REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

Lilly. P. V. “Role of women in agriculture- A case study of female agricultural labourers in palakkad district of Kerala ” Thesis. Department of Economics, Dr. John Matthai Centre Thrissur , University of Calicut, 2000
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Review of Literature

In the developing economies of the world, women's role in economic activity especially in agriculture assumes and added dimension with the recognition that an enhancement of their work participation has implications for the achievement of overall development and socio-economic goals. There are numerous studies conducted in social sciences, which demonstrate clearly that the gender issues have distinctly strong spatial and regional dimension. There is a general awakening about the problems that are specific to women. In an agrarian economy like ours where social and economic hierarchy prevails, women are deprived of equal position. They are treated as inferior to men. The available literature deals with various aspects of women who are engaged in agriculture as labourers. Issues addressed include women labourers and their status - education, employment, wages, Income and standard of living, participation in social and political activities. This section is divided into different categories based on various aspects related to female agricultural labourers.
2.1.1 Women in Agriculture and Economic Development

Boserup (1970), Government of India (1975), Agarwal (1981), and IRRI (1985) highlighted the position and role played by female labourers. They studied about the economic contributions of these labourers. There is feminisation in agriculture and the share of female labourers are significant in developing countries and their economic resources is an addition to family income. Mazumdar (1975) showed the traditional classification of some jobs as the monopoly of women and also analysed the role of female agricultural labourers in economic development.

Das (1976) and Sethi (1982) noticed the role of women in agriculture. Sethi analyses the hours of work performed by the female labourers and also the conditions of labour. At the same time, Das stated that the income earned through work pushes the power and status of the females in a society. They convinced the fact that working women furnishes economic development and increases the status of women.

Acharya and Parker (1983) reported the rising importance and growth of female agricultural labourers.
This study also highlighted the infusion of mechanization and its effect upon the level of employment in agriculture particularly on female labourers. Mencher (1984) focuses on different roles of both sex and traced women as labourers in the traditional rice growing regions of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In another study (1985) she provided the wide range in female work participation and its implications in the development strategy.

Wanshi and Kapse (1985) tried to find out the contribution of female workers in the farm sector. The participation rate of females is high in Una district of Himachal Pradesh. Fruzzetti (1985) studied the role of rural women in a farming community. She also noticed the importance of female employment in agriculture, provides income and better standard of living to the workers.

In their studies, Marothia and Sharma (1985) and Desai and Patel (1985) emphasized the role of working women in agriculture. The first one investigated the contribution and participation rate of female labourers in agriculture in rice farming systems of Chattisgarh region. At the same time Kelkar (1985) examined the relationship between women's work in subsistence agriculture and rural development strategies. In Telangana, Volimiheni (1987)
examined Socio-economic status and the level of women's participation and identified the jobs available for women in agriculture. She also assessed the role of rural women in economic development.


Laxmi Devi (1988), Saradamoni (1989) and Singh et al. (1988) noticed the growth and importance of women in agriculture. They stated that most of the rural women become agricultural labourers and emphasised the role of women in agriculture. At the same time Satapathy (1989) conducted a study on the role of women in agriculture.

Pradhan (1990), Nambiar (1992) and Varma (1992) and Roy (1993) analysed the proportion and the importance of female agricultural labourers. They provides income to the family. The economic resources they get will
determine the socio-economic status of the labourers. They analysed the socio-economic condition of these labourers. Umadevi (1994) showed the participation rate of female labourers in agriculture and discussed about the wage condition and the economic role they played in development.

The Human Development Report (1995) identified the importance and role played by the female labourers in unorganised sector. It made a clear vision about the share of income and their economic contribution. The rural female labourers were engaged in unorganised sector especially in agriculture.

Jain (1996) argued that agricultural operations especially weeding and harvesting are the main wage earning occupation for women agricultural labourers in many parts of India. This study gives the awareness that the feminisation in agriculture is important and the rural female labourers are mostly engaged in agricultural and allied activities.

It is pointed out the significance of female labourers and feminisation in agriculture recommended by Chackacherry (1997) and Banerjee (1997). They analysed
the level of female labourers in agriculture and highlighted their role, which is important and brings development to the economy.

2.1.2 Women Participation in Agriculture

Chawdhari and Sharma (1961) made an attempt to analyse and reported about the nature of participation of female labour force in agriculture. The participation rate is an increased rate, but the employment opportunities provided to the females is in a decreased rate. Gulati (1975, 1984) and Nath (1970) observed the general decrease in female labour force participation over the period 1961-1981. The employment rate decreased and the nature of cropping pattern also helps to decrease the participation rate.

Ram (1969) attempted to analyse on the changing trends of women’s employment in agriculture and non-agriculture sector. The employment opportunities for women especially in rural economy is in agriculture. He found out that most of the women labourers, due to lack of education and skill, depends mostly upon the agriculture sector. The census conducted by the Government of India (1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991) aimed at investigating the
participation rates of female labourers in agriculture and in other sectors at national, state and local levels.

