CHAPTER I
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Women are almost half of the adult population. They constitute one-third of labour force but consume two-thirds of the world’s working hours and yet earn only one tenth of the income and own only one per cent of world’s property.

An analysis of International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization and National Population Census data was carried out by Dixon (1982) which reveal that women constituted 38 per cent of agricultural labour force in developing countries. For 19 countries of South and South East Asia, Dixon (1982) estimated that 45.3 per cent of agricultural labour force consist of women. According to him this figure, in fact, is an underestimate because of defects in data collection which include under counting of the contribution of unpaid family labour, underestimate of seasonality of women labour and self-reporting bias of the interviewees who are, by and large, menfolk.

The real issue therefore, is more serious, despite their involvement in agriculture work in such a large long magnitude they have not been actively
involved in the main stream of development and there is hardly any appreciation and recognition of their extensive contribution. By and large, they have remained as “invisible workers”.

The prosperity and growth of a nation depend on the status and development of its women as they not only constitute nearly half of its population, but also influence growth of the remaining half of the population. The crucial role of women in agriculture allied occupations and household activities have, however, been under estimated and undervalued.

The multiple roles played and the productive inputs made by women in terms of work hours contributed or equivalent income generated in the family are neither attended nor recorded.

1.2 ROLE OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Women form the critical core input of the development of any economy. They contribute 2/3 of the world’s work hours, produce 50 per cent of world’s food supplies, account for 60 per cent of the work force and contribute up to 30 per cent of the official labour force. A quarter of the households world wide is
headed by women and in the other 1/3 of the households, 50 per cent of the total earnings is contributed by women.¹

The prosperity and balanced development of a country depends upon its women as they not only constitute nearly half of its population but have equally important role along with men in creating a better life for the family. Women play a significant and crucial role in increasing agricultural production by participating in different production and management activities as crop production, livestock production, post harvest operations in addition to their traditional responsibility as home makers etc. But their signal contribution is neither appreciated nor recorded.²

Women continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance. The household is a major centre of work for women. Women’s work in the home can include many different kinds of economic activity, for example, subsistence agriculture, production of goods for trade and keeping accounts for their

¹www.uek.cas.cz/globdem/FT. nasurueen.htm

²Indian Farmer’s Digest, April 2001, p.22.
husband’s business. Time–use statistics considering all work reveal that women spend more of their time working than men in all developed and developing countries except Northern America and Australia. In many developing countries hit by the economic ravages of the 1980s, women especially very poor women are now working 60-90 hours a week in order to maintain their meager living standards of a decade ago.

Women’s share in the labour force increased between 1970 and 1990. It rose to 39 per cent in developed regions and from 12 per cent to 17 per cent in Africa and Asia. Most women are still working in agriculture in much of Africa and Asia. Nearly 80 per cent of economically active women in sub-Saharan Africa and at least half in Asia, except Western Asia are in agriculture.

The role of women in Economic development of our country is equally important as that of man. Rural women have been actively playing various roles in supplementing the family economy. Moreover women are considered to be the conservators of family traditions. Apart from participating in domestic work, she is a partner with the male in productive work in agriculture and allied activities. The rural women are excellent entrepreneurs in agriculture and allied activities. For example, the U.N. commission for Africa reports that in
many parts of Africa, women have played a major role in production of food. It has been estimated that women formed 30-60 per cent of agricultural labour in Africa.

Women are fully engaged in some task or the other which directly or indirectly contributed to the family economy. Mechanization of agriculture, rural development programmes and market oriented economy have accelerated the active participation of rural women at home and also in agricultural and allied activities. Baleill (1975) has reported that the number of women force working in the field was more in southern parts of the country than in the north and even they outnumbered men in some fertile rice growing districts of the south. In addition to this wage labour, most of the women are engaged in supplementary work like dairying, poultry, piggery, weeding, spinning etc. In fact mechanization of agriculture and allied fields has no where either helped or reduced the labour tasks, the rural women were performing. On the other hand it has reduced their leisure and free time, as they are forced to perform the additional tasks which were created by it.

