

Dynamics Roles and Implications of Globalization in the Conditions of Cashew Industry Workers in Kerala

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Abstract

Cashew plays a vibrant role among the traditional crops like coffee, pepper, cardamom etc. Cashew industry is an export oriented traditional industry and also a labour intensive industry. Through this industry more than three lakh people are directly employed, of whom 95% are women from socially and economically backward communities in rural areas. The cashew industry occupies a predominant position in Kerala's economy. It is an important source of income for socially and economically backward groups, particularly women in the processing sector and the cashew industry creates abundance of job opportunities in the rural areas. The globalization has an impact on the industry as a result of the economic asymmetries in trade of cashew. There is an increase in export, import and foreign exchange of cashew at state level. However, there is slight decrease in the number of cashew processing industries in Kerala and also the employment and working conditions of women cashew workers are not properly developed. The present paper analyses about the implications of economic reforms in the status and working of cashew workers in Kerala and the development of cashew processing industries.

Keywords: Cashew processing industries, Economic reforms, Status and working conditions of cashew workers.

Introduction

The Cashew nut processing industries plays an imperative role in the Indian food processing industry. It has the potential to provide source of livelihood for the cashew growers, empower rural women in the processing sector, create employment opportunities and generate foreign exchange through exports [1]. Cashew plays a vibrant role among the traditional crops like coffee, pepper, cardamom etc. Cashew processing industry provides more than three lakh persons are directly employed, of whom 95% are women from socially and economically backward communities in rural areas. Women employment becomes a basic requisite for the social and economical uplift of women.

Objectives

To analyse the implications of cashew industry in the eve of economic reforms in Kerala.

To evaluate the status, working conditions and performance of cashew workers in Kerala.

Methodology

The present study is exploratory in character and designed as a mixed one based on the survey method. Both primary and secondary data were used for conducting the study. Cashew industries flourish throughout Kerala, but the present study covers only the Kollam district

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because ninety one percent of cashew processing factories are concentrated in Kollam. The study was conducted among the women workers in various cashew processing industries located within the revenue district of Kollam. The secondary data has been collected from Books, Journals, Magazines and Cashew Report of Cashew Export Promotion Council of India etc.

Status of cashew workers in Kerala

In Kerala, the major share of the work force in the cashew processing industry is women and about 95 per cent of the workers are drawn from the depressed castes [2] and Kannan [3] in his study, points out that nearly three fourth of the workers belong to the scheduled castes and half of those belonging to other backward communities were employed in Roasting and Shelling. The forward castes and Muslims constitute only 14 per cent and 8 per cent respectively are engaged in these categories of work. Workers belonging to forward and Muslim communities are concentrated in the Peeling section. This study highlights the fact that majority of the workers in the cashew processing industry belongs to socially backward and economically disadvantaged groups. Linda Berg [4] states that the women workers of the cashew factories in Kerala suffer from great poverty, deprivation and starvation compared with the average Malayalee.

The cashew industry occupies a predominant position in Kerala's economy. It is an important source of income for socially and economically backward groups, particularly women in the processing sector. Moreover, this is an export-oriented industry that earns foreign exchange. India is the global leader in cashew processing and Kerala alone accounts for 56 per cent of the total export of cashew kernel from India. Within Kerala, 90 per cent of the industry is concentrated in Kollam district, which has been declared as the Cashew Town of Export Excellence by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India (Perspective Plan 2030) [5]. There are about 390 cashew factories currently functioning in Kerala. Like other traditional industries in Kerala such as coir and handloom, the wages are low in the cashew processing industry as well.

Role of women in the era of globalization

Women constitute two third of the world's workforce which receives ten percent of world's income and own one percent of the means of production [6]. In the context of development, women's leadership and agency in social change have been levers for women's empowerment within communities. Women have sought to fight entrenched interests for community benefits, and through their collective strength, have earned a new identity. Women's right around the world is an important indicator to understand global well-being. The activity rates of females differ from country to country and also between different regions of large countries. The distribution of female workers among different occupations also differ from country to country, depending upon the structure of the economy, various social factors, educational levels and attitude of women towards jobs of different kinds.

