



An Economic Analysis of Woman Labour in Agriculture Nagapatinam District of Tamilnadu

Dr.P.Zearamane

Assistant professor

Department of Economics

D.G.Government Arts college for women

Mailaduthurai

Abstract.

Women as agricultural labourers are discriminated in wage payment on sex basis. The wage differences exist in all major agriculture operations including transplanting and weed in which women intensive operations and better are performed by women labourers. There is a need for effective implementation of minimum wage. This paper examines the an economic analysis women agricultural workers with the objectives; i) to evaluate the income and expenditure pattern of agricultural women workers in Nagapatinam district, Tamil Nadu ii) to identify the standard of living of agricultural women workers in the study area and iii) to analysis the pattern of borrowing and the purpose of borrowing of the agricultural women workers. There are 60 women agricultural labourers selected for the present study. Information on wages, employment, income, borrowing and other aspects each of the respondent households were collected, with the help of a pre-tested interview schedule.

Keywords: Agricultural workers, discrimination, wage, wage discrimination, women agricultural workers,

Introduction

Agriculture in India is the vertical backbone of the country and is regarded as the largest sector of the country's economic activity. It is the major sector of the State economy, in which the majority of people earn their livelihood. Though the share of agriculture in the aggregate economy has declined rapidly during the planned development of the country, it assumes a pivotal role in the rural economy. The contributory share of agriculture in GDP has declined from 55.4 per cent in 1950-51 to 18.5 per cent in 2006-07. Agriculture at

present provides livelihood to 60 per cent of the total population. The sector provides employment to 58.4 per cent of country's workforce and is the single largest private enterprise (Anon., 2007).

Agriculture also plays a very important role in industrial development of our nation as it is the source of raw materials for many industries. India's foreign trade is deeply associated with agriculture. Agriculture accounts for about 14.7 per cent of the total export earnings.

Agricultural Labour - Definition

Unlike industrial labour, agricultural labour is difficult to define. The reason is that unless capitalism develops fully in agriculture, a separate class of workers depending wholly on wages does not come up. The First Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee (ALEC) 1950-55 defined Agricultural Labour as "Those people who are engaged in raising crops on payment of wages" (based on occupation). That is if half or more of a household have wage employment in agriculture then those households can be termed as agricultural labour households. The Second ALEC 1956-57 enlarged the definition to include- "Those who are engaged in agriculture and other agricultural occupations like dairy farming, horticulture, raising of livestock, bee keeping, poultry etc." (based on income). According to this definition if 50 per cent or more of its income is derived as wages for work rendered in agriculture and allied activities, then it could be classed to agricultural labour household. According to National Commission on Labour "An Agricultural labourer is one who is basically unskilled and unorganised and has little for his livelihood, other than personal labour" (Srivastava, 1993).

Classification Of Agricultural Labourers

The agricultural labourers can be classified into mainly two categories. 1. Landless agricultural labourers - i) Permanent Labourers Attached to Cultivating Households, ii) Casual Labourers. 2. Very small cultivators whose main source of earnings due to their small and sub marginal holdings is wage employment. Permanent or attached labourers work on annual or seasonal basis and they work on some sort of contract. Their wages are determined by custom or tradition. Temporary or casual labourers are engaged only during peak period of work. They are paid at the market rate. Under the second group come small farmers who possess very little land and therefore, have to devote most of their time working on the lands of others as labourers.

Woman Labour on Agriculture

In Indian population 48.27 per cent are women and the number is 495.7 million (Anon., 2001c), 72.72 per cent of the women live in rural areas, 45.84 per cent of the female population is illiterate. In rural areas the corresponding figure is 53.3 per cent. The labour force participation rate of women is 31.56 per cent, less than half of the mens' rate of 68.44 per cent. A recent report by the government has revealed that women outnumber men as agricultural labourers. The Union Minister of State for Agriculture Kanti Lal Bhuria said as per the 2001 census, there were 42.95 per cent women labourers as compared to 27.51 per cent men.

