

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Occupational structure shows the number of people who are working in various occupations to their livelihood. Occupational structure or economic structure is closely related to economic status of people which affects this behaviour and personality. The social and economic status of women in a society is largely determined by the social element, economic structure of the society and education. Though females' contribution is very small as compared to the males in employment their problems and conditions are in fact, inseparably linked everywhere with the general problems of the society they live in. Generally, women are employed largely in the unorganised sectors both, in urban and rural areas. The occupation structure differentiates the nature of jobs from rural to urban. The following overview of literature deals with studies pertaining to the women working in unorganised sectors.

In 1981 census, the total population is divided into three broad categories namely, main workers, marginal and non-workers. Main workers are those worked for the major

part of the year preceeding the date of enumeration and whose main activity was either cultivation or agriculture labourer or household industry, or any other work. According to 1981 census, 33.45 percent of India's population is mainworkers and of the mainworkers only 20.21 percent constituted by females and 79.79 percent males.

Regarding the overall participation of mainworkers the trend shows that the females participation has increased from 12.06 percent in 1971 to 13.99 percent in 1981, whereas the male population has declined by one point from 52.62 percent in 1971 to 51.62 in 1981.

Concerning the work participation rate in the urban areas, it is observed that it is distinctly lower than that in the rural areas for both males and females. The female participation has increased sharply in the rural areas from 13.36 percent in 1971 to 16.00 percent in 1981 and shows that female participation has increased from 6.65 percent in 1971 to 7.28 percent in 1981. Thus, the participation of women is observed as increasing both in the urban and rural areas.

Similar is the case with regard to the marginal workers (marginal workers are those who have not worked for the major part of the preceeding year concerned but nevertheless have done some work during any time in the reference period).

The total workforce (mainworkers plus marginal workers) of females indicates that it has increased to 19.76 percent in 1981 from 14.15 percent in 1971.

A view at the agriculture work performed by women shows that they are involved either in harvesting, weeding, threshing, sowing, and transplanting besides, sometimes assisting in ploughing. The Madhya Pradesh studies in Economics of Farm Management¹ reported that 50 percent of the female labour is primarily employed in weeding operations. In the Farm Management Studies², it was found that except for the central zone, almost all types of field operations are performed. Studies conducted in different regions in India confirmed that full days employment of women is lesser than men for wage employment. Rao and Sharma³ found that the average days worked per casual labourer engaged only in agricultural labour worked out to 247 and 92 for males and females respectively. Bhat's⁴

study shows that a female casual labour worked on farm on an average of 192 days and some of them got work for more than 237 days in a year. Similar is the study by Joshi and Pandey⁵ who showed that women work for lesser days than men. Studies⁶ also indicate that during agricultural seasons, sometimes women work for a greater number of days than men. The data from Agricultural and Rural Enquiries⁷ reveal that in three agricultural operations viz, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting employment of women in terms number of full days per year had been more than that of men.

Noting at the data on unemployment among agricultural workers during their second enquiry Rural Labour Enquiries, found that adult women were unemployed at the all India level for 196 days. All of them were not agricultural workers, but some of them worked in non-agricultural occupations too. Goswami and Bora⁸ in 1970 in terms of mandays, show that the farm workers remained unemployed for about three months in the case of adult men and six months in the case of women. Joshi and Pandey⁹ disclose that unemployment is found highly among females than males.

Migration is an important factor in promoting urbanisation in India. In India the largest volume of

migration is rural migration and 77 percent of all migrants are females. It has been assumed that migration is basically marriage migration but practically nothing is known about other types of rural migration. The Committee on the Status of Women in India¹⁰ found large number of women seeking employment during slack agricultural seasons in irrigation, road, and other construction work. In some regions that is, Punjab and West Bengal, it is known that migrant female labourers from other districts or states are hired during planting, weeding, and harvesting seasons; and in some districts of Andhra Pradesh women and children comprise an important part of the migrant labour force in the Tobacco Industry¹¹.

Regarding the rural-urban migration of women the World Bank¹² has estimated that the volume of migration has been increasing more rapidly than that of males for the last several decades. In urban areas women are over represented in unorganised and the modern sectors. Further employment among women from the lower middle class and poor socio-economic groups is more common than it is among the elite.

A Town and Planning Survey of 1975 found that 38.4 percent of adult women in Delhi's squatter settlements were

employed as against 5.1 percent of Delhi's total population. Findings of the Madras slum showed that at least 30 percent of the adult women were employed, though this was true of 6.7 percent of city's total population.¹³

Leela Kasthuri's¹⁴ study of South Indian Weavers caste migrants in a Delhi slum showed that metropolitan areas were chosen for migration in the hope that they would provide employment in domestic sector or construction work.

A study by Thipiah¹⁵ indicated that women workers in the urban informal sector are migrant females who left the district on account of natural calamities like draught or compulsion of employment or marriage or wage differentials between the urban and rural sectors.

Apart from women migrants from the villages in search of jobs, many poor residents of cities are increasingly taking up jobs of different castes. Banarjee¹⁶ found that despite constant wage rates in certain sectors over a seven year period more and more women were coming into the employment market. Of 400 women studied the majority were domestic servants and rest were distributed in various unskilled and semiskilled occupations. Nearly 25

percent were employed as price rate workers. While 16 percent were the sole family earners about 60 percent contributed to one third of the family income. Banarjee observed that not only did women work in low paid jobs but were also prepared to work into socially taboo area.