The UN Fourth World Conference on 'Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace' in 1975 proclaimed as an International Women's Year. This Platform is an agenda for women's empowerment. It recognizes the equality of women and men is necessary for social justice and to achieve development and peace. It is an action agenda to safeguard women's human rights. The discussion mainly concentrated to Women's share in the labour force which continues to rise but women are concentrated in unremunerated and temporary work. Employment opportunities for women often have been limited to low pay and poor working conditions [7]. When combined with inflexible working conditions, inadequate sharing of family responsibilities, and attitudinal obstacles, these factors restricts women's economic opportunities and economic autonomy.

Beijing Conference in 1995 had identified certain quantitative and qualitative indicators of women empowerment. In tune with the Beijing conference, the goal of the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, passed in the year 2001, is to bring about advancement, development and empowerment of women. It mainly focuses on the equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation and equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, carrier and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, etc. The policy prescriptions include making the judicial-legal system more responsive and gender sensitive to women's needs, bring on greater equality in power sharing and participation in decision making at every level [8]. The attributes of women empowerment listed in the policies are economic and social empowerment. In the economic empowerment attributes, there are several items. They are poverty eradication programmes specific to women, strengthening of micro credit, specific programmes for women in agricultural, industry, and in the social empowerment attributes of women, there are several items. They are equal access to education, holistic approach to women's health and nutrition, inclusion of women's perspective in housing policies and provisions of safe and adequate housing, provision of safe drinking water and proper sanitation facilities, women's perspectives in environment protection and development be included in policies. This policy for the empowerment of women making them conscious that the constitution not only grant equality to women, but also empowers the state to take on procedures of positive discrimination in favour of women, within the framework of a democratic policies, laws, development policies, plans and programmes have intended at women's advancement in different spheres .

From the fifth five year plan elapsed there has been a discernible shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. This globalisation policy has both positive and negative effects for the empowerment of women. The positive effect of globalization is that it has opened up broader communication lines and attracted more companies as well as different organizations into India. This provides opportunities for not only working men, but also women, who are becoming a larger part of the workforce.

With new jobs for women, there are opportunities for higher pay, which raises self-confidence and brings about independence. This, in turn, can promote equality between the sexes, something that Indian women have been struggling with their entire lives. Globalization has the power to uproot the traditional treatment towards women to afford them an equal role in society. The cashew processing workers are skill oriented in nature and especially in the globalised skill oriented scenario the cashew processing activities which could raise the qualities of their work even though they are in the marginalised sections of the society [9].

The impact of globalisation can be seen in many fields. There is a common conviction that globalisation damagingly affects the workers, especially unskilled workers, either directly or indirectly, through trade and capital mobility. Its effect on wages, employment and income inequality have led to the vagueness among working class. Another aspect which has gravely affected the working class is that the prices of essential commodities touching the sky. Workers both in urban and rural area spend a large allocation of their income on food and the real wages of the workers have come down adversely affecting their living standards. In particular, globalization has the potential to lead to exploitation of the female workforce and even to expose their safety. Women are now seeking paid employment; a vast majority of them obtain only poorly paid, unskilled jobs in the informal sector, without any job security or social security. Additionally working women in India are more likely to be subjected to intense exploitation; they are exposed to more and more risks that cause health hazards and are forced to endure greater levels of physical and mental stress. Thus it would appear that globalization has made many international corporations richer by the billions at the expense of women who are suffering enormously due to this expansion of corporate empire [9].

Role of globalization in traditional industries

Government of India introduced a large number of innovative promotional measures to uplift the growth of traditional industries. This has played a key role in our planned development with its advantages of low investment, high potential for employment generation, diversification of the industrial base and dispersal of industries to rural and semi urban areas. The traditional industrial sector has been appropriately given a strategic position in our planned economy towards the fulfilment of the socio economic objectives particularly in achieving equitable growth.