Women dutifully play the role of a mother, wife, daughter-in-law, sister and so on and so forth within the household. She cooks for the household,
The woman cleans, fetches water. Apart from this she also cleans the milch animals, their sheds, milks the cow and supplies the milk to cooperatives and for the needy households. Between 6 to 7 in the morning one can see the farm women in the field after completing their routine household tasks. She returns with a head load of firewood or cow dung for the farm manure or sometimes fodder for the animals. Wherever sericulture is practised the women along with their households go to the field and get the mulberry leaves and feed the silk worms and take care of growth of the cocoons. Wherever vegetables and greens are grown, women tirelessly work in the field in maintaining, plucking, packing and loading them for marketing outside the village. But within the village the women are engaged in even selling the products. Thus it could be observed that, irrespective of the caste and class, almost all the women invariably contribute to welfare of the family. Apart from domestic work, they are also engaged in farming and non-farming activities for the upkeep of the families.

Participation rates in wage labour in Asian agriculture vary with sex, the size of the landholding, and family income. The use of female labour is much more seasonal and the female wages are considerably lower than the male wages on an hourly basis. There is a matching correlation, even stronger, between family income levels and the fate of female labour force participation.
rates; the lower the family income, the higher the rate of female labour force participation. The relationship is much more marked for women than men over almost the entire income range.

The feminization of employment in particular sector is not necessarily associated with genuine improvements in the material and social situation of women. As economics compete against each other under conditions of trade liberalization, a hidden consequence is the phenomenon of women in different countries competing against each other. There are about 200 export processing zones in some 50 countries around the world, employing approximately two million workers. According to UNCTAD, 80 per cent of these workers are women, mostly between 16 to 25 years of age. They work total hours that are 25 per cent more than schedules prevailing in other firms. (Engender for UNIFEM Situational Analysis 1998).

The new economy offers a plethora of opportunities to women. The post-reform period has been associated with growing employment opportunities for women. Labour market in India is undergoing a change in the process due to structural adjustment programmes and the wave of globalization. The features like feminization and informalisation of labour
market are almost universal. A rapidly growing economy offers highly lucrative, more sophisticated and technical employment opportunities, but it also provides work opportunities for the less fortunate, unskilled and uneducated counterparts of the female labour force. Rapid growth always induces more female labour participation. The dawn of liberalization and globalization in India forced the women to take up jobs in industries and tertiary sectors.

1.3 IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON AGRICULTURAL WOMEN IN INDIA

As for as the number of people employed in agriculture at the all-India level, the report of the Planning Commission’s Task force on employment opportunities shows an absolute decline between 1993-1994 and 1999-2000. The situation in the recent past is such that the specific activities or sectors, in which rural workers in general and rural female workers in particular are employed, have already begun to suffer setbacks. During the post-1993 years, the overall employment growth rate for rural people has declined in 13 states, compared to the preceding decade.³

The impact of globalisation on our agrarian sector has worsened the plight of agricultural workers to an alarming degree. The share of agriculture in our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined from 54.56 per cent in 1951-52 to 27.87 per cent in 1999-2000 --- almost a 50 per cent reduction. But the shift of labour force from agriculture to other sectors, as projected by the followers of the World Bank – IMF Model, has not taken place. For, as much as 65 per cent of our workforce is still engaged in agriculture. These limitations are severely affecting the stagnating yields, a very large proportion of marginal, small and semi medium holdings, a high proportion of landless labour households, and highly concentrated and food-oriented cropping system. Indian agriculture would, therefore, be facing serious challenges, both internal and external, in the process of fulfilling WTO commitments.\(^4\)

Despite the services rendered by women in the family and work place, they constitute nearly 70 per cent of the world’s poor and more than 65 per cent of the illiterates (1995). To quote the World Bank, “Women as a group are among the poorest of the world’s poor”. The discrimination and marginal treatment of women inflicts permanent disparity in terms of health, knowledge, knowledge, knowledge.\(^4\)

\(^4\)http://pd.cpim.org/2002/nov10/11102002_globalisation.htm
skills and aspirations. They are relegated to the status of secondary members in the family and backward citizens in the society.

