SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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A. INTRODUCTION

India is a country of villages as the majority of its population lives in villages and far-flung remote areas. The interesting aspect is that every region of the country though connected with the cities now; however, still possesses its own peculiar traditional ethos. Also most of the rural communities are still devoid of modern facilities like education, electricity, proper drinking water, health care, ample transportation, etc. But the lack of education in many of the rural belts of India is proving fatal and acting as the breeding ground for social vices, evils and paving the way to anti-social/national activities.

Women emerged as a distinct interest group in the 19th century primarily because the bourgeoisie democratic revolutions of 17th and 18th century that excluded women from their concept of equality. This distinction was based on gender. Since then women as a commune had waged struggle for recognition of their rights as a human being. Women’s execute multilateral role in the society i.e. as a mother, wife, daughter and service provider to the society. In spite of the fact that the women’s contribution to the country’s development is equal to that of man, still they experience a number of limitations that restrain them from comprehending their potential for expansion. It was against this background that the government’s all over the world felt the need to prioritize the interests of women and their participation at every stage of the development process. UN stated that ‘Gender Equality and Women Empowerment’ as one of the Millennium Development Goals to be attained by the year 2015. The term

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Women’s empowerment implies the ability of the women take all the important decisions independently related to her throughout her life span that will ensure her success in all aspects of life. A woman is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. In fact often women in India are deprived of their fundamental right to dignity also leave alone the question of gender equality. The present paper explores the questions central to women’s development in India that is fundamentally patriarchal in nature. The article attempts to grapple with the few challenges faced by the women in India like the Sanitation issues, educational beliefs, community customs, etc. The objective of the paper is to evolve strategies to empower women who are as human beings as men are.

This project examines the social, economic, political and educational status of women in rural areas of India, and evaluates their contribution to rural development. In this era, women are coming out of the web created by social bias and gender discrimination. But this progress is limited to the urban India. This project will be relevant in analyzing if the same progress is reflected among rural women, who are not only larger in number, but are far from access to goods and services. By examining rural women’s contribution to rural development, this project will help analyze the role rural women are playing, despite the hurdles they face, in the advance and growth of rural India.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Das, Bhaswati and Khawas, Viman (2009), in an article, discuss the newly emerged attempts at inclusion of women in development process and bringing them on an equitable platform with men. They discuss that social discrimination starts in the family itself, and that the culture of silence has prohibited Indian women from offering assistance to fellow women. The situation is even worse when economic deprivation adds to the problem. They also discuss economics of gender under two theoretical frames- firstly, the role of gender in natural resource management, and secondly, the feminization of labour market. They state that women are worse affected by depletion of natural recourses. They discuss increasing female participation in wage employment, especially in rural markets.
Rajgopal, Shobhita (2009), in her article, focuses on presenting an overview of education in Rajasthan and analyzing the specific realities with reference to different levels of education. This paper presents the development context of Rajasthan, including some crucial indicators, presents a detailed analysis of girl education in the state, looks at various policy initiatives by state, and offers certain suggestions.

Rastogi, Preet (2009) states in her article that the labour force and workforces in India have been experiencing decline over the 1990s and this is also true among females in rural areas. As for labour market feminization, there is an increase in the share of women in the organized sector, especially in urban areas, indicating an enhanced level of education. She also states that women’s participation in the organized sector is due to economic compulsions.

M. Koggel, Christine (2006) discusses, in one of her articles, that globalization has increased women’s participation in the workforce and their freedom and agency. She also discusses a potential negative impact when she elaborates that women’s freedom and agency are not always improved when they enter the workforce, and merely increasing women’s workforce participation is not an adequate development policy.

C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**Functionalist Theory**

According to functionalism, society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. The functionalist perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of society by focusing on how each part influences and is influenced by other parts.

**Conflict Theory**

Conflict theory is a macro theory propounded by Karl Marx that claims society is in a state of perpetual conflict due to competition for limited resources. It holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity. It has been used to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including gender discrimination.
Marxist Theory

Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis that analyzes class relations and societal conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and a dialectical view of social transformation. It has been used to understand women empowerment since the 1970s. Thinkers have looked to Marxism as to answer the question - who can we account for women’s subordination? Capitalism is also said to be linked to male domination, and women are compared with labour class.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory seeks to analyze the conditions which shape women’s lives and to explore the cultural understanding of what it means to be a woman. It has been concerned with understanding fundamental inequalities between women and men and analysis of male power over women. Its basic premise is that male dominance derives from the social, economic and political arrangements specific to particular societies.

D. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The development discourse has experienced numerous changes over the decade. Different discourses have influenced and changed the discourse. In the last few decades, the role of women in development has received a lot of attention. Although the principle of equality of men and women was recognized in 1945 in the UN charter and in 1948 in UN Declaration of Human Rights, it has been pointed out by researchers that development planners worked on the assumption that what would benefit one section of society (especially men) would trickle down to the other (women) and they need not fully address women’s position in process of development.

But recently, the role of women has been newly theorized by activists and social thinkers, especially by writers like Judith Butler in Gender Trouble, 1990. They are now seen as highly instrumental in social, political and cultural development. At the same time, their social, political and cultural position is also being looked into, and their hardships in educational, occupational, familial, legal and personal fronts are recognized and researched.
upon. These hardships are mainly faced by rural women, who are not only larger in number, but also are more backward than urban women.

This project tries to find out the social, economic, political and cultural status of rural women, the adversity they face on various fronts and their overall contribution to rural development.

E. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
   a. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
      1. Finding the social condition of women in rural India.
      2. Finding the educational status of women in rural India.
      3. Evaluating the political empowerment and occupational structure among rural Indian women.
      4. Examining the role and contribution of women in rural development.
      5. Analyzing the policies and programs for rural Indian women.
   b. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS
      1. Lower the socio-economic status of women in rural India, higher the rate of their participation in job sector.
      2. Working rural Indian women are more empowered than homemakers.
      3. Higher the education among rural Indian women, higher is their political empowerment and awareness.
      4. Lower the socio-economic status of women, higher is their contribution to rural development.
   c. RESEARCH DESIGN

Diagnostic research design has been used in this project.

d. POPULATION OF STUDY

This project concentrates on studying the status of women in rural areas in India, and studies rural women of a remote village, named Paika, near Ranchi, Jharkhand. Women of different age groups were interviewed.

e. SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLE DESIGN
This project uses convenience sampling.

This project uses women of rural Jharkhand as the representative sample of women of rural women, and studies 15 women of Paika Panchayat, Paika village, around 40 kms from Ranchi, Jharkhand.

f. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Interview schedule has been used in this project as a method of data collection.

F. DESCRIPTION OF THE VILLAGE

The village which was subjected to study was Paika village in the state of Jharkhand, India. It is a beautiful village surrounded by dense forests and fantastic fauna, and is situated around 45 KMs from Ranchi ,10 KMs from ANGARA Block, on Ranchi –Purlia Highway. The population of the village amounts to around 4000. The village is very underdeveloped and lacks proper housing, drainage or any other infrastructure. Hinduism is the majority religion of the village. Most of the populace of the village constitutes of OBCs and STs. Use of alcohol is in abundance in the village. Hadia and Mahua are the most commonly consumed drinks. Very high unemployment rates can be seen in the village. Majority of the population is below poverty line. No proper source of drinking water is present in the village. Tube wells are used for drinking water. Moreover, some tube wells are dysfunctional. Electricity is present almost 24 hours a day. Agriculture is the major occupation of the village dweller, but no proper irrigation facilities are present. There are three upper primary schools (up to class 8), where a healthy parent teacher ratio is maintained and where good female participation can be noticed. Women of the village are actively participating in the socio-economic activities and working for development of the village. Health centre of the village is not functional. Angan wadi centre is fully functional in the village. There is only one bank branch in the village- of Bank of India. The village lacks strong local governance system and the panchayat is not functional. The festivals of sarhul, sarana, diwal, durgapuja and maker sakranti are celebrated in the village. MGNREGA is being implemented in the village but the
citizens aren’t getting proper wages in time. Indra Awas Yojna, National Rural Literacy Mission and Toilet construction projects are also been implemented.

