



ENHANCING RURAL LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN OF SOUTH TAMIL NADU THROUGH PALMYRA PALM AND GUM ARABIC TREE

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Abstract: Rural was the backbone of our motherland. Agriculture and allied sectors are absolutely the largest livelihood source in the rural areas of India. Tamil Nadu has traditionally been an agricultural state, while its advances in other fields launched the state into competition with other areas. Nearly 70 percent of the country's population lives in rural areas report from the latest census. Unemployment and poverty are inextricably linked in that one can't be decoupled from the other. Unemployment is the major cause of poverty. The current situation in rural areas monsoon failure, mechanization, agriculture diversification, increased urbanization, decrease in the agricultural land and some other facts to create a large number of landless and unemployment youth and women in the rural areas of south Tamil Nadu. It is a complex issue, about which there are increasing concerns and arguments but based on the research very little. In this scenario, this paper mainly focuses on the usage of Palmyra palm and Gum Arabic tree and to create livelihood opportunities for landless and also securing farming opportunities in Tamil Nadu. It will shed light on how the increase employment and reducing poverty and also livelihood opportunities for landless people, especially youth and women and its implication on rural livelihood in the near future.

Keywords: Unemployment, Palmyra palm and Gum Arabic tree, livelihood opportunities

1. Introduction

Agriculture is significant for Indian economy and society both. According to the Socio- Economic and Caste Census, SECC in 2011, out of 24.39 crore households in the country, 17.9 million households live in villages and are mostly dependent on agriculture (Naresh sirohi, 2018). Indian agriculture and rural areas are undergoing a considerable change. Rural India is becoming less and less agricultural, and allied activities are now a very important part of the livelihood strategies. The agriculture and allied sector contributes significantly to economic growth, income diversification, rural employment and poverty reduction. Agro- industries are getting even more important in view of very impressive growth in high value commodities alongside rising incomes in recent years. It has larger scope for acceleration in future given the thrust on doubling farmer's income.

In India with low transition of workforce and complex land laws for agriculture, small and marginal farmers dominate rural wealth. Income from agriculture (farming) is not enough for their livelihood. In fact, more than



one-third of rural poor are farmers. They require adequate off farm income opportunities in their vicinity, for this to happen, growth of productive employment in rural non-farm sector is important (Brajesh Jha, 2011). Around 70 percent of Indian population still lives in rural areas with the major source of income continuing to be agriculture. However, with increased urbanization and decrease in the agricultural land, unemployment in rural India is gradually gathering momentum. Agro based industrial sector, in spite of its high potentiality to ensure equitable income and employment opportunities in rural areas, has remained underdeveloped.

There is a vital need to improve the economic scenario in rural India to have a sustainable growth model for the country as a whole. Rural local resources could be instrumental in bringing out the much needed turnaround of rural communities and at the same time securing farming. It can revive many traditional crafts which are dying a slow death. Generally, it can open rural mindset to new thoughts and ideas from the outside world.

In above facts this paper, after presenting growth of employment for youth and women in rural area of south Tamil Nadu, discusses policies for growth of productive rural employment opportunities in subsequent section.

2. Materials and Methods

This study, mixed method research design was followed. In this method, collecting, analyzing, and mixing both primary and secondary data, the collected information through quantitative and qualitative. Primary data collected from through survey method, the survey conducted in six districts of south Tamil Nadu, namely Thoothukudi (Pannaivilai), Ramanathapuram (Vikrannapandipuram), Tirunelveli (Rayagiri), Sivagangai (Melamangalam), virudhunagr (Rengappa naickanpatti) and Madurai (Nadupatti). Secondary data information collected from Journals, Conference papers and web sources particularly research articles and kurukshetra magazine.

The 180 respondents selected from the rural area in six districts of Tamil Nadu. Respondents randomly selected from each village 30 people. Mostly the heads of the household were approached as they had a better memory of the past life. For the purpose of this research, we have employed mixed survey method. The reason this method has been used is because the impacts of Palmyra and Gum Arabic trees varies for different geographical regions.



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Mixed method survey most frequently used tools when conducting a research since it provides in-depth information and specific knowledge on a particular issue for a community.

3. Results and Discussion

For the purpose of this research, researcher met individuals and groups at different category (farmer group / youth group / women group /general public etc.) to assess farming, employment and livelihood status and also impact of Palmyra and Gum Arabic tree. More often than not, it is a time intensive task especially when a face-to-face is conducted since it is dependent on time and availability of the informant. Furthermore, the findings attained from such interviews are not generalizable since they reflect a particular individual's impact and perspective on a life style.

