

CHANGING PATTERN OF RURAL FEMALE WORK PARTICIPATION: A STUDY OF BANKURA DISTRICT IN WEST BENGAL

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Rural female work participation is an indicator of development and its change or sectoral distribution signifies the structural change of society as well as economy. Bankura District is not an exception. Work participation has increased over the time but recently huge number of marginal workers is found due to insufficient capacity of adjustment of female work force in agrarian rural economy. Female work participation is always high in the backward caste society due to economic compulsion. Mass enrollment of females in educational institution and higher age at marriage causes the recent declining trend in work participation rate. According to the nature of rural transformation participation of females in non-agricultural sectors has increased significantly and micro regional characteristics and block level follow the similar causal relationship.

Introduction

Female participation in the labour force and access to decent work is very much essential for an inclusive and sustainable development of the country. Generally work participation of women in the workplace is low compared to men. In the poor economy work participation of female is an economic compulsion and in contrary in the advanced society it is influenced by social change and educational attainment. Along with the work participation rate of female the occupational structure within the female workforce is highly significant and is a dynamic phenomenon to study which may indicate the structural change of economy and rural transformation.

This study tries to focus on female work participation rate and examine the nature and pattern of diversification in the rural female occupational structure in Bankura

District and even in block level, so as to find out the trajectories behind the process of this economic transformation during 1961 to 2011. This study is mainly based on census data. This paper is structured to fulfill following ways: Section I analyses the changing pattern of rural female workforce. Section II the nature of employment of rural females. Section III discusses the occupational structure of rural female among different social groups in micro level along with in rural transformation.

Changing Pattern of Work Participation

The census of India 2011 defines work as participation in any economically productive activity whether the participation is physical or mental in nature within one year reference period¹.

Work Participation Rate²

$$= \frac{\text{Total female workers (Main + Marginal)}}{\text{Total female}} \times 100$$

In Bankura district during 1971, rural female work participation rate was 8.19 percent which has gradually increased up to 24.29 percent in 2011. It accelerated from

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Table 1: Work Participation Rate of Rural Female in Bankura District (1971-2011)

CD Blocks	1971		1981		1991		2001		2011	
	Workers (%)	Non-Workers (%)	Workers (%)	Non-Workers (%)	Workers (%)	Non-Workers (%)	Workers (%)	Non-Workers (%)	Workers (%)	Non-Workers (%)
Saltora	9.85	90.15	21.03	78.97	30.21	69.79	38.30	61.70	22.91	77.09
Mejhia	4.60	95.40	10.57	89.43	17.54	82.46	23.06	76.94	13.28	86.72
Gangajalghati	10.49	89.51	20.58	79.42	24.73	75.27	27.05	72.95	19.95	80.05
Chhatna	12.55	87.45	20.05	79.95	24.70	75.30	37.28	62.72	24.03	75.97
Bankura	8.64	91.36	12.50	87.50	15.76	84.24	32.12	67.88	17.49	82.51
Barjora	6.44	93.56	9.31	90.69	16.18	83.82	23.55	76.45	19.85	80.15
Onda	6.35	93.65	11.47	88.53	15.76	84.24	40.42	59.58	21.43	78.57
Sonamukhi	5.22	94.78	14.23	85.77	17.06	82.94	33.95	66.05	30.28	69.72
Patrasayer	3.11	96.89	10.69	89.31	15.58	84.42	39.22	60.78	25.15	74.85
Indus	1.84	98.16	4.35	95.65	10.23	89.77	29.26	70.74	19.38	80.62
Kotulpur	1.67	98.33	4.68	95.32	7.09	92.91	46.05	53.95	21.17	78.83
Jaypur	3.28	96.72	7.57	92.43	8.71	91.29	32.65	67.35	21.33	78.67
Vishnupur	8.60	91.40	13.80	86.20	20.27	79.73	32.49	67.51	27.11	72.89
Indpur	9.88	90.12	18.02	81.98	20.95	79.05	30.44	69.56	25.34	74.66
Taldangra	9.69	90.31	18.53	81.47	19.67	80.33	24.94	75.06	27.40	72.60
Simlapal	8.53	91.47	21.28	78.72	24.25	75.75	29.00	71.00	25.81	74.19
Khatra	12.95	87.05	23.44	76.56	27.32	72.68	32.66	67.34	28.11	71.89
Ranibundh	13.72	86.28	37.01	62.99	33.66	66.34	47.59	52.41	38.96	61.04
Raipur	13.26	86.74	25.64	74.36	33.80	66.20	31.98	68.02	32.14	67.86
Bankura District										
Total	8.19	91.81	15.94	84.06	20.22	79.78	33.53	66.47	24.29	75.71
S. C.	10.64	89.36	26.39	73.61	30.28	69.72	43.67	56.33	34.75	65.25
S.T.	18.12	81.88	43.86	56.14	46.42	53.58	51.85	48.15	44.34	55.66

