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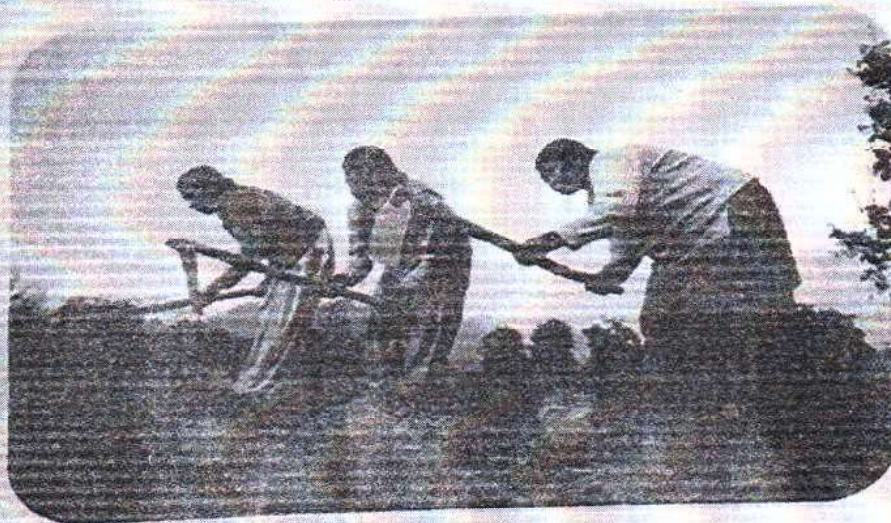
Research by

Dr. Sachin Hudale

Assistant Professor and Head Department of Geography,
Yas. Bancrao Chavan College, Islampur , Tal. Wlawa, Dist.
Sangli.

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Assistant Professor and Head , Department of Geography ,
Yashwantrao Chavan College, Islampur , Tal. Wlawa, Dist. Sangli.
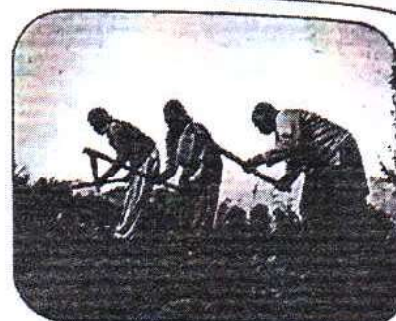
ABSTRACT

The present study aims to analyze the social status and living standards of working women in rural areas of Walwatahsil of Sangli district from Maharashtra. Walwatahsil has been chosen as the study area because it is one of the agriculturally advance tahsil in the Sangli district. The study is based on the primary data collected through field survey of 160 women workers from 16 villages of Walwa tehsil with the help of panned scheduled. Most of the women workers engaged in agricultural activities and poverty, social constrains, etc. were pull of them in to the workforce. Married women in active age group with low education attainment and having large family size mostly participated in the workforce. As living standard is concern, due to the betterment policies of government there is some kind of improvement in living standard of rural women workers.

KEYWORDS: social status, living standards, women workers, agricultural activities .

INTRODUCTION

In India, almost 81 per cent female population lives in rural areas. Eventually, work participation rate of female workers is higher in rural areas than urban. Recently, India's Deputy Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador, TamayaLal revealed a data in the session of UN Commission on Status of Women, according to that, almost 120 million Indian women which is about 80 per cent of total female workers are employed in the rural sector and more surprisingly this is about 30 per cent of the total workforce in rural areas (Singh, Anita, 2017). The women work participation rate has increased overall from 19.7 per cent in 1981 to 25.6 per cent in 2011 (Census of India, 2011). Most of the women participated in the workforce due to their necessity, instead of their choice. This participation, however, has been largely distress induced and has compelled women to take up jobs which offer very poor wages and no social security (Padma, 2004). Now a days, the gender pay wage gap also shrinking woman work participation. Women earn 57 per cent of what their male male colleagues earn for performing the same work (World Economic Forum, 2016). Hence, women are facing so many problems while work participation. This paper throws a light on some of these issue through understanding the social status and living standards of the working women in rural areas.