Mukerji (1970) who has identified and interpreted the spatial pattern of the varying extents of female participation in rural agriculture labour in Andhra Pradesh. It reveals that there is a striking concentration of rural female agricultural labour in Andhra Pradesh and discussed the main factors, which are responsible for the concentration of these labourers in Andhra Pradesh. An evaluation, which was made by Government of India (1974) on the level of status of women. The level of employment opportunities shows the level of income and status of female workers. The unemployment rate is high among female workers than male workers especially in agriculture sector.

Reddy (1975) commenting on the paper of Gulati, explains rural female participation rates in terms of certain agricultural factors such as irrigated area, average annual rainfall, crops grown and agriculture labor productivity to bring out the inter regional variations in female participation rates in India. Lal (1976) finds the average and operation wise female labour employment, which clearly supports the prevailing view that in India the supply of
labour is wage responsive. The real wage in agriculture sector is widely depends on the growth and productivity of agriculture.

Bardhan (1977, 1989) and Banerjee (1989) made the contention in their study that the nature and dimension of female labour force participation in the country pointed to the fact that a very large proportion of the workers turned as agricultural labourers. The proportion of female labourers in agriculture is increasing, which indicates their poverty and low standard of living. Agriculture provides employment to the rural females. The level of unemployment shows the level of living, poverty and indebtedness. Dixon (1978) finds the tension between the low economic status which requires women to engage in economically productive activities outside the home. This study also stated that the economic condition will push the females to work and earn livelihood to their family.

Chopra (1979) found out the variations in the incidence of cultivators, agricultural labourers and female workers in three agro-climate zones over three census years. In 1951, 1961 and 1971, she made an attempt to find out the interregional variations in rural India. The increase in the proportion of cultivators is less than that of agricultural
labourers. The female agriculture labourers' growth is significant in 1951 and 1961. Mitra et al. (1980) observed the shifts in occupational participation from 1961 to 1971. This study also analysed the status of females in the rural society.

Another work which was provided by Gadre and Mahalle (1985) shows that, between 1956-57 and 1980-81, the number of male farm family workers per hectares decreased by 22 per cent but females increased by 20 per cent. The main reason for this was due to the shift away from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations among men. In 1981, International Labour organization (1981) focused their study with ARTEP on women participation and labour force in India. In rural areas, the participation rate showed an increasing trend especially in unorganised sector like agriculture. Deere and Leal (1982) observed the importance of female agricultural labourers. There is an increasing trend in the participation of females in agriculture. The participation of females in agriculture is sensitive to the range of activities included as a part of agricultural production.

In her study, Sen (1983) examined the importance of women in agriculture sector. Most of them
were worked as agricultural labourers. She also worked out the incidence of regional variations and the level of employment. She measures the incidence as the proportion of female agricultural labourers in the total rural female population. Dutta and Sharma (1985) analyses the organizational character of peasant households induces more female labour participation is agriculture. This study conducted in Ranchi district of Bihar and concluded that the contribution of female labourers in agriculture is significant. Krishnamurthy (1984) discussed the male as well as female agricultural labourers' participation rates on the basis of 1971 and 1981 census and National sample survey. In this study, the author raised two questions: Is there any evidence of a relative shift away from agriculture sector and any change in the participation rate?

Saikia (1985) identified the work participation of female labourers in Assam state. The participation of females in agriculture sector is due to economic compulsion and the level of poverty. This study aimed at finding out the important factors like the effect of cropping pattern, cropping intensity, economic conditions of labourers, which influenced the work participation of female agricultural labourers. Arunachalam (1985) observed that in hill regions of North India and Assam, the female workers out numbered
male workers in agriculture. It also analysed the employment and participation rate of female labourers in agriculture.

Banerjee (1985) argues that there is a declining trend in participation of female labourers in agriculture. It is also aimed to investigate the reason, which affect the declining trend of participation and there is loss of employment in India and Indian states. In most of the Indian states show a declining trend of employment in agriculture.

Chattopadhyay (1986) discussed the participation rate of female labourers in agriculture, type of farming activities, wages and system of payment through data collected from agricultural casual labourers of 12 villages of Sriniketan, West Bengal during 1976-77. This study tried to find out the various explanations for the declining trend in the participation of females.

Duvvury (1987) examines the participation of women in work force, trend in female participation rate over time and international differences in female work participation rate through a survey of existing literature. This study analysed the work participation of women

Swarnikar (1988) observed women participation in rural economy and the role of female agricultural labourers in Madhya Pradesh. It also tried to analyse their growth and the conditions in the rural economy. Jose (1989) and Acharya and Panwalker (1989) analysed the fact that a very large proportion of the women workers belong to the category of unskilled workers who offer themselves for wage employment is low paying occupations such as agricultural labourers and domestic labour.

Sundaram (1989) also enlightened the role of women in agriculture. It also analysed the nature and character of these labourers on the basis of different census years. The important fact to note that there is a declining trend in female labour participation in agriculture during various years. Bhat (1989) Sapru (1989) and Nagaraj (1989) attempted to understand the participation rate of females in agriculture as labourers. Sapru analysed the conditions of female agricultural labourers of south Bengal. Chavannavar (1990) also analysed the participation rate of
females in agriculture. The role played by female labourers in agriculture is very important than their men folk.

Gulati (1991) observed that the overall decline in female work participation rates in Kerala is partially a statistical illusion that is a reflection of the failure of enumerating agencies. There has been little exhaustive work done to establish the nature and causes of declining trends in female work participation in Kerala. Tripathi (1991) is also analysed the participation rate of females in agriculture as labourers.