Source: district census hand book, 1971 to 2011

10.64 percent to 34.75 percent and from 18.12 percent to 44.34 percent for SC and ST female. Rural female work participation rate in the district and block level has gradually increased from 1971 to 2001 and follow a declining trend from 2001 to 2011 and the picture is similar for SC and ST female. Roughly 10 percent gap is observed between different social casts (S.C., S.T, and other than S.C and S.T) regarding work participation³ (Table 1). Higher age at marriage and huge female student enrollment in educational institutions are the cause of declining work participation in 2011. The rate of decline ranges between 7.5 to 9.5 percent for all social groups which signifies an inclusive growth and development in the study area. Since the beginning the percentage of female participation in Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been

significantly higher than others. As these communities are considered to be socio-economically backward, so the family as a whole engages in various economic activities for their livelihood. Due to the backwardness in education, all these categories of female mainly engage themselves in the primary sector especially in agricultural sector.

The female workforce participation growth rate from 1971 to 2011 is the highest in Sonamukhi and Ranibundh (nearly 23%) and the lowest in Bankura Meija and Gangajalghati blocks (nearly 11%).It can be said that due to the overall progress, the growth of 19 to 23 percent is being observed in the two other blocks in the eastern part of the district such as Patrasayer and Kotulpur⁴.Moderate growth rate is being observed in the rest of the blocks (Fig.1).