STUDY AREA

The study was conducted in Walwatahsil, which is one of the agriculturally developed tahsil in the Sangli district of Maharashtra. The tahsil is blessed by the River Krishna to the North and River Warana to the south. Tahsil spreads from 16.85^0 N to 17.17^0 N latitudes and 74.15^0 to 74.45^0 E longitudes, and it covered 776.07 sq km area. According to the Census of India, 2011 the total population of the tahsil is 4,56,002 among them 2,35,160 (51.57 %) are males and 2,20,842 (48.43 %) are females. The tahsil has recorded population growth of 6.69 per cent during 2001-2011. The total literacy rate of the Walwatahsil is 76.56 per

cent, in which 81.39 per cent males and 71.41 per cent females were literate. The sex ratio of the tehsil is 939. Out of the total population, 77.08 per cent population lives in the rural areas, while 22.92 per cent population livers in the urban areas. It means more than 75 per cent population is directly or indirectly dependent upon agriculture, eventually, agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of the tahsil.

OBJECTIVE
1. To study the social status of working women in study area.
2. To understand the living standards of working women in study area.

METHODOLOGY
The entire study is based on the primary data, collected from the intensive field work during December 2017. The Wlawatahsil is divided in to eight revenue circles, from every circle two villages were selected with the help of random sampling. From each selected village 10 households of women workers were sampled again randomly. Eventually, 16 villages and 160 women workers' households selected as a sample from Walwatahsil for this study.

A scheduled was planned in a manner that it was easily communicable to the respondents. Secondary data, in some extent regarding to the studywas collected from the District Census Handbook and Gram Panchayat offices of relevant villages.

DISCUSSION
In India, agriculture is almost main occupation in rural areas both male and female population. Hence, population in rural areas is mainly engaged in the agricultural activity directly or indirectly. But there is a distinct gender inequity found in this kind of work. Apart from that there is some non-agricultural activities are also found in the rural area and gender discriminatory are found here also. Hence this study put a focus on the women workers which is working on the agricultural as well as non-agricultural sector in rural areas. Apart from that some kind of self-employment were also done by rural females. So females, being as women worker have what kind of social status and living standard is tested in this paper.

SOCIAL STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN WORKERS
Data regarding the various aspect of the social status like caste-wise distribution, age-wise distribution, marital status, family size, education, etc. were collected through field surveys and discussed.

Caste-wise distribution of sample rural women workers shows that 47.50 percent women workers belongs to Scheduled Caste, thereafter 30.0 per cent belongs to Other Backward Caste and 22.50 belongs to General Caste (Table 1.1). As we mentioned women participation in workforce is not by choice but by necessity. Most of time general category women having comparatively high economic status than the Scheduled or other backward caste women, hence there is not any need to participate in the workforce. On the other hand Scheduled or Other Backward Caste women having low economic status eventually they more need for jobs.

Age-wise distribution of sample rural women workers shows that more than 75 per cent women workers belonged to the age-group ranging between 15 to 44 years (Table 1.2). It means most of the women workers were in the active age-groups. It further shows that the women work from early age just to supplement the meager income of the family.This type of women workers found in large numbers in Scheduled Caste. This work hampers their personality and deprives them from education and leaves little opportunities for free physical growth and mind.

SOCIAL STATUS AND LIVING STANDARDS OF WORKING WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS.....