The traditional industries have found a place of prominence in successive Industrial Policies of India since 1948. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 emphasised that traditional industry provides immediate large scale employment; it offers a method of ensuring more equitable distribution of national income and facilitate an effective mobilisation of resources of capital and skill, which might otherwise remain unutilised. The industrial policies also commence in successive years for the rapid growth and development of traditional industries in India like Industrial Policies of 1977, 1980 and 1991. The traditional industries like coir, cashew, handloom, handicrafts, and khadi along

with the small business units such as electronic goods in the modern sector are having potentialities of employment for the growing population in the country [10]. Traditional industries in India generally cast against the background of a variety of problems that have intensified particularly after the first quarter of this century. The traditional industrial sector is a vital constituent of overall industrial development of the country. The traditional industrial sector forms a dominant part of Indian industry and contributes to a significant proportion of production, exports and employment. There are large numbers of working poor in India. Around 94 percent of the workers are in the unorganised sector with low productivity, low earnings, and poor conditions of work and lack of social protection. The report says that while the trends may mask regional and country level successes, at the global level, there is little evidence to suggest employment has been responding to economic growth.

Globalization and cashew industry

Cashew industry is one of the traditional industries which is export oriented industry and generates foreign exchange to build up the share of the gross domestic product of the country. The increase in import of raw cashew shows the availability of raw nuts and the lack of domestic cultivation of cashew especially for generating the employment opportunities in the cashew processing industries. The industry, being highly labour intensive is a vital source for domestic employment. Statistics reveals that about 95 percent of women workers are in the cashew processing industry.

Over the past few decades this industry has seen some rapid and tremendous growth, though unregulated. This unregulated growth has threatened the survival of the industry. One of the major constraints of the industry is the perennial shortage of supplies of raw nuts and the precarious dependence on supplies from other countries. India has historical importance in this regard that it is the first country in the world that started the international trade of cashew. The globalization put forth some opportunities such as: (i) increase in cashew cultivation and cashew production, (ii) employment generation, (iii) formation of cashew processing unit, (iv) alcohol production from cashew apple, (v) shield oil production, (vi) transportation facility for cashew industry etc. India has a tremendous potential in the domestic as well as foreign market of cashew [11].

Cashew industry in Kerala with respect to the export was 44060 MT and the percentage increase was 5.44 and the value of export during this period was 48823 lakhs, its percentage increase was -11.42% in 1990-91. During 2017-18 the export increased to 68150 MT and its value during this period was 309875 lakhs. The percentage increase during 2017-18 was 3.63% compared to 2017-18 and the percentage increase in the value of export goes to 7.65%. With respect to import in 1990-91 the import of raw cashew nuts in Kerala was 4898 MT and the percentage increase in cashew import was 911.76 % and its value during this period was 4073 lakhs and its percentage increase was 3.23%. During 2017-18 the import increased to 213106 MT and its value during this period was 139008 lakhs. The percentage

increase during 2017-18 was 11.55% compared to 2017-18 and the percentage increase in the value of export goes to 22.53%. The foreign exchange of cashew nut in Kerala from 1990-91 was 273.67 lakhs and the percentage increase during this period was 1.06%. It is clear that in the successive years the foreign exchange shows an increasing trend not much very high difference but a slight change during these years. In 2017-18 the foreign exchange of cashew kernels was 506.70 lakhs (CEPCI, 2018).

The globalization has an impact on the industry as a result of the economic asymmetries in trade of cashew (Mahajan, 2010). There is an increase in export, import and foreign exchange of cashew at state level. However, there is slight decrease in the number of cashew processing industries in Kerala and also the employment and working conditions of women cashew workers not properly developed.

Economic reforms were instrumental in improving the competitiveness the cashew processing industry. As a result, the quality and standard of cashew in the domestic and international market increased in the post reform period. The cashew processing industries under the public sector is mainly focused on the variety of domestic market of cashew; it helps to improve the economic condition of the cashew processing sector. The export and foreign exchange of cashew increased during the post reform period which is reflected to increase the share of the state gross domestic product. The international expos were conducted to increase the competitive condition of cashew. The volatile nature of price of cashew influenced the market conditions and the consumption pattern mainly due to the prestigious position of cashew in the international market after the economic reforms. The export- import liberalised policies affect the import of raw nuts from the African countries and to create a suitable remedy for solving the shortage of raw nuts in the cashew processing sector. The number of private owned cashew processing industries increased after the economic reforms. The private multinational entrepreneurs earned maximum profit and for this the employment opportunities to the cashew processing workers increased, it affected the wages and living conditions of marginalised sections in the

society. The goods and services tax implemented by the present government affected the international market of cashew and the value addition policies affected the socio economic conditions of cashew processing workers. After the economic reforms, the budgetary provisions and the subsidies provided by the government highly promote the cashew processing industry to improve and sustain the living conditions of cashew processing workers.