Visaria and Unni (1992) tried to find out the importance and the participation rate of agricultural labourers. Visaria and Unni analysed the status of self-employed women and their role in human resource development. Eapen (1994) stressed the changing structure of the work force in Kerala. This study is also analysed the growth of female agricultural labourers in different districts of Kerala.

Jayasree (1994) recorded the rate of workers (89.5 per cent) engaged in unorganised sector in 1981. Of course, 82.3 per cent are engaged in agriculture and allied occupations. Where as only 13.3 per cent of the female
workers are employed in organized sectors of the labour market. The female labourers who are engaged in agriculture, contributes income to their family. Devaki Devi (1994) analysed the participation of women in agriculture. This study noted the fact that the female agricultural labourers are more concentrated in developing countries including Asia.

Jha (1995), Das and Vijay Kumar (1995) and Banerjee (1995) observed the growth and the importance of women labour participation in agriculture. On the basis of their study, they clearly stated that the increasing role of female labourers' is necessary to provide economic resources and the livelihood to their family members. Dewan (1995) confirmed with the increasing level of female work participation in the economy. The female participation rate changes according to the following factors. The work participation rate increases as poverty increases and declines with increase in household income and male earnings. The female participation is on the basis of economic compulsion. Kabir and Krishnan (1996) studied the reasons for increasing agricultural labourers in Malabar region of Kerala.
Agarwal (1997) made an attempt to study the role of women in agriculture. The participation rate of women in agriculture is greater than male and also noticed the status of female workers. Unni (1997) studied the position of women workers in agriculture. This study is also analysed the wages of these labourers and found that female labourers who entered into work force especially in agriculture as labourers is due to their poverty and indebtedness. Nirmala and Bhat (1999) also studied and analysed the female work participation in the emerging labour market in India. This study also highlighted the fact that there is female concentration in the agricultural sector and there is an increasing trend in the participation rates of women labourers.

2.1.3 Women and Low Status

Government of India (1954) reported an intensive survey on the basis of employment, wages and living levels of the agricultural labourers. Gupta (1960) also analysed the growth of agricultural labourers’ and reported that the wages which is given to the labourers and ultimately the level of indebtedness makes them always in vicious circle of poverty.
Mamoria (1969) aimed at to find out the main problems confronted by female as well as male agricultural labourers. This study also tried to find out the problems like low wages, unemployment, low income, poverty and indebtedness. Reserve Bank of India (1971-72) focused on rural indebtedness, its sources and purposes. This study stated that the rural indebtedness is the sign of low status of the labour households in the society.

In various years, government of India (1973, 1975, 1976, 1978 and 1983), Mongia (1976) conducted study on the different aspects of agricultural labourers. The first study concentrated on their indebtedness, income, consumption expenditure and employment. The second study analysed the labour force that are engaged in agriculture and their status in the society. The level of employment, wages and earnings and standard of living are also discussed in this study.

Bardhan and Rudra (1980) made the contention in their study that the wage rate varies with the sex of the labourer. Female labourers usually get a lower rate. Mencher and Saradamoni (1982) examined the main problems faced by the female labourers in agriculture. Female labourers further faced the health hazards posed by
long hours of work in muddy water with the risk of parasitic infection, especially in rice growing areas. These aspects of female labourers are also discussed by Saradamani (1983).

Hara Gopal, Nagashwar Rao and Swamy (1984), Jha (1984) and Sharma (1984) worked on the problems of poor rural labourers who engaged in agriculture. The main problems confronted by the agricultural labourers are low earnings, poverty and indebtedness. Hara Gopal et al. analysed the problems with special reference to agricultural labourers in Andhra Pradesh. Chatterjee (1984), Gupta and Sen (1984), Government of India (1988) and Raj (1988) aimed at to find out the difficulties faced by women labourers. The rural women workers have to bear double work load by performing household duties and economic activities. They find it difficult to cope with these double duties. The contribution made by these workers to their family is significant.

The World Labour Report (1984) also conducted a study on the features of agricultural rural poor and their income. The standard of living, employment and wages are in a lowest position. Agarwal (1985) in her study reveals the fact that the agricultural labourers who are the bulk of women workers in agricultural sector come from a
traditionally low social status. These women workers are mostly illiterate and have to face irregular employment, heavy burden and exploitation.

Jain (1985) discussed about female work participation rates, which vary directly with increase in poverty. Women's employment has a direct influence on economic prosperity. Government of Kerala (1985) and Joshi (1985) also emphasized the problems of female labourers and their family. Jain and Nayar (1985), Jhurani (1985) and Vedantam (1985) focused their attention on women, who are victimised in matters of paucity of land, low level of employment and other problems. The World Labour Report (1985) and Agarwal (1985) made an attempt on the problems of female labourers and these studies concluded the fact that the socio-economic conditions of female agricultural labourers were low and they are the most vulnerable section of the unorganised sector.

In their study, Bandopadhyay (1986) investigated the participation of female labourers in agriculture. But at the same time, they analysed the difficulties confronted by the female labourers and most of them were below the poverty line. The nexus of landlessness, growth and poverty has thus assumed significant importance. The same point
is also advocated and investigated by Kurian (1987) and Vaidyananthan (1986) and concluded that the level of living of these labourers were insecure and precarious.


