



Understanding the Feminization of Indian Agriculture

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Abstract

India as a developing country has an agriculture sector as its backbone. With the development of technology, the agriculture sector is also developing but is not capable of decreasing the ignorance of women's labour as an imminent part of the agriculture sector. India as a developing country continues to absorb the female work force in agriculture but failed to give recognition to their work. The share of women in Agriculture wage employment is increasing day by day and this increase in participation of women's work in the farm sector is referred to as Feminisation of agriculture. This paper studies the process of feminisation with regard to the Ideological debate on two factors either "Demand-pull" or "Distress push" with respect to domestic gender relations. Although women's participation in labour market is increasing in spite of that their status remains depressed. This shows the actual gap between women's participation in the economy and the value of their work. It raises the question of changing the structure of women's social and economic value. The analysis will be both qualitative and quantitative. The paper will demonstrate that the Feminisation of Agriculture is largely driven by the migration of men from rural to urban areas and is strongly related to poverty. Then deals with the double or triple burden of work on women due to increasing contribution to agriculture thereby examining that the Feminisation of agriculture can be better explained in the form of agrarian distress.

Keywords: Feminisation, Agriculture, Employment, Development

I. Introduction:

In recent times gender has been an important focus of attention in discourse and around labour laws moving from the mainstream of the labour law debate. In 1999–2000, males and women made up 62 and 38% of all farmers, respectively, according to the NSSO Employment

and Unemployment Surveys. By 2004-05, however, the proportion of men had dropped to 58% while that of women had risen to 42% (Srivastava and Srivastava, 2009). Furthermore, according to the same NSSO data, women outnumbered males in all states but West Bengal when it came to work in agriculture (both farming and paid agricultural labour) as a percentage of all rural employment. In comparison to 67% of men nationwide, approximately 84% of women employees were employed in agriculture in 2004–2005 (Srivastava and Srivastava, 2009). In 2011–12, 59 and 75% of men and women, respectively, were working in agriculture (NSSO). Women constitute a significant part of the workforce in India but they lag behind the men in terms of employment and work participation. In India, the participation of women is highly disheartening and disproportionate, although they are considered to be equal in the partner in progress but still remain subject to marginalisation and repression. Its reality is that women have been socially and economically handicapped with their male counterparts. Feminisation of agriculture refers to an increase in women's participation in the agriculture sector. It thereby raises questions regarding the changing structure of rural India in regard to women's economic and social roles. This adds to the heavy burden of work for most of the women as they have to work in the field and do household activities too. This leads to further undermining of women's well-being. Feminisation can also be seen as a matter of visibility of women's work as now, they are becoming the face of a certain labour force.

Agriculture has become a female activity over the years. Since the 1970s it has been observed in many parts of the country. The share of women in agriculture has been rising during the reform period. The period from 1991 to 2001 shows a decline in the agricultural workforce but the decline was more in the male workforce which is 11.7 million as compared to the female workforce which is 0.5 million. As per the census



2001 women constitute 1/3 of the agricultural workforce.

The objective is to analyze the trends and different dimensions of the feminization of agriculture in India. Also, the study has been done to analyze the nature and extent of women's participation in agriculture, identify the factors leading to feminization in Indian agriculture, the impact of women's participation in agriculture, the contribution of women to Indian agriculture, nature of women making decisions in work.

This paper asks what can be understood from the official data about the increasing participation of women in Indian agriculture in the context of both survey evidence and anecdotal assuming women in India are assuming greater responsibility for agricultural labour. The approaches for these questions are through the analysis of occupational data drawn from the population census. Indian economy is a producing faster rate of growth but with highly uneven distributional consequences including those relating to gender.

This paper is organised as follows. The first section will deal with women in agriculture: evidence from the past by utilising census data, the second section will include trends in the participation of women in Indian agriculture, and the third section will cover the factors that influence women's participation in agriculture by providing causes of feminisation. The last section will explain how best to understand the feminization and the conclusion.

