

# Rural Wages and Salary Earnings in India: Analysis of the Recent Trends across Gender

Deepika Jajoria

**Abstract-** Last decade of economic reforms, the period of deceleration of employment in rural areas for males particularly for females, has witnessed a greater restructuring of employment pattern across various production sectors. There are evidences of further widening of the gap in levels of earning between males and females across various industries and occupations. The patterns of wages and salary earnings in different sectors reveal that the growth of women employment and earnings have not been simultaneous as no concordances were found between a positive but decelerated growth of rural employment and increments in real earnings of both males and females. This paper seeks to analyse the patterns of growth and levels of rural wages among males and females across broad industries and occupations in rural areas using individual level data from quinquennial rounds on employment and unemployment situation by NSSO.

**Key Words:** Rural wages, salary, gender.

## Introduction

It is widely accepted by the research scholars that a number of factors determine the wage rates in rural India such as fluctuations in the labour market, seasonality of labour demand, levels of economic development, availability of labour and quality of labour in terms of levels of skills and education among labour. Quite at large, in a regional context, gender differences in wage rates are controlled by numerous considerations such as nature of work available (manual/ non-manual), relative dominance of males and females in the society, social acceptance of women, social structure, and demographic structure of the existing population. The basic objective of this paper is to examine the trends in real wages and to analyse disparity between earnings of males and females in rural India during last decade i.e. the later phase of economic reforms.

Views of social science researchers are diverse about widening of the gap in levels of earning between males and females in rural areas. The patterns of wages and salary earnings in different sectors reveal that the growth of women employment and earnings have not been simultaneous. The sectors of mass employment and higher employment growth have witnessed

the slowest growth in earnings, while the sectors of diffused employment and lower employment growth have witnessed high growth in earnings. This has led to the further widening of the existing income inequalities across sectors<sup>1</sup>.

In the post-reform period, relaxed labour regulations with greater autonomy to the employer, preferred use of contractual, casual and piece rate workers has meant greater preference of women employees as they are easier to dismiss, obedient, willing to accept lower wages, less likely to expect promotion etc. are the factors which determine preference for women in the labour market as their expectations are lower and can be made to work longer hours<sup>2</sup>.

In other view, adjustments in the household income is the main reason that has compelled women to take up petty jobs which render meagre wages and no social security (Ghosh 2009). However, this has induced feminisation of low productive activities where women are concentrated in the low paid and less remunerative activities associated with longer work hours (Ghosh, 2009). Further, a lot of studies indicate that the importance of females as agricultural workers has grown up, as more men

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Deepika Jajoria is working as an Assistant Professor in Economics at Shyam Lal College (Evening), University of Delhi. She is PhD Scholar at Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. email – deepikaomatic@gmail.com

move to non-farm job leading to an increased feminisation of agriculture<sup>3</sup>. In this situation, rural females are supposed to work as hired labourers since they are more likely to expect lower wages than their male counterpart.

Evidences from the available literature suggests that the males are better off compared to the females in terms of getting wage rates in both agricultural and non-agricultural sector<sup>4</sup>. Casualisation of rural employment in the non-farm sector, since 2004-05, was more rapid among rural females than among rural males with the total increment in casual employment being 16% and 8.7% respectively. Increased casualisation of the workforce has reduced the bargaining capacity of labour in the post-liberalisation era<sup>5</sup>. Virtually, there has been no improvements in the level of earnings for rural females. Wage differentials exist and have intensified in the post-reform period. Since a large share of women workers are engaged in agriculture particularly, as casual wage labour, the trend in growth rate of agricultural wages is an important indicator of women's wellbeing in rural areas<sup>6</sup>. Also, there are evidences that the growth of real earnings in the farm sector has been lower than in the non-farm sector.

This paper seeks to analyse the patterns of growth and levels of rural wages among males and females across broad industries and occupations in rural areas. Attempts has also been made to find concordances between change in wage rates and a simultaneous growth trends in rural employment in various sectors of production. To assess the gender dimensions of real earnings, two way analysis has been done. First, growth trends and gender inequalities measured in terms of differences in average nominal and real earnings of males and females in various manual and non-manual operations<sup>7</sup>; comparative analysis of compound annual growth of real earnings of males and females in those operation or tasks; and the gender disparity in real earnings in the same by applying *Sopher's Index of Disparity (modified)*; gender differences are then testified through *Independent Sample's t-Test* by comparing mean earnings of both males and

females in the same operations. Second, the same methodology has been applied to assess the trends of growth and inequalities among female workers of current casual and regular status across various production sectors. For this purpose, unit level data for three quinquennial rounds of NSSO on the situation of employment and unemployment were used (i.e. 1999-00, 2004-05 and 2009-10). Nominal earnings of rural males and females in all operations or tasks and production sectors have been adjusted with normal GDP figures first, and then exercised to estimate the real earnings considering the year of 1999-00 as base. Current daily status of the workers has been taken into consideration to analyse the wage and salary earnings.