G. FIELD OBSERVATIONS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The project focuses on the status of women in rural areas and their contribution to rural development. It was found in the field research that the participation rate of women in schools is higher than that of boys. It could be easily observed that most women were Hindus and belonged to either OBC or tribal categories. It was also observed that adults of the village were keen to send their daughters to school, at least on primary level. Another positive aspect was the role and contribution of women in the socio-economic development of village. Women, even though not educated beyond class 9 or 10, were actively working towards development and spreading awareness. But on the negative side, were limited number of girls were opting for higher education, and even lesser number of females is in pursuit of education beyond post graduation. Reasons cited by most of the women opting out of studies were family pressure or marriage. Most women are engaged in primary sector activities, like farming, crop husbandry, etc. But no availability of proper irrigation facilities could be seen in the village. The purpose of agriculture was not to sell the produce and earn profit. These activities were mostly directed towards personal consumption. Use of alcohol (hadia and mahua) could also be seen in women of the village, especially elderly women. Most women were demanded dowry before marriage and were comfortable with the idea of giving dowry. A significant number of women face domestic abuse because of alcohol addiction. A good number of women have bank account in the one branch of BOI situated in the village. Reproductive health facilities are not available in the village- like contraceptive means, sanitary napkins, delivery and abortion facilities, etc. Health sub-centre of the village is not active, and necessary facilities like child delivery are accomplished after the anganwadi workers take the women to hospitals in cities, the nearest one being 20 kms away.

H. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The field research conducted suffered from the following limitations-

1. The time of research and filling out interview schedules was limited-only for hours.
2. The respondents were unwilling to answer to sensitive issues like reproduction, domestic abuse, alcoholism, etc.
3. Language was also a barrier to the research process as the interview schedules were in English and the respondents had to be interviewed either in Hindi or in their native dialect.
4. There were too many researchers present on the field, which aggravated and infuriated the respondents.
5. Value system was another hurdle as the respondents, who had lived according to rural traditions and customs, could not relate to the interviewer’s values.
6. Some women were hesitant to answer questions posed by the interviewer in absence of their husbands and without their permission.

I. DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA INTERPRETATION

Jharkhand is the 28th state of India which was formed in 2000. The state is at a slow pace of development in relation to its potential and expectations. As per 2001 census, 46.2% of the population is below poverty line, even though the state has richest mineral resource. The state has a high tribal population. Jharkhand, according to 2011 census, contributes 8.4% of ST population to the entire country’s ST population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>ST(%)</th>
<th>SC(%)</th>
<th>OBC(%)</th>
<th>OTHERS(%)</th>
<th>ALL(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All-India</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate for Economics and Statistics of respective State Govt and Central Statistical Organisation

Rural women are considered the backbone of Indian economy. They play an important role in the socio-economic activities of the village, are active in maintaining household, single-handedly bear the burden of child rearing and domestic work, and also contribute to the primary sector of the economy by engaging in agricultural
activities, gather forest produce and do labour work.

**Socio-Cultural Paradigm**

According to functionalist theory, every institution of the society works in coherence, and thus, every basic or collateral facility, social and economic institutional, cultural aspects of the society are working consistently towards achieving a good standard of living.

The village Paika of Jharkhand has a healthy sex-ratio. Hindus are in majority. 80 % of the women interviewed were tribal (belonging to ST category).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. (out f 15)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.67 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table-Social categorization of Women in Paika*

Women of tribal community are more respected and empowered than the mainstream society. The same can be witnessed in Paika village.
Graph- Family Structure of Women in Paika Village

It was interesting to notice that most women lived in small families (53.33 %). Despite financial and educational backdrops in the village, the rural populace understands that too many family members do not bring more help to the household, but in fact, are a burden. 93.33 % of the women interviewed had 3 or less number of children. This displays a great level of understanding and reasoning on part of the villagers. According to UNDP and 2011 census, Jharkhand, a tribal majority state, is maintaining a sex ratio of 947, which is higher than national sex ratio.
Graph - No. of Children of Women in Paika

**Basic Facilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Availability (out of 15)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproductive Health</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redressal for Harassment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table - Availability of facilities

The village lacks proper drinking water facility. Drinking water is only available through tube wells. There is no supply of tap water. Also, many tube wells are dysfunctional. Also, electricity is sufficiently available in the village. According to the populace interviewed, there is an all-time supply of electricity.

Sanitation, another requirement of a healthy lifestyle, also suffers in the village. There is not any proper drainage system. Houses lack toilets. Houses of most respondents lacked toilets. However, government is implementing toilet construction program which is successful so far, and within 2 years, it has been predicted, all houses in the village will have toilets.
Around 60% women said that they don’t face sexual harassment in the village, workplace or otherwise. Of the other 40% who do face the same, only 6.66% are of the view that their grievances are properly addressed by the system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reproductive Health Facilities Availability</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanitary Napkins</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53.33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table-Reproductive Health Facilities*

The village lacks reproductive health facilities, which are essential for general well being of a woman and her family. The health sub-centre is not fully functional. It has only one doctor who visits merely once a month. The only medical assistance women get is through anganwadi, which is functional. The caretaker there takes women to hospitals in the city, the nearest one around 20 kms away, for medical problems.