To assess the impact of globalization on women, we need first to have an understanding of the position of women in the Indian setting. Table 1 gives certain self-revealing demographic statistics of women in India.

**TABLE 1.1**

**TREND IN FEMALE POPULATION, DEPENDENCY RATIO AND LITERACY RATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female Population (million)</th>
<th>Sex Ratio</th>
<th>Dependency Ratio</th>
<th>Literacy Rate (per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>39.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>82.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India 2001, T.N. Provisional Population Totals, Directorate of Census Operation, Tamil Nadu.

N.A – Not Available

The sex ratio, dependency ratio and literacy rate are indicators of human development. The literacy rate in females is still 39.29 per cent as against 64.13 per cent in males, indicating wide disparity in male-female education.
Household Employment of Women

At the household level, women perform multiple tasks from nursing the children, managing home affairs, developing human resources in terms of health, education, to inculcation of values and attitudes to build the family. As home-makers women spend 10-12 hours per day doing household chores including fetching of water, gathering of fuel and collecting fodder (1988).

It can be concluded that the informal sector is the asylum for the women labour force in India. Hence it is a sector of great economic significance and its proper recognition and development is the effective way of reducing poverty in India. Women thus constitute a significant proportion of the labour in the informal sector, particularly in agriculture. The impact of globalisation on the peasant women of India can be understood by examining specific cases.

Gender Patterns:

(a) Occupation

A cursory glance at the occupational composition of female work force shows that a larger proportion of women workers are employed in agriculture mainly as agricultural labourers.
(b) Enterprise

The pattern of crop sector employment across crop and farm size groups revealed that out of the total mandays actually spent in various farming operations, 74 per cent is accounted for by females and 72 per cent by hired female labour. This implies an increasing feminisation of farm labour that proportionately increases with larger and more commercialized crop enterprises. In more income-generating activities like the livestock sector, share of males (41-64 per cent) is higher in agriculturally less developed regions as compared to that (27-47 per cent) in agriculturally more developed regions (2001).

(c) Operations undertaken

As per the 1991 census, 38 per cent of agricultural labourers, 29 per cent of livestock and forest dwellers and 20 per cent of cultivators are women. About 50-90 per cent of the agricultural operations are carried out by women only. In pulse production, plantation crops and coir industries 30-80 per cent of various operations are normally done by women workers (1995). It is said that in Asian agriculture, women work as hired agricultural labourers or unpaid
family workers and contribute between 10 and 50 per cent of labour force for various crops (2000).

(d) Wages

Women suffer from feminisation of wages. Statistically women receive 10-60 per cent less wages than that of men for the same quantum of or more work (1993). Rural women’s earnings are only 10 per cent of those of their male counterparts for the same work done (1992). The wage differentials reflect the variations in productivity due to gender specific occupations and pattern of participation in farm operations. Generally male workers participate more in high wage operations like ploughing and land preparation, female workers in more low wage operations like transplantation and weeding (1998).

In paddy cultivation, mechanization of operations like weeding, combined operation of harvesting, threshing and winnowing and shelling affected women labour and cautioned of labour displacement in the long run (Seema and Malaviya, 1991). As polluting jobs, harvesting and winnowing

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5 www.uek.cas.cz/GlobDEM/ft-nasurudeen.htm
of paddy were reserved for Scheduled Castes in villages where poverty was acute women from backward castes also harvested (Rajula, 2001)

**Singh et. Al.** (1991) observed the introduction of machines for land preparation, weeding and interculture disemployed female labour of lower castes that it reduced the drudgery and work load of women in upper and intermediate castes. However the improved tools and equipments need better skills and training. Due to the pre-occupation with home management activities like procuring fuel, fodder etc. women are hardly able to spare time to improve their skills.