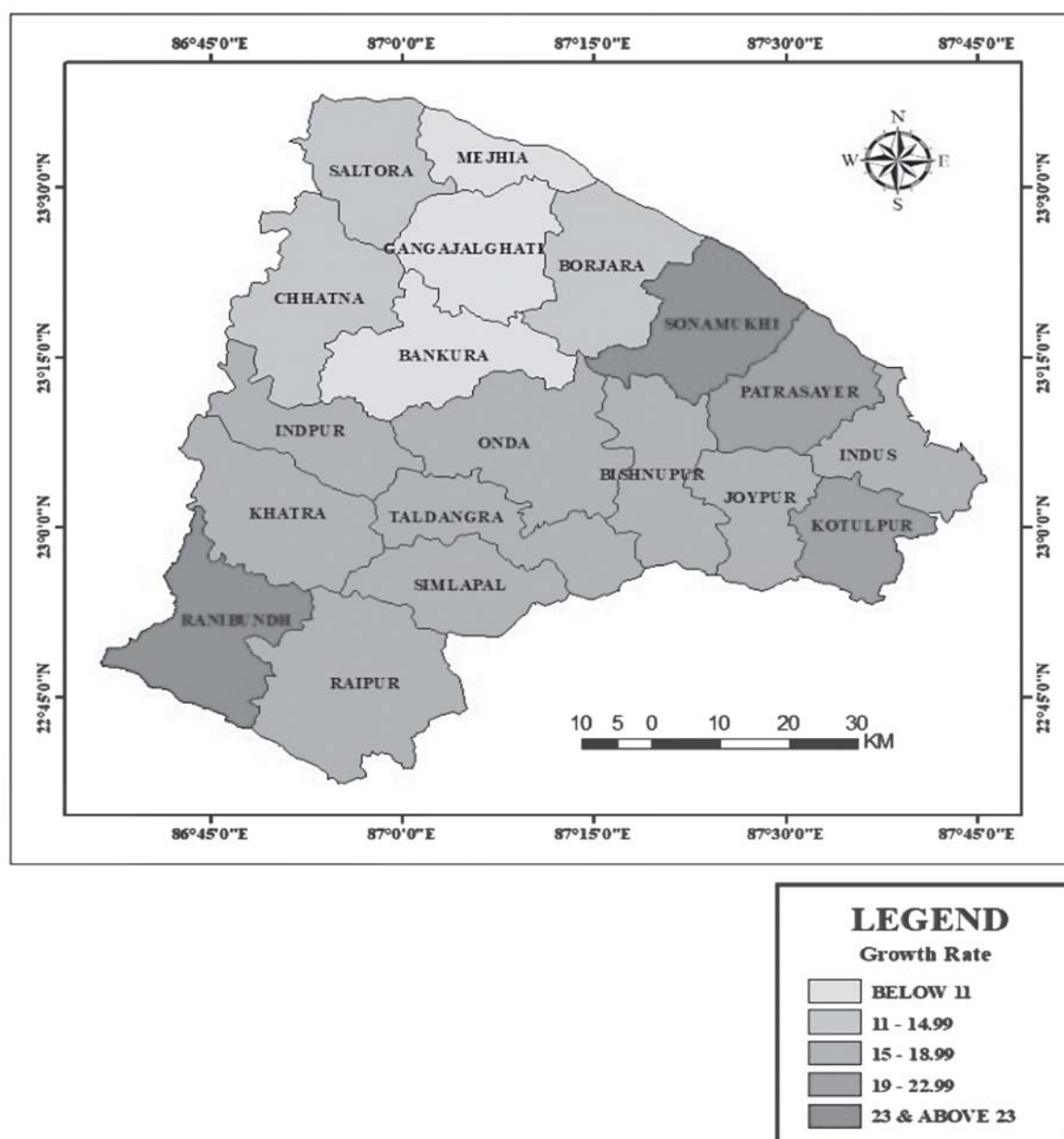


Fig. 1. Growth Rate of Rural Female Workers in Bankura District From 1971-2011

Nature of Employment of Rural Females:

Nature of employment of females in rural Bankura can be viewed by their regularity of employment. Census of India classify all the workers in two halves – 1) *Main worker*: A person who has worked for major part of the reference period (i.e. six months or more during the last one year preceding the date of enumeration) and 2) *Marginal worker*: A person who worked for 3 months or less but less than six months of the reference period⁵. Up to 1991 almost two-thirds of female were in the workforce are in the main worker category. However, since 2001 the scenario started to change and in 2011 a complete reverse

picture is observed where almost two-thirds (63.96 in 2001 and 64.76 percent in 2011) of women are unable to participate in work for more than 6 months in a year or classified as ‘marginal’ category (Table: 2). A more or less same scenario is observed in the different blocks. Gradual transformation of rural economy, distressed agriculture, lack of interest in agriculture by present generation formed an occupational composition in the district where such economy cannot accommodate all the female work force. Though the work participation rate has increased over time but number of marginal workers is goes on high since 2001 due to insufficient capacity of adjustment of female

Table 2: Percentage of Main and Marginal rural female workers in Bankura District (1981-2011)

CD Blocks	1981		1991		2001		2011	
	Main workers (%)	Marginal workers (%)	Main workers (%)	Marginal workers (%)	Main workers (%)	Marginal workers (%)	Main workers (%)	Marginal workers (%)
Saltora	69.95	30.05	55.71	44.29	31.81	68.19	34.59	65.41
Mejhia	61.87	38.13	58.25	41.75	33.97	66.03	41.48	58.52
Gangajalghati	74.40	25.60	73.29	26.71	38.39	61.61	27.01	72.99
Chhatna	65.08	34.92	64.36	35.64	32.07	67.93	26.29	73.71
Bankura	69.60	30.40	69.83	30.17	32.25	67.75	45.10	54.90
Barjora	74.33	25.67	71.64	28.36	38.02	61.98	37.97	62.03
Onda	71.99	28.01	70.25	29.75	31.46	68.54	42.90	57.10
Sonamukhi	76.89	23.11	87.40	12.60	48.35	51.65	51.72	48.28
Patrasayer	64.14	35.86	70.46	29.54	38.92	61.08	49.43	50.57
Indus	74.52	25.48	71.10	28.90	31.55	68.45	37.60	62.40
Kotulpur	66.44	33.56	67.07	32.93	17.78	82.22	37.50	62.50
Jaypur	52.79	47.21	61.61	38.39	43.60	56.40	33.58	66.42
Vishnupur	84.24	15.76	73.82	26.18	46.06	53.94	38.58	61.42
Indpur	75.55	24.45	80.54	19.46	38.88	61.12	28.54	71.46
Taldangra	67.56	32.44	78.43	21.57	30.56	69.44	26.61	73.39
Simlapal	79.49	20.51	88.11	11.89	55.19	44.81	33.38	66.62
Khatra	77.81	22.19	88.77	11.23	45.02	54.98	28.38	71.62
Ranibundh	55.01	44.99	73.87	26.13	35.77	64.23	26.88	73.12
Raipur	64.56	35.44	69.50	30.50	34.27	65.73	29.01	70.99
Bankura District								
Total	69.56	30.44	72.73	27.27	36.04	63.96	35.24	64.76
S. C.	74.36	25.64	78.83	21.17	41.52	58.48	37.87	62.13
S. T.	73.65	26.35	80.16	19.84	41.33	58.67	29.45	70.55

Source: district census hand book, 1981 to 2011

work force in agrarian rural economy. It is 30.44% in 1981, 27.27% in 1991 and 63.96% in 2001, 64.76% in 2011⁶. (Table 2)

Occupational Diversification and Transformation of Rural Economy:

