

# GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE IN INDIA DURING POST-REFORM PERIOD

<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. K. Das, <sup>2</sup> Rajasi Dutta

<sup>1</sup> Professor, <sup>2</sup> State Aided College Teacher (SACT)

<sup>1</sup> Department of Commerce, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, West Bengal, India,

<sup>2</sup> Department of Commerce, Charuchandra College, University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India.

**Abstract:** This paper examines the gender perspective of rural employment structure in India during the post-reform period on the basis of NSSO and Census data. There is evidence of gender-based labour market segmentation in both farming and non-farming sectors in most rural areas. It finds a declining rate in the female-male labour force participation rate presents a challenge for both government and private sector. The proportion of workers engaged in the farming activities gradually declined for both rural male and female. Whereas, on the other hand, in non-farming sector, the proportion of rural male and female workers engaged in the non-agricultural activities gradually increasing. The scenario is almost same for all the states across the country.

**Keywords:** Gender-wise rural Employment Structure, Work Force Participation Rate, Labour Force Participation Rate, Compound Annual Growth Rate, Post-Reform Period.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Employment structure in rural India has been a significant aspect for the growth of the economy for a long period. Agricultural sector generates huge employment to the poor and weaker section of male and female workforce in the rural states of India. But, in the post-reform period it has been found that a huge proportion of rural workforce both male and female have changed their employment from agricultural activities to various non-agricultural activities of different industrial categories viz. mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, electricity, gas and water, trade, hotel and restaurant, transport and storage, service and others. During 1990s, agriculture experienced a net decline in employment which might have caused the non-agricultural informal sectors in rural areas, to engross all the increase in the growth of rural male and female workforce.

The gender aspect in rural employment has become significant in last few decades with a sharp increase in the rural female workforce participation. A significant portion of female workforce engaged themselves in agricultural as well as non-agricultural employment. In the major states of rural India, the percentage of female workforce participation rate has increased tremendously in the post-reform period. It seems that the process of transformation of the rural workforce structure has accelerated the tendency of feminisation in the rural workforce structure. In spite of significant development in the rural employment structure it is found that there has always been discrimination between the rural male and female workers. From various reports of NSSO, Ministry of Human Resource Development, and information gathered from various studies and journals it has been found that, there is a persistent fall in the female-male labour participation rate during the post-reform period. The decline in labour force participation among rural women is also greater as per the NSS data.

Females tend to be clustered in fewer sectors than males and in agriculture, tend to be mostly involved in subsistence production. This segmentation suggests that it may be more difficult for women than men to switch for better jobs in new sectors when new economic opportunities arise. Women are mostly employed in low-quality jobs, including such activities where their rights are not respected and social protection is restricted. Women are paid less than men in many cases. However, the rural India has experienced an increasing tendency of feminisation of rural employment structure during the post-reform period.

In the following sections we shall devote ourselves in exploring the state level gender wise employment scenario in rural India, impact of the transformation in rural employment structure on the female workforce and various causes of gender discrimination in rural employment and for this we will analyse at aggregate level.

The entire analysis will be based on the secondary data available in the reports of the NSSO, various reports of Census, Government of India, Statistical Abstracts of Labour bureau, Government of India and different MHRD reports and also in the published literature.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The gender perspective of the employment structure in rural sector indicates the structural transformation of the rural economy as a whole. There has been a tremendous growth of non-farm activities in rural for both male and female workforce. There are few literatures in this area discussed below:

Ghosal (2002) has found that a huge proportion of rural male and female workforce have shifted from agricultural activities to different non-agricultural activities of different industrial categories in secondary sector and majority of the workers shifted themselves into tertiary sector and others.

Jha (2006) pointed out that towards the end of 1990's the incidence of unemployment was very high in rural occupational sectors of India. This situation was disturbing employment of male and female workers in the rural sector mainly which is associated with the farming activities, it was also stagnated during the pre-reform period before 1990's. The employment in agriculture has also been restricted by the increased pressure on land. All these factors are responsible for moving of male and female workers towards non-farm sectors.