Bhatt (1989) find out the major problems faced by the rural female labourers. International Labour Organisation (1995) and Government of India (1995) conducted study on the role played by the female labourers in agriculture. At the same time, they focused their attention on the problems like unemployment, poverty and low income of these labourers.
The most important problem faced by female agricultural labourers in India is the vicious circle of poverty. This point has been stated and analysed by Kannan (1995), Gulati (1995), Krishnaji (1995) and Chatterjee and Kundu (1997). Kannan identified the fact that the wage rates of these labourers in Kerala are consistently higher than other Indian states except the agriculturally prosperous state of Punjab and Harayana. These studies also noticed the socio-economic backwardness and the poverty of the rural labourers.

Jhabvala (1997) identified the unorganised sector workers who constitute nearly 93 per cent of the workforce, who live and work in the most precarious conditions often they work at back breaking labour for a wage that does not even fetch them two square meals a day. Mazumdar (1997) and Manuja Devi (1997) studied the importance of female agricultural labourers especially in rural areas. The level of earning reflects the incidence of under employment or surplus labour in agriculture. The level of earning will affect their standard of living and ultimately socio-economic status of the poor rural workers.

Gulați (1981) noticed that some tasks are done exclusively by women and are often back breaking and low
paying. Gaiha (1981) analysed the risk of poverty and finds that there is a tendency of poverty, which is stronger in village households. In these households women entered into workforce as a labourer is essentially as a result of poverty and economic compulsion. Rajula Devi (1986) also stated that the proportion of women working as agricultural labourers has gone up with the decline in opportunities in traditional industries and services. Mathew (1985) examined broad theoretical aspects of employment, emerging trends in structure of women's employment in Kerala and gender based exploitation in a changing environmental and institutional framework. The bulk of female employment is in unorganised sectors and female agricultural labourers were still the prominent segment in the economy.

Patel (1988) argues that economic development has resulted in marginalisation of women from the work force causing large number of them to seek employment in the unorganised sectors. The economic compulsion and level of poverty compels them to enter even in low paid employment as agricultural labourers. Poonam S. Chauhan (1996) tried to analyse the trend of Indian labour force that is in unorganised sectors. The study also revealed the fact that most of the workers who engaged in unorganised
sectors are women. Kulkarni (1997) studied the position of female agricultural labourers on the basis of their role especially in rural sector, their employment and work. Most of the rural females were depended upon agricultural employment and work.

2.1.4 Employment and Unemployment

International Labour Organisation (1963) conducted a study primarily on women in paid employment in India. This also concentrated in their traditional avenues of employment and also provides the figures of female workers including in agriculture. At the same time, Mencher (1980) found that landowners preferred to employ women labourers than men workers. She estimated that in Palakkad, on an average, used women for 417 hours per acre of wetland per crop season.

Mamoria (1981) discussed about the level of employment in agriculture and presented percentage distribution of female agricultural labourers in India. This study also mentioned about the fixation of working hours in a day in agriculture. The changes in agricultural employment has been noticed by Ghosh and Mukhopadhyay (1984) and stated that the change in cropping pattern, the
participation rate and employment opportunities allotted to females is also changed. There is a declining trend in the level of female employment in agriculture.

Panghal and Rame (1985) and Sen (1985) noticed the worse conditions of female labourers in terms of employment opportunities. Panghal et al. mainly concentrated their study on women labour and their employment pattern with special reference to Haryana agriculture sector. At the same time, Jaiswal and Singh (1985) observed the condition of rural female labourers and reported that the status of these labourers were very low due to low wages and income and reduction in employment opportunities in agriculture.

Malik and Giri (1986) aimed at to find out the economic aspects of employment of female labourers in agriculture. In their study, Daugat and Yadav (1985) covers 180 land holdings from nine villages of Karjal Tehsil in Ahmad Nagar. Accordingly, it shows that the average per hectare, labour use for crop production was 23 days for a male and 12 days for a female. At the same time, Grewal (1985) pointed out that the level of employment is low for scheduled caste female agricultural labourers. This study
covers 120 scheduled caste workers from six villages in two blocks of Sangrur district during 1984 – 85.

Vaidyanathan (1986) conducted a study on the average of full days worked in agricultural operation and reported a decline in employment between 1964–65 and 1974–75 for all sections of the population. The employment will determine their status in the society. Dantwala et al. (1986) discussed the changes in employment and working conditions of rural poor women and reported that the cropping pattern will affect the level of employment in agriculture.

Mies (1987) made an attempt to examined the difference between income and expenditure for consumption caused mainly by the low wages and insufficient and irregular employment of women and men through out the year. This clearly pointed out the incidence of poverty among the agricultural labourers and their family. Bhalla (1988) and Singh et al. (1988) studied the employment pattern of women, on farm and household work. At the same time Nayyar (1989) surveyed the trends of employment in agriculture during 1971–81 in Punjab and Haryana. The study also reveals that there is a declining trend in female employment.
Fatima (1991) dealt with the plight of rural agricultural women labourers and stated that the condition of rural women is depends upon the level of employment opportunities available to them. Unni (1992) analysed the trends of employment among the female workers in agriculture during 1961 to 1988, on the basis of various secondary data sources. During these years, there is an increasing trend in casualisation especially among female labourers. This study also tried to assess the position of agricultural labourers and reported the changes occurred in the level of employment of women in agriculture.

