Chapter VIII

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter gives the summary and findings of the present study and the conclusions emerging out of that.

This study on "Gender Issues in Development: Impact of Shift in Cropping Pattern in Kerala on Employment of Women, Family Income and Consumption" is a novel study related to the subject. As there was no earlier study to guide, this falls within the purview of explorative studies. The study gains importance in the context of declining female labour force participation in Kerala vis-à-vis the talk on women's economic independence, gender equality and gender justice. Women's employment and their income earning capacity not only increases the status of women at home and in the society, but also acts as an anchor of family consumption expenditure of at least agricultural labourers. Many empirical studies reveal that income earning capacity of females enhance their decision-making capacity in the matter of income disposition. Studies also reveal that the major portion of the income of female labourers is spent on family consumption rather than on personal consumption.

Kerala agriculture was receptive to changes from very early days. This has resulted in the predominance of cash crops in Kerala Agriculture. Change in cropping pattern in favour of commercial crops, mainly tree/perennial crops, had serious impacts on the economy of the state. The major impact of such change in cropping pattern was
manifested on female employment in the agricultural sector. Changes in cropping pattern in favour of tree crops caused reduction in female employment in agriculture. A large number female labour previously employed in agriculture sector were left without any work and income. This has reduced their voice in family income disposition and adversely affected the family consumption pattern of the labour households.

As the household consumption pattern of labour families are influenced by income of female labourers, the policy makers and development planners have to target increasing employment opportunities to female labour.

8.1 Objectives

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the impact shift in cropping pattern on female labour force participation and the resultant changes in household consumption pattern. The specific objectives are:

1. to focus on the impact of change in the cropping pattern on employment, especially of women labour.
2. to study the impact of changed female employment (unemployment) situations resulting from the shift in cropping pattern on family consumption pattern, and
3. to study how women labour in agriculture sector got adapted to the situation of changing employment opportunities.
8.2 Chapter scheme

The study is divided into eight chapters including the introduction and concluding chapters. The importance and significance of the study is given in the introductory chapter. The objectives of the present study and the important hypotheses set are also given in this chapter. The detailed methodology, the sampling design, the concepts used, and the plan of the study as well as the limitations of the study are also given in the same chapter.

The second chapter gives a basis for the problem setting, of course by surveying the relevant literature. The reviewed literature have direct or indirect relevance to the present study. The third chapter gives female labour force participation. The work participation at state level, study area level, selected taluk level and panchayat level are analysed in this chapter. The industrial category-wise data as time series of Census data from 1961 to 1991 is used for analysis of state level participation rates.

In the fourth chapter a detailed analysis of shift in cropping pattern of Kerala is given. An analysis of the production pattern of major crops cultivated in the state also is given. The study has also analysed district level data vis-à-vis the state level data.

The fifth chapter presents the analysis of data with respect to respondents specific characteristics. The characteristic variables relating to farmer households and labour households are analysed separately in this chapter.
The sixth chapter analyses the impact of shift in cropping pattern on employment of female labour in agriculture at micro level. In the context of change in cropping pattern, it is analysed how female agriculture labour got adapted to the new situation. The analysis in this chapter is purely based on sample data.

The impact on family consumption pattern owing to changed female labour employment situation in agriculture is analysed in chapter seven.

In the last chapter, the summary of the findings of the study and the major conclusions that emerged from the study are given.

8.3 Data and Methodology

The study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. Primary data were collected from 100 sample households in Karukachal grama panchayat of Changanacherry taluk for micro level study on the impact of shift in cropping pattern on female employment and the resultant change in family consumption pattern. The secondary data on agriculture performance of Kerala were collected from (1) 'Statistics for Planning' 1986, 1993, & 2001, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala, and (2) 'Economic Review' (various issues), State Planning Board, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram. Industrial Category-wise and Sex-wise Distribution of Main Workers, Kerala is also used from Census reports since 1961 onwards.
The primary data were collected through a sample survey of Karukachal Grama panchayat of Changanacherry taluk, Kottayam district, Kerala. The main labour colonies of the panchayat are Anchani colony in Ward III, Umpidi in Ward IV, Kuttickal colony in Ward VII, Santhipuram in Ward IX and Writtenparamba in Ward X. Ward VII was selected to identify the households to be surveyed. A total of 100 households were surveyed, of which 76 were labour households and 24, full-time or part-time farmer households. (The labour households were designed to be 75 and other 25. However, after random selection of the households, while conducting the survey it was found that for one of the respondent households, wage income was the major source of income and agricultural income was meagre and land owned was only 10 cents, although the household was listed as a farmer household. Therefore the household was included in the labour household category and thus the number of households surveyed from labour and others became 76 and 24 respectively).