India is a young country as highlighted by our Prime Minister in his Independence Day Speech of August 2017. India today has the world's largest youth population (Srija, 2018). Women in India, more so in rural and farm sectors, are often considered obstinate about surviving and moving ahead. "The Rural women constitute a large proportion of population in rural India. Poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural households. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy (Rakesh Srivastava, 2018)".

Rural youth and women are the key agents for rural development. They play a catalytic role towards reaching of transformational financial, ecological and social changes required for sustainable development. But education level, limited access to credit and skilled knowledge are among the many challenges they face. These are further aggravated by the global food and economic crises, climate change and unemployment. Empowering them is crucial, not only for the well-being of persons, families and rural communities, but also for overall economic efficiency.

In this scenario, rural local resources could be instrumental in bringing out the much needed turnaround of rural communities. Palmyrah and Gum Arabic trees are commonly seen between agricultural fields in Tamil Nadu. People used them to mark boundaries in land and water bodies, and that works on biodiversity conservation.



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Planted around water bodies, they are assumed to recharge water. Both trees are sturdy and strong and do not fall easily. Palmyra trees help them withstand heavy winds and cyclones.

Palmyra referred as tree of life with nearly 800 uses including food, beverage, fiber, fodder, medicinal and timber ("Palm Tree, Cultivation, Sugar-Palm," 2015). Among the different suitable for eating uses of the palm, the sweet sap tapped from the inflorescence for making palm sugar is of prime importance. The endosperm of the young fruit, like tender coconut, is a delicacy in summer. The petiole fiber and leaf blade are used to make products such as brushes and handicrafts. The tree serves as a source of raw material for several cottage industries (Pc, Gn, M, & Hp, 2017).

The Gum Arabic tree is a thorny tree that grows in the forest and water bodies. It is home to Africa and the Indian subcontinent. This tree is regarded as one of the most useful and traditional trees in Tamil Nadu. The tree grows naturally in our country. Tamil Nadu can grow anywhere in barren lands and drought tolerant. Used as gum, firewood, animal feed, manure, pharmaceutical and wood furniture etc. Our Gum Arabic tree grows and grows. These trees are diamond-strewn trees are very stable. This is why this tree is used to make a variety of wood materials such as wood plow, sickle and ax stumps, knobs, cow carts, door frames, siding, board and frames.

Conclusion

Trees is an integral part of our life and culture, as it is used in agriculture purpose, daily usage things, religious ceremonies, art and music. Thus it is a mystical plant that engulfs our daily lives. This offers an excellent starting point in increasing employment, income generation and improving nutritional status of rural poor. Since tree can provide the basis for an expanding small and medium enterprise sector, it offers an effective mechanism for rural poverty alleviation and livelihood securities.

Thrust areas for wood product utilization and marketing based research need to be identified. More financial incentives and support need to be provided to promote the Palmyra and Gum Arabic tree industry and for establishing new such industries in production catchments. Agriculture research needs support of strategic framework and supporting policies for maintaining long-term livelihood, Government policies regarding natural



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resources, Palmyra and Gum Arabic tree product marketing, tree planting use and investment in subsidies in wood products need to be reoriented. It will be meet the employment demand and livelihood in near future.

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A Brief Author Biography



Mr. C.Thatchinamoorthy is perusing Ph.D. in the field of Agricultural Extension from Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University. He had been awarded M.Sc. degree in Agricultural Extension from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. He has been awarded UGC fellowship for pursuing his Ph.D. degree programme and also received five awards. He has published one book and three book chapters and also 15 research papers in journals of national and international repute, besides some popular articles for the benefit of farming community and field functionaries. He possess over two months teaching and six years of research experience. He is on the panel of editorial member for popular journals like JASR, AEXTJ, IJAAS and AJMS. His doctoral research theme focusing on integration of agriculture and nutrition will enhance nutritional security. Currently undergoing thesis research findings will help to formulate effective nutrition extension strategy for enhancing nutritional security in agriculture.

Dr. J. Meenambigai, has completed her undergraduate and post graduate studies between 1990-96 at AC & RI, Madurai. She did her doctoral degree programme at TNAU, Coimbatore in Agricultural extension during 1997- 2000. She is currently working as a Assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University. She has 16 years of experience in teaching, research and extension. She wrote a book on “Extension education and Rural Development.” and “NGO Governance” (Tamil and English) as academic contribution. As a research contribution she has published 32 numbers of research articles in professional journals and 10 popular articles. She has guided on research project for undergraduate students and M.Sc. (Agri) students. Presently she is guiding one Ph.D scholar doing research in the area of nutrition extension. She has served as a co-ordinator for the training programmes organized for the SHG members on floriculture and marketing management sponsored by DRDA and TNCDW. She also organized UGC XII plan sponsored EDP skill oriented training programme for women on kitchen garden and cutflower arrangement as an extension contribution.