Acharya (1993) Gopalan (1995) and Jha (1997) focused on women and employment in agriculture. The bulk of employment in agriculture to women is depends upon the extensive crop cultivation especially the rice cultivation. This also discussed the nature and level of employment available to them. They also made the aim of their study to reveal the importance of agriculture in order to provide employment to the poor females in rural India.

Gulati (1976) studied about unemployment problem among females in India, which shows that though there is a wide interstate difference in the level of unemployment, male and female levels Co-vary together.
The group of female labourers in agriculture is the worst among rural labourers who confronted the problems of poverty and high incidence of unemployment. Acharya and Mathrani (1991) stated that in most of the states in India the incidence of unemployment is higher among women workers compared to men workers. The days of employment available to women workers shows a declining trend and there is a change in sectoral employment, which automatically increases the problem of unemployment among the female agricultural labourers.

2.1.5 Impact of Technology on Employment and Income

Billings and Singh (1970) and Chakravarthy and Tiwari (1979) emphasized the fact that with the economic development of an agricultural area, the participation of farm work by women declines. The economic development entails the introduction of machinery. They analysed the economic effects of mechanisation on female labourers of Punjab and Haryana.

Mies (1980) has recorded the removal of women from their means of production and from their productive function by the introduction of new technology in West Godawari district. Sen (1982) reflected on the impact of
green revolution on female labourers. Based on Kerala study, Kala (1982) and Srivastava (1983) observed that it is almost a taboo for women to handle any of the modern labour saving devices. Jobs performed by women are mainly menial. Labour displacement character of even simple technologies affects the women most because of their lack of education and skill.

Agarwal (1985) reviews work efficiency of male and female labourers in agricultural tasks, relative wage rates, implications of agricultural modernization for rural women and schemes for improving their economic status. Joshi and Alshi (1985) analysed the impact of the introduction of high yielding variety and stated that it is one of the important factor, which has increased the agricultural production and created employment opportunities. However, Pant (1985) observed the effect of modernization in agriculture by transferring traditional farm operations to machines poses yet another threat to rural female workers.

Ramesh et al. (1985) and Ray et al. (1985) studied and evaluated the impact of technological changes in agriculture and its impact on the economic status of agricultural labourers. United Nations (1986) focused on the decline in employment and it has been associated with
the introduction of new technology in agriculture and in Asian regions, the decline in employment appears to have been concentrated on women.

Duvvury (1988) analysed the women's participation in labour force. It also focused on the impact of technical change on women in agriculture. Due to mechanization, there is a decline in employment. Punjabi and Sadhu (1988) and Punia (1988) examined the role of women in agriculture and analysed the role of national development approaches and their impact on women. Chen (1989) and Sinha (1993) observed the displacement of women from agriculture, where the high yielding variety package of inputs especially chemical fertilisers and weedicides and mechanization are adopted. The technological development in agriculture sector shows the removal of female unskilled labour, which brings progress with pauperisation.

2.1.6 Women Labour and Wage Discrimination

The government of India (1960), Bhalla (1974) and Parthasarathy and Rao (1975) tried to reveal the complexity of wage structure, which existed in agriculture sector and rightly pointed out that there is differences in
wages by sex and operation wise in different regions. Andippan (1980) observed the process of wage fixation in different states of India. The government appointed wage boards and other agencies responsible for fixing minimum wage scales for men and women.

Jose (1980) analysed and developed the fact that women comprised a significant proportion of the agricultural labour. He tried to find out the wages of agricultural labourers in different Indian states in real and money terms. Panikar and Soman (1984) analysed the wages and status of female labourers in Kerala. Rao (1985) also analysed the wages of female labourers and their involvement in activities. This study also realized the relation between the education and development.

Bergmann (1984) analysed the conditions of agricultural labourers in Kerala on the basis of sex. This study mainly with reference to Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. It also analysed the Agrarian Reform and its impact on workers. Subha Rao and Reddy (1987) focused on wage differentials between male and female farm workers in Andhra Pradesh. Jose (1988) categorized the agricultural operations such sowing, women workers predominantly perform transplanting, weeding and
harvesting with relatively lower wages. Indian states exhibit considerable gender disparity in wages and showed the changes in money wages of both sex during the period 1970-71 to 1984-85.

Unni (1988) conducted a study on real wages for female agricultural labour for the period 1956-57 to 1977-78 on the basis of Rural Labour Enquiry and National Sample Surveys. It is significant to note that only in Kerala and West Bengal, there was decline below the base level only for one year during 1970-71 to 1984-85. Nehru (1989) noted the women's participation in agriculture and found that their work is on family fields and therefore work is undervalued.

Subha Rao and Paniswara Raju (1990) Arputhamurthy (1990) and Government of Kerala (1994) highlighted on the existing wages of different sectors of the economy. The former study also analyses the fact that wage differentials based on operations are more prevalent is due to varying degrees of demand for employees. Government of Kerala renewed and published the new wage rates accordingly on the basis of the changing conditions of the economy. Kalpagam (1994) analysed the wages of female workers who were engaged in all sectors. The study found
out the fact that the female labourers are subjected to low wage rates. The wages of female agricultural labourers are lower than their male counterparts.