Srivastava and Srivastava (2010) stated large-scale surveys show that while employment of rural women has grown over the decades, female workers are still largely employed or self-employed as casual labour in farming activities. They face various types of discrimination, including job-typing that pushes them into low-paying jobs.

Mazumdar and Neetha (2011) analysed some of the explicit as well as not so explicit trends in relation to women's employment in India from 1993-94 to 2009-10 and argues that they indicate a grave and continuing crisis in women's employment under liberalization led growth. Trends in the distribution of male and female workers by employment status and broad industry for the same period are also outlined in their study.

Chand and Srivastava (2014) explained the cause of reduction in female workforce participation as the highest increase in the proportion of female withdrawing from farm work and staying back at home is reported in the case of agricultural labour households and increase in proportion of female in domestic activities is also noticed in the case of non-farm rural households.

Deepanshu (2017) pointed out that there is a persistent fall in the female-male labour participation rate, from a rate of 45% in 2003 to a rate of less than 34% in 2015. The exacerbating effect of gender-division in the employment situation presents significant spill overs on declining aggregate labour productivity levels hindering the realisation of potential economic growth levels.

Vasudeva (2018) explained that with a rise in migration of male workers from rural to urban areas, there is 'feminisation' of agriculture sector, as the number of women in multiple roles such as cultivators, entrepreneurs and labourers is increasing, according to the Economic Survey 2017-18. Notably, as per Census 2011, out of total female main workers, 55% were agricultural labourers and 24% cultivators. However, only 12.8% of the operational holdings were owned by women, which reflected the gender disparity in ownership of landholdings in agriculture.

Roy Chowdhury (2020) said that damages due to floods reduce job opportunities in rural agricultural sectors. The study also shows that the decrease in employment opportunities is more for female workers than for male workers. The possible reason is that female workers cannot easily shift from farm to non-farm occupations due to socio-economic and cultural barriers.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

Several studies have been made to understand the gender-wise nature and pattern of transformation of rural employment structure in India. Most of these studies are dated and in them no recent data is considered. These studies have failed to capture the dynamics of gender-wise changes in nature of rural workforce structure in different states of India during the post reform period. Most of the earlier studies, however,

highlight the fall in the productivity of agriculture and the desperate migration, poverty, demographic pressure, increase in population, economic distress etc. as the main explanation factors behind the rapid transformation of employment structure during the post-reform period. The main objectives of the study have been outlined as:

- To examine the gender-wise process of transformation in the rural employment structure in rural India.
- To study the industry-wise sectoral rural employment in India during the post-reform period and to find out the state-level employment scenario.
- To identify the factors which are responsible for the shifting of rural male and female workforce from farm to non-farm informal activities.

#### 4. DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

The study is empirical in nature. It is exclusively based on the secondary data available from various reports of decennial censuses and also from different reports of quinquennial surveys on employment-unemployment situation in India of the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). On the basis of this data set we have captured the trend in employment structure during the period of economic reform. Different rounds of NSSO data on employment-unemployment situation is used in varying combinations for post-reform period, 50<sup>th</sup> round (1993-1994), 55<sup>th</sup> (1999-2000), 61<sup>st</sup> round (2004-2005), 62<sup>nd</sup> round (2005-2006), and 64<sup>th</sup> round (2007-2008) and 66<sup>th</sup> round (2009-2010) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2018-2019) are considered to capture the trend in employment structure during the period of economic reform. Work Force Participation Rate (**WFPR**), Labour Force Participation Rate (**LFPR**) are considered on the basis of usually working persons (Principal & Subsidiary activities) taken together and Unemployment rates are considered according to Usual Status, Current Weekly Status and Current Daily Status (NSSO).

The data of gender aspects are collected from the Census Reports for the years 1991, 2001 and 2011. Gender-wise changes in the Farm and Non-Farm employment in rural areas is being attempted to show with the help of the tables.

To analyse the data, we have used conventional statistical tools like coefficient of variation, compound growth rate, tabular presentation etc. From the results of the analysis of data we have substantiated our hypotheses and drawn our inferences as well as concluding observations.