The continuing environmental degradation due to the free play of multinational corporations affect all human lives and has more direct impact on women. The health and livelihood of women particularly the poor are threatened by pollution and toxic wastes, large scale deforestation, depletion of soil, coastal and marine resources.

It is now widely recognized that the promotion of economic liberalization and market-oriented growth, particularly in the south have resulted in greater inequalities in income and assets between and within countries. The feminization of the labour force and the feminization of poverty
are terms which have been used to describe the ways in which global economic changes and market-led growth have influenced women.

1.4 LABOUR PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN TAMILNADU AGRICULTURE

The agricultural economy of the Tamil Nadu State is dominated by food grains production. Various studies on Female participation state that a minimum of 160 and maximum of 290 work days are spent by farm women in the fields as agriculture occupies an important place in the State economy.

The geographical area of Tamil Nadu state is 1.2 crore hectares. The same has been classified according to different types of land.
### TABLE 1.2

DISTRICT – WISE CONTRIBUTION TO NET AREA SOWN – 2011-2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. No (1)</th>
<th>District (2)</th>
<th>Net area sown (In Hectares) (3)</th>
<th>Percentage of Net Area Sown to Geographical area of the District (4)</th>
<th>Total net (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kancheepuram</td>
<td>160090</td>
<td>3601</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Thiruvallur</td>
<td>133648</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Cuddalore</td>
<td>230679</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Villupuram</td>
<td>341035</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Vellore</td>
<td>215916</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Thiruvannamalai</td>
<td>205316</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>259267</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Namakkal</td>
<td>195048</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Dharmapuri</td>
<td>392652</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Coimbatore</td>
<td>328267</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Erode</td>
<td>309252</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Thiruchirapalli</td>
<td>184179</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Karur</td>
<td>103971</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Perambalur</td>
<td>215733</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Pudukkottai</td>
<td>165586</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Thanjavur</td>
<td>203175</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Thiruvarur</td>
<td>152460</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Nagapattinam</td>
<td>151774</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>152792</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Theni</td>
<td>113238</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Dindigul</td>
<td>291373</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
<td>183651</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Virudhunagar</td>
<td>149620</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>124323</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Thirunelveli</td>
<td>157482</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Thoothukudi</td>
<td>185048</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>The Nilgiris</td>
<td>77393</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Kanniyakumari</td>
<td>81408</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5464376</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.tn.gov.in/deptst/glance.htm
The average area under paddy has increased from 35 percent of the gross cropped area in 1961-62 to 42 percent in 2011-2012. Paddy is the principal crop of the State and nearly half of the cropped area is used for it. Due to monsoon failure in certain part of the state, the gross cropped area has slightly decreased. Still it constitutes 54 percent of the total area. Female participation in the State varies from district to district and from region to region. It also depends on the income earning opportunities of families, domination of caste, socio-economic and cultural factors. Tanjavur district is considered to be the treasury of grains and almost the entire cropped area is occupied by paddy. In North and South Arcot districts the percentage of area under paddy in proportion to the total area under food grains is 89 per cent and 78 per cent respectively.

Tamil Nadu (2848 kg/ha) stands third next to Punjab (3842 kg/ha) and Haryana 2874(kg/ha) at the all India level of production. Rice production showed an upward trend in the eighties in Tamil Nadu and it was comparatively higher than the all India level. Similarly women’s participation also has shown a higher trend during this period. In some regions the use of technology has displaced women’s labour and in some regions it has increased women’s participation due to extensive use of land.
Women are half of the sky, half of the earth, half of the blood and half of the soul of the society. No one can deny this fact, because women are indeed a pivot around whom the family, society and humanity move. Still their crucial role in agriculture should not obscure the farm women’s primary functions as wives, mothers and home makers. Traditionally women had no definite decision-making role in a majority of family affairs because of the dominance of male members in the rural milieu. “When Women move forward the family moves, the village moves, and the nation moves”. These words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru are often repeated because it is an accepted fact that only when women are in the main stream of progress can any economic and social development be meaningful. Women’s employment is the need of the hour in the country. Employment is a shield for women to escape from all social evils. Employment gives economic status and it paves the way for social status. The role of women either in industry or in agriculture has increased in a developing country like India because of the violence and poverty commonly faced by their male counterparts. In rural India, the majority of men feel that the woman’s earnings are inevitably indispensable for making both ends meet.