The government of Kerala (1995, 1995, 1996) published the average daily wage rates of skilled and unskilled workers in agriculture sector. It also surveyed the socio-economic status of the workers who earn low wage and have less employment opportunities. Government of India (1996) tried to conduct a survey and published agricultural wages by operation and gender wise at national, state and district level. It analysed the existing wages of agricultural labourers and found that the female wages are lower than males. Another study conducted by the Government of India (1996) on money wages and minimum wages of agricultural sector. The existing money wages and minimum wages is vary from state to state and region to region.

Parthasarathy (1996) examined the trends of wages and employment of agricultural labourers on gender basis. This study found out the fact that there is an increase in wages of females, however, it is lower than their menfolk. The level of employment to female labourers is lower in agriculture. Another survey conducted by
government of India (1996-97) and reported that the wages of female labourers is low in all states of India. A study was carried out in the state of Harayana by Kaur and Goyal (1996) to analyse the extent to which female agricultural labourers lay behind the male labourers with regard to wage payment to different agricultural operations, average earnings and mode and rate of payment.

Tulpule (1997) conducted a study on the conditions of employment and the working of minimum wages act in India. Kannan (1998) stressed on the fact that the wages of males and females who are engaged in unorganised sectors including agriculture is very low. He also analysed the unemployment rates and the growth of money wages of male and female paddy field labourers. The study stressed the growth of money wages by gender in different years. The incidence of unemployment is more borne by the female labourers than males in Kerala.

Jhabvala (1998) concentrated her study on weaker sections especially on women and child agricultural labourers. This study is mainly stressed on the effects of minimum wages act on labourers, their standard of living and the socio-economic status of the female workers. Giri and Rao (1961) and Krishnaji (1971) examined the seasonal
variations in wage rates of agriculture sector. Kodiyan (1972) and Jose (1973) show the role of workers, their trends and the rates and differences in wages of agricultural labourers in Kerala. Their study mainly concentrated on the existing wage rates of the labourers and the role and influence of trade union to gain higher wages in Kerala.

Sathuraman (1972) looks at seasonal variations in terms of differences among operational wise wages in agriculture sector. There are variations in wages on gender as well as operational wise activities. Khana and Mathew (1979) and Patel (1982) showed the unequal wages to women, which is a part of the general discrimination against women in the work. These studies also pointed out of the fact that in unorganised sector, female workers are invariably paid much less than that of the males. Chattopadhyay (1982) argued that in almost all parts of the country, a sexual division of work characterizes even agricultural activity. It also noted the nature of payment to the labourers on the basis of gender. Balaraman (1985) reveals that on an average, the wages paid to a female worker was roughly 60 to 80 per cent of the wages paid to a male worker. In agricultural sector, there is discrimination that is largely operated through open wage discrimination.
Lakshmi Devi (1989) cites evidence to show that in Kerala, discrimination exists in employment opportunities as well as in wages received in agriculture and in construction. Even though there is increase in wage rates of agricultural labourers in Kerala, there is discrimination between male and female in wages. Agarwal (1989) made a study on low wages, on gender basis. Despite lower employment and earnings for women in India, over the decade the men/ women disparity in employment and earnings has gone down, more so in case of earnings.

Raju (1991) noticed a lower disparity in earnings in Kerala in 1974-75. This accompanied by relatively greater fall as compared to males, in their contribution to wage labour. The female deprivation is of different nature. The bias towards women workers is expressed not through discriminatory wage structure, through employment strategy, which discourages hiring of women in the first place.

Choudhary (1993), Das (1985), Government of Pondicherry (1997) and Pandey et al. (1985-86) reassessed the wage differentials and discrimination towards the male and female labourers. The wages paid to the female labourers is low compared to male workers. Terrell (1992)
also showed the difference in wages paid to the females and existence of the discrimination against women workers in all sectors including agriculture. Mukherjee (1996) confirmed with the findings of the recent surveys that gender based wage discrimination continue, even for identical tasks performed by men and women, such as weeding or even a typical female labour intensive such as transplanting. There is discrimination not only in wages but also in all aspects of life.

A number of scholars Mencher (1978), Raghavan (1971), Alexander (1973), Namboodri (1978) Jose (1977), Marakkar (1974) and Government of Kerala (1994) revealed the participation, growth, importance, economic conditions of agricultural labourers and the gains through the trade union. They also analysed the measures taken by the government to support the agricultural labourers in Kerala on gender basis. George (1984) studied in depth the progress of political struggles in order to gain in wages of agricultural labourers. He tried to find out the importance role of political struggles in the process of increasing wages.

Kannan (1988) made and attempt to find out the role of trade union and the gains of agricultural labourers in Kerala. This study also analysed the wage structure,
condition of employment of agricultural labourers. The working of trade union in Kerala is a gain on wage aspect, but it creates some additional burden on labourers. The landlords and the rich farmers control the days of employment available to the labourers.

