

Labour, Land and Rice Production

Women's Involvement in Three States

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The underlying assumption in many studies which examine the situation of agricultural labour is that the male worker is the main breadwinner and the sole supporter of women and children. This study which examines the involvement of women—both labourers and landowning—in rice production in three states, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal finds that their contribution is neither marginal nor insignificant. Through their work, knowledge and skills both categories of women make crucial contributions to the production and processing of rice as well as to household expenditure. They are also aware of technological changes and influence their acceptance or rejection. But in order that their role be recognised many concepts and definitions including those of work, employment, wages, earnings, etc. have to be revised.

LAND and labour are well acknowledged factors of production. But the most common practice is to treat labour as abstract or neutral (which may be equated to male), and land as static (ignoring the changes in its character over time).¹ In this paper we introduce gender and class and examine women's—both labourers and landowning—involvement in rice production in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. These two categories of women have one thing in common, viz, their work is not recognised, and it often goes uncounted and unrecorded. At the same time their interest in and contribution to rice production are not the same. This is mainly determined by their relation to land while most of the labourers are landless, the women in the land-owning households do enjoy some access to land and produce and control over labour even when they do not have any *de jure* right over land. What is presented in this paper are some of the important findings of a bigger study.² The objectives of which were modest—the immediate and important among them was to “fill in a substantial gap in the data base on women's economic activities, and document the contribution of women to the production of rice at different stages”.

During the course of this study we had to go beyond the strict objectives laid down in the research proposal.³ The responses we received as well as our own observations have helped in widening our perspective. Among the main arguments put forth in this paper are (i) women's involvement in rice production is not marginal or insignificant; women labourers' contribution is crucial both for rice production and household maintenance, (ii) exploitation of women labourers and thereby labour as a whole exists in very many ways and it varies between regions, (iii) women from land-owning households contribute to the production and processing of rice in a much bigger way than understood and (iv) both categories of women are aware of technological changes, and play a role in accepting or rejecting innovations.

Before proceeding, a brief description of the study area and respondents is necessary. Field work was undertaken in 28 villages, 10

each in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and eight in West Bengal. An idea of the regional spread of the villages can be had from table A. About 48 women labourers and 10-15 women from landowning households from each village formed our respondents. They belonged to different religions, castes and tribes. The majority were married and came under the age group 26 to 50. The number of unmarried women as respondents was more in Kerala. The respondents included widows in both the categories, most of whom lived with adult working sons and their families. There were some—particularly in Kerala—who lived along with adult working daughters. In the case of some landowning women it was found that married daughter and family lived with the mother. A third group of widows was found to be living with small children or unemployed adult children, thus adding to their responsibility. We had respondents who were divorced⁴ as well as those who were deserted by husband. A very small number of our respondents lived alone. The number of cases under each of the above description was lesser among the women in the land-owning households. The difference between the two categories of households became clearly marked when it came to educational levels of respondents, and other members of the household, and also the availability of a regular income.⁵

What has this study brought to life about women's life and work? This would be better understood if we pause for a while and examine the observations of some others. To begin with, let us see what two of the major reports on agricultural labour have said. References to women labourers are made in more than one place in the Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee Report (1960), gist of which is contained in the following: “A distinct feature of agricultural employment is the preponderance of women and children as wage earners. While such employment is often resorted to for supplementing family income, it is to an extent a contributory factor to low wage levels of adult male agricultural workers. Employment of women is generally confined to particular agricultural operations such as transplanting. Children are employed for

cattle tending, weeding, etc. . .” (p 39). These observations are very largely repeated in the Rural Labour Committee Report (1963-64) of the ministry of labour. “It is the economic compulsion, more than any other consideration, which motivates women in rural areas to seek employment for wages. It is, therefore, but natural that such women are drawn from the poorer strata of the rural society comprising mostly the landless agricultural labour households. Although employment in agriculture is in itself seasonal, the employment of women is all the more sporadic as they were generally tied to household chores and take up employment mainly to supplement the income of the household.” Shortage of space does not permit us to enter into discussion on remarks as given above. However it is necessary to add that such remarks are not restricted to government reports. Even “progressive” social scientists have expressed such views, which reflect both ignorance and attitude towards poor people's life. Unfortunately these views have influenced the formation of definitions and concepts. Our observations which are different are not the result of a lapse of nearly two decades.⁶ The underlying assumption in all the above observations is that the male agricultural