II. Literature Review:

Numerous programs targeting rural women have been implemented by the government as well as international organizations. However, these programs genuinely do not address concerns relating to women's access to higher-paying jobs, upward economic mobility, and rights like equal pay for equal work and property rights (Vepa, 2005).

According to the Economic Survey 2017–18, as more males move from the countryside to the cities, the agricultural industry is becoming more "feminized," with more women taking on numerous jobs as cultivators, business owners, and workers. The contribution of women to agriculture needs to be honoured. However, there are barriers for women in this field when it comes to access to rights to land and property, entitlements, etc (Hans et al., 2020). The focus of the paper is on the rising trend of women working in agriculture, the causes of feminization on farms, and the symbiotic

relationship between property rights, productivity, and poverty. The data study also revealed that the majority of women who owned land worked primarily as unpaid family caregivers (28.27%), indicating that although they make a considerable contribution, it is not recognized as such. Lack of acknowledgment, lack of ownership rights, the socioeconomic environment, and a few other things prevent them from having great agricultural output (Sharma and Nayak, 2019).

Overall, rural women have more work than urban men, and a greater part of their labour is spent on unpaid home duties like food preparation and water and fuel collection. Although women make a considerable contribution to food and agricultural production, the percentage they contribute cannot be objectively verified. The participation of women in rural labour markets varies greatly among regions, but they are almost always overrepresented in unpaid, seasonal, and part-time work. Additionally, the research that is currently available indicates that women are frequently paid less than males for the same work (Raney et al, 2011).

Research on various aspects of women's lives has increased recently in India, with the initial emphasis on the social aspects of their status giving way to analyses of women's locations within the sphere of economic production, a shift that was prompted by the alarming decline in female participation (Duvvury, 1989). The feminization of agriculture, or the growing proportion of women working on farms in India, raises concerns about the changing nature of rural India, particularly in relation to women's social and economic roles (Pattnaik et al., 2018). As the agrarian crisis worsens, rural men are more motivated to look for employment alternatives outside of agriculture and to leave the countryside (Chandrashekhar, 2015 Tumble, 2014). Two aspects of economic development that have had particularly significant effects on poverty are the expansion of agriculture and the rise in women's income. In low-income agriculture-based economies, this is why policies and initiatives aiming to increase the productivity and income of women farmers have the potential to bring about a convergence of very effective anti-poverty forces (Ashby et al, 2009).

Women are not only forced out of work as a result of the ideological situation that results in the low evaluation of female labor in a limited market for agricultural labor that exhibits a light degree of unemployment and underemployment but also because women withdraw themselves from the labor market to give men a chance to find



employment first. The main cultural tenet is known as "sexual dual-ism," which holds that because men are typically the primary breadwinners, women must accept subjugation (Chowdhry, 1993). Studies that look at this process of feminization are frequently divided along ideological lines that follow either the "demand-pull" or the "poverty-push" thesis. However, the patriarchal system has received little attention in this discussion. The discussion is revisited in this study with an emphasis on home-gender relations. We find that women's household status remains severely depressed despite rising labor market participation. However, female laborers who have access to productive resources are successfully reshaping gender relations both inside and outside the home. We contend that their experiences have ramifications for transformative policies (Garikipati, 2006).

III. Material and Methods:

The secondary source has been taken for analysis of the process of feminization. For investigating the agricultural labour force participation their trends and their implication for women data from the population census and NSSO have been taken. The census provides data on the basis of gendered participation of labour in various sectors for both rural and urban areas. However, in the census, there is a difference between the cultivators (those who provide effective direction in cultivation) and agricultural laborers (defined in terms of kind or wage payment for laboring). The two combined to get the total population in agriculture. The census data doesn't consider the full contribution of women in agriculture as it fails to see the various innumerable tasks performed by

women in and around the field. Therefore, it can be said that these data sample doesn't clearly show the important role played by women in agriculture. This indicates that although census data is comprehensive women's labour is still underestimated. Women are working more but the data shows that they are working less, especially in agriculture.