### **Dimensions of Growth in Rural Employment by Sectors**

Post-reform period has been characterised by agrarian distress which has resulted in significant deceleration in the employment generation potential of the farm sector thereby increasing the proportion of non-farm sector in total rural employment, particularly for females. Growth trends in employment (table 1) have been on account of sectors such as Construction, Education, Transport-Storage-Communication and Health & Social Work which are characterised by irregular employment and lower wages. Higher growth rate of employment for rural females in Electricity-Gas-Water supply sector is attributed to their little participation. Therefore, women are increasingly getting concentrated in the sectors where they tend to remain in lower job categories than men and are paid lower wages than men. Women are preferred in such jobs as they easily accept casual contracts, demand lower wages than men. On the other hand, employment growth remained positive but decelerated during 1999-00 to 2009-10 for rural males in both farm and non-farm sectors (table 1). Health & Social Work, Manufacturing, Electricity-Gas-Water Supply and Forestry, Logging & Fishing are the sectors in which it remained negative for rural males during 2004-05 to 2009-10.

**Table 1 - Compound Annual Growth of Usual Status Workers by Broad Sectors in Rural India, 1999-00 to 2009-10**

Usual Industry	Growth (%)			
	Rural Males		Rural Females	
	1999-00 to 2004-05	2004-05 to 2009-10	1999-00 to 2004-05	2004-05 to 2009-10
Agriculture & Hunting	0.8	0.2	3.1	-4.3
Forestry, Logging & Fishing	4.7	-1.0	8.8	-21.7
<b>Agriculture &amp; Allied</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>-4.4</b>
Mining & Quarrying	4.6	6.3	3.7	-5.7
Manufacturing	4.0	-1.1	5.6	-5.5
Electricity, Gas & Water Supply	1.6	-1.5	9.4	21.5
Construction	11.3	12.0	10.5	24.5
Wholesale, Retail Trade; Repair	6.5	0.7	8.5	-1.3
Hostels and Restaurants	6.3	3.4	7.5	-2.4
Transport, Storage & Communication	6.1	3.1	25.0	2.0
Education	3.7	0.5	12.8	0.6
Health & Social Work	7.7	-6.2	9.9	1.9
Other Services	-0.2	1.5	-0.4	-1.1
<b>Non-agriculture</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>All Sectors</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>-3.5</b>

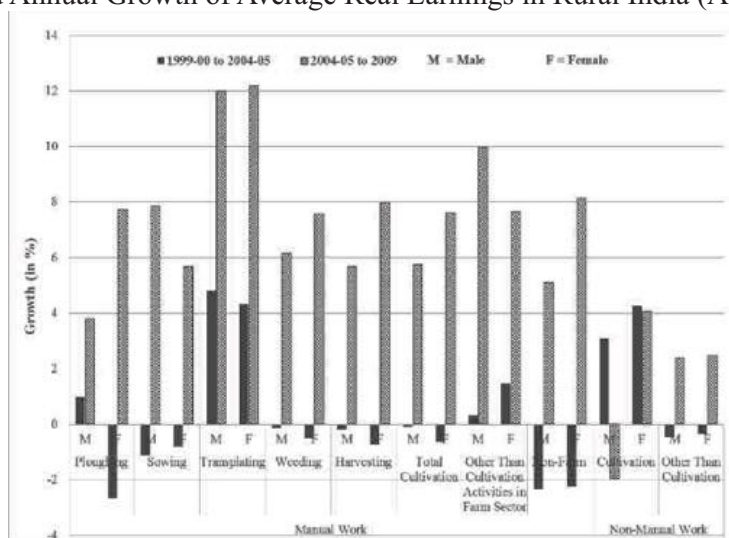
Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.