#### 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

##### 5.1 The Gender Structure of Rural Employment in India

The gender pattern and current trends in the rural employment structure can be easily determined by analysing the Labour Force Participation Rates in India. In this section, we will observe the changes in the LFPR of both rural male and female workers during the post-reform period. As we consider LFPR is the main indicator of determining the nature of gender inequality in rural employment. When the major states of India are witnessing a perpetual downfall in the process of employment generation in various formal organised sectors, a declining rate in the female-male labour force participation rate presents a challenge for both government and private sector. There is a persistent fall in the female-male labour participation rate, from a rate of 45% in 2003 to a rate of less than 34% in 2015. The exacerbating effect of gender-divide in the employment situation presents significant spill overs on declining aggregate labour productivity levels hampering the realisation of potential economic growth levels (Mohan, 2017).

It is evident from Table 1, as per Usual Principal & Subsidiary Status, Current Daily Status and Current Weekly Status, there has been a decline in the female-male labour force participation rate. A closer look at the NSS data shows that the sharp decline in rural areas. The female LFPR has fallen from 330 per 1000 in 1993 to 190 in 2018. Whereas the rural male LFPR has fallen from 561 to 521 over the same period. Decrease in agricultural work opportunities is partly responsible for this decline. The size of agricultural landholdings has shrunk with divisions within families, according to agricultural data.

The decline in labour force participation among rural women is also greater among the lower income sections as per the NSS data. The first three income classes, representing the lowest earners in rural India, have the lowest female workforce population ratio (WFPR) (defined as the number of people who are currently employed per 1000 of the population), according to NSS data. The lowest representation of 198

per 1,000 females is in the third lowest income class of 20%-30%, while the highest of 288 is in the third highest income class of 70%-80%. One of the main factors identified as hindering women's participation in the workforce is low education. Another factor that has had an impact on women's workforce participation is the MGNREGS. MGNREGS work increases market wages for men, but not for women. (Salve, 2019). There is a decline in women participation in rural areas is mainly concentrated among married women aged 25-64. The lack of availability of agricultural and non-agricultural jobs in rural areas appears to be driving the declining participation in rural areas. Structural occupational change in India also led to a rapidly shrinking primary sector in favour of a rapidly expanding secondary and tertiary sector. This also mainly contributed to the declining female labour force participation.

**Table 1: Gender-wise Rural Labour Force Participation Rate in India during the Post- Reform Period**

Financial Year	Principal & Subsidiary Status		Current Weekly Status		Current Daily Status	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1993-94	33.0	56.1	27.6	54.7	23.2	53.4
1999-00	30.2	54.0	26.3	53.1	22.0	51.5
2004-05	33.3	55.5	28.7	54.5	23.7	53.1
2009-10	26.5	55.6	23.1	54.8	19.7	53.6
2011-12	25.3	55.3	21.5	54.5	18.0	53.4
2018-19	19.0	52.1	15.5	49.7	NA	NA

**Source:** NSSO Report (1993-94,1999-00,2004-05,2009-10, 2011-12,2018-19)

Some reasons behind reduction in workforce seem to be:

- (i) Rise in the proportion of female withdrawing from farming activities and staying back at home is noticed in the case of agricultural labour households.
- (ii) Increase in proportion of female in domestic activities is also noticed in the case of non-farm rural households.
- (iii) High growth in the output of agriculture and terms of trade for agriculture during the post reform period led to sharp increase in income of farmers as well as agricultural labourers in this period which induced withdrawal from farming work.
- (iv) Increased enrolment in education.
- (v) Increase in reservation wage and non-availability of suitable work at that wage rate.
- (vi) Manufacturing jobs away from the place of the habitation, discouraging female to go for it.
- (vii) Lack of skill to get well paid non-farm job.
- (viii) The female withdrawal from labour-force might be due to the reversal of an exceptional increase in female labour-force caused by agrarian distress and
- (ix) Rising tension between labour and employer in agriculture due to changing social relationship between them (Chand and Srivastava, 2014).