Occupational composition of females is another important area to notice where 80.50 percent of female workers are found in primary, 13.68 percent in secondary and 5.82 percent in tertiary sector of economy in 1961 whereas this occupational pattern has changed to 74.84 percent in primary, 7.26 percent in secondary and 17.90 percent in tertiary sector in 2011⁷ (Table 3). It can be seen that from 1961 to 2011, participation in primary and secondary sectors is gradually decreasing and participation

in tertiary sector is gradually increasing. Shrinkage of primary sector is a generalized phenomenon in the economy but it is alarming in case of secondary sector. Primary and secondary are considered as the basic sectors of economy especially secondary or manufacturing in present context. Like some other rural pockets in the country a disproportionate development, nearly threefold growth of tertiary sectors is observed in Bankura which may indicates a hollow growth of economy which may collapse any time. Annihilation of rural household industries due to competition with inter regional or international imported factory made goods in the age of globalization and lack of modern industry and local resource based or agro industry are the main causes of shrinkage of secondary sectors in this region. In the northern Bankura where mining and

Table 3: Bankura District: Proportion of Rural Female Workers Engaged in Different Sectors of Economy (1961-2011)

CD Blocks	1961			2011		
	Primary Sector (%)	Secondary Sector (%)	Tertiary Sector (%)	Primary Sector (%)	Secondary Sector (%)	Tertiary Sector (%)
Saltora	92.72	4.17	3.10	66.28	4.32	29.40
Mejhia	84.65	9.38	5.97	55.10	3.69	41.21
Gangajalghati	88.26	6.80	4.94	71.51	7.02	21.47
Chhatna	91.36	4.92	3.72	72.36	5.81	21.83
Bankura	72.85	21.91	5.24	52.94	9.85	37.21
Barjora	62.48	26.23	11.29	67.96	7.75	24.29
Onda	66.88	25.73	7.39	76.04	8.17	15.79
Sonamukhi	61.88	29.20	8.92	75.13	7.96	16.91
Patrasayer	59.81	28.60	11.59	78.57	7.51	13.92
Indus	36.36	41.68	21.96	81.70	4.04	14.25
Kotulpur	45.86	40.05	14.08	65.78	10.97	23.24
Jaypur	35.54	52.89	11.57	61.19	14.45	24.37
Vishnupur	50.69	31.52	17.78	61.75	14.20	24.06
Indpur	85.64	11.87	2.49	81.70	4.96	13.34
Taldangra	82.78	14.45	2.78	81.88	7.16	10.96
Simlapal	79.43	16.81	3.76	79.60	7.10	13.30
Khatra	92.83	4.49	2.68	86.94	2.43	10.64
Ranibundh	88.43	5.52	6.06	83.15	8.25	8.61
Raipur	92.77	4.41	2.82	86.64	4.09	9.26
Bankura District						
Total	80.50	13.68	5.82	74.84	7.26	17.90
Scheduled Caste	77.64	15.49	6.88	81.50	4.70	21.96
Scheduled Tribe	91.87	3.57	4.56	85.62	4.04	10.34

Source: district census hand book, 1961 and 2011

large and medium industrialization have flourished to some extent but the female work participation is still undesired level because lack of female working opportunities and environment. Whereas female work participation in household industries is somewhat better (doubled than district's average) in Bishnupur sub-division due to its endogenous famous Sari (Baluchari and Sarnachari) manufacturing industries.

Comparatively less diversification in the occupation is observed among backward casts. More rural female are engaged in agricultural sectors particularly as agricultural labour and a large proportion is classified as 'marginal'.

Growth of tertiary sectors is more than threefold in the district in the same time period and block wise

fragmented data depict similar pattern. In the northern part of the district (Borjora, Gangajalghati, Mejia) and Surrounding of Bankura city huge growth of tertiary employment for female is observed mainly due to flourishing of retail business activity. On the other hand southern part, in the Khatra Sub-division popularly known as Jangal Mahal like Raipur, Ranibadh, Simlapal, Khatra, Indpur blocks maintain less diversified due to its backwardness, less accessibility and long time political instability due to left radical movement.

Conclusion

The economic and demographic landscape of Bankura district is changing fast. Currently the work participation

is moderate in Bankura but there is an ample scope of female employment if we explore the opportunities within the agricultural and medium and small scale industrial sector. Agricultural research and related literatures has already suggested different cash and commercial crops and horticulture for Bankura which may make profit maximization. Similarly there is a good scope of agro and mineral based industrialization. But such activities have concentrated only in two blocks in north Bankura. Different indigenous traditional craft, weaving, metal and forest product based household industries is already famous in Bankura, but should be encouraged by proper planning and investment. It is a good sign that the vertical disparities among different social groups narrowed down but more rapidity is desirable involving educational

facilities and encouragement among rural backward caste females. □

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