### Dimensions of Growth in Real Average Earnings

Last decade of economic liberalisation, the period of several key transformations in the rural employment generation schemes, has come up with oodles of up-and-downs in the real earnings

of rural male and female workers in different operation or broad occupations. Transplanting and other than cultivation activities in farm sector are the only manual tasks where both males and females could deter an uninterrupted increase in the real wages and earnings (table 2; figure 1).

Figure 1- Compound Annual Growth of Average Real Earnings in Rural India (At 1999-00 Factor Cost)



Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.

<b>Table 2- Average Real Earnings (in Rs.) across Gender in Rural India [At 1999-00 Factor Cost]</b>					
<b>Type of Operation</b>		<b>Gender</b>	<b>1999-00</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
Manual Work	Ploughing	Male	43.0	45.2	54.4
		Female	33.4	29.2	42.4
	Sowing	Male	40.0	37.9	55.2
		Female	29.0	27.8	36.7
	Transplanting	Male	39.7	50.3	88.6
		Female	29.6	36.5	65.0
	Weeding	Male	35.7	35.4	47.8
		Female	26.0	25.4	36.6
	Harvesting	Male	39.7	39.3	51.7
		Female	29.5	28.5	41.8
	Total Cultivation	Male	39.9	39.7	52.5
		Female	28.3	27.5	39.6
	Other Than Cultivation Activities in Farm Sector	Male	48.3	49.1	78.9
		Female	32.8	35.3	51.1
Non-Farm	Male	75.7	67.2	86.2	
	Female	42.1	37.6	55.6	
Non-Manual Work	Cultivation	Male	57.8	67.4	61.1
		Female	29.9	36.9	45.0
	Other Than Cultivation	Male	120.0	117.3	132.1
		Female	80.7	79.3	89.7

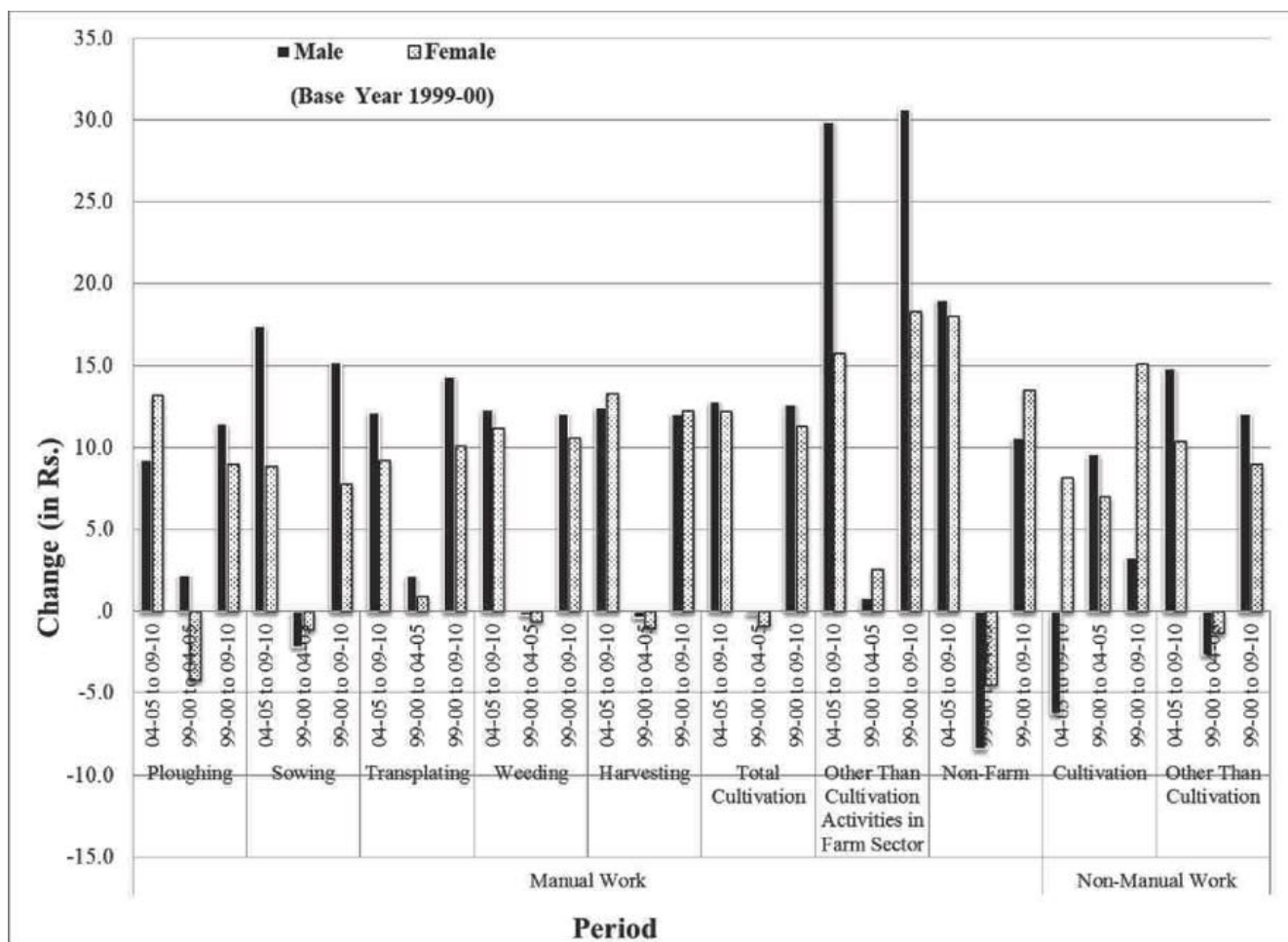
*Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.*