## 5.2 Sectoral Rural Employment by Gender in India

In this section we have discussed about the gender-wise sectoral rural employment in India during the period of reform based on various NSSO data (Round 50<sup>th</sup> to Round 68<sup>th</sup>). Table 2 provides a gender-wise rural employment scenario by sector and by employment status. Agriculture continues to be the main source of rural employment for both women and men in India. Among workers in the usual status (Principal & Subsidiary Status) in rural India, about 59 per cent of the males and 75 per cent of the females were engaged in the agriculture sector. The proportion of workers engaged in the agricultural activities gradually fell from 74 per cent in 1993-94 to 54 per cent in 2018-19 for rural males and from 86 per cent in 1993-94 to 71 per

cent in 2018-19 for rural females. The Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for male has been declined by 5.25% and for female it has fallen by 3.14%. Whereas, on the other hand, in case of non-agricultural sector, the proportion of workers engaged in the non-agricultural activities gradually increased from 26 per cent in 1993-94 to 46 per cent in 2018-19 for rural males and from 14 percent in 1993-94 to 29 percent in 2018-19 for rural females. The CAGR for male and female workforce has been 10.21% and 13.05% respectively during the reform period. This shows a prominent future of both male and female workforce in non-agricultural sectors.

It is observed that during last decade, about 79 million is the net addition to the total workforce. Of the total net addition to the workforce, one-third of it is absorbed in the agriculture and the rest in the non-agriculture. Thus, a large part of the increasing rural labour force, both male and female, gets absorbed in non-agriculture. Relatively higher growth of workforce engaged in non-farm when compared with the farm is observed during the last three decades. It indicates increasing absorption of workforce in non-agriculture sector for the last three decades. The rate of growth in the total workforce engaged in non-farm activities is distinctively high and different from that of farming activities, particularly during 1991-2001. (Ventakanarayana and Naik, 2018).

**Table 2: Gender-wise Sectoral Composition of Rural Employment in India during the Post-Reform Period**

Sector	year	Male	Female	CAGR for male	CAGR for female
Farm	1993-94	74.1	86.2	-5.25%	-3.14%
	1999-00	71.4	85.4		
	2004-05	66.5	83.3		
	2009-10	62.8	79.4		
	2011-12	59.4	74.9		
	2018-19	53.6	71.2		
Non-Farm	1993-94	25.9	13.8	10.21%	13.05%
	1999-00	28.6	14.6		
	2004-05	33.5	16.7		
	2009-10	37.2	20.6		
	2011-12	40.6	25.1		
	2018-19	46.4	28.8		

**Source:** Employment Unemployment Survey, NSSO

Table 3 shows the sectoral industry wise rural employment by gender in India during the post-reform period. The participation of male and female rural workforce in different farm and non-farm sectors are clear from the table. Both rural male and female workforce seems to shift their jobs from farming to non-farm sectors during the period of reform. There has been a fall in the farming activities accompanied by an equivalent increase in the non-farm activities mainly in the manufacturing and household industries. In farming sector, rural male and female workforce has declined sharply from 74.1 per cent in 1993-94 to 53.6 per cent in 2018-19 and 86.2 percent in 1993-94 to 71.2 percent in 2018-19 respectively.

The other categories of non-farming activities are manufacturing, trade, hotelling, construction, transport, storage etc. where the rural male and female workforce engaged themselves leaving the agricultural activities. In the post-reform period, the manufacturing output in rural areas witnessed higher growth rate of 8.38 per cent, which further accelerated sharply to 15.87 per cent during 2004-05 to 2011-12. Rural male and female workforce engaged in manufacturing activities, increased from 7% in 1993-94 to 9% in 2011-12 but declined in 2018-19 to 7% and 7% in 1993-94 to 10% in 2011-12 and 9% in 2018-19 respectively. The

table further reveals that many rural male and female workforces shifted themselves to construction sector. Rural male workforce engaged in construction activities has increased from 3% in 1993-94 to 13% in 2011-12 and 15.4% in 2018-19, whereas, the rate has increased from 1% in 1993-94 to 6% in 2018-19 for rural female workforce. Again, in sectors like trade, retail, transport, storage and communication and service, the rural male workforce participation has increased marginally from 7% in 1993-94 to 8% in 2018-19. Whereas, rural female workforce participation has increased sharply from 3.4% in 1993-94 to 9.1% in 2018-19. Rural female workforce participation in all non-farm sectors has also increased but at a lower rate compare to the rural male workforce.