2.1.7 Caste and Work

Saradamoni (1980) analysed the relation between caste and work in agriculture sector in Kerala. Most of the agricultural sector belongs to the socially backward families. It also examined the emergence of slave caste. There is a close relationship between caste and agricultural work and therefore the status of these workers is also related to the work and caste. Lebra et al. (1984) in their work, “Women and Work in India” analysed the availability of employment to females in various sectors and found that a substantial proportion of the agricultural labourers belongs to the socially disadvantaged caste. The backward and socially disadvantaged caste female workers engaged in agriculture because of their economic backwardness and poverty.

Bose (1985) conducted a study covering poor house holds from four villages in West Bengal and focused on caste hierarchy and sex based division of labour among
agricultural labourers and poor peasants. The socially disadvantaged caste and class do the work in agriculture as hired workers. Majid (1986) examined the contribution of labourers in terms of cash and kind. This study is also confined to women who engaged in cultivation activities.

Nirmala Bhai (1986) made an attempt to assess the importance of Harijan women in independent Indian agriculture. These socially backward women are engaged in agricultural fields and low paid occupations because of their lack of education, skills and knowledge. In India, the socially backward groups do most of the agricultural field works. The socio-economic factors compel them to enter into low paid occupation like agricultural labourers.

Radhakrishnan (1989) identified the lower polluting casts, with no or little land, who worked as agricultural labourers. The low standard of living of these poor labourers pushes them to enter into the labour force. The main activities performed by these female workers are as agricultural labourers. In most of the regions of the world, these female labourers do the farm operations at low wages and they have irregular seasonal employment. Their socio-economic condition can be analysed on the basis of caste and work they performed Ramamchandran (1990)
discussed the importance of female agricultural labourers. Their economic contribution to different spheres is very important and valid. This study mainly concentrated on the socio-economic status of the socially backward female workers.

Prakash (1992) and Kumar (1992) concentrated their study mainly on the genesis and growth of agricultural labourers in India. They put forward the reasons, which are responsible for the emergence and growth of agricultural labourers. In Malabar region, there is increase in the proportion of agricultural labourers and most of them were from low and socially disadvantaged castes. This also analysed the impact of colonization and changes that takes place in the work force in the economy.

Jain et al. (1997) analysed the relation between the work and caste in a society. The scheduled caste women engaged in low paid occupations and due to their lack of education, productive assets, economic resources, they have low socio-economic status in the society. Bhat (1997) noticed the agricultural set up of Palakkad district of Kerala. This study investigated the conditions of agricultural labourers. This mainly concentrated on the social status of the agricultural labourers.
2.2 Data and Research Methodology

2.2.1 Data Source

Data collected for this study belong to two categories: primary and secondary. Primary data has been collected from 300 female agricultural labourers, to examine the socio-economic conditions, to analyse the current problems of these labourers and to find out the changing role of these labourers in the context of land reforms. For the purpose of primary data collection, a field investigation was conducted in six selected village panchayats of Palakkad district. And also conducted discussion with the labourers in groups and observed various points in the discussion with the land lords, farmers, officers of Krishi Bhavan, taluk officers and with the members of the interviewee’s family.

2.2.1.1 Collection of Data

Data is collected with the help of a carefully prepared interview schedule (see Appendix II) which related to age, education, marital status, economic factors and condition, financial, social, occupational and caste status of the respondents. The questionnaire was pre tested on fifty women workers in Palakkad. The interview schedule, which
attempted to elicit information on all points. The schedule was modified in the light of the pre testing before it was finalized and used. There are several problems faced during the fieldwork. The most important one was the identification of the households where the respondents lived. In order to find out their houses (huts) the researcher approached the local people especially the farmers and the neighbours.

At first, they did not open frankly. The questionnaire was filled up after the informal discussion with the respondents. The data collected on the basis of the information given by the respondents was then analysed. During the fieldwork, the questionnaire used in Malayalam language. The fieldwork of the study was conducted from June 1998 to March 1999. The respondents were met personally at their houses. The items on which information was collected included, besides basic socio-economic data, the role of respondents in making important decisions in the family, both money centered and children centered and the freedom she has in spending and control on family income.

Primary data, wherever necessary, supplemented by secondary data which are collected from various official publications of Bureau of Economics and Statistics, State
Planning Board, Kerala Agricultural University and other published and unpublished materials in the form of reports by National sample survey organization, census Department, Labour Bureau, Ministry of Agriculture, Books, Journals and Periodicals devoted to female agricultural labourers.

2.2.2 Research Methodology

2.2.2.1 Meaning and definition of the key terms

'Agricultural Labourer' is one who is basically unskilled and unorganised, work in agriculture and other agricultural operations like farming, dairy, poultry, horticulture and live stocks excluding work in fisheries, on wages for a larger part of the year and whose income are derived mainly from wage labour. Labour can be divided into male and female on the basis of sex.

The unorganised sector, which provides low wages, irregular jobs, casual nature of work and absence of social security. Agricultural labour includes in unorganised sector.

On the basis of the nature of work, agricultural labourers can be classified into three categories: field
workers, ordinary labourers and skilled labourers. The field workers include ploughmen, sowers, weeders transplanters and reapers. The ordinary labourers are employed in building embankments, digging and silt clearing. The carpenters, Masons and black smiths are included in the category of skilled labourers.