TABLE A: STATE AND DISTRICTWISE DISTRIBUTION OF VILLAGES STUDIED

State	District	Number of Villages Studied
Kerala	Palghat	2
	Trichur	2
	Alleppey	2
	Malappuram	1
	Cannanore	1
Tamil Nadu	Trivandrum	2
	Kanyakumari	2
	Chingleput	2
	Thanjavur	2
	South Arcot	2
	Tirunelveli	1
West Bengal	Madurai	1
	Birbhum	2
	24 Parganas	2
	Purulia	2
	Bardhaman	2

labour is the real worker, breadwinner and supporter of women and children. Our position and observations are different.

We hold the view that women labourers are performing some of the crucial tasks in rice cultivation. While women in large numbers are engaged in the production and processing of rice, we did not find a rigid sexual division in these tasks. In transplantation and weeding, two tasks commonly ascribed to women, we found interesting regional variations in what women and men did or did not do. There are villages where only women did these tasks, while in some villages men also did these tasks. In some places men who did these works were made fun of as engaging in female tasks. In some women plant the seedlings pulled out by men. However we do not agree to the view that women are engaged in less strenuous tasks. Transplantation is a highly skilled and strenuous task, and women have acquired the skill and strength passed down through generations. Coming to harvesting a task which benefits the labourers most, because of the kind payment, we found more clear-cut regional variations in sexual division and/or "co-operation". In some villages in Thanjavur district only pairs of women and men were employed, thus discriminating against women without adult male members in the household who would go for harvesting. In some of the villages in the southern parts of Kerala and nearby villages in Tamil Nadu, women are not employed in harvesting. As we go to the northern parts of Kerala harvesting becomes a near monopoly of women. One of our findings which has to be reported here is that what we usually refer to as harvesting is a combination of several tasks like reaping or cutting the stocks of paddy, bundling them, carrying them to the threshing yard, threshing and winnowing. Then there is measuring and storing of grain, and also stacking of hay which can also include tasks like loosening and drying.

There is wide variation between villages as to how these are treated and also how payments are made. In many places reaping and bundling upto winnowing are treated as one work. In one of the villages in Trichur district in Kerala women labourers stopped carrying the bundles to create work for their menfolk who are facing severe unemployment. In one of the villages in Alleppey district in Kerala the situation is different. This area has witnessed strong, militant unionism. Due to increasing labour costs and strong unionism, landowners have shifted the threshing yards nearer to the fields and this has put an end to work like carrying reaped paddy. Very often sale of paddy and straw also take place there itself. Due to these and other reasons our villages in this district showed the lowest employment for the individual worker. Sometimes a labourer got work for less than an hour.

It is doubtful whether the linkage of agricultural labourers' life and work to external developments are understood by researchers and policy makers.⁸

Yet another point that merits our attention is the status of labourers as permanent as against casual, and landless versus those with some marginal size land under their control. We did not find anywhere permanent labourers like the old agrarian slaves whose life was under the master's control in every sense. Majority of our respondents were casual labourers. Others came under varying types of permanent relationship with the employer.⁹ Wages given to permanent labourers are slightly less than what is generally given to casual labourers. But the former has an assurance if the employer has work. They can also get small loans without interest. They are also preferred when there is 'domestic' work or other work nearer home, and for which payment at least partly would be in food. Where do women come in this? It is difficult to answer this correctly because our knowledge about women's entry into labour market is limited. We found a few cases where husband is a casual labourer and wife permanent or vice versa. We found cases where husband becomes a permanent labourer and wife works for the same employer without entering into any contract. A recent study in one of the Tamil Nadu districts, which is also our field area reports that "in practice the paddy's wife does all the non-agricultural work required of him for no additional payment". The same report pointed out that in one village the paddy's wife was expected to do the weeding, transplantation and harvesting in the landowners' field as part of the paddy's contractual agreement.¹⁰ One cannot say that there is sexual division of labour in such situations.