IV. Results and Discussions

In India, there are over 482 million workers, of whom 150 million are women. Of them, 122 million live in rural areas, and the remaining 28 million work in cities (Census of India, 2011). Women grow more than half of the world's food, but globally, their labour has mostly gone unpaid (Dankelman and Davidson, 2013).

93% of the remaining workers are employed in the unorganised or informal sector. With 96% of women working in the unorganised sector, the statistics for women in India are even bleaker. Overall, the female labour participation rate (WPR) rose from 19.8% in 1981 to 25.5 percent in 2011. In urban regions, it has gone from 8.3 to 15.4 percent, whereas it has increased from 23.2 to 30 percent in rural areas. However, the proportion of women working in agriculture has dropped from 71.8% in 2001 to 65% in 2011. According to the 2011 Census, 97.6 million women labour in agriculture, making up around 37% of the entire agricultural industry. This is a decrease of about 2% from the 2001 Census. The expected number of women participating in 2020 is 115 million, or 50% of the total. Despite a rise in female literacy from 8.9% in 1951 to 65.5 percent in 2011, progress is slower than it is for their male counterparts.

Table 1: Workforce participation by occupation and gender, all workers

Census	Cultivators		Agricultural labourers			Household industry		Other workers	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
2001	31.1	32.9	20.8	38.9	3.2	6.5	44.9	21.7	
2011	24.9	24	24.9	41.1	2.9	5.7	47.2	29.2	

Source: Census of India

Table 1 demonstrates that the transition from the function of cultivator to that of another, non-agricultural worker dominates the migration of workers out of agriculture, both male and female. In reality, despite the sharp fall in the number of cultivators, there was a rise in the proportion of male and female workers engaged in agricultural labour from 2001 to 2011.



Table 2: Classification of total agricultural workers

Total/Urban/Rural	Cultivators (Main and Marginal)	Agricultural Labour (Main and Marginal)
Total	118808780	144333690
Rural	115084638	136998308
Urban	3724142	7335382

Source: Census of India, 2011

As from the above table, it can be analysed that the total number of agricultural labours and cultivators is higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas. In urban areas workers mainly work in some formal or informal jobs, so there is less proportion of workers in the agricultural sector in urban areas.

Table 3: Classification of agricultural workers (Male and Female)

Total/Urban/Rural	Male cultivators (Main and Marginal)	Male agricultural labour (Main and Marginal)	Female cultivators (Main and Marginal)	Female agricultural labour (Main and Marginal)
Total	82762934	82742337	34045846	61591353
Rural	79895308	77932222	35189330	59066086
Urban	2867626	4810115	856516	2525267

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table 4: Number of Rural Urban Cultivators (Figures in %).

	2001		2011		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Rural	42	37.1	35.2	28.8	33
Urban	2.5	4.1	2.7	3.1	2.8
Total	31.1	32.9	24.9	24	24.6

Source: Census of India

According to the above table, there are now 33% less cultivators overall in rural regions than there were in 2001 (40% fewer). In terms of gender, women have strayed from being farmers more dramatically than their male counterparts. Between 2001 and 2011, their share decreased from 37% to 29%.

Analysing women's engagement in agriculture and other occupations on a state-by-state basis is significant in and of itself. However, the main goal of this paper's research of state-by-state variations is to ascertain what can be learned about the origins and effects of diverse employment patterns from these variations. The table reveals a wide range in each state's reliance on agricultural employment, which is not surprising. The involvement of women in agriculture varies equally

between states and areas. With the exception of Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland, men outnumbered women in terms of participation in agriculture across all states. However, it is clear that the disparities in involvement between men and women employees were minimal in those states with a higher number of agricultural workers (i.e., above the national average). Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were the exceptions to this tendency, having a large proportion of agricultural employees but only 25 and 28% of all agricultural workers being women, respectively, despite 65 and 75% of female workers working in agriculture in those two states.

Table 5 depicts the total share of agriculture workers as a share of all workers in India is 54.6 percent whereas talking about the men's share of total agriculture workers is 62.9



percent and the female share of total agriculture is 37.1 percent. However, in terms of total share of

agriculture workers Bihar and Chhattisgarh ranked among the top 2 states.