There are mainly two types of field workers:
Permanent labourers: These labourers are hired generally throughout the year, is paid either in cash or in kind or in both.

Casual Labourers: They fulfill the need for additional labour at peak periods of farm operations. They are temporary workers and are paid at a rate fixed for an eight hours a day. The wage rate varies from one region to another and at different times of the year.

2.2.2.2 The Sampling Frame Work

The present study is with respect to female agricultural labourers in Palakkad district of Kerala. The selection of study areas has been done on the following grounds. Agriculture is one of the major sectors in Palakkad district, which provides direct employment to the
people especially to females. The district is known as one of the granaries of Kerala state. According to 1991 census, 70.17 per cent of the female workers in Palakkad returned as female agricultural labourers, which holds a unique position among the districts of Kerala. Palakkad district is a backward district and the proportion of scheduled castes is also high in Palakkad.

Palakkad district consisted of five taluks, among them three taluks, viz., Alathur, Chittur and Palakkad are selected on the basis of the concentration of paddy cultivation and female agricultural labourers. For the purpose of present study, two-stage stratified sampling procedure is adopted for the selection of development blocks, village panchayats and female agricultural labourers from three taluks of this district.

In the first stage, a sample of two development block are selected from each taluk. Six village panchayats, one from each development block are selected depending on the criteria of concentration of female agricultural laborers. The selected village panchayats and blocks are Kizhakkencherry (Alathur Block) and Thenkurissi (Kazhalmannam Block) from Alathur taluk, Nallepally (Chittur Block) and Muthalamada (Kolengode Block) from
Chittur taluk and Elappully (Malampuzha Block) and Parali (Palakkad Block) from Palakkad taluk.

In second stage, a list of farmers was obtained from each centre and from that 20 farmers are selected. From those farmers, researcher collected a list of 200 female agricultural labourers from each village panchayat. Sample sizes of each panchayat were divided in proportion to the degree of concentration of female agricultural labourers. The sample labourers from the sample size designed for each panchayat were randomly selected. Thus a total of 300 female agricultural labourers have been selected as ultimate stage of sampling for primary investigation. The following chart shows the structure of selected samples from Palakkad district of Kerala.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Development Block</th>
<th>Village panchayat</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alathur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alathur</td>
<td>Kizhakken-cherry</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kuzhal-mannam</td>
<td>Thenkurissi</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chittur</td>
<td>Nalleppally</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kollengode</td>
<td>Muthal-amada</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palakkad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malampuzha</td>
<td>Elappully</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palakkad</td>
<td>Parali</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the labourers are interviewed with the help of a multidimensional interview schedule, which gives an insight into the problems and socio-economic conditions of the female labourers. The available literature on women in agriculture was extensively used to understand the conditions and problems faced by these labourers. However, emphasis is given to the data collected with the help of the structured interview schedule.

2.2.2.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data have been analysed in a number of closely related operations according to the nature of the response. Different kinds of response have been grouped into a number of categories and counts are made of the number of cases falling in the groups. These results are then summarized in the form of statistical tables. Tabulation has been done entirely by manual method (hand tabulation). Wherever relationships between two variables are desired to be seen, cross tables or break down tables has been prepared.

Test of significance

The Chi-square test has been used to establish the association between the variables. The quantity Chi-
square describes the magnitude of the discrepancy between theory and observation. It is defined as:

\[ \chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \]

where 'O' refers to the observed frequencies and 'E' refers to the expected frequencies. The calculated value of \( \chi^2 \) is compared with the table value of \( \chi^2 \) for given degrees of freedom at a certain level of significance. In order to test whether or not the attributes are associated we take the null hypothesis, that there is no assumption in the attributes under study or in other words, the two attributes are independent. If the calculated value of \( \chi^2 \) is less than the table value at certain level of significance (generally five per cent level), the hypothesis that the attributes are not associated holds good. On the other hand, if the calculated value of \( \chi^2 \) is greater than the table value at a certain level of significance, the result of the experiment does not support the hypothesis or, in other words, the attributes are associated. It should be noted that \( \chi^2 \) is not a measure of the degree or form of relationship, it only tells whether two principles of classification are or are not significantly related, without reference to any assumption concerning the form of relationship. The level of significance for acceptance
of relationship is five per cent. Where Chi-square could not be applied or where the tests are self-explanatory the data was presented as such and no statistical test is applied, where simple statistical methods such as averages and percentages are used.

**Quality of Life Index**

A quality of Life Index is constructed to identify the poor families from among the respondents on the level of their living. Quality of life index is measured on the basis of housing and related facilities like drinking water facilities with in the house, sanitation facilities, electrification, ownership of agricultural land, household assets and live stocks and have been constructed by giving appropriate scores to individual variables. A household who have below 20 aggregate scores have been taken as poor. There are six main variables and ten scores are given when the answer is 'yes' and a zero score is given if answer is 'no'.

The maximum score of variables is 60. The different scores differentiate the households as poor (when score value is below 20), moderate (if the value is between 20 and 40), and good when the score value is between 40 and 50 and very good when it is 50 and above. The
selected variables and the allotted scores to each variable in order to construct Quality of Life Index can be seen from Appendix I.

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