Even though the economic reforms generated a gradual improvement in the cashew industry and the cashew processing workers, it negatively implied on the policies too. The facilities provided by the private cashew processing industries and their behaviour deteriorated in the post reform period due to the profit considerations. The social security benefits and welfare measures of the workers in the private cashew processing industries are not satisfactory. The work pressure and exploitation of the commission agents in the private cashew processing industry is an outcome in the reform period and they exploited the benefits of cashew processing workers. The workplace harassment and insecurity in the work increased after the reforms, the liberalized policies caused cut throat international competition among the cashew processing countries; Vietnam is major threat to India in this globalised scenario. The following tables are extracted from my thesis illuminating the motivational factors and working conditions of samples selected from women cashew workers in Kerala [12-18].

From the above table it is clear that the F value for wage factor as one of the motivational factors to choose cashew industry as opined by the cashew workers based on their community is 4.506, which is significant at 0.05 level indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of opinion about wage factor as one of the motivational factors based on the community. It is also evident that the F value for Infrastructural and Environmental Factor as one of the motivational factors to choose cashew industry as opined by the cashew workers based on their community is 9.678, which is significant at 0.05 level indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of opinion about

Table 1: Summary of ANOVA for the motivational factors to choose cashew industry as opined by the cashew workers based on their community.

Factor	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Wage Factor	Between Groups	40.057	13.352	4.506	.004
	Within Groups	1840.193	2.963		
	Total	1880.250			
Infrastructural and Environmental Factor	Between Groups	119.471	39.824	9.678	.000
	Within Groups	2555.226	4.115		
	Total	2674.698			
Behavioral Factor	Between Groups	83.291	27.764	6.429	.000
	Within Groups	2681.749	4.318		
	Total	2765.040			
Input Factor	Between Groups	5.300	1.767	1.939	.122
	Within Groups	565.749	.911		
	Total	571.050			
Total Motivational Factors	Between Groups	429.773	143.258	7.801	.000
	Within Groups	11403.868	18.364		
	Total	11833.642			

Source: Estimated from Primary Data, 2017.

Infrastructural and Environmental Factor as one of the motivational factors based on the community and it is also evident that the F value for behavioral factor as one of the motivational factors to choose cashew industry as opined by the cashew workers based on their community is 6.249, which is significant at 0.05 level indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of opinion about behavioral factor as one of the motivational factors based on the community.

From the above table it is evident that the F value for input factor as one of the motivational factors to choose cashew industry as opined by the cashew workers based on their community is 1.939, which is not significant at 0.05 level indicate that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of opinion about input as one of the motivational factors based on the community and it is evident that the F value for total motivational factor to choose cashew industry as opined by the cashew workers based on their community is 7.801, which is significant at 0.05 level indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of opinion about total motivational factors based on the community. Thus it could be concluded that opinion about the wage factor, infrastructure and environmental factors and behavioral factors are more varying as the motivational factors to choose the cashew workers based on their community.

Working Condition of Women Cashew Workers during Pre and Post Reform

Furthermore, different measures of globalization have different impacts on working conditions. The cashew workers are affected by fluctuations in wages due to fluctuations in cashew prices, lack of improvement in living conditions due to wage rigidity, increase in work place exploitation and harassment, prevalence of insecurity in workplace, shortage of raw nuts leading to uncertainty of regular work, commission agents involvement, work pressure due to low quality of imported raw nuts, societal attitudes, health ailments, trade union activities, delay in shelling activities and discounting the output generated by the cashew workers in the post reform period compared with the pre reform period.