Specific Objectives of The Study

1. To measure the season wise employment of woman labour in agriculture
2. To examine the pattern and composition of woman labour employed
3. To measure the extent of unemployment during off season and document the alternative sources of employment
4. To study the impact of seasonal woman unemployment in agriculture
5. To elicit the opinions of the women labourers to overcome the problem of unemployment during off season

Hypotheses

1. Women get seasonal employment in agriculture.
2. Women are involved in all activities of agriculture.
3. Women have limited alternative sources of employment.
4. Seasonal unemployment of women in agriculture causes adverse social and economic impacts

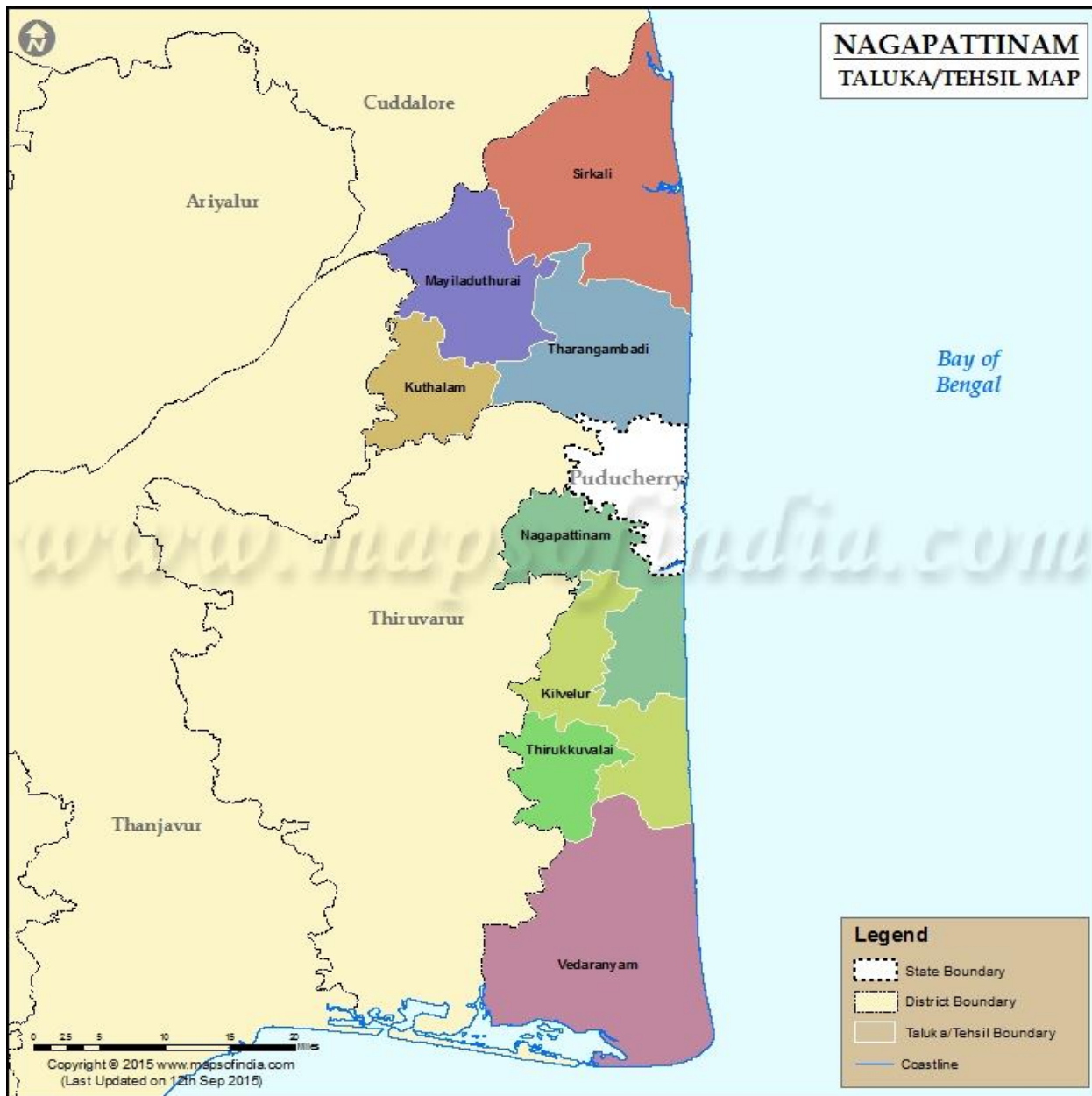
METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines briefly the characteristics of the study area, the sampling procedure, the nature and source of data Primary and Secondary data the Primary data has collected simple random sampling for 60 women's labour in agriculture in Nagapattinam District.