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Table 1
Social Status of Women Workers

1.1 Caste-wise Distribution

Sr. No.	Particulars	Scheduled Caste	Other Backward Castes	General Castes	Total
1	No. of Women Workers	76 (47.50)	48 (30.00)	36 (22.50)	160 (100.0)

1.2 Age-wise Distribution

Sr. No.	Age Groups	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	15-24	27 (35.52)	15 (31.25)	11 (30.56)	53 (33.13)
2	25-34	21 (27.63)	11 (22.92)	07 (19.44)	39 (24.38)
3	35-44	12 (15.79)	08 (16.67)	09 (25.00)	29 (18.12)
4	45-54	08 (10.53)	07 (14.58)	05 (13.89)	20 (12.50)
5	55-64	05 (6.58)	05 (10.42)	04 (11.11)	14 (8.75)
6	65 and above	03 (3.95)	2 (4.16)	00 (0.00)	05 (3.12)

1.3 Marital Status

Sr. No.	Marital Status	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	Unmarried	19 (25.00)	07 (14.58)	04 (11.11)	30 (18.75)
2	Married	43 (56.58)	32 (66.67)	27 (75.00)	102 (63.75)
3	Widower	09 (11.84)	05 (10.42)	03 (8.33)	17 (10.63)
4	Divorcee	05 (6.58)	04 (8.33)	02 (5.56)	11 (6.87)

1.4 Family Size

Sr. No.	Family Size	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	1-5	21 (27.63)	16 (33.33)	15 (41.67)	52 (32.50)
2	6-10	46	32	21	99

Sr. No.		Scheduled Caste	Other Backward Castes	General Castes	Total
		(60.53)	(66.67)	(58.33)	(61.88)
3	More than 10	09 (11.84)	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	09 (5.63)

1.5 Educational Attainment

Sr. No.	Educational Attainment	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	Illiterate	37 (48.68)	21 (43.75)	13 (36.11)	71 (44.38)
2	Primary	30 (39.47)	18 (37.50)	10 (27.78)	58 (36.25)
3	Secondary	09 (11.84)	07 (14.58)	08 (22.72)	24 (15.00)
4	Higher Secondary	00 (0.00)	02 (4.17)	05 (13.89)	07 (4.38)

Source : Fieldwork, 2017   Note : Figures in bracket are percentiles

The distribution of women workers of different age groups among the different castes shows that the percentage of young women in the age group of 15 to 24 tears was higher among the SCs (35.52 %) then the OBCs (31.25%) and General castes (30.56%). This is due to the better economic and social status of general castes than SCs and OBCs. The younger women belonging to general castes do not work in economic activities before marriage due to some religious factors. Moreover in scheduled caste families the women in the early age-group starts to work to supplement their family income.

Nearly one-third of the women workers (63.75) were married, while only 18.75 per cent of women workers were unmarried. Remaining 17.50 per cent women workers were either widower (10.63%) or divorcee (6.87%). Among all the caste groups same trends were found in marital status of women workers in rural areas (Table 1.3). Poverty, social restraints, and most of women often look for solace in married life, etc. are the reasons that married women do engaged in the various agricultural and non-agricultural activities.

The sample women workers had very large family size. Since they got married at early age so they had more children. Apart from that, children are considered to be the economic assets in their families. More children mean more helping hands to supplement family's merger income. Most of the sampled women workers live in joint families. Their families constituted young children, adult but non-working unmarried girls and boys, aged parents and other relatives. Almost one-third (61.88%) of the rural women workers had family size constituting 6 to 10 members (Table 1.4). In Other Backward Castes (66.67%), followed by Scheduled Castes (60.53%) families this number is quite high as compared to general castes (58.33%). And again 11.84 per cent sampled women workers from Scheduled Castes had family size constituting more than 10 members. Large family size and more number of dependents in the family have compelled them to work on low wages for long hours at the cost of their physical, mental and social development.

Gender disparity in education is anobstinate problem in Indian society, especially for girls from rural areas as well as lower socio-economic backgrounds. It is also influenced by lack of educational facilities and cultural norms. Among the sampled women workers from the study area nearly half of the women workers (44.38%) were illiterate and never attended school. As different caste groups is concern illiteracy found high in the women workers of Scheduled Castes (44.68%), followed by Other Backward Castes (43.75%). The proportion of illiteracy in general castes' women workers is quite less (36.11%) as compare to above said

other caste groups. Overall 36.25 per cent of sampled women worker educated up to primary level a 15.00 per cent educated up to secondary level of school and drop outs. There is only 4.38 per cent samp women workers educated up to higher secondary level among them proportion of general castes' wom workers were high. Schooling of most of literate sampled women workers from Scheduled Castes and Oth Backward Castes found up to only primary level. Low levels of education in a situation of extremely limit employment opportunities are major constraints on securing employment in non-agricultural sect particularly for women. India's constitution guarantees free primary school education for both boys and g up to 14 years age. This goal has been repeatedly reconfirmed but primary education in India is r universalized (National Commission for Women in India, 1993).