The lack of improvement in living conditions of cashew workers was mainly due to the wage conditions and lack of employment opportunities. The wage rates are revised regularly but the expected improvement was not seen in the post reform period. The workplace exploitation and insecurity in the workplace of cashew workers especially in the private sector are high during the post reform period. The profit motive nature of managers and employers shows strict behaviour towards the cashew workers, especially in the case of more broken nuts, more small pieces and damage of good quality nuts.

The uncertainty of work due to the shortage of raw nuts is a serious issue affected by the cashew workers. The lack of availability of domestic raw nuts leads to the import of nuts for processing. But during the post reform period, the quality of imported raw nuts becomes deteriorated and it seriously affects the output of workers. Majority of the

workers opined that they used small knife for peeling, but due to the low quality, the processed nuts become broken and it leads to the reduction of their wages.

The social attitude towards the cashew workers becomes favourable during the post reform period. The cashew workers become low profile, but due to the changes in the work perspective especially during the post reform period it becomes changed accordingly and society provides equal status to the cashew workers. Health ailments due to strained work are a major problem in the cashew processing sector. For getting high wages the cashew workers were continuously engaged in work and thus their health problems increased and low back pain has been identified as one of the most common disorders among the cashew workers. It can be found that the workers often skip rest intervals and therefore continue working in the sitting position for long hours. The situation is better among peelers and graders. It was also found that the situation is better in factories owned by the government to those in the private cashew processing industries. The awareness programmes and medical camps are the better solution for reducing these health problems.

High wages with high work is a feature of cashew processing industries. Majority of the cashew workers opined that the wages are calculated on the basis of the quantity of output generated by the cashew workers. It can be found that shelling section on an average prepares 8 kgs of cashew and in peeling section about 10 kgs were processed, but if any worker processed high amount of cashew, they can receive more wages. It all depends on the availability of raw nuts and the processing skill of the workers.

Trade union affects the working condition of cashew workers. Majority of the cashew workers opined that the role of trade union become minimised and they worked according to the aspirations of the employers especially in private sector but in the government sector the trade union pressure is still high during the post reform period. The trade union helps the cashew workers in protecting the rights and revision of their wages. Shelling plays an important role in the cashew processing work, if there is a lag in the shelling activity it seriously affect the remaining works in the cashew industry. But delay in shelling activities reduced the total employment condition of the cashew workers. During the post reform period the delay in work is reduced especially in private cashew industries than the government cashew processing industries. The most important complaint is about the inaccurate measurement of weight and assessment of quality. Thus it can be concluded that the overall issues related to working condition is significantly higher in the post reform period than the pre reform period and government sector was much better than the private sector in this regard.

Fluctuations in cashew prices which affect wages are more in post reform than in the pre reform period. Wage rigidity is very high in post reform period than in the pre reform period. Further work place exploitation, harassment and the prevalence of insecurity in work place are very high in private sector compared with the government sector in post reform period than in pre reform period.

The shortage of raw nuts which leads to the uncertainty of regular work of women cashew workers is very high in post reform period than the pre reform period. It is also observed that there exists compulsorily deduction by commission agents who are more rampant in the post reform period. The researcher also found that the commission agents severely exploit the workers by extracting a given percent of the wages and also insisting the workers to work extra hours. It means that the high work pressure due to the exploitation of commission agents has an impact on the working condition of cashew workers in post reform period than in the pre reform period. Again the low quality of imported raw nuts and the resultant output have impacted the workers more in the reform period than in the pre reform period.

The societal attitude towards women cashew workers have improved during the post reform period than in the pre reform period. In spite of this, the cashew work is still considered as a low profile work and the young generations are not ready to join in cashew work, they prefer other works in textiles, margin free markets etc in post reform period than in the pre reform period. It is also found that high work related health ailments increased during post reform period. At the same time the high wages due to creation of high output which is the result of the policy initiative introduced in the reform period have positively impacted the worker's income. It is also observed that the trade union activities of women cashew workers are instrumental in improving the working condition in the cashew processing industries.

However there is a natural delay in the raw nuts which is due to its poor availability adversely affects the overall working condition of the cashew processing industries and

thereby the workers. It is also found that high fluctuations in cashew price affect the wages in post reform period than the pre reform period. Thus overall there is an improvement in the working condition of the women cashew workers in Kerala during the reform period.