The women there do not have proper access to sanitary napkins, contraception, deliveries and abortion. As a matter of fact, most women interviewed were unaware of the terms ‘sanitary napkin’, ‘contraception’ and ‘abortion’ (even married women with kids!).

**Education**
There are three upper primary schools (up to class 8), where a healthy parent teacher ratio is maintained. It is encouraging to notice that there is more participation of girls in schools. Mid day meal scheme is also vociferously implemented in the village schools.

But women face problems in their higher education because of family pressure and lack of facilities in the village itself. Discrimination starts in the family itself. (Bhaswati and Khawas, Viman, 2009) Around 60% respondents said that their reason of abandoning education was either marriage or family pressure. 30% claimed that they could not pursue higher education because of lack of facilities in the village.

Women of different age groups were interviewed. The ones in the age group of 20-25 were more educated than the elder women. This shows that the literacy and educational levels have risen up in last few decades.
A significant number of women in the village revealed that they had started to take vocational courses and are helpful that this would help them gain self reliance.

**Occupation and Income**

As the graph above indicates, 33.33% of women interviewed are engaged in crop husbandry and 20% are domestic workers. Other 33.33% are professionals or social workers. This indicates rural women’s active participation in the socio-economic development of India.

We see a clash between castes, classes and gender in the occupation sector, which is in consonance with conflict theory. We also see women shifting to labour sector because of economic clashes between classes. (Rastogi, Preet, 2009)
Majority (86.67%) of the respondents were either directly, or indirectly dependent on agriculture. Interestingly, most of these respondents used agriculture only for consumption, not for sale. Mostly products that are cultivated are grains, potatoes and tomatoes.
Sadly, no irrigation facilities are available in Paika. 93.33% of the women interviewed claim that agriculture is insufficient for sustenance.

Also, although the percentage of professional women is not very strong in the village, it is a silver lining to know that women are actively engaging in socio-political activities and are aiming to spread more awareness and fight for justice in the village.
Graph- No. of Hours Work (per week)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income (Rs)</th>
<th>Number (out of 15)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 5,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>60 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000-10,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.66 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-20,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.66 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000-30,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.66 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table- Avg. Monthly Income of Women in Paika

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income (Rs)</th>
<th>Number (out of 15)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 5,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66.66 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000-10,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-20,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000-30,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table- Avg. Monthly Household Income of Women in Paika

As represented above, rural women do work for a significant number of hours, but sadly, they are deep in poverty. One of the respondents admitted to earning less than 500 Rs. in the entire month, an amount on which the entire family has to suffice.

Globalization has increased women’s participation in the workforce and their freedom and agency. (M. Koggel, Christine, 2006) This phenomena is not always beneficial because these sectors are not yet female-friendly.
Maximum population of the village falls below poverty line. Agriculture has failed to meet the needs of the people. The people employed under MGNREGA have not received their deserved timely wages. The income earned by doing labor work outside of the village has also proven insufficient, 66.67% of the household earning less than Rs. 5000 per month. Education, medical facilities, meager necessities for the entire household are hard to be bought with such small amount of money.

**Banking**

The village has only one branch of a bank-of Bank of India. It is a small, but functional branch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bank Account</th>
<th>No. (out of 15)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66.66 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Have</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.33 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table-Bank Account**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of availing bank facilities</th>
<th>No. (out of 15)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.66 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table-Availing bank facilities

As represented in the tables above, a significant percentage of people have bank accounts, but the same are not availed to use regularly. Respondents claimed that since they had monthly/yearly savings, and as they could not afford loans, they hardly ever used their accounts. In fact 0% of the populace interviewed had ever taken any loan from the bank.

Abuse and Crimes

93% of the interviewed women stated that they do not face any kind of sexual harassment outside their homes, in workplaces or otherwise, and that the village is very safe for women. But 66.66% also admitted that they face domestic abuse in some form or the other, which is seldom induced by alcoholism of their family members.

Participation, Empowerment and Contribution

Table-Women Voters in Paika

Only 53.34% rural women partake in government formation and vote in the elections. This is rather unfortunate, but on the bright side, the women who did admit to voting are from a landless and uneducated class who are willing to contribute their share in government formation and exercise their right to vote.