**Table 3: Gender-wise Sectoral Rural Employment in Industry in India during the Post- Reform Period**

Industrial Category	Male					Female				
	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12	2018-19	1993-94	1999-00	2004-05	2011-12	2018-19
Agriculture	74.1	71.4	66.5	59.4	53.2	86.2	85.4	83.3	74.9	71.1
Mining and Quarrying	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.7
Manufacturing	7.0	7.3	7.9	8.1	7.4	7.0	7.6	8.4	9.8	9.0
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2
Construction	3.2	4.5	6.8	13.0	15.4	0.9	1.1	1.5	6.6	6.0
Wholesale/ Retail / Trade	5.5	6.8	8.3	8.0	9.8	2.1	2.0	2.5	3.0	4.3
Transport, Storage and Communication	2.2	3.2	3.8	4.2	5.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Services	7.0	6.1	5.9	6.5	8.0	3.4	3.7	4.0	5.2	9.1

**Source:** Various Rounds of NSSO data

Thus, it can be concluded from the table that in the post-reform period, a large proportion of rural workforce have shifted themselves from farming activities and engaged themselves in different non-farming sectors viz. manufacturing, construction, transport, hotelling, service and so on. The rural female workforce engaged in rural non-farm employment is much less than the rural male workforce. Gender-wise disaggregation reveals that female workers possess relatively low level of education and technical training as compared to male counterparts. These facts suggest that setting up of industries and improvement in infrastructure are not sufficient conditions for increasing employment in rural areas. Improvement in industrial infrastructure in rural areas must be accompanied by the effective human resources development programmes to impart necessary skills and training to rural youth to match the job requirement in manufacturing sector. (Srivastava et al., 2017).

### 5.3 Gender-wise State Level Employment Scenario in Rural India

The male and female WFPR in rural employment in different states has been explained here. In this section an attempt is made to discuss the trends of rural employment across the states gender wise. For this purpose,

we have chosen the various reports of the Census data since 1991. Table 4 presents the rural WFPR of both male and female workforce in India at state level during the post reform period as per the Census data. It also shows the ranking of the states according to the percentage of rural workforce participation.

Now the table shows both rural male and female WFPR in different states during 1991 to 2011. For rural male workforce, Tamil Nadu is consistently holding the first ranking position from 1991 to 2011. The other states where rural male WFPR has increased between 1991 and 2011 are Himachal Pradesh (50.46% in 1991 to 59 % in 2011), which was in 11<sup>th</sup> position in 1991, gained 3<sup>rd</sup> ranking position in 2011 followed by West Bengal (52.09% in 1991 to 57.2%), Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, which states have male WFPR higher than the national average. Whereas, the other states viz. Assam, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh have coincided with the national average. Only Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir have lower WFPR than the all-India level. Further, for rural female workforce, among major states -Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Kerala, Rajasthan and Maharashtra show higher than all-India average participation rates for the rural females in 2011. Himachal Pradesh being on the top position. On the other hand, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab and West Bengal have female WFPR lower than the national average. Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh show WFPR coincide with the all-India average. Punjab being at the bottom of the ranking for both the years 1991 and 2011. Almost all states have experienced a fall in rural female WFPR during the year 2011. In south India, Kerala does not record a high work participation rates in spite of very high literacy. The inter-state variations which are measured in terms of Coefficient of Variations (CVs) have shown an increasing trend both for male and female WFPR. However, male WFPR has shown a sharp increasing tendency in the inter-state variations (6.38% in 1991 to 8.30 % in 2011) and female workers participation has shown a tremendous declining trend (47.97% in 1991 to 33.33% in 2001) but again a marginal increasing trend in the inter-state variations is 37.04% in 2011 (Table 4).