Another case of exploitation to which agricultural labourers in general and women in particular are subjected to is when women and men work jointly. In one of the Thanjavur villages we found the women cutting the ripened crop and making bundles early in the morning. The men get up slowly, and carry the bundles to the threshing yard. Women come back and help in threshing and winnowing. They do not wait till the grain is measured and wages given, as they have to rush to make small purchases and cook for the night. Women's work was more "invisible" in West Bengal than in the other two states. We have not been very successful in breaking the veil of "invisibility" though contrary to what city friends had informed us we found large number of hard working women. They did not—at least in our sample—enter into contract with employers, but fulfilled husband's contractual obligations, and to repay loans. However the biggest number was casual labourers. These practices influence ideas about women's work and earnings, how the society and women themselves perceive them, and the

work and earnings they actually get. Women in the unorganised sector are paid lower wages everywhere. In rice farming too those tasks specifically treated as women's work get lower wages. In the cases described above, where women and men share work and earnings even if women's work is made visible, their earnings would remain submerged. Such earnings would go as male earnings. We cannot say whether this joint payment is higher or lower than what women and men would together get if they were paid separately. This, and also why this kind of practices are more prevalent in certain regions are areas which need further probing. In all probability we can presume that they are getting less than two independent incomes. While gender discrimination cannot be disputed in such cases, we cannot ignore the class exploitation behind these practices.

Our field work brought to light other aspects too which need fresh understanding. One is the prevalence of some kind of tenurial relationship between labourers and landowners. The practice of labour households taking some land on some kind of share-cropping basis is in vogue in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal though it was not observed in Kerala. The size of land leased in as well as the tenurial agreements were not the same everywhere. In one of the Thanjavur villages many labourers had leased in 33 cents of paddy fields (100 cents = 1 acre) on tenancy basis (50:50 share-cropping). The land belonged to the temple and it was parcelled and leased out by the managing committee. In Chingleput district some labourers had leased in two acres of field, and in some cases it went up to three acres. The tenurial agreements can be based on *alavaram* (twenty-five per cent of the produce to the labourers and the rest to the owner of the land) or *varam* (50:50). In this case if the landowners provide water from the tubewells installed by them their share can go upto 67% per cent. Here also questions like who benefits more, the labourer or landowner, where are such arrangements more prevalent and reasons for that remain unanswered in our study. The traditional labour has a hunger for land and even a small plot, if there is no calamity, brings a few bags of grain and hay into the household. A few among them are also able to save a bit to buy a cow or pair of oxen or buffalo. The landowner, on the other hand is free to withhold the lease after one harvest, and the same land is not given to the same labourers for long. This enables them to have labour whenever they want. The labourers will not have sufficient land and their access to resources like credit, water, etc. remains limited if not absent. Wage work remains the assured source of income for them. These leaseholding labour households can make any small gain from agriculture only if the women and children take part in the produc-

tion process at all stages. Kalyan Dutt, while writing on production relations in agriculture has pointed out that it was in the interest of the capitalist landowner to see that the labourer has a plot of land which would not meet even their subsistence requirements.¹¹ According to him women and children have specific skill and role.

Another observation to be noted here is that changes are happening in the mode of payment. Already shift from kind to money payment has taken place in many parts. We found that a kind of contractual system of payment was being introduced in some places. For example, wages per acre would be fixed for transplantation, and for weeding it would be so many paise per bundle or so many rupees per acre. For the labourers the temptation would be to work more and make higher earnings. However, this can bring about changes in sexual division of work, and also reduce the number of labourers needed. This will have grave repercussions on the labour households which face intermittency of work even now. This is a point which has not received due attention. It is common to characterise agricultural labourer's work as "seasonal", which cannot fully convey what it means to have work for a few days followed by short or long spells without work, and the same repeated again. Despite the differences observed earlier (landless and marginal, permanent and casual) all agricultural labourers face this intermittency in the availability of work. Available literature on agricultural labour does not throw useful light on this situation and how they cope with it.