Andrea and Singh's¹⁷ study indicates that 50 percent of the small vendors, retailers, and food source providers in Hyderabad were women. Banarjee¹⁸ suggests that the displacement of women from the organised sector, especially in manufacturing industry has forced large numbers into field work and self employment which yields less than the subsistence. Sharma's¹⁹ study indicates that 75 percent of all urban working women were concentrated in only 19 occupations. Apart from clerks, teachers and nurses who comprise 20 percent of the urban female workforce, the vast majority were in occupations which needed little or no education. Nearly 25 percent were unskilled labourers or domestic servants. Singh and De Souza²⁰ found that women were invariably domestic servants, howkers, construction workers and petty workers. In their study of slum and pavement dwellers in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras a survey of 80 working class women indicated that they were either factory workers or domestic servants²¹.

A study of the migrant women in the slums of Delhi²² shows the limited nature of employment as compared to men. Women form 87 percent of all domestic workers; women in domestic form 84 percent of the total female labour force. In occupations of high prestige and income, migrant women are hardly represented. Participation of migrant women in the labour force is much higher than the others. The types of jobs available to them however, are of the lowest status and pay.

In a number of city surveys it has been found that most of the urban working women are also uneducated, unskilled and participating in manual occupations. Lakdawala²³ and others reported that in Bombay employment opportunities for women were limited to only few occupations, which did not require much skill. They have shown that professional occupations were second in ~~importance in women.~~ But even in this category most of the women were concentrated in lower grades. Sen²⁴ in the city survey of Calcutta revealed that the proportion of women to total workers was one half of what it was in Bombay. There they constituted nearly 10 percent of the total workers whereas, in Calcutta it was only 5 percent. Puna city survey²⁵ of 1937 and 1954 also confirm and hold that same

pattern as reported by other surveys. He developed a scheme for classifying occupations according to their socio-economic status. According to his classification it was found that there was a decline in the percentage of those who were working at comparatively higher level viz, clerical, professional and other such salaried jobs.

Brahme ²⁶ conducted a study among 75 hamal (coolie) women in Pune city and found that the respondents were involved in the transportation of goods by carrying headlods or pushing hand carts from godowns to shops as well as to the residence of customers. In addition to carrying goods women were responsible for sorting, grading, weighing and arranging goods and repairing gunny sacks used for transportation. Most of them were migrants, the fathers of whom were small cultivators or landless labourers. Around 55 percent were below the poverty line. Working conditions were strenuous and dangerous at the timber and railway goods yards. Approximately 55 percent of the women or their families were in debt and one third of them reported that their previous employment were domestic servants and have changed for better pay.

The studies initiated in Bihar and Delhi by the National Committee²⁷ shows that the women workers were employed in construction industry mostly as unskilled manual labour. The report also indicated wage discrimination, deferred payment, unexplained fines and deductions generally made by contractors or sub-contractors as well as a high degree of indebtedness of these workers to these persons. The study in Delhi among 150 construction workers by G. P. Sinha²⁸ reported that the payment were paid lesser than the prevailing rate. S. N. Ranade²⁹ found that men were paid at least Re.1 more for doing exactly the same job as women. Women in Delhi Survey, earned Rs.100 to Rs.125 while the average earnings in Warrangal Survey was Rs.225.

A case study of Amravati city by S. S. Kaptan³⁰ regarding the income, wages, and working conditions of women workers in the unorganised sector revealed that the social conditions in which they live continues to be traditional, exploitative and antiwoman in nature.

DeSouza³¹ has shown by comparing different regions that the rate of women workers varies with the level of socio-economic development and the percentage of women engaged in tertiary occupations. Comparatively the rate of women workers is much higher in less developed areas where

more people are engaged in primary and secondary occupations and it is lower in more prosperous regions where a large proportion were working in tertiary occupations.

Work participation rate among women according to the level of their education shows that the highest proportion of workers are among illiterate and decreases with the increase in the level of education, that is, comparatively a lesser proportion of the literates work as compared to the illiterates³². Standing³³ states that empirical research has so far not adequately demonstrated any constant association between education and female labour force participation. Nath³⁴ on the 1961 census data and Singh on the 1971 Census data suggest that women's participation in the labour force tends to decline with increase in literacy. In fact, Singh³⁵ states that those women with the least amount of education whether trained in the formal system or not, were the most likely to work.

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P. Subba Rao and Parmeswara Raju conducted a study exclusively among housemaids and indicated an unsound relation between housewives and housemaids in a town in Andhra Pradesh.

From the studies discussed above it is clear that female employment has spread out both in the rural and urban areas. With increasing industrialisation, mechanisation and a decline in the demand for traditional handmade goods, women were not necessarily pushed out of employment; due to the mandate of poverty they seek alternate jobs either in the same areas or migrate to other parts wherever work is available. Though scores of studies have accumulated concerning various problems of the working women in unorganised sector, little concentration is extended to the housemaids problems. Though they get full time employment the wages and other benefits are comparatively less and are more prone for exploitation.

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