**Table 4: Gender-wise Rural Workforce Participation Rate in India and its Major States during the Post-Reform Period**

States	Male			Female		
	1991	2001	2011	1991	2001	2011
Andhra Pradesh	57.92(2)	58.48(2)	58.4(4)	42.48(2)	43.24(3)	44.6(2)
Assam	49.30(13)	49.77(14)	53.1(12)	23.27(9)	22.28(13)	23.7(10)
Bihar	48.87(14)	48.43(16)	46.7(16)	16.26(12)	20.19(15)	20.1(14)
Gujarat	54.91(5)	55.59(4)	57.1(6)	35.60(7)	39.04(8)	32.0(8)
Haryana	48.51(15)	50.88(11)	50.1(14)	12.62(15)	34.18(9)	20.9(11)
Himachal Pradesh	50.46(11)	54.74(5)	59.0(3)	36.61(5)	46.47(2)	47.4(1)
Jammu & Kashmir	NA	49.14(15)	46.3(17)	NA	25.84(11)	20.8(12)
Karnataka	56.04(3)	58.32(3)	59.8(2)	36.60(6)	39.86(7)	38.8(7)
Kerala	47.88(16)	50.22(13)	53.6(11)	16.86(11)	15.88(17)	20.2(13)
Madhya Pradesh	53.96(7)	53.08(10)	54.3(9)	39.26(3)	40.68(6)	39.3(6)
Maharashtra	53.19(8)	54.18(8)	56.7(7)	46.06(1)	46.52(1)	42.5(4)
Orissa	54.68(6)	53.38(9)	56.5(8)	22.62(10)	27.10(10)	29.7(9)
Punjab	55.05(4)	54.45(6)	54.9(10)	4.37(16)	23.15(12)	14.3(17)
Rajasthan	50.12(12)	50.82(12)	51.7(13)	33.25(8)	40.70(5)	42.7(3)
Tamil Nadu	58.28(1)	59.38(1)	60.0(1)	38.50(4)	41.33(4)	41.2(5)
Uttar Pradesh	50.51(10)	47.84(17)	47.4(15)	14.16(13)	18.89(16)	18.3(16)
West Bengal	52.09(9)	54.30(7)	57.2(5)	13.07(14)	20.70(14)	18.4(15)
All India	52.48	52.36	53.0	26.67	30.98	30.0
CV	<b>6.38</b>	<b>6.44</b>	<b>8.30</b>	<b>47.97</b>	<b>33.33</b>	<b>37.04</b>

Source: Census, 1991, 2001, 2011

Figures in parenthesis are ranks of the corresponding states according to their workforce participation

#### Gender-wise Changes in Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR) in 1991, 2001 and 2011:

- The rural male and female WFPR in the country have recorded a marginal increase from 39.1% in 2001 to 39.8% in 2011.

- Majority of the states have shown increase in male WFPR between 2001-2011: West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.
- In some major states female WFPR has declined. Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar.
- During 2011, among the major states, male WFPR was the highest in Tamil Nadu followed by Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka (approx. 60 per cent), West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh (58 per cent each).
- The WFPR for males was the lowest in Bihar (46 per cent each) preceded by Uttar Pradesh (47 per cent).
- Among females, WFPR was the highest in Himachal Pradesh (47 per cent) followed by Andhra Pradesh (45 percent).
- The WFPR for females was the lowest in Bihar and Haryana (20 per cent) preceded by Assam (23 per cent), Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal (18 per cent each) and Punjab (14 per cent).

#### 5.4 Growth of Rural Female Workers in India during the Post-Reform Period

The gender dimension in rural employment has become important in recent decades with the growing concerns about the status of females in a society. A significant portion of female workers is concentrated in agriculture, manufacturing and community services. During the post-reform period the growth in the number of female workers in the rural India have increased. In all the four broad categories viz. cultivators, agricultural workers, household industry and other workers the rate of rural female workers participation has increased over the period from 1991 to 2011.

Let us now examine the growth of rural female workforce in India by occupation since in the post-reform on the basis of reports provided by Labour Bureau, Government of India. Table 5 represents the percentage of female main workers to total female population under broad categories during 1991 to 2011. To analyse growth of women employment in rural India during 1991 to 2011 for the given categories compound Growth rate is taken for consideration. It is evident that, there was no considerable growth in female main workers (16.19%). Under the cultivators and agricultural labourers' category more than 50 per cent growth was observed. The maximum growth was witnessed by other workers 90.01% followed by household industry having 72.75 %. The rate of growth is low for cultivators and agricultural labourers when compared to Household Industry and Other workers.