Though the main thrust of our study was women's involvement in rice cultivation we attempted to collect information on other work they did either along with agricultural work or otherwise. Routine work in the household commonly known as "domestic chores" was left out. Our data cannot claim to be complete. However, the findings are interesting. Our respondents in all the villages were engaged in a variety of work which brought kind or cash benefits to the household. By and large it can be said that the additional work that these women got depended upon the natural endowments of the region. For example, our respondents in Purulia district in West Bengal went to the nearby forest and collected *kendu* leaves, lac and other forest produce. This is not possible for women in those villages where there are no forest nearby, where woods and forests are destroyed or where the use of common property has been restricted by local bodies or state government. Cowdung collection and dung cake making, grass cutting and firewood collection are the most common work these women found. Both cowdung cakes and firewood serve as fuel in one house and can also be sold. If the labour household has a cow or any other animal, part of the grass the women collect

is used to feed them, and the rest sold. Breaking stones, making stone chips, carrying them, sand, etc.—usually called head load work, working at construction sites are other work available to some. The regional difference in the work available is significant. Collection of fish, crabs and snails, edible leaves and flowers, making of cotton quilts (*kaniha*) are certain items of work only women from West Bengal villages marked. Whereas multiple crop regions offered more of "extra work" primarily rice growing areas could offer much less of such kind of work. Though these works have a major role in maintaining the labour households in the unenviable state in which they exist they are ignored by the official data collecting system because they do not always fit into the accepted definition of "employment".

Before closing this discussion we have to take note of some disturbing developments that are closing these avenues which give extra work to the women labourers. They include the impact of new regulations, modernisation, urbanisation, technological changes and the resultant ethos about style of living. When tiles and concrete replace grass and palm leaf mats as roofing material, some amount of work available to the poor and particularly women are reduced. Permanent compound walls instead of annual fencing, plastic goods in the place of traditional baskets and other items are other examples. No effective intervention to reduce the hardship in the insecure life of the respondents is possible if we do not even recognise the contribution these women make to their households and to the society. Pranab Bardhan is one economist who noted this kind of work. Yet he concluded that "in spite of all this glaring sources of under-employment, it is probably correct to say that the extent of labour force participation by women in West Bengal is significantly below that of men."¹² If we accept that women like our respondents are constantly seeking work (paid or unpaid) which somehow helps their households, what should be the next step—to fit that work into current definitions or look for new definitions?

Land, other variable assumes greater importance when we come to the landowning households. It has to be mentioned that our land-owning respondents were not a homogeneous group. The size of land owned/operated, where they are located, whether they are irrigated or not and what crops are grown as well as the presence of persons who bring non-agricultural regular income make significant differences between these households, which are reflected in the life of the women in them. A grave mistake has been entered into our understanding of the "upper-caste and upper-class" women in India who are said to be not doing any agricultural work, particularly manual work. Many of our respondents, while answering about their occupation said that they were

'housewives'. A small number gave 'agricultural' as their occupation. Some including a muslim respondent in Kerala replied 'housewife and supervision of agricultural work'. Two of our respondents from Kerala, one Nambudiri and one Nair (both high castes) were teachers in addition to being housewife and cultivator. One of the methods by which data was collected from these women was by asking them to note down their day-to-day work in paddy cultivation in note books. The other was by asking them to mark against the items of work listed in a printed diary. Though we could not entice all women to keep written diaries, some of the available ones are very interesting and contain rich material. Those women who wrote the diaries did not confine themselves to paddy work alone. The varieties of tasks a paddy growing area generally have, and also the order of priority in women's minds get reflected in these diaries. Tamil Nadu diaries gave a fascinating picture of the respondent's knowledge about cultivation and their concern and participation. They have shown a tenderness to paddy crop and fields almost similar to what they would show to their own children. Many of them visited the fields more than once, everyday, checked water level and adjusted it if necessary. They understood the need to be careful both when water was scarce, and when pumps involving electricity consumption and hence payment were used. Apart from supervising the work done by the labourers many of them worked along with the labourers. Notings like "extracted good work from the labourers" was not uncommon in these diaries.

