

A Study on the Development Issues of Women in Rural India

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ABSTRACT

Women are an integral part of a society in general and form an indispensable unit of the socio-economic life of any country. Rural women play a vital role both on social and economic front. They support their families, generate income, and strive to improve the well-being of the community by and large. They are active contenders of the economy of the community. Nevertheless, they face many perpetual and tenacious constraints that hinder their development in society. This paper studies the socio-economic conditions of women in rural areas and intends to find out the major problems faced by women, their causes, and to suggest ways to solve them. It also studies the economic contribution of women in rural areas. The area chosen for the study was Vembar, Tamil Nadu, a coastal village in South India. The main occupations in the village are fishing and palmyra tapping. Data were collected from 702 households. After an extensive survey and focussed group discussions, it was found that the major problems that they face are poor sanitation and infrastructural facilities, lack of education, an overload of work, lack of self-employment initiatives, and improper health care. There is also a low employment rate among these women as they neither find suitable jobs, nor are they required to do so by their family members, making them economically dependent on their male counterparts. These rural women must be provided with training programmes so that they can grow as a person and as contributors to the economic development of the village.

INTRODUCTION

Women are an integral part of a society in general and form an indispensable unit of the socio-economic life of any country. They play a vital role both on social and economic front. Women support their families by generating income and strive to improve the well-being of the community. In rural India, women are active contenders of the economic activities of the community. Nevertheless, they face many perpetual and tenacious constraints that hinder their development in society. This can be attributed to the run-of-the-mill education and training programmes accessible to these women imparting them with a means of subsistence.

Women's employment is crucial to their welfare not only to provide a means to reduce the incidence of poverty but also to act as an instrument of economic independence and a higher role in the decision-making power. The work that a woman does is considered to be redundant except when she is brought to such a situation where the family needs another set of hands to remove them from the clutches of poverty. The employment of women in the family has been looked upon as a diminution of the status of men in society for not being able to manifest their role as the head

of the family. The women are also affected by social and cultural background of the place they reside and restricted by the norms prevailing therein. Even when they are employed, they face many tenacious constraints that hinder their development, thereby hampering the community at large.

Empowerment of women can be accomplished with the dispensation of proper education and skill development training. But rural women are not exposed to such opportunities in the village. They are not granted the freedom which entitles them to make self-decisions and act according to their willingness. Likewise, women face many difficulties in their daily lives, which encroaches their path to development on par with their male counterparts.

Significance of the Study

India is the second most populous country, with nearly 70% of the population living in villages and far-flung remote areas without proper education, health, sanitation, and other infrastructural facilities. Women comprise 48.5% of the population. Rural women account for 69% of the women and 33% of the total population (Census of India 2011).

In India, there has always been a conventional image – women must take care of the family members, cook and do all other household chores, and the male head of the family must be the breadwinner. Their education has been considered unnecessary, and their employment scorned upon. However, the role of women has been changing on an enormous scale.

Although women have seen many socio-economic developments, they still haven't been completely emancipated from the clutches of the stereotypical gender-based views which obstructs their path to contributing to the best of their abilities for the betterment of the community. The advent of globalisation and westernisation brought about breaking down the gender stereotypes and other barriers faced by women, particularly in rural areas, but have failed to achieve it with the women in rural areas. These women still face gender-based stereotypes, caste-based discrimination, less decision-making power in the family, and complete dependence on their male counterparts.

The country can fully develop only if the economic condition of women in rural areas is increased. Therefore, the study of the development issues of rural women is of vital importance.

Statement of the Problem

This paper focuses on the study of the socio-economic conditions of women living in rural areas and seeks to find the problems that they face, which hinder their development in society. It also studies the development issues that these women face.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Owing to its importance, gender equality and women empowerment have been a major topic used as a background of numerous research studies. The ever-changing notions concerning women, the fight for the rights of women, and the onset of the concept of feminism has brought out the need for research on the development of women. Many studies have been made to know the various social, psychological, economic, and health problems faced by a woman in rural India. The findings have not yielded satisfactory results and show that the women have still yet to develop more.