Table 5: State-level analysis of agricultural workers

States	Agricultural workers as share of all workers (%)	Men as share of agricultural workers (%)	Women as share of agricultural workers (%)
Chhattisgarh	74.7	52.4	47.6
Bihar	73.6	71.7	28.3
Madhya Pradesh	69.8	58.5	41.5
Jharkhand	63	56.2	43.8
Himachal Pradesh	62.9	45.1	54.9
Rajasthan	62.1	52	48
Odisha	61.8	63.2	36.8
Nagaland	61.7	48.5	51.5
Andhra Pradesh	59.5	53.2	46.8
Uttar Pradesh	59.3	75.2	24.8
Meghalaya	58.5	55.4	44.6
Arunachal Pradesh	57.7	50.5	49.5
Mizoram	55.8	56	44
Maharashtra	52.7	55.1	44.9
Uttarakhand	51.2	51.5	48.5
Gujarat	49.6	64.2	35.8
Assam	49.3	71.6	28.4
Karnataka	49.3	58.5	41.5
Manipur	49.1	55.4	44.6
Sikkim	46.5	53.1	46.9
Haryana	45	70.6	29.4
Tripura	44.2	68.2	31.8
West Bengal	44	78.1	21.9
Tamil Nadu	42.1	54.7	45.3
Jammu and Kashmir	41.5	65.8	34.2
Punjab	35.6	85	15
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	29.2	51.7	48.3
Kerala	17.2	70.5	29.5
Andaman & Nicobar	14	76.9	23.1
Goa	10.1	57.9	42.1
India	54.6	62.9	37.1

Source: Pattnaik, 2018



Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Workers in Agriculture in Usual Status (PS+SS) in India.

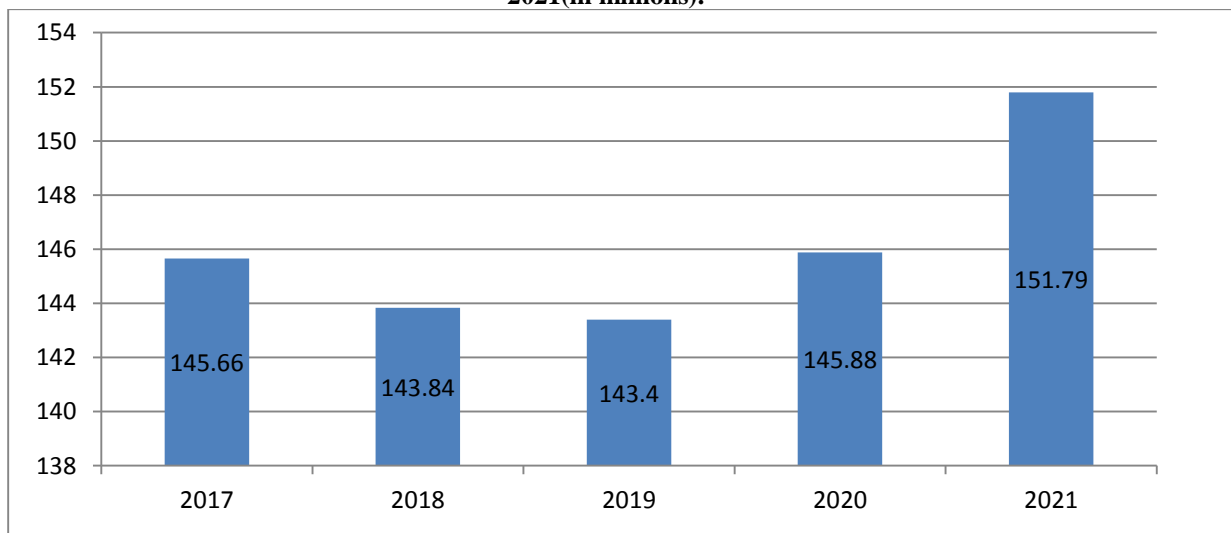
Year	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1987-1988 (43rd Round)	74.5	84.7	9.1	29.4.
1993-1994 (50th Round)	74.1	86.2	9	24.7
1999-2000 (55th Round)	71.4	85.4	6.6	17.7
2004-2005 (61st Round)	66.5	83.4	6.1	18.1
2009-2010 (66th Round)	62.8	79.4	6	13.9
2011-2012 (68th Round)	59.4	74.9	5.6	10.9
2017-2018 (PLFS)	55	73.2	5.4	9.1
2018-2019 (PLFS)	53.2	71.1	4.9	7.8
2019-2020 (PLFS)	55.4	75.7	5	8.2