The households were selected at random. The household survey was conducted using a structured and pre-tested questionnaire (A copy of the questionnaire used is appended to the thesis). The survey was conducted as direct personal interview by the researcher herself. One member of the household was interviewed, the farmer respondents were all male, but labour respondents were from both sexes although male labourers interviewed were few. The female labour respondents were the major category of informants of the survey.
The reference period for the survey was about three decades prior to the survey date, from 1970 to 1998. Data on employment, wages, income, consumption, area of land owned, cropping pattern, and education were collected from the sample households.

The collected information was arranged in two way/three way tables and the percentages of respondents/households were taken to observe the intensity of functioning of variables involved. Method of analysis followed is descriptive.

The secondary data on work force participation of females were also analysed descriptively using two way classified data and the percentages of observations thereof.

The secondary data on agricultural performance of Kerala were analysed taking growth rates of area under crops, production and yield of crops, and measure of instability.

8.4 Female Labour Force Participation

Casualisation of work is increasing in the case of workers of both sexes. Female labour are being evicted from their traditional sectors of agriculture wage labour, household industries, etc. and were finding no opportunities in other industrial categories as the additional opportunities generated in all the categories were few. The percentage of women workers, in manufacturing industries other than household industries as well as in services other than transport, storage & communication, to total female workers increased
over the decade 1981-1991, but accommodating a low addition to female workers occurred in absolute terms. This growth in female employment in manufacturing and/or services sectors was not enough to accommodate the released agriculture labour, observed as a decline in employment both in absolute terms and proportionately. This poses several issues, which are gender specific and generated by development of decades. In the context of feminisation of work lead to feminisation of poverty, female labour being evicted from their traditional sectors of employment have serious implications on manifold aspects of life of labourers and their family. This view has to be centred again round the view that female labour incomes are spent mostly on household expenses rather than male income. The implication of changing work distributions of female labourers will be on family consumption pattern. The sample study of the present work concentrates on this aspect.

8.5 Agricultural Performance of Kerala

The analysis of agricultural performance in Kerala at state level and at the study area (Kottayam district) level revealed that agriculture sector is recovering from a decline since early 1980s. Total agriculture showed growth in production and yield due to shift in cropping pattern in favour of high valued non-food crops. The disparities in agriculture performance of state and the study area, is noticeable. Even non-food crops production and yield growth rates varied considerably. The peculiarity of cropping pattern change in Kottayam is that 75 per cent of total agriculture at present is of non-food crops and the important non-food crops in the district are perennial and tree crops like rubber, coconut,
and cocoa. Food crops in the district remaining only 25 per cent of total agriculture, has serious implications. The number of workers accommodated in food crops production due to the seasonal and labour intensive nature of food crops was high compared to that of non-food crops. When the cropping pattern shifted over years such that more than 50 per cent of the area under food crops was also brought under non-food crops, the number of employment in the food crops sector declined significantly. Even if the released area from paddy and other seasonal crops cultivation had been utilised in cultivating other perennial and tree crops like coconut and rubber, it was not possible to absorb the total released labour from paddy sector. This is because the perennial and tree crops are less labour intensive compared to paddy, tapioca, ginger, etc. Further, such a shift in cropping pattern affect female labour more than male, because of high female labour intensity in paddy sector as well as female labour saving nature of tree crops. This has implications in the context of, income of women labour in agriculture sector contributing much to the household income of the labour families and thereby determine the consumption behaviour of labour class. The impact of female labour saving cropping pattern is redistribution of employment and thereby income, in favour of male labour.