Studies reveal that technological developments have lifted the status of women in rural areas. On the contrary, a study by Dr S P Shahi¹ (2004) about Technology and Development keeping rural women in focus claims that women's employment conditions have been worsened; the reason is that the introduction of technology has replaced men for the work done by women and women are employed only when there is an absolute shortage of labour.

Rajeshwari M. Shettar (2015),² in her paper "A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India," attempts to analyse the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment. The study reveals that acceptance of unequal gender norms by women is still prevailing in the society. Access to education, employment, and change in social structure is the only enabling factors to Women Empowerment. Empowerment of Women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could only be possible by adopting definite social and economic policies with a view of the total development of women and making them realise that they have the potential to be strong human beings.

¹ Dr.S.P.Shahi, "Technology and Development: Rural Women in Focus", 2004.

² Dr. (Smt.) Rajeshwari M. Shettar, "A Study on Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in India", IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM) e-ISSN: 2278-487X, p-ISSN: 2319-7668. Volume 17, Issue 4.Ver. I (Apr. 2015), PP 13-19

Dr Rekha Acharya, and Ms. Somya Sharma, (2016)³ in their study, “Livelihood Pattern of Rural Women-A Comparative Study of Shivnagar&Mirjapur Villages” have studied about livelihood activities those are performed by rural women and their contribution in the development of socio-economic well-being of their families in the selected two villages viz; Mirjapur and Shivnagar. This study has also tried to assess the level of women empowerment attained by these rural women through livelihood activities. This research paper has used primary data collected from a sample size of 30 rural women from two villages in Indore by convenient method. The study has used a t-test for two sample mean to check the mean income difference among rural women who are linked with Self Help Group or non- Self-Help Group. The study has found that if we want to expand the rural livelihood activities, women should have involved in livelihood activities because women are more efficient in expanding livelihood activities through home-based industries. SHG, NGO, or any organization are very helpful to the involvement of women in various livelihood activities. Linking with SHG also helps in the improvement of quality, expansion of livelihood activities & standard of living.

Arundhati Bhattacharyya, (2016),⁴ in her paper “Rural Women in India: The Invisible Lifeline of Rural Community,” studies the general condition of the rural Indian women and the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on the overall empowerment of the rural women. The study has stated that this has opened doors for a supplementary source of income, and this income is being used by rural households for starting their own ventures. A rural community, including the rural women, are benefitting from this scheme. It has brought in a significant increase in monthly per capita consumption expenditure of rural households. There is high participation from marginalized groups, including the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes. The paper recommends that the MGNREGS projects should be planned to utilize the period of the off-season for agricultural labourers. Such planning will provide off-season employment to labourers.

A study by Sathiya Sheila⁵ on “The socio-economic status of female agricultural labourers

³ Dr.Rekha Acharya , MS. Somya Sharma, “Livelihood Pattern of Rural Women-A Comparative Study of Shivnagar&Mirjapur Villages”, Research Front, Volume 4, No. 2, June 2016

⁴ Arundhati Bhattacharyya, “*Rural Women in India: The Invisible Lifeline Of Rural Community*”, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, BhairabGanguly College, Kolkata, 2016.

⁵ Sheila T S. “*Socio-economic status of the women agricultural labourers in Madurai district*”, J. Advances in Business Management 2017; 3(2): 61-63, DOI: 10.14260/jadbm/2017/14.

in Madurai district” (2017) found that the female labourers face a lot of problems in their daily life, the foremost problem being seasonal unemployment which is inadequate for their subsistence. The elderly women face many tensions like unemployment or marriage of children, lack of time for family, financial crunches, and lack of emotional support. Lack of sanitation facilities and lack of educational awareness is a serious issue that makes the life of a woman miserable. Most of the women do not own property, and even when they own it, they do not manage it. They are completely dependent on the male members of the family for the fulfilment of all their basic needs.