Women are also active contributors in the primary and labour sectors. Women of varied educational status are also working in the social sector to achieve socio-economic welfare. And women’s contribution as domestic workers is excluded from the country’s census and reports, which is as important as any profession. Their domestic work amounts to a major chunk of economic participation. They are active in forest and other natural resource management.
**Schemes and Programs**

![Bar graph showing schemes and programs](image)

**Graph- Schemes and Programs**

Government policies like National Rural Literacy Mission and Indra Awaas Yjna are significantly successful in the village, and have helped 40% and 53.33% population respectively. MGNREGA has been implemented and has provided employment to 33.33% population, but the employed workers have not received their wages. Toilet Construction Project is also an important step towards achieving sanitation in the village. It has built a significant number of toilets as of now, and it has been predicted that all the houses in the village will be equipped with toilets in a span of two years.

**Attitude**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. (out of 15)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who think education is a necessity</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who send their daughters to school (primary level)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>86.67 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who are against dowry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who have faith in</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33.33 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table-Attitude of Women in Paika

J. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. Maximum population of the village is tribal.
2. A healthy sex ratio is present in the village.
3. Small families are in abundance.
4. Dowry is a common practice.
5. Custom of child marriages are also present.
6. Most residents of the village are unaware of the functioning of banks, and do not need to use the facilities because of lack of savings and inability to pay loans.
7. The village has educational facilities only up to upper primary level and girls face problems in obtaining higher education.
8. Families do not object to primary education of girl children, but are skeptical about sending them for higher education.
9. Alcoholism is common among women and their families.
10. Women face domestic abuse because of alcoholism.
11. Most women do not face sexual harassment in the village.
12. Lack of drinking water facilities, medical services, reproductive health facilities, sanitation and facilities in cases of delivery, abortion and contraception.
13. Proper electricity facilities.
14. Women are unaware of concepts of contraception and sanitary napkins.
15. Maximum women partake in their right to vote.
16. Significant numbers of women are active in social activism and spreading awareness. Many of these activists are homemakers and are not qualifies to work. *Second hypothesis stands disproven.*
17. Most illiterate or uneducated women are reluctant to approach panchayat or the courts with their issues and problems. They are also unaware of the governmental schemes and programs and of basic reproductive health products like copper T, condoms, sanitary napkins, etc. Hence, *third hypothesis stands proven.*
18. Avg. monthly income and avg. monthly household incomes are significantly low in the village. Most respondents were below poverty line.
19. Apart from engaging in domestic activities and maintaining the household, rearing children, etc, lower class women are active participants in other sectors of the economy and nature preservation. Hence, the first and fourth hypotheses stand proven.

20. Lack of irrigation facilities.

21. Revenue through agriculture is grossly insufficient.

22. Inefficient implementation of government schemes and programs for rural and tribal welfare.

23. Panchayat system is not actively functional.

K. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Proper implementation of Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan, National Rural Literacy Mission, Indra Awaas Yojna, toilet construction programs and MGNREGA.

2. Providing proper irrigation facilities.

3. Establishing secondary and senior secondary schools in the village.

4. Starting vocational courses for women to make them self reliant.

5. Proper control over production and distribution of hadiya and mahua.

6. Encouraging production of more crops in the village, and providing minimum support price for the produce.

7. Making panchayats directly accountable to the state government.

8. Establishing an active health centre which is directly accountable to state government.

9. Equipping the already active angan wadi centre with more resources and facilities.


L. CONCLUSION

To conclude, women are an important part of not only rural economy, but also national economy. They play the important roles of workers, labourers, farmers, child bearers, domestic help, etc, even though their contribution in their domestic roles is not taken into account by the governance, and even their families. Women of Paika village are active participants of the economy and equal partakers in the social welfare. They are responsible homemakers, activists, farmers and even professionals. If they are given appropriate opportunity and suitable conditions, they will thrive and flourish, which is in
rural and national interest. They lack proper education system on a secondary or college level, they lack self reliance and they are short of occupational opportunities. Those who farm, lack irrigation facilities, finances, subsidies and minimum support price. The village also lags behind in sanitation, redressal system and medical facilities. But all these problems can be addressed by proper implementation of existing welfare programs and making the implementation authorities and panchayats directly and transparently responsible to the state government, like the governance system of Kerela. Another great effort on part of the government would be to strictly enforce the existing pro-women laws. On grass-root level, the social researchers, anthropologists and nonprofit organizations could work on village level, maintaining constant contact with the villagers. If given a fair opportunity, rural women of Paika panchayat would prosper and bloom, and would be a greater asset to the rural and national development.

M. REFERENCES