It has to be made clear that we should not make any generalisations from these land-owning women's involvement in rice production. It shows significant regional variations. Apart from that, caste, ideas of 'prestige' and 'status', etc. also play a role in the extent to which women of this class take part in visible agricultural work. For example, West Bengal diaries showed a marked importance in "cooking and feeding" both household members and labourers. Their direct involvement with the work in the fields was less than that of Tamil Nadu women. Cooking appears to take more time in West Bengal households. If this included collection of vegetables and fish, then the time spent would be more. Women in Bengal spent more time in cattle care and looking after poultry. However things are changing. A Brahman respondent informed us that she was doing more work than what her mother did. Though these women did not visit the fields daily, they knew what was going on there. They knew their labourers, and gave instructions through the chief labourer.

It is not correct to stop at 'upper-caste and upper-class women do not work in India'. We have to ask, why and also what else do they do? In West Bengal, for example, cook-

ing and other work close to the house take a lot of time. Still we found a few women who sat near the threshing yard, after attending to all domestic work, and supervised the operations so carefully that no grain was lost. Stopping the practice of feeding the labourers has in a sense reduced these women's involvement in cultivation. It used to give them a sense of participation (even when they were not conscious of it) and they used to know everything that took place in the field through the labourers. The same happens when the size of land under the control of the household gets reduced due to partition, or when the family decided to sell lands. This was observed in Kerala where more than one respondent said that cost of paddy cultivation was going up and that they were not finding it attractive. Some planned to sell the fields, or convert them to coconut or banana gardens. In some places, rubber cultivation has begun.¹³ These changes would affect both categories of women. Some of the new crops do not require as many female labour as paddy does. Most of the cash crops that substitute paddy do not need the care and attention that paddy demands and this will reduce women's involvement in the production process and also storage, sale, etc.

Employer-labour relationship was not focused in the main study. But from various responses we received it was interesting to note how opposite were the interests of these groups. The labour respondents in general welcomed the fixed timings of work now followed, as opposed to the earlier practice of the landowners calling the labourers to work even before the sun rose and kept them till the moon reached high up in the sky. A number of women from the landowning households lamented that they have lost their old time control over workers. Surprisingly even owners of small and marginal holdings complained of "idleness" of workers, and emphasised the need to work along with labourers. On several occasions, the need for ideological education and debate became pronounced. At least the women from labour and marginal and small landed households can know that they can find common grounds.

One area in which our respondents from both categories agreed was in their matter of fact attitude towards the technological changes that have come about in rice production. The most significant of these changes are in high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilisers, pesticides and to some extent in the Japanese method of transplanting. Generally science and technology come as something which the ordinary people cannot easily grasp and hence they create an image of something superior. That is somewhat lacking here. Machines to weed and transplant have not come in a big way as to frighten the labourers. We had asked the landowning respondents whether they listened

to the programmes for farmers broadcast over the radio. The majority listened, but most of them said that they did not follow all suggestions and advice. In answering about the choice of a particular variety of seed or why change of seeds was made between crops, one Kerala respondent said: "When we sowed only government approved varieties we had loss. Now we use both approved and non-approved varieties. During this season we used four new varieties. . . Brown hopper attacks the new varieties, but yield is high. . . Demand for labour depends on weed and not on the variety of seeds." This single answer leaves us with quite a variety of topics to probe. The respondents like this woman were able to answer without consulting anyone. They knew a lot about seeds and fertiliser. We cannot say that all that they said about rejection of seeds is "scientific". However it is necessary for the scientists to know how their research findings are received by the cultivators and understand the logic behind them. Though it may sound odd, we feel that these women with vast experience in producing and processing upto the stage of cooking and serving should be taken into confidence before technological changes are offered to them. The Tamil Nadu Women's diaries showed their knowledge of water management and would certainly have some suggestions for effective and less expensive methods of irrigation. As our study did not have science and technology as a component our findings

TABLE 2: AVERAGE WEEKLY CONTRIBUTION BY WOMEN AND MEN IN LANDLESS AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS

Village Code	Average Weekly Contribution (Mean) (Rs)	
	Women	Men
101	19.16	12.99
105	22.10	26.37
102	11.43	8.73
110	14.32	16.97
103	14.39	11.04
104	10.81	9.84
106	7.42	37.44
107	23.97	24.64
108	20.05	14.06
109	28.10	15.29
211	9.11	6.20
219	13.33	13.22
212	7.03	4.69
214	5.66	5.88
213	10.02	9.59
216	18.07	23.99
215	13.29	11.29
217	18.04	30.82
218	24.50	30.06
220	13.67	17.95
321	10.93	12.51
322	9.43	10.87
323	19.07	14.05
324	15.21	26.59
325	17.53	16.69
326	22.01	25.87
327	18.37	20.90
328	8.09	32.02

TABLE 3: WEEKLY CONTRIBUTION BY RESPONDENT AND HUSBAND TOWARDS HOUSEHOLD MAINTENANCE (LANDLESS AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS)

Village Code	Maximum (Rs)		Minimum (Rs)	
	Respondent	Husband	Respondent	Husband
101	26.81	27.44	0.19	0.00
105	30.88	64.48	1.99	0.00
102	14.57	14.35	4.79	0.00
110	25.44	54.31	5.94	0.00
103	31.95	32.98	0.27	0.00
104	11.53	18.89	2.25	0.00
106	25.62	71.73	0.56	0.00
107	36.99	46.76	0.35	0.00
108	26.36	29.19	7.11	0.00
109	34.56	41.63	9.23	0.00
211	11.90	17.71	3.47	0.00
219	17.44	32.32	2.99	0.00
212	13.20	9.09	1.15	0.00
214	8.01	10.38	1.92	0.00
213	15.30	19.08	4.69	0.00
216	29.03	29.25	1.52	0.00
215	18.48	31.89	0.58	0.00
217	17.64	32.09	4.96	0.00
218	38.40	71.57	8.23	0.00
220	21.01	32.58	1.33	0.00
321	14.27	16.68	6.18	4.15
322	14.71	15.05	4.79	0.00
323	20.37	15.02	14.85	0.00
324	23.02	34.29	9.24	0.00
325	23.34	21.77	7.81	0.00
326	21.83	19.36	12.94	12.59
327	25.04	31.41	6.46	0.00
328	24.82	65.85	2.27	0.00

in this regard are sketchy and tentative. However we have enough evidence to suggest this as an area for further research, and future concern. Science and technology cannot be neutral to social realities which include inequalities in wealth and income, as well as opportunities and access to resources. As such, in situations like ours which are marked by harsh unemployment, labour displacing technologies should not find place. Labour absorbing and skill upgrading technologies should have high priority and these should reach women. It is necessary that a dialogue is initiated between technologists and natural scientists, social scientists and women like our respondents, and mechanisms through which information and feed back would flow regularly has to be set up. Women's organisations have to be entrusted with the responsibility of disseminating scientific findings and monitoring their reception/rejection.

To conclude, it is necessary to say that we have come far from our starting point. But our data demonstrate that women are not outside the rice production system. Nor are they supplementary earners in the household, as the tables 1 and 2 show. Through their work, knowledge and ability to manage the process, both categories of women we have dealt with are fully involved in the production of rice. For their work to be recognised, many concepts and definitions including work, employment, wages, earnings, contribution, etc. have to be renewed. The method of assessing work and fixing remuneration has to be revised. It is also necessary to assess the volume of labour necessary for agriculture and generate other employment for the women, as well as a second range of work for those who remain in agriculture. Even a casual look would suggest vast potential for the development of animal husbandry including piggery, poultry and fish culture in West Bengal. The problem of rural employment would be serious in Kerala, where an erosion of agriculture-based work for the labour has been taking place for quite some time. Moreover to the traditional worker and the landowner agriculture is no more an attraction.¹⁴ When we attempt all this within a framework aimed at doing away with inequality, oppression and exploitation it is natural that labourers, and particularly women should have a stake in land and rice production rather than being mere wage earners. We say women, because women have had a special function in rice production which has made them skilled and equipped for that. Another reason is that they bear the maximum brunt of the present system, and cope with all the hardships that follow a life of deprivation and insecurity and yet remain oblivious to all including data collecting agencies. Instead of saying "women and children reduce wage rates" we have to say "without these women, their households would not have survived". Then our whole vision would change.

Notes

[This is a slightly modified version of the paper presented at the panel Women Property and the Household in the Ninth European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, July 9 to 12, 1986, at South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University.]