Women of India are relatively disempowered, and they enjoy a lower status than men despite many efforts undertaken by the government. Overall, the basic problems of women in rural areas come from a lack of independence, inadequate opportunities for employment and education, restricted mobility, and inadequate knowledge and skills. In considering the above views, the present study has made a serious attempt to study the development issues of women in Vembar village, a typical rural area in Tamil Nadu, India.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are

1. to find the socio-economic conditions of the respondents in rural India
2. to analyse the development issues faced by rural women
3. to know the major problems faced by women

METHODOLOGY

The area chosen for the study was Vembar, a coastal village in Tamil Nadu, South India. Rural women face many constraints in the form of social, economic, cultural, physical, and psychological issues. However, the study focuses on the development issues that women face in the aspects of education, income, health, and infrastructural constraints. The study seeks to find the development issues in the coastal village, which is rich in culture, religion, and traditional occupations like fishing and Palmyra tapping.

The village, according to the Census of 2011, has 1492 households. The sample size chosen for the study is 47%. The study covers 702 households in rural areas. An informal interview was conducted to collect the required information for the study. The primary source of data was collected for the analysis of the research findings. The tool used for data collection is an interview

schedule. The period of study is 2016-17.

The study uses Tabular analysis and Percentage to analyse the findings. Simple Linear Regression has been used to find the relationship between the income and education of rural women.

The estimated Regression model is given as follows:

$$Y=A+bX$$

Where the Dependent variable is:

Y = Monthly Income

The Explanatory variable is:

X = Literacy level (Years of schooling)

Coefficient:

b is the coefficient of the explanatory variable

Positive coefficient of the significant variable explains the direct relationship between the explanatory variable – literacy level and the income level, whereas the negative coefficient explains the inverse relationship between the two. The higher the value of the coefficient, the higher is the influence and vice versa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Conditions of The Respondents

Table 1 gives the general characteristics of the respondents which are pertinent to understand the socio-economic background of the respondents in Vembar village, Tamil Nadu.

Table 1 Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents (Source: Primary Data 2016)

S.No.	Variables	Groups	Percentage
1.	Sex	Male	51
		Female	49
2.	Age	0 to 14	18.3
		15 to 24	19.6
		25 to 45	39.3
		46 to 65	18.5
		> 65	4.3
3.	Family Size	Small (less than 4)	45.3
		Medium (4 to 6)	54.55
		Large (More than 6)	0.15
4.	Monthly family per capita income	Less than 3000	49

		5000 to 25000	49.8
		More than 25000	1.2
5.	Religion	Hindu	36.7
		Muslim	1.2
		Christian	62.1
6.	Community	FC	3.0
		BC	55.4
		MBC	38.4
		SC & ST	3.2

From table 1, it is evident that the majority of the respondents were male. The sex ratio of the respondents was 959 females for 1000 males. The village had 39.3 percent belonging to the working-age group of 25 to 45. The family structure of the study area consisted of joint families, which are the typical characteristic of rural India. The number of members in the family ranged between 1 and 10. A study by Newman in 2009 found that there is a negative correlation between the size of the family and the socio-economic status.⁶ More than half of the respondents had a medium size family with 4 to 6 members in the family. Therefore it is evident that the Vembar village residents prefer large families.

Religion and community are the major social factors that decide the socio-economic position of the rural people. The prominent religion in the village was Christianity. The percentage of Christians in the village was 62, Hindus 36.7 percent, and only 1.2 percent were Muslims. The study showed that only 3 percent of the respondents were from the Forward Community. The majority belonged to the Backward Community. Nadar was the ubiquitous caste under the Backward Community. The primary occupation under this caste in Vembar used to be Palmyra tapping, which became obsolete with the decrease in remuneration from it, the strenuous work that needs to be exerted, and the increased risk of accidents involved. Thirty-eight point four percent of the respondents belonged to the Most Backward Community. The castes under this community included Paravar and Valaiyar, which were predominant in fishing, pearl diving, boat building, salt making, and other sea-related activities. Less than 5 percent were of Scheduled Caste, which was previously segregated as ‘untouchables’ and Scheduled Tribes – the people who lived in tribal forests.