Since human resources in an economy constitute a significant input in the production process of goods and services the study of human resources
especially of women, their quality of work and their problems is of immense importance in manpower planning in a developing country like India. Knowledge about the working of women is more crucial in rural economy of India where the earnings of women are indispensable to the poverty ridden people.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women contribute a lot under several odds. Women and men often develop different agricultural expertise and knowledge, and women play important roles in both rice production and post harvest activities. They make up nearly 50 per cent of the world’s population, comprise 33 per cent of the official labour force, perform about 70 per cent of all working hours, receive 10 per cent of world’s income and own even less than one per cent of world’s property. The statistics of these hard facts justify the validity of a study that focuses on women’s condition today. Many activities of women in economically gainful work are either given no recognition or not properly represented in statistical data. As a matter of fact neither their domestic work is economically evaluated nor is their participation in agricultural and non-agricultural activities linked to production. One of the most glaring facts which
women have to confront today is the discrimination which accompanies them from the time of recruitment. Women are considered second class and also there is glaring discrimination in their wages.\textsuperscript{6}

The present study attempts to throw light on the contribution of women in agriculture. In India majority of the population depends on agriculture for livelihood. As such the involvement of women is crucial in building up the household sector. This study attempts to assess the role and participation of women in various farm activities, their contribution to household matters, their role in decision-making, and the problems they face apart from various suggestions and policy measures. It would also help the planners and policy makers in programming measures to solve the problems faced by women and outline the various means to empower them.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of agricultural women labourers and pattern of distribution of income and expenditure.
2. To analyse the pattern of agricultural women labourers participation in agricultural production viz paddy cultivation.
3. To study the sex and wage discrimination through job segmentation in agriculture.
4. To analyse the supply responsiveness and women labour absorption in paddy cultivation.
5. To study the constraints faced by agricultural women labourers in the study area and
6. To suggest measurers for improving the economic conditions of farm women and strengthen agriculture sector.
1.7 HYPOTHESES

1. There is no difference in male and female participation in paddy cultivation.

2. Annual income of the farm households is independent of their agricultural income.

3. The annual income of the farm households does not depend on the age of the female labourers.

4. Size of the family does not influence the annual income of the farm households.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is based on survey method by direct personal interview with a well designed schedule. The respondents did not maintain adequate farm records and accounts and they were able to furnish the particulars in view of long association with farming activities. Therefore, it suffers from a certain degree of recall bias. The study is only about one district as such the findings cannot be generalized for the state as a whole.
1.9 CHAPTER SCHEME

The report of the present study has been organized and presented in seven chapters.

Chapter I introduces the subject and deals with the role of women in economic development, impact of globalization on agricultural women in India, labour participation of women in Tamilnadu agriculture, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypotheses, limitations of the study and chapter scheme.

Chapter II reviews the earlier studies and concepts relating to farm women and their participation.

Chapter III presents methodology and profile of the study area.

Chapter IV analyses the socio-economic conditions of agricultural women labourers of family income on the level of living of the sample population and their familial profile and their empowerment.

Chapter V examines the employment pattern of agricultural women labourers participation in paddy cultivation.
Chapter VI examines sex and wage discrimination and women labour absorption in paddy cultivation.

Chapter VII presents a summary of the findings, the results arrived at and the suggestions and policy implication made in the context of the research findings.