8.6 Shift in Cropping Pattern and the Impact on Female Labour at Micro Level.

The micro level analysis showed that change in cropping pattern had been adopted by farmers one or more times due to many reasons. The shift in cropping pattern was in favour of tree and perennial crops. The percentage of respondent farmers cultivating paddy declined from 54 in 1975 to 50 in 1980 and to 33.33 in 1985. Tapioca
cultivation also declined over the period. On the contrary, coconut cultivation increased over years as the percentage of farmers cultivating coconut increased from 4.17 in 1975 to 16.67 in 1985. Paddy cultivators declined to 16.67 percent of farmers in 1990 and none of the farmers included in our sample, cultivated paddy since 1995. Ginger also was not cultivated since 1980. The farmers have shifted to perennial commercial crops.

The percentage of respondent farmers in rubber cultivation increased from 4.17 in 1970 to 41.67 per cent in 1998. While stopping paddy and tapioca farmers shifted to mainly rubber and secondly, coconut. Although coconut and rubber in the initial one or two years of cropping are possible to be mixed cropped with tapioca, plantain, ginger and such seasonal crops, only an insignificant percentage of farmers resorted to such practices. Otherwise farmers who adopted mixed cropping with rubber opted for teak and arecanut, which are again tree and perennial crops.

The shift in cropping pattern from seasonal and food crops to perennial tree crops had introduced drastic changes in the employment pattern. The seasonal and food crops engaged more women labourers, but the tree/perennial crops were female labour saving. Therefore shift in cropping pattern left many of the female labourers unemployed due to their being evicted from their previous employment and their been not accommodated in the new cropping system. Increasing overall unemployment also introduced cutthroat competition for employment both by female and male workers keeping females again away from opportunities in the male dominated social set up of production sectors.
From 1975 to 1992 the major reason for whatever shift in cropping pattern was financial loss incurred by the previous cultivated crops. Analysis of primary data reveals that, from 1990 onwards farmers started seeking better options in commercial crops because of the opportunities expected by opening up of Indian markets to competition. However, in mid 1990s decline in price of rubber due to global competition had clearly indicated the vulnerability of local farmers in commercial agriculture. Still 50 percent of the farmers initiated a second shift in cropping pattern again to seek better options in commercial crops and the shift was from coconut, pepper and tapioca to rubber.

The labourers turned unemployed was 68.42 percent of the labourers in the sample and the changes in cropping pattern had been a major cause of this unemployment. Another cause of unemployment was non-availability of work. Labour being evicted from agriculture sector and not finding job in any other secondary or tertiary sectors had still further implications on family income of labourers. This ultimately led to a permanent reduction in income of the family of the unemployed. The consequences were very low consumption of goods and services for maintenance of the labour. Because 89.47 percent of labourers in our sample were females, the unemployment of female labour due to shift in cropping pattern has implications on family consumption pattern of labour households.
It was after the opening up of Indian markets for global competition, i.e., since 1992 onwards, the 80.77 percent of total unemployment of female labour occurred. The perceptions of farmers about trade liberalisation and the opportunities that brings had excited them to shift the cropping pattern in favour of commercial crops. This had ultimately resulted in unemployment of female labour and reduction in their family income. Majority of female labour replaced from agriculture did not find other works because of severe competition for work by the otherwise unemployed labourers and especially male labourers.

Unemployment of female labour due to change in cropping pattern adopted by farmers has serious implications on family income of female labourers. The spending pattern of female and male income earners, are different. Female earners spend more on family consumption, while male earners spend mainly on personal consumption. The sample study revealed that due to female labourers left unemployed, the family consumption expenditure was reduced. This reduction in family consumption expenditure introduced changes in family consumption pattern.

The increase in the percentage of labour households left without food for breakfast and lunch during the period 1990-98 had manifold implications. The female labour evicted from agriculture sector were left unemployed because other sectors did not
absorb them as was prevailing cutthroat competition for employment by job seekers due to already increasing general unemployment. They didn’t get adapted to any other work in household industry or so. Instead they were entangled in unemployment and poverty, starving as they abstained from one or two time meals per day. The labour households living on one meal a day will create serious health hazards and leave low quality labour for future both physically and in skill. The lack of opportunities for female labour due to cropping pattern change and increasing general unemployment had already led to a least consumption by labour families. The consumption pattern of labour families changed to a position of abstaining from consumption of food for breakfast and lunch and the same was experienced by the labour families, the female labourers of which turned unemployed due to changes in cropping pattern in favour of female labour saving crops.