Findings indicated that out of the total respondents in the study, only 42.5 percent were

⁶ Newman, L.A. (2009), “Do socioeconomic differences in family size reflect cultural differences in confidence and social support for parenting?”, *Population Research and Policy Review*, pp. 661-691.

actively employed. The monthly per capita income of 49 percent of the respondents was less than Rs.3000. Internationally, according to the income-based benchmarks set by the World Bank (2015), an income of less than \$1.90 per day per head of purchasing power parity (which is Rs.126.75 in Indian currency) is defined as extreme poverty. By this estimate, half of the respondents of the study area were impoverished living well below the poverty line. Thus, it can be inferred that poverty doesn't prevent women from having large families, which is the typical characteristic of rural India.

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES OF WOMEN IN RURAL INDIA

The paper also studies the development issues faced by women in rural areas in order to better understand the status of the development of these women. The issues faced by the rural women in Vembar village have been categorised as:

- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Infrastructure

Education

Education is an important factor to elevate the socio-economic condition of women in rural areas. But its importance has hardly been realised in spite of the free and compulsory education and schemes like mid-day meals for students provided by the government to encourage the spread of education to the rural masses and its access to the poor and the needy.

Table 2 Level of Education of the Respondents

YEARS OF SCHOOLING	MALE	FEMALE
No Schooling	19.4	24.3
1 to 5 (Primary Education)	19.6	19.2
6 to 10 (Secondary Education)	36.4	33.0
11 to 12 (Higher Secondary Education)	10.9	11.9
More than 12 (Higher Education)	13.8	11.6
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Primary Data 2016

Table 2 indicates that the level of education of rural Indian women was much lower than that of the men. The percentage of women who had no schooling is higher than that of the men.

The majority of women have achieved only secondary education and 24.3 percent had no education at all because it was not affordable. There were six schools in the village and one engineering college. The girl children were not allowed to go outside their village for their higher education. Only 11.6 percent of the working women had studied in college. Higher education had not been chosen by the women who completed high school because of a lack of financial resources. Traditional notions call for higher dowry and marriage expenses to be borne by the family of the girl child. Therefore, they prefer to invest more in girls' marriage instead of funding their education, which would be more suited for the boys who would bring revenue to their family in the future. The cost of education, distance to the educational institution, and gender norms are some reasons for less education of the women. Findings indicate that the form of education also played a significant role. Many women had opted for teacher training due to stereotyping thoughts that a good job for women is to teach. They had also studied engineering due to herd-like behaviour. The women who were not able to complete their education or those who were not able to find suitable job opportunities returned to manual labour inside the village.

Employment

The main occupations in the village were fishing and palmyra tapping. The employment of women is necessary not only for subsistence but also for uplifting the status of women by making them economically independent.

Table 3 Status of Employment of the Respondents

SEX	Employed	Unemployed	Total
Male	60.8	39.2	100
Female	22.7	77.3	100
TOTAL	42.2	57.8	100

Source: Primary Data 2016-17

The findings indicate that the participation of women in paid employment is only 22.7 percent. The percentage of men who were employed was much higher than that of women. More than three-fourths of the women population were unemployed. The women in the village did not go for work unless there was a dire financial need to do so. The participation of women in employment in the village meant a reduction of the social status of the family in the sense that the men were incapable of providing for the family. Another factor leading to a low level of employment or unemployment was the herd-like mentality and stereotypical ideas that “engineering is the only good career path for social status and arts and science streams are of no

use,” which is being passed on from generation to generation.