EMPLOYMENT PATTERN OF WOMEN WORKERS

As Consider to employment pattern, respondent divided in to two broad categories i.e. wage-p employment and self-employment (Table 2). Agricultural labours and non-agricultural labours considered in wage-paid employment, while animal husbandry and others such as store, parlor, etc. considered in self-employment.

Table 2
Nature of Employment of Women Workers

Sr. No.	Nature of Employment	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1. Wage-paid Employment					
i	Agricultural Labour	65 (85.53)	33 (68.75)	09 (25.00)	107 (66.88)
ii	Non-Agricultural Labour	10 (13.16)	14 (29.17)	05 (13.89)	29 (18.13)
2. Self Employment					
i	Animal Husbandry	01 (1.32)	01 (2.08)	19 (52.78)	21 (13.13)
ii	Others	00 (0.00)	00 (0.00)	03 (8.33)	03 (1.88)

Source : Fieldwork, 2017   *Note : Figures in bracket are percentiles*

According to the Table 2 most of the female workers participated in the agricultural activities such transplanting of seedling, weeding, harvesting, transporting harvest, threshing, drying of hey, etc. There 66.88 per cent working women work as agricultural labours. 18.13 per cent working women engage weaving, pot making, basket making, construction, etc. consider as non-agricultural labours. As conside self-employment, there are animal husbandry is most dominated occupation among women from gene category. As per caste groups are considered, there were highest number of women workers ft Scheduled Castes working as agricultural labours (85.53%) and 13.16 per cent of Scheduled Castes' wom workers busy as non-agricultural labours. Almost same pattern found in the sampled women wv fromOther Backward Cates.

LIVING STANDARDS OF RURAL WOMEN WORKERS

The sample rural women workers households were characterized by conditions of their hou drinking water facilities, toilet facilities, electricity facilities, fuel facilities, etc. Proper shelter is prereque

for healthy life because it enhances the performances of the residents in their domestic and economic conditions (Edelman and Mitra, 2006).

Table 3
Living Standards of Women Workers

3.1 Type of House

Sr. No.	Type of House	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	Katcha& Thatched	08 (10.53)	02 (4.17)	01 (2.78)	11 (6.88)
2	Katcha	09 (11.84)	06 (12.50)	03 (8.33)	18 (11.25)
3	Semi Pucca	38 (50.00)	21 (43.75)	05 (13.89)	64 (40.00)
4	Pucca	21 (27.63)	19 (39.58)	27 (75.00)	67 (41.88)

3.2 Source of Drinking Water

Sr. No.	Source of Drinking Water	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	Public	29 (38.16)	09 (18.75)	05 (13.89)	43 (26.88)
2	Private	47 (61.84)	39 (81.25)	31 (86.11)	117 (73.13)

3.3 Availability of Toilet

Sr. No.	Availability of Toilet	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	Open Ground	04 (5.26)	01 (2.08)	00 (0.00)	05 (3.13)
2	Toilet Pit	21 (27.63)	11 (22.92)	05 (13.89)	37 (23.13)
3	Septic Tank	51 (67.11)	36 (75.00)	31 (86.11)	118 (73.75)

3.4 Source of Light

Sr. No.	Source of Light	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)

Sr. No.			(N = 48)		
1	Electricity	71 (93.42)	47 (97.92)	36 (100.0)	154 (96.25)
2	Kerosene or Other	05 (6.58)	01 (2.08)	00 (0.00)	06 (3.75)