Source: indiastat

From the above table, it can be analysed that the share of the agricultural male workforce in India is lesser than the female agricultural workforce using Principle and Subsidiary status. There is not much difference in rural areas but it is showing a huge gap in urban areas. It can be analysed that in rural areas in the 43rd round male workers in agriculture are 74.5 %, whereas for

females it is 84.7%. But in the case of urban areas, the percentage distribution of females is three times that of male workers. Likewise, in the 50th round, it is 74.1 % in rural areas and 9 % in urban areas for males. Discussing females there is a mot difference in rural areas that is 86.2% and 24.7 % in urban areas which is nearly three times of male workforce.

Figure 1: Number of people employed across the agriculture sector in India from financial year 2017 to 2021(in millions).



Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/report-content/statistic/1284035>

It can be analysed from the above table that in the financial year 2017 the number of people employed across the agricultural sector is 145.66 million followed by a decline in the financial year 2018 which is 143.84 million. This decrease in the

workforce has continued to decline in the year 2019 also that is 143.4 million. But in the year 2020, it has shown an increase in the number of people employed across the agricultural sector that is 145.88 million which is approximately equal to the



number of people employed in the year 2017. This may be due to the sudden worst of the COVID-19 pandemic as many workers returned from their place of destination because of job loss or many other economic reasons. As of the fiscal year 2021, India's agriculture industry employed the most people, close to 152 million people. Despite the coronavirus pandemic's detrimental effects on the nation's GDP, this was the only industry to experience an uptick in employment. The sector was responsible for over 40% of employment in India that year, with an annual growth rate of 4.1%.

V. Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper examines that as men move out of agriculture to urban areas, feminization occurs. The data from the census and NSSO show that the pace of feminization is gradual. As take part in decision making the ability to contribute to agricultural dynamism is constrained by various factors. Despite being predominantly engaged in agriculture the share in operational holding of women is very low, that is proportion of holding controlled by women is small. The proportion of holdings by female declines with the size of the holdings as the small farmer has less access to various facilities related to agriculture such as credits, insurance, etc Women from ST have the lowest share in operational holdings and the same is also for SC whereas women of the general cast have the highest share in holding relatively.

Female agricultural laborers are disadvantaged as they are less paid in comparison to men in the same days of employment. Women must be given access to land and encouraged to pool and augment their land, labour, and financial resources is the most important point that should be taken into consideration. Feminisation can be seen as an empowering process by keeping it away from patriarchal norms and structure by entering into the world of work. Therefore, feminisation can be considered as empowering potential of women only if the constraint that limits the women is addressed. Participation of both men and women workforce has declined but the rate of decline is higher in men than female. This cannot be considered as empowerment of women as they are doing the work left by men so it is "feminisation because of compulsion" or also "feminisation because of agrarian distress as women have to do in order to run their livelihood. The analysis shows that social and economic protection is not in the rural population because these women as the reserve army of labour absorbed in agriculture and allied

activities as the cheapest labour. In order to transform this situation, it is necessary to focus on women's overall development in agriculture. Feminisations of labour in Indian agriculture is taking place in the context of shrinking land holding, growing labour shortages, mechanization, etc. Feminisation has been occurring due to a deepening crisis of gender relations. So, efforts should be taken to address this broader crisis otherwise outcomes will be limited. Feminisation as a form of structural transformation is different from feminisation as a result of agrarian distress.

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