*\* Compound Annual Growth Rate.*

Real wages for both males and females in the manual and non-manual operations once slumped in the period of 1999-00 to 2004-05 except in Transplanting, Other than Cultivation in farm sector (manual), non-manual Cultivation and in Ploughing for males, but again raised between 2004-05 to 2009-10. The period between 1999-00 to 2004-05 is characterised by an abrupt decline in real earnings followed by a retrieving level to some extent in the year of 2009-10. A

sudden fall of real wages of rural men and women seems to be an outcome of erratic monsoonal conditions followed by a substantial fall in Kharif production, when the second advance estimates of foodgrains production released by the Ministry of Agriculture placed the Kharif foodgrains production at 102.9 million tonnes, short of previous year's production by nearly 9 million tonnes.

Figure 2- Change in Average Real Earnings (in Rs. At 1999-00 Factor Cost) of Rural Workers in India, 1999-00 to 2009-10



Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.

Remarkably, the period between years 2004-05 and 2009-10 records increment in the real earnings of both males and females in all rural operations except in the non-manual cultivation works for males. Figure 2 shows the extent of change in the real earnings of the rural workers across gender. It is notable that overall period between 1999-00 to 2009-10 has come up with an increase in the real wages for both males and females in both manual and non-manual tasks of cultivation and other than cultivation. Broadly, three observations could be demarcated- First, total monetary growth (in Rs.) and annual growth (in percentage) in real wages favours men in each

rural operation or task; second, rural labour markets offer more remunerative earnings in the non-manual type of jobs both in farm and non-farm sectors; and third, both men and women enjoy favourable incomes in non-farm and other than cultivation sectors irrespective of manual or non-manual tasks. Analysis from table 2 and figure 1 and 2 indicates that the real wages in rural India have been rising over time, however, the gender inequalities have not been slenderised and imbalances across males and females remain unchanged in all rural manual and non-manual operations.



**Table 3– Sectoral Distribution and Compound Annual Growth of Average Real Earnings in Rural India (At Factor Cost 1999-00)**