3.5 Fuel Used in Kitchen

Sr. No.	Fuel Used in Kitchen	Scheduled Caste (N= 76)	Other Backward Castes (N = 48)	General Castes (N = 36)	Total (N = 160)
1	Wood	11 (14.47)	02 (4.17)	01 (2.78)	14 (8.75)
2	Cow Dung	18 (23.68)	07 (14.58)	06 (16.67)	31 (19.38)
3	Kerosene	05 (6.58)	03 (6.25)	00 (0.00)	08 (5.00)
4	LPG	42 (55.26)	36 (75.00)	29 (80.56)	107 (66.88)

Source : Fieldwork, 2017   **Note : Figures in bracket are percentiles**

More than 80 per cent of women workers had semi-pucca and pucca houses. Only 18.13 per cent women workers living in katcha and katcha& thatched houses. As different caste groups is concern, more than 20 per cent of women workers from Scheduled Castes and more than 16 per cent from Other Backward Castes living in katcha and katcha& thatched houses. On the other hand, three-fourth women workers from general castes living in pucca houses. Thus it can be inferred that the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes women workers had poor socio-economic status than the general castes women.

Data regarding source of drinking water supply conditions of the sampled women workers presented in Table 3.2. It reveals that most of the women workers were using water from private connection provided thorough various scheme by the concerned grampanchyats. Almost three-fourth women workers had private connection for drinking water. Remaining women workers were using water from public connection or government hand pumps. As caste groups are concern the number of using public connection is high in the women belongs to Scheduled Casted as compared to Other Backward and general castes and they added that, they have to stand in long queues for the irregular and erratic public water supply.

As toilet facility is concern, due to government schemes and policies sanitation conditions of village are become well. Accordingly, there were 73.75 per cent sample women workers were having septic tank while 23.13 per cent of women workers were used toilet pits. Apart from that, there were 5.26 per cent women workers from Scheduled Castes and 2.08 per cent from Other Backward Castes are still suffering get proper and hygienic sanitation facilities.

Electricity is one the prime necessities in today's era. Data regarding the source of light to sampled women workers is represented in the Table 3.4. It reveals that, due to government various schemes, almost all the (96.25%) women workers were have access to electricity. Some disparity found among SCs and OBCs but all the general caste women having access of electricity. There were 6.58 per cent of women workers belongs to SCs and 2.08 per cent belongs to OBCs were still have not access of electricity and they used kerosene and other oils for lightning.

Due to 'UjalaYojana' of the Bharat Sarkar most of the women now get LPG connection. Eventually, it is found that most of the sampled women workers (66.88%) used LPG for cooking. Most of the general castes (80.56%) and Other Backward Cates (75.00%) women used LPG, while nearly half of the women workers from Scheduled Caste (55.26%) managed to use LPG for cooking. Remaining 44.74 per cent women workers from Scheduled Caste still depend on the other sources like wood, cow dung and kerosene.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In rural area, large number of women workers engaged in agricultural activities rather than non-agricultural activities and self-employment. It is but off course, due to customs, traditions and social constraints found in our society, especially in rural areas.

Most of women participated in workforce by necessity, poor economic status is more common reason behind it. Eventually a ratio of women participation in workforce is higher in women who belong to SCs and OBCs and having poor economic status. Most of the women workers work from early age to support their families for economic stability in some extent. Again due to poverty, social restraints and for retain peaceful married life married women were most frequently engaged in workforce, basically in agricultural sector. Most of the women workers constitute a large family size, hence they have more number of dependents which compelled them to work low wages for long hours. As a gender disparity in education found in our society, education attainment of women workers also low. A large number of this type of women workers found in SCs and OBCs as compare to general castes women workers.

Most of the women workers had semi-pucca and pucca houses, private drinking water supply, better sanitation facilities, electricity and fuel facilities due to various scheme introduced by the Government for betterment of rural population.

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Dr. Sachin Hudale
Assistant Professor and Head , Department of Geography , Yashwantrao Chavan College, Islampur , Tal. Wlawa, Dist. Sangli.