Type of Occupation

The types of occupations have been classified into five categories based on the level of education, level of responsibility, and the actual work. Manual and non-manual labour has been divided on the premise that manual work involves physical strength, whereas non-manual work involves mental strength. The unskilled manual occupations that they were involved in include the daily wage earners, housekeepers, construction workers, and workers employed under the MGNREGA scheme of the government. The skilled manual work included tailoring, fishing, and allied activities. The low-level non-manual occupations include jobs like office assistants and sales staff. The medium level non-manual occupations included high school teachers and company jobs. The high-level non-manual occupations included University teachers and engineers.

Table 4 Occupational Status of Respondents

OCCUPATION	MALE	FEMALE
Unskilled Manual Workers	23	50.7
Skilled Manual Workers	51	17
Low-level Non-Manual Employees	19	21
Medium Level Non-Manual Employees	0.4	10
High-Level Non-Manual Employees	6.6	1.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2016-17

Since the women had not received a proper education, they had no option but to go for manual labour. Even if the women had completed their college degree, they were unable to find suitable job opportunities in the field of their education, which forced them to return to manual labour. Sixty-seven point seven percent of the paid women workers were involved in manual work, whereas only 32.3 percent were employed in non-manual work. From table 4, it can be inferred that more than half of the paid women workers were employed in unskilled manual labour and earned a meagre amount of wages. Only 1.3 percent of the working women were employed in high-level non-manual jobs. Another cause for concern was that many activities done by women were unaccounted for and unpaid. The fishing activities done by women like mending the nets were not accounted as paid work. In palmyra tapping, an activity done seasonally, which did not provide much remuneration, the men climb the tall palmyra trees and collect the fruits. The making of the jaggery by boiling at a very high temperature was done by the women, which also was not

accounted as paid employment. The women were also involved in making baskets to sell the jaggery in the markets. When Palmyra tapping became an occupation less demanded, the women took to weaving baskets as their mainstream job and sold their baskets in markets that had a high demand for them.

INFLUENCE OF EDUCATION ON INCOME

The regression analysis found that the level of education influences the level of monthly income of the women respondents in Vembar village. They had a positive relationship. The higher the level of education, the higher will be the income level. For every year of schooling of the women, there is the possibility of an increase of Rs.1000 of monthly income. Therefore, it is inferred that educating women is very important as it would increase their earning capacity making them economically independent, which in turn gives them better social status.

Health

Women's health is a significant factor that is often overlooked and neglected. The well-being of women plays multiple roles not only in improving their capacity to work and earn more but also to help take care of their family members and improving the nutrition of their children in their early years. Health was another sector in which women were of lower status than men.

Table 5 Presence of Health Problems

Sex	Presence of Health Problems (Percentage of Respondents)
Female	54.4
Male	45.6
Total	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2016-17

From table 5, it can be seen that the percentage of respondents who had health problems comprised more of women. Therefore attempts were made to find the health issues faced by them. The major health problems faced by women can be understood from Table 6.

Table 6 Major Health Ailments of Women

Health Ailments	Percentage
Body Pain	28.0
Toothache	19.0
Malaria	10.5
Tuberculosis	8.3
Birth Complications	5.7

Others	28.5
Total	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2016-17

The ailment suffered most by women was body pain due to strenuous manual labour that the women were employed under extreme heat and long working hours. Other health ailments included common cold and fever. More than one-fourth of the women who had ailments suffered because of lack of immunity because of heat and extreme weather, dust and air pollution, and improper sanitation facilities in the village. Nineteen percent of the women suffered from a toothache because of the production of jaggery in the village. They also suffered from Malaria and Tuberculosis.

Another factor which aggravated the health condition was access to health facilities. There was a Primary Health Centre in the village. The women had to go to nearby towns in order to avail of better health facilities.