**Table 5: Growth of Female Workers by Occupation in Rural India during 1991 to 2011**

Year	Female Main Workers	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry	Other Workers
1991	15.93	5.51	7.05	0.55	2.82
2001	14.68	5.11	4.51	0.95	4.11
2011	25.5	24.0	41.1	5.7	29.2
<b>CAGR</b>	<b>16.19</b>	<b>50.73</b>	<b>58.82</b>	<b>72.75</b>	<b>90.01</b>

**Source:** Statistical Profile on Women Labour, 2012-2013, Labour Bureau, Government of India (Percentage Female worker to Total Female Population).

#### Findings:

Women faced inequalities in all the pillars of fair work, rights and standards at work, social protection, employment creation etc. for a long time. Therefore, for the ILO (International Labour Organization) gender equality is a crucial issue. The ILO has implemented a number of projects that promote gender equality in rural areas. Thus, since 1990's the gender inequality in terms of engagement in work has been shorten with the growth in the number of female workers in the rural India (Hodges, 2012).

Plausible explanation behind the increasing trend of feminization in rural employment structure during the post reform period may be increase in literacy rate of women, Government adopted strategies like National Literacy Mission for imparting functional literacy, spread of elementary education, due to economic distress, increase in poverty and unemployment, to generate income, so on and so forth. Further the reasons behind this increase in the growth of rural female workers in the last decade in all the broad categories of industries in India during the period of reform as discussed above may be due to increase in rural literacy rate, economic distress Government adopted strategies and so on.

With a rise in migration of male workers from rural to urban areas, there is 'feminisation' of agriculture sector, as the number of women in multiple roles such as cultivators, entrepreneurs and labourers is increasing. The Union government was implementing various schemes to improve the entitlements of women farmers. To ensure main-streaming of women in the agriculture sector, the government is earmarking at least 30% of the budget allocation for women beneficiaries in all ongoing schemes-programmes and development activities. Besides focussing on women self-help groups (SHG) to connect them to micro-credit through capacity building activities and to provide information and ensuring their representation in different decision-making bodies (The Economic Survey 2017-18).

## 6. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The conclusion which emerges from the analysis of data can be outlined as follows:

- The gender pattern and current trends in the rural employment structure is determined by analyzing the workforce participation rates in India. It is found, there has been a tendency of decline in the rural workforce participation rates in India since the post reform period for both male and female workforce. The female WFPRs according to NSSO report has been quite considerable in the rural areas during the period of reform. This indicates prevalence of underemployment in rural areas. In the post reform period, rural areas also witnessed negative growth in employment in spite of increase in output. The reason behind decline in rural workforce between 1993-94 and 2011-12 may be – (i) on account of rising unemployment, (ii) due to change in labour-force, (iii) high growth in agricultural output, (iv) increase in literacy rate, (v) lack of skill to get well paid non-farm job and so on.
- While analyzing the gender-wise sectoral rural employment in India during the period of reform based on various NSSO data, it is observed that, farming continues to be the primary source of rural employment for both male and female workforce in India. Among the rural workers about 59 percent of the males and 75 per cent of the females are engaged in the farming sector. The proportion of workers engaged in the agricultural activities gradually declined for both rural males and rural females. The CAGR for male has been declined by 4.33% and for female it has fallen by 2.77%. Whereas, on the other hand, in non-farming sector, the proportion of rural male and female workers engaged in the non-agricultural activities gradually increased. The CAGR for male and female workforce has been 9.41% and 12.71% respectively during the reform period. This shows a prominent future of both male and female workforce in non-agricultural sectors. Again, in the sectors like trade, retail, transport, storage and communication and service, the rural male workforce participation has increased marginally during the period of reform. Rural female workforce participation in all non-farm sectors has also increased but at a lower rate compare to the rural male workforce. It is observed, the gender-wise disaggregation reveals that female workers have relatively less education and technical training as compared to male workers. Thus, in rural areas, the industrial training and infrastructure must be improved for the betterment of the rural youth.
- The gender-wise trends of rural employment across the states in rural India are discussed here. For this purpose, we have chosen the various reports of the Census data since 1991. The inter-state variations which are measured in terms of CVs have shown an increasing trend both for male and female WFPR. However, male WFPR has shown a sharp increasing tendency in the inter-state variations (6.38% in 1991 to 8.30 % in 2011) and female workers participation has shown a tremendous declining trend (47.97% in 1991 to 33.33% 2001), again a marginal increasing trend in the inter-state variations in 2011(37.04%). Here we find, Tamil Nadu is consistently holding the first ranking position from 1991 to 2011 for rural male. The states of Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Orissa have rural male WFPR higher than the national average (53% in 2011). Whereas, the other states viz. Assam, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh have