Conclusion

Globalization and the consequent policies affect the working and living conditions of women cashew workers. The wage rate, wage condition, technology, social security benefits, welfare and health facilities provided by the cashew processing industry and the trade union activities of the cashew workers have improved. But however, there is an increase in issues related to working conditions and the job security of women cashew workers during the post reform period.

The growing demand for kernels in the international market and the availability of cheap possessing labour (mainly of women), the required skills in processing are the important favourable factors for the rapid growth of cashew processing industry in India. Cashew processing industry in India flourished primarily because of the international market. Globalization and the consequent economic policies highly affect the cashew processing industries. The trade policies and liberalized trade agreements after the economic reforms with the international scenario influence the working of cashew processing industries. The private sector's dominance of cashew processing industries is one of the net outcomes of the economic reforms. In general, the economic position of the women cashew workers much improved after the economic reforms.

Table 2: Working Condition of Women Cashew Workers during Pre and Post Reform (Difference in ranks).

	Paired Samples Test							
	Indicators	Mean Post reform	Mean Pre reform	Mean Difference	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Fluctuations in price affecting wages	3.97	2.04	1.928	0.010	186.320	624	.000
Pair 2	Wage rigidity	4.03	2.06	1.966	0.012	166.658	624	.000
Pair 3	Work Place Exploitation	3.92	2.11	1.811	0.023	77.370	624	.000
Pair 4	Insecurity in work place	3.89	2.08	1.806	0.024	76.833	624	.000
Pair 5	Shortage of raw nuts leads to uncertainty of work	3.82	2.90	.920	0.046	20.162	624	.000
Pair 6	Commission Agent Deduction	3.70	2.04	1.669	0.034	48.674	624	.000
Pair 7	Work Pressure due to Commission Agent	3.71	2.00	1.709	0.030	56.638	624	.000
Pair 8	Work Pressure due to low quality material	4.00	2.50	1.499	0.034	43.928	624	.000
Pair 9	Social Attitude	3.71	2.62	1.086	0.039	27.667	624	.000
Pair 10	High Work due to Health Ailment	3.95	2.80	1.144	0.039	29.387	624	.000
Pair 11	High Wages Due High Work	4.00	2.39	1.614	0.025	65.342	624	.000
Pair 12	Trade Union affects working condition	3.92	2.79	1.126	0.040	28.411	624	.000
Pair 13	Delay in Shelling affect work	4.00	3.10	.902	0.039	23.220	624	.000
Pair 14	Discounting the Output	3.96	3.13	.827	0.043	19.024	624	.000
Pair 15	Overall issues related to working condition	3.89	2.47	1.4292571	0.018	78.852	624	.000

Source: Estimated from Primary Data, 2017.

The social security benefits, welfare and health facilities provided by the private cashew processing industries are low compared with the government cashew processing industries. The social security benefits, welfare and health facilities provided by the cashew processing industries to the cashew workers are the main reason for the existence of women cashew workers still working in these industries even though they get minimum wages. The living conditions of women cashew workers during the post reform period show a significant improvement with respect to the wage rate, household conditions and the participation in the social organisations. The social and economic indicators which evaluates the ultimate development of cashew workers implies that the lack of availability of raw nuts is a major problem affected by the cashew processing industries and it is the major hurdle to provide maximum employment opportunities to them. From the data, it can be concluded that even though the cashew processing industries provide health, welfare and social security benefits, the issues related to working conditions exists as a pertinent issue of the women cashew workers. The nature of wage payment, revision and minimum wages and fix regular wage system, provide more packages to improve the economic conditions and the professionalism in the effective working of cashew processing industries to strengthen the working habits of the cashew workers. The need for the integration of private cashew processing industries into union with the government cashew processing industries for providing maximum number of days of employment helps for the revival of cashew processing industries for attaining better development. The cashew processing workers expected that through the consecutive policies adopted by the government would rejuvenate the traditional cashew processing sector into a splendid way, thereby improving the socio economic conditions of cashew processing workers and can survive in a glorious manner in the near future which leads to the rural development .

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