Table 7 Type of Treatment Preferred by Women

Type of Treatment	Percentage of Women
Self-Treatment	50
Government Hospital	39
No Treatment	7
Private Hospital	4
Total	100

Source: Primary Data 2016-17

Half of the women respondents preferred self-treatment by purchasing medicines at medical stores to avoid additional consultation charges. This shows the less importance given to health by women. Some people followed traditional healing methods by using natural herbs and plants like turmeric and Aloe Vera to heal sicknesses. About 40 percent of the women preferred Government Hospital. Government Hospitals provide free medical care and medicines at reduced rates. However, they had to leave the village to avail of these facilities. The primary health centre in the village catered to immediate and common health needs and lacked equipment with higher infrastructural facilities and technology. About 7 percent of women preferred to have no treatment. They were unconcerned with their health as they were of the view that the ailments would be cured automatically instead of spending their money. Only 4 percent preferred private hospitals. These hospitals charged a higher amount as medical fees, and this facility was availed only by the people who earned more in the village.

Infrastructural Facilities

Table 8 Access to Infrastructural Facilities

INFRASTRUCTURE	Accessible	Inaccessible
Hospital	53	47
Shop	53.4	46.6
Water	51.42	48.58
Electricity	74.2	25.8

Source: Primary Data 2016-17

From Table 8, the water quality was also another of the problems listed by the women. They complained about the low water quality they can get in the village and remarked that nowadays the quantity of water in the wells has not only been reduced as it is no more adequate for drinking since it became salty. The scarcity of water in Tamil Nadu due to insufficient rainfalls and water conflicts with neighbouring states can be attributed to this problem. The women workers in Vembar had to walk long distances to get suitable water for drinking, cooking, and other purposes. They also had to pay money to buy water for daily use.

The people also complained about frequent power cuts. Only half of the population had access to proper and regular electricity facilities.

MAJOR PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN

The major problems faced by women in Vembar village are the various social problems like gender inequality, caste differences, and alcoholism, economic problems like unemployment and underemployment, poverty, lack of education, and the problems of improper access to infrastructural facilities.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Gender Differences

Before Independence, women were victims of widespread illiteracy, forced child marriage, opposition to the remarriage of widows, female infanticide, violence, and the rejection of individuality. India has developed since then, but still, the women in Vembar were prone to social injustice and gender-based differences. They had restricted choices of career opportunities compared to men. The women were expected to stay at home and clean and cook for the members of the family. Some women had not even stepped outside of their village. They did not have any personal time for themselves and had to work for the satisfaction of their husbands and their in-laws. Right from their childhood, the women in Vembar are subject to these prejudices.

The women also fall prey to social inequality. Women are considered to be the weaker sex and have no decision-making power in the family. They can decide on cooking, whereas they absolutely lack decision making power in financial matters and child-rearing. The decision-making authority rests with the husband or his father. Being in a patriarchal society, women have little idea about the concept of gender equality. The best part of it is that most women don't even realise that and feel willing to adjust to any extent for the sake of harmony and peace in the family.

Caste Differences

The largest part (54 percent) of the population in Vembar belonged to a caste called the Nadar, and a smaller part (20 percent) to a traditional fishing caste called the Paravar. Over the years, there were disputes between the two castes that they had separate exclusive places of worship and education. The Paravars did not send their children to schools owned by Nadars. They also had separate churches. People from the two castes attend weddings and family functions in both communities, but they did not have inter-caste marriages. The women were the victims of such caste differences as the problems of women from lower castes did not end with economic independence as they were subject to lack of decision making power and inequality in the places of work.

Other social problems

Alcoholism was prevalent in Vembar, which added on to the financial crisis that the people face. This was prevalent more among the fisherman community. Men earned about Rs.800 to 1000 a day from fishing, but the women got less money in their hands for handling the household expenses. The fishermen of the Paravar community in Vembar spent more than 50 percent of their income on alcohol, leaving insufficient money to meet daily expenses and necessities like food. The women had to borrow to meet these expenses, which stuck them in a debt trap.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Education

The residents in Vembar village wanted to send their children to pursue an education in the hope that they will be able to get them out of this vicious cycle. But they are not able to do so because of a lack of sufficient funds at home. The children are forced to drop out. The girl children dropped out of school more often. They were sent to work when it is challenging to manage their finances. They worked in local shops or at a seafood processing company in Vembar.