8.8 Conclusions

This section shows an attempt to sum up the conclusions derived on the present study in relation to the objectives set in the introduction chapter.

One of the conclusions regarding the labour force participation of females in Kerala is that participation is declining. Casualisation of work is increasing in the case of workers of both sexes. Female labour are being evicted from their traditional sectors of agriculture wage labour, household industries, etc. and were finding no opportunities in other industrial categories also as the additional opportunities generated in all the
categories were few. This poses several issues, which are gender specific and generated by development of decades.

The second conclusion derived on the present study is that agricultural performance in Kerala at state level and at the study area (Kottayam district) level is recovering from a decline, since early 1980s. Total agriculture showed growth in production and yield due to shift in cropping pattern in favour of high valued non-food crops.

The disparities in agriculture performance of state and the study area, is noticeable. Even non-food crops production and yield growth rates varied considerably. The peculiarity of cropping pattern change in Kottayam is that 75 per cent of total agriculture at present is of non-food crops and the important non-food crops in the district are perennial and tree crops like rubber, coconut, and cocoa. Food crops in the district remaining only 25 per cent of total agriculture.

The implications of shift in cropping pattern from food and seasonal crops to non-food and tree crops, is that labour employment opportunities declined in agriculture sector and female labour were the class evicted from new agriculture. The cropping pattern of Kerala shifted over years such that more than 50 per cent of the area under food crops also was brought under non-food crops, the number of employment in the food crops sector declined significantly. This has implications in the context of, income of women labour in agriculture sector contributing much to the household income of the labour families and thereby determine the consumption behaviour of labour class. The impact of female labour
saving cropping pattern is redistribution of employment and thereby income, in favour of male labour.

Another important conclusion of the study is that at micro level farmers adopted shift in cropping pattern two or more times and from 1975 to 1992 the major cause of such shift in cropping pattern was financial loss due to prevailing cropping pattern. However, primary data shows that since 1990 changes in cropping pattern in favour of perennial tree crops was due to farmers seeking better options in commercial agriculture promised by globalisation of Indian markets. Although agriculture performance improved, the impact on the society of labourers was unfavourable. Globalisation benefits commercialisation imperatives but labour class in the countries, which have weak bargaining position, suffers drastically. From the micro level analysis, it was 68.42 percent of labourers, who turned unemployed due to changes in cropping pattern.

The micro level sample study led to the conclusion that it was after the opening up of Indian markets for global competition, i.e., since 1992 onwards, the 80.77 percent of total unemployment of female labour occurred.

The spending pattern of female and male income earners, are different. Female earners spend more on family consumption, while male earners spend mainly on personal consumption. Thus, the micro level study reveals that due to female labourers left unemployed, the family consumption expenditure was reduced. This introduced changes in family consumption pattern.
The analysis of change in consumption pattern of labour families showed that the percentage of labour households left without food for breakfast and lunch, during the period 1990-98, had increased. The lack of opportunities for female labourers due to cropping pattern change and increasing general unemployment had already led to a least consumption by labour families. The female labourers evicted from agriculture sector did not get adapted to any work on their own in household industry or so, or not found any employment on payment in other sectors. Therefore, the consumption pattern of labour families changed to a position of abstaining from consumption of food for breakfast and lunch.

The labour households living on one meal a day will create serious health hazards and leave low quality labour for future both physically and in skill. The female labourers being evicted from agriculture sector due to changes in cropping pattern have implications for policy initiation. As female income is the main determinant of consumption pattern of labour households, mainly in the matter of consumption for satisfying basic needs of family members, any policy interventions for the improvement of labour families shall take into account this. The policy interventions for development through increase in employment opportunities shall concentrate on female employment to derive desired results.

The present study concludes also that consumption pattern of labour households changed to a deteriorating position due to unemployment of female labour in agriculture
due to cropping pattern change, it opens up opportunities for further study using more information collected in a series, covering years, and including a large sample to conduct a more serious study of impacts of changes in cropping pattern in Kerala agriculture.
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