coincided with the national average. Only Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir have lower WFPR than the all-India level. However, for rural female workforce, among major states-Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Kerala, Rajasthan and Maharashtra show higher than all-India average participation rates for the rural females in 2011. Himachal Pradesh being on the top position. On the other hand, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab and West Bengal have female WFPR lower than the national average (30% in 2011).

- The gender aspect in rural employment has become important in past few decades with the sharp increasing tendency of feminization. A significant portion of female workforce engaged themselves in farming as well as non-farm employment. In the major three states of eastern India, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the percentage of female workforce participation rate has increased tremendously since the period of reform. The rural female besides looking after the household activities participating in agricultural operations. Further, it is noticed that majority of the female workers in rural areas are engaged in self-employment and casual employment mostly as unskilled and semi-skilled workers. To analyze growth of women employment in rural India during the period of reform we have taken compound growth rate into consideration for all four categories viz. cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industries and other workers as per the Census data. It is evident that the rate of growth is low for cultivators and agricultural labourers when compared to Household Industry and Other workers. In the post reform period, some of the reasons behind feminization are- (i) the rising education among women (ii) increase in literacy rate (iii) declining fertility rate (iv) economic distress (v) increase in poverty (vi) Government adopted strategies and so on.
- During the post-reform period, in spite of so much development in rural areas and feminization in the rural employment structure it is found that there has always been discrimination between the rural male and female workers. Therefore, here we have analyzed discriminations among genders in rural employment on the basis of the data available from various reports of NSSO, Ministry of Human Resource Development, and information gathered from various authors' studies and journals since the period of reform. We have traced the changes in the LFPR of both rural male and female workers since the period of reform. We have also compared the educational level of rural male and female on the data available from Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and also the gender gap in earnings during the period of our study. Where we find, a declining rate in the female-male labour force participation rate presents a challenge for both government and private sector. There is a persistent fall in the female-male labour participation rate, from a rate of 45% in 2003 to a lower rate of less than 34% in 2015. The decline in labour force participation among rural women is also greater as per the NSS data. In educational level also, we can see gender inequalities even in the post reform period. The enrolment rate and drop-out rate are higher for rural females compare to rural males. During 2011-12, about 21 per cent of rural males and 12 per cent of rural females in India were educated. Further, we have measured the gender gap in earnings mainly on the basis of NSS data since the reform period. It is clear from the study that the absolute wage differentials between rural male and female workers have widened over time. There are huge wage differentials between rural female and male workers. Therefore, female workers are in a poor position in terms of wage earnings in comparison to the male workers. Rural employment includes agriculture, self-employment jobs in small trade, cottage industries and enterprises providing goods and services, and wage labour in agriculture. These works are time consuming not sufficiently remunerated. Female workers in rural areas form a significant proportion of unpaid family workers. It is seen that unpaid work on family agriculture accounts for 34 percent of females' informal employment in India (compared with 11 percent of males' informal employment). Female workers employed in rural areas are often involved in multiple activities and also different part time employments at the same time. They may need to change their occupations, or may remain unemployed or underemployed over a certain period of time. Thus, there is an urgent need for governmental interventions and making policies to improve conditions of the rural females in India regarding wage earnings, education and employment.

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