Even education was not of much help because jobs hardly reached their village. They had gone for higher education and had professional degrees like engineering, but they couldn't find jobs which further discouraged them from studying. They were forced to go back to fishing.

Employment

Rural women who are unemployed accounted for 77.3 percent. Women are paid less compared to men and are paid lower wages for doing the same work. Since women do not consider their work as a life career, they do not equip themselves with proper education and training. Their aim is to get married, and they are pushed into employment only under a financial crunch in the household.

Women who work were employed in unskilled manual labour. This is because of the lack of employment opportunities due to improper education and lack of skill training at a younger age. Women were not allowed to work but were nevertheless pushed to do so because of the needs of the household. Their employment was used as a tool for bridging the gap between their education and their marriage. Jobs for the community women should be provided.

Income

The paid working women do not earn sufficient income for the work that they do. It was not adequate to meet daily expenditures. The paid working women faced an overload of work, both unpaid household chores and paid work, mostly manual. They had a lack of organised self-employment initiatives, and did not form organised groups to enforce higher wages for themselves.

CONCLUSION

The study of development issues is of paramount importance for defining the wealth of any nation. Due to the alarming rate of unemployment, particularly in rural areas, a country can straggle in the development process. The study faceted on the development issues of rural women in Vembar village has found that the women in rural areas have not been completely emancipated from the clutches of poverty, gender inequality, and economic dependence and that there is a dire need for specific actions to enhance their standard of living.

The study has brought to light certain significant findings on the nation's malady of the socio-economic status of rural women. The pigeonhole of compartmentalisation of women's roles in the village has the ramifications of more than half of the women respondents being economically dependent on their male counterparts. The level of education was found to be trifling with 25

percent of the women respondents having no education.

The study found that the education received by the women had significant repercussions on the status of their employment, but only to an extent. Underemployment prevailed in the village where the women were not able to find suitable jobs. This is the outcome of the gender roles placed by the traditional norms in the village community. The women were not allowed to leave the village to find suitable jobs, nor were they required to do so unless there aroused a problem of financial destitution.

The women also lacked the skills that would help them to be employed in high paying jobs. Vocational training and proper education tools must be supplied to both the paid and unpaid women workers to uplift their status.

The development of the country rests in the hands of its women. A country can only fully develop if its women are educated, suitably employed, and contribute more not only to their homes but also to the well-being of the community. Higher employment would lead to a rise in the purchasing power of the family and would improve their quality of life. They are also the educators of the generation of tomorrow. Therefore, women in rural areas must be given suitable education, job opportunities, skill training, and welfare schemes. The prime step to give suitable education is to create awareness of the importance of education among the people in rural areas. The Government of India is providing free and compulsory education up to the age of fourteen. This is common for both boys and girls. Though such a provision is given, the attendance in school is lower. As a result, even after completing the school, they are not skilled for better employment. Hence, the effectiveness of the enhancement of skill-based education must be given priority. For this, good governance is the need of the hour. For those students who are interested in pursuing higher education must be provided with suitable financial support in the form of scholarships and educational loans. Proper infrastructural facilities in the village schools and transport facilities to go to nearby towns for higher education are the twin needs to improve the educational status of rural folks, especially the girls. The educational institutions must train the students in such a way that they can improve their life skills to help them get employed anywhere. If proper steps are taken to improve the educational status of women, it will result in the improvement of economic status, which in turn would increase the social status leading to the economic development of the country. Thus, it is in the hands of the government to develop the villages in rural India and place

the country forward on its path towards development.
