regardless of accomplishing all the household tasks, no acknowledgment is given to her immeasurable contribution. Women’s contribution in decision-making method has been of great significance since women contribute in every household activity and gives contributes enormously in all settings. However, their contribution in decision-making process of household is kept on in a very low scale as all significant assessments are carried out by family’s head or the male members, since most of the females were deprived of opportunity to get education as a result of obnoxious system of discrimination against the women in family. Women’s decisions invariably do not get much recognition in agriculture sector as well. The situation has become more intriguing in case of the suggestions pertaining to choosing the appropriate measures to increase production, purchasing and expenditure activities. It is recommended as a result of the findings that it is imperative to encourage women to have correct and comprehensive knowledge about their authorized rights.

7.5.2 Rural Women and their Contribution in Food Security

Rural women create major and multiple contributions to the accomplishment of nutrition and food security routines and produce more than half of the food developed
globally. Land and property rights reinforce women’s food security, their bargaining potential in the household and their societal position as members of the society. Over the past few years, a lot of attention has been paid to micro credit interferences for the women empowerment. With regards to fundamental factors, women’s control of household finances is the most important promoter of family’s food security and nutrition. Women are more inclined than men to use extra cash amount on nutrition inputs for example food. Asset rights, access to other properties and agricultural land, labor and income opportunities are essential for a protected livelihood. Women in general play an important role in the rural economy across the world. In developing countries, women represent overall around 40 per cent of the agricultural labour and women’s roles range from being farmers on their own or someone’s lands – either may be unpaid or paid employees, together with their major role as providers of unpaid work in their families and societies. Though, in various settings women experience more restraints than men in accessing main productive resources for example land and to avail allied services including credit, expansion and societal protection; they experience wage inequity in rural employment markets and frequently work without compensation on family-owned farms. This restricts their potential conducive to agricultural production and makes use of new opportunities.

In general, women are accountable for production that facilitates local consumption, such as staple crops including vegetables, on more marginal lands. Those crops are frequently considered as women’s or men’s crops and men likely to bring more cash crops into being. Though, roles differ, as do every day jobs, and in fact the allotments are blurred. For instance, men might facilitate to prepare the land on which ‘women’s crops’ are sowed and cultivated, and women might be entailed in weeding men’s crops. Since women lack access to land, their decisions regarding what they cultivate are still more limited. The research finds that when women are most likely to work on land; when they actually do, the plot they could access is frequently of poor quality without resources to support. These gender differences not just influence women’s position; they have major inferences for food and nutrition security. Landesa (2012) claims that when women have no access to their own land, then there is a probability of more than 60 per cent malnourished children and when women have rights over land and income, this enhances their decision-making authority and position giving rise to positive nutritional effects for them and their household and society as a whole.
7.6 **RECOMMENDATION**

Empowering women to contribute their best in household and society decision-making transforms into increased well-being and effective growths for children, thus lessening poverty for future generations and playing an important role in long-standing socio-economic development. As a result, reducing the “gender gap” in access to land, properties, services and opportunities has been found to be one of the most effective methods to alleviate rural poverty and increase agricultural development and rural growth. In recent times, there have been certain positive developments with regard to women's access to land and other resources. Nonetheless, the legitimate provisions have not however been entirely realized in assuring women’s rights to land and property. Whilst women have an important role in management and usage of property, such as farmland, their right to use and control over other resources are often unnoticed. With the intention of establishing gender-just policies and legislation and eliminate organizational and cultural obstacles, it first becomes significant to look at and document the ground reality with regard to land and asset ownership in the nation, insights, and also challenges faced by women in obtaining their civil rights to own, direct and utilize family resources. There is a call for apparent and necessary liability methods for governments, rights bodies and international organizations, and also for NGOs and the private sector. Methods are required to guarantee rules of gender equality, policy consistency and ownership. These policy mechanisms should be founded on clear, right and related indicators which are developed at the planning phase and are built through democratic processes wherever possible. They must facilitate food security to be evaluated in more integrated, comprehensive ways that take over nutritional, social, political, economic and gender equality effects. The research has highlighted the inestimable value of bringing together women and men which are suggesting a gender-transformative agenda regarding food and nutrition security from different countries and organizations. It is very important to stick with the conditions of this space for discourse among these different groups and individuals so they are able to enrich more experienced knowledge of the subjects, build new concepts and execute their learning with principle. In addition, it is essential to endorse the leadership and support capabilities of those functioning on gender and food and nutrition security, so that they may push for organizational change and take part in meaningful discourse with international organizations, rights authorities and private-sector players and within policy advocacy domain including their own movements and associations.
7.6.1 Enhancing Food Security through Women Empowerment

Women farmers’ contribution to the food security and climate resilient agricultural practices are the way forward for the future generation to define agriculture in the country. Marginalized women would gain their due legitimate space in the economic sphere through land rights when it is defined as livelihood means. This field observation and analysis reveals that while large proportion of population need land, the landed population, which comprises largely of marginal and small farmers are struggling to meet the growing pressure of water depletion, fluctuations in rainfall, increase in inputs cost in agriculture and uncertain price market for their produce. Despite of all these struggles, land is considered as key economic base for rural livelihoods.

Further, while the rural livelihood programmes needs to be linked with Women Farmers Collectives through providing scope for women’s participation in improving the lands under their possession along with maintaining commons and its management needs to be brought under the ambit of local governance where women have access to representation. The recognition of women as farmers and their representation would bring them into the public process of re-distribution and maintenance of resources for common good as well as developing their private enterprises.

Strategies intended at empowering women should focus on both their practical gender requirements as well as their deliberate gender needs. The following strategies can be recommended. Encouraging rural women’s contribution in decision-making and management, including through affirmative action, and sustenance for women’s organizations, labour unions or other organizations including civil society groups endorsing rural women’s rights; increasing informal women’s groups in rural areas would be a step toward intensifying their empowerment as this would assist better mobility outside the home and their access to property. Women must be given practice in decision-making power, such as participatory workforce and budget organization.

7.6.2 Areas for Further Research

It is significant to carry out gender-aware studies of the existing situation in terms of food and nutrition insecurity, to gain a deep insight of the gendered financial, societal and cultural aspects. Research should be carried out not only to focus on gaps but also to hypothesize which strategies and practices are effective and why, towards the
reaching an understanding of a gender-just foresight of food and nutrition security. There will be a need to perform high quality research studies to strengthen knowledge of contextual realities, such as the gendered inferences of global macro-economic transformations, on land and property ownership rights. A higher level of research, education and activities like seminars, extension lectures could work for greater involvement of women in the management of intensifying decision-making power of women in the society.

7.6.3 Policy Recommendations

There needs to be a gender just policy on land rights, which would eliminate inequitable provisions in inheritance and ownership rules, making women equivalent beneficiaries in land and property inheritance, particularly matrimonial property rights, as also a guarantee towards efficient monitoring and execution through Gender Just Land Rights Policy in which sensitization of land administrators and modification of forms and measures and so on are followed. Guarantee convergence in accessing entitlements to other relevant resources *inter alia* credit, inputs, newer farm techniques, association with service and marketing activities, and extension services regardless of land title. One may also recommend to provide women rightful spaces for engagement, knowledge and backing support to manage and perform their role more effectively on the basis of the findings of the current study. Allocation of sufficient finances by the government for carrying out programs pertaining to agricultural management and revenue generation work. It is essential for state government to organize customized land rights literacy programs along with developing fundamental agricultural skills and farm administration.