PROFILE OF NAGAPATTINAM DISTRICT

Nagapattinam district was carved out by bifurcating the composite Thanjavur district on 18.10.1991. Nagapattinam is a unique district with all its historical and cultural significance. There are burials in and around the town from the Sangam period indicating some level of human habitation. The neighbouring port, Kaveri poompattinam (modern day Poompuhar), was the capital of the Chola Kingdom of the Sangam Age, referred widely in Tamil scriptures like Paṭṭiṇappālai. The early works of Tevaram by the 7th century poets Appar and Sambandar mention the town had fortified walls, busy roads, buildings and a busy port. The inscriptions from the Kayarohanswami temple indicate the construction was initiated during the reign of the Pallava king, Narasimha Pallava II. A Buddhist pagoda was built under Chinese influence by the Pallava king and town was frequented by Buddhist travellers. Nagapattinam was the prominent port of Cholas for trade and conquering gateway to the east. In the early 16th century, the Portuguese started commercial contacts with the district and established a commercial centre in 1554. The Portuguese also conducted missionary enterprise in the district. In 1658, the Dutch established an agreement between King Vijaya Nayakkar of Thanjavur on 5th January 1662. Ten villages were transferred from the Portuguese to the Dutch – Nagapattinam Port, Puthur, Muttam, Poruvalancheri, Anthanappettai, Karureppankadu, Azhingi Mangalam, Sangamangalam, Thiruthinamangalam, Manjakollai, Nariyankudi. Ten Christian Churches and a hospital were built by the Dutch. They also released coins with the name Nagapattinam engraved in Tamil letters. As per agreement between the first Maratta King Egoji of Thanjavur and the Dutch, Nagapattinam and surrounding villages were handed over to the Dutch on 30th December 1676. In 1690, the capital Dutch Coromandel changed from Pulicat to Nagapattinam. Nagapattinam district fell into the hands of the British in 1781 after the two naval battles between British and French fleets were fought off the coast of Nagapattinam, as it was then known; the first in 1758 as part of the Seven Years' War and the second in 1782 as part of the American Revolutionary War. The district was taken by the British from the Dutch in 1781 (who had been formally brought into the war in 1780).

Figure -1 .District map of Nagapattinam



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In consistence with the objectives of the study, the necessary data collected from different sources were analyzed and interpreted.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMEN LABOURERS IN AGRICULTURE

The general characteristic features of the women agricultural labourers are presented in Table The study covered 60 women labourers in Nagapattinam district in tamilnadu.

General characteristics of the women agricultural labourers

SI NO	Category	Women labourers	
		Frequency Percentage	Frequency Percentage
1	a. 15-24 years	21	2.50
	b. 25-34 years	3	5.83
	c. 35-44 years	27	44.17
	d. 45-54	24	39.17
	e. 55 years and above	5	8.33
2	Marital status		
	a. Married	46	80.00
	b. unmarried	3	4.17
	c. Separated	3	3.33
	d. Divorcee	0	0.00
	e. Widow	8	12.50
3	Education qualification		
	a. Illiterate	12	19.16
	b. Lower primary	34	57.50
	c. Upper primary	10	16.67
	d. High school	4	6.67
4	Family type		
	a. Joint family	2	8.00
	b. Nuclear family	58	98.00
5	Female head		
	a. Yes	11	17.50
	b. No	49	82.50
6	SC	28	44.00
	BC	10	26.00
	MBC	22	40.00
7	Main occupation		
	a. Self farming and labour	12	18.00
	b. Agricultural labour	48	72.00
8	Type Of Labour		
	a. Permanent labour	0	0.00