- 1 Till sometime back land was considered a most precious item of property symbolising prestige and power. Customary practices prevented transfer and alienation. Emergence of notions of private property, changing inheritance patterns and new demands on land have resulted in turning land into a mere commodity which can be divided, transferred and sold. Landowning still yields power, but the changes that have occurred have affected both the landowners and the labourers as well as their interpersonal relationships.
- 2 "Women in Rice Cultivation", a report submitted to the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).
- 3 Methodology of the study is not given in this paper, as it has been explained in several papers. Please refer: Saradmoni, K (with Joan Mencher and Janaki Panikker): "Women in Rice Cultivation: Some Research Tools" in "Studies in Family Planning", the Population Council, New York, 1979. Saradmoni, K (with Joan Mencher): "Muddy Feet, Dirty Hands: Rice Production and Female Agricultural Labourers", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XVII, pp A 149-167, 1982.
- 4 Though separation and desertion is marked among the labour households, divorce was found noticeable in a muslim dominated village in north Kerala.
- 5 While many of our landowning households had regular non-agricultural income from sources like teaching, business or employment in government and non-government sectors, the total number of persons who have got a regular employment in the labour households is very small.
- 6 This argument was put forth by a former director of the Central Statistical Organisation at the Golden Jubilee Symposium on Women, Work and Society, Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi, September, 1982.
- 7 Earlier it was wife-husband team; now a mother and adult son can also go as pairs.
- 8 Though agricultural labourer still remains an interesting subject for researchers, one does not come across much information on how land reforms, changing crop pattern, mechanisation, etc. not to speak of developments not directly related to agriculture on their life.
- 9 The classification of labourers into permanent and casual labourers needs examination. We are yet to have details regarding the advantages and disadvantages of being a permanent labourer, why it is more common in certain parts, and how and why some labourers leave permanent relations and opt for uncertain casual status.
- 10 T K Sundari: "Caste and the Rural Economy", Working Paper, No 130, Centre

for Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1980 (mimeo), p 27.

- 11 Kalyan Dutt: "Production Relations in Agriculture, with Special Reference to Andhra Pradesh", in "Peasant Farming and Growth of Capitalism in Indian Agriculture", V V K Rao et al (ed), 1984, pp 127-28.
- 12 Bardhan, P K: "Land, Labour and Rural Poverty", 1984, p 23.
- 13 It is unfortunate that the government of Kerala, as well as politicians and social scientists have not viewed with seriousness the falling acreage under rice cultivation as well as the fields left uncultivated. The small owners find it unprofitable to cultivate paddy, and prefer to sell the fields or leave them uncultivated. This is an issue which needs immediate attention in a food deficit state like Kerala.
- 14 It would be interesting to know how many small owners and labourers have left or are trying to leave land and cultivation, their traditional occupation. As this cannot be seen as a simple matter of some people leaving one occupation to another it has to be investigated thoroughly.

Shree Raj Travels and Tours

SHREE RAJ TRAVELS AND TOURS has planned diversification into the hotel industry. It intends to build executive hotels with all modern amenities in industrial cities of India, having a population of five lakh and over. To undertake this massive project the company intends to float a public limited company under the name and style "Raj Executive Hotels". The formalities connected with the public issue are being worked out, according to Lalit Shah, chairman and managing director. Referring to the travels and tours business, he said having made a mark in outbound tourism, the company was now also looking towards promoting domestic tourism. From the summer of 1987, it planned to charter a full airbus from Indian Airlines to transport the tourists at convenient times from Bombay and Delhi to Srinagar. The final touches to this concept were being given in consultation with Indian Airlines. The target set this year was to promote 6,500 passengers to Kashmir during the peak tourist season of April to June. The Department of Tourism, J and K State, and the Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Association have hailed this new "revolution" in domestic tourism brought about by Raj, and had offered facilities like free land to put up shamianas at Gulmarg, Sonmarg and Manasbal, etc. to serve freshly cooked hot, delicious food to the tourists. As these places are not geared up to provide hygienically prepared food. The company decided to cater to the tourists by serving Gujarati, North Indian, South Indian and Chinese cuisine specially prepared by selected chefs.