	b. Casual labour	48	72.00
	c. Cultivators cum labour	12	28.00
9	Type of work		
	a. Skilled	0	0.00
	b. Unskilled	60	60.00
	c. Hours of work per day (7-8 hours)	60	60.00
10	Social particulars		
	Members of co-operative	6	10.83
	Members of religious union	12	20.00
	Members of SHG 's	8	12.50
	Members of labor union	42	70.83
	Members of agriculture labour welfare board	58	98.33
11	a. Ration card	60	100.00
	b. Voters card	60	100.00
12	Average annual family income	35187.67	
13	a. Average land holding size	0.025 ha 6.36 cents	
	b. Average assets position	68000.79	
	c. Average debt position	3521.25	

Source Computed Form Primary Data

Age

It is evident from the table that majority of the women labourers, 44.2 per cent belonged to the age group of 35-44 years. About 39.2 per cent were in the age group of 45-54 years, 8.3 per cent were above 55 years of age. Only less number of women labourers was in younger age group, that is 5.8 per cent in age group of 25-34 years and 2.5 per cent in age group of 15-24 years.

Marital status

It is observed that 80 per cent of the women labourers were married, 12.5 per cent of them were widows, 4.2 per cent of the labourers were unmarried and 3.3 per cent of the labourers were separated from their spouse.

Educational qualification

The educational level of labourers showed that 57.5 per cent of the labourers had primary education, 19.2 per cent of the labourers were illiterate, 16.7 per cent of the labourers had upper primary education and 6.7 per cent of the labourers had high school education.

Family type

It is observed from the Table 4.1 that 76.7 per cent of the women labourers belonged to nuclear family, 21.7 per cent of the women labourers belonged to extended family and 1.7 per cent of the women labourers belonged to joint family. The average family size of the sample labour households was 4.54 members.

Female headed

It is evident from the Table 4.1 that 82.5 per cent of the women labourers belonged to male headed households and 17.5 per cent belonged to female headed households.

Caste

In the study area majority of the labourers belonged to Sc, and MBC. Only 15 BC category. Majority Hindu only.

Main occupation

Among the women labourers 987.5 per cent women had agriculture labour as their main occupation. Only 2.5 per cent women labourers did both farming and labour activities.

Type of labour

In the study area 97.5 per cent labourers worked as casual labour. Only 2.5 per cent worked as both cultivators and casual labour. There was no permanent labour in agriculture in the region. **Type of work**

The women labourers in the study area are not technically skilled. So they are involved in unskilled works. They worked for 7-8 hours a day.

Social participation

The women labourers had participation in organizations and unions. Among the sample labourers 6 labourers were members of cooperative society, 12 labourers had membership in religious unions and 8 labourers were members of self-help groups. About 42 labourers were members of labour unions, 58 labourers were members of agricultural labour welfare board.

Possession of rationcard and voter's ID card

From the Table 4.1 it is evident that all the sampled women labourers possessed rationcard and voter's ID card.

Income

The annual average family income of the labourers was Rs. 35187.67.

Conclusion

From the analysis, it is concluded that the women agricultural workers' standard of living were poor in the village. All women agricultural workers are coming under below poverty line limit. Therefore the government intervention is needed for improving wage rates in farm-sector and increasing non-farm employment opportunities in the study area. On the social sector front, the female literacy rate is lower in this village, than in the district and the state. A serious effort to improve female literacy through ensuring compulsory elementary education needs to be taken up urgently. They also do not develop on other skill to diversity their labour. But it is found that the labourers now have realized the importance of education and they force their children to attend school, which is a welcoming feature.

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