Current Daily Industry	Gender	Regular Salaried				Casual Labourers					
		1999-00	2004-05	2009-10	Growth 1999-00 to 2004-05 (in %)	1999-00	2004-05	2009-10	Growth 1999-00 to 2004-05 (in %)		
					Growth 2004-05 to 2009-10 (in %)				Growth 2004-05 to 2009-10 (in %)		
Agriculture, Hunting	Male	35.2	54	58	8.9	1.4	25.8	40.2	53.8	9.3	6
	Female	27.8	44	38.1	9.6	-2.9	17.9	28	40.4	9.3	7.6
Forestry, Logging, Fishing	Male	84.7	105.9	136.6	4.6	5.2	36.2	77.7	79.2	16.5	0.4
	Female	59.5	73.2	540.8	4.2	49.2	26.3	35.5	36.1	6.2	0.3
Mining and Quarrying	Male	98.7	206.8	146.2	15.9	-6.7	37.5	57.8	83.1	9.1	7.5
	Female	41.2	61.4	157.7	8.3	20.8	24.8	38.7	54	9.3	6.9
Manufacturing	Male	59.2	98.1	100.1	10.6	0.4	35.4	54.6	71.3	9.1	5.5
	Female	24.4	34.1	47.3	6.9	6.7	22.4	31.8	47.4	7.3	8.3
Electricity-Gas-Water Supply	Male	115.9	202.8	241.8	11.8	3.6	35	70.5	78.5	15	2.2
	Female	73.8	211.6	251.5	23.5	3.5	70.3	20.5	48.6	-21.8	18.8
Construction	Male	81.7	88.3	137	1.6	9.2	37.9	59.1	74.8	9.3	4.8
	Female	57.2	73.5	98.1	5.1	5.9	25.2	41.8	55.4	10.7	5.8
Wholesale, Retail Trade; Repair	Male	38.2	60.3	74.8	9.6	4.4	32.7	49.2	69.6	8.5	7.2
	Female	35.4	46.3	43.4	5.5	-1.3	24.7	33.8	71.8	6.5	16.3
Hotel and Restaurant	Male	45	71.1	69.8	9.6	-0.4	44.6	57.2	72.4	5.1	4.8
	Female	35.3	34.9	30.4	-0.2	-2.8	21.2	40.3	65.8	13.7	10.3
Transport, Storage and Communication	Male	71.6	105.8	116.6	8.1	2	43.6	59.4	80.5	6.3	6.3
	Female	56.4	106.2	116.3	13.5	1.8	32.3	36.2	51	2.3	7.1
Computer and Related Services	Male	73.9	149.4	254.9	15.1	11.3	27.4	35.7	87.9	5.4	19.7
	Female	-	57.8	93.9	-	10.2	-	-	-	-	-
Education	Male	130.5	185.6	243.2	7.3	5.6	47.3	62.1	52.7	5.6	-3.3
	Female	93	96	129.5	0.6	6.2	14.9	42.7	45.1	23.5	1.1
Health and Social Work	Male	118.9	149	215.7	4.6	7.7	28.8	54	63.8	13.4	3.4
	Female	81	103.6	90	5.1	-2.8	17.9	43.3	35.4	19.4	-3.9
Other Services	Male	105.9	150.7	213.6	7.3	7.2	37.1	54.1	56.8	7.8	1
	Female	61.7	46.6	75.3	-5.4	10	20.9	34	44.3	10.3	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>86.8</b>	<b>119.2</b>	<b>150.7</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>63.7</b>	<b>68.9</b>	<b>93.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.

Broadly, growth in total wages was found higher from 2004-05 to 2009-10 as compared to that from 1999-00 to 2004-05; males were found in an advantageous position over females in both regular and casual type of employment. However, from 2004-05 to 2009-10 females have over-performed males in regular employment with a higher growth of real earnings as the later experienced a deceleration (table 3). In all periods, both males and females of casual and regular status experienced lowest returns in agriculture. Rural non-farm sector and its sub-sectors provide somewhat better income opportunities as compared to that of farm. Workers from regular status have always been in an advantageous position over the workers from that of casual status in all the sectors. Recently in 2009-10, females experienced negative growth of real earnings in agriculture, health and social work, hotel and restaurants and wholesale and retail trade (table 3). On the other side, real earnings raised at a higher rate in forestry, logging and fishing, mining and quarrying, computer and related services, other services, construction and manufacturing. Among males, it was negative in mining and quarrying and hotel and restaurants. While comparing two subsequent periods of economic growth between 1999-00 to 2004-05 and between 2004-05 to 2009-10, the overall growth of real income for female regular workers has been thwarted in the second period in agriculture, manufacturing, electricity-gas-water-supply, wholesale and retail trade, transport, storage and communication as compared to the first period.

In all sectors, workers from casual status have always been in a disadvantageous position compared to regular workers. Although all the sectors in all periods show a positive increase in the real income of both males and females except a negative growth in electricity, gas and water supply for females in the first period and education and health and social work respectively for males and females in the second period, yet there is a slackening of growth in the real income in the second period in almost all sectors. It was accelerated only in case of males in education and females in wholesale, retail trade and transport-storage-communication.

It is perceptible that the real wages for female casual workers are comparatively higher in the non-farm sector than in the farm sector. Wholesale, retail trade, hotel and restaurant, construction, mining and quarrying and transport-storage-communication are the sectors where females have relatively advantageous position over other remaining sectors.

While comparing the two periods viz. 1990-00 to 2004-05 and 2004-05 to 2009-10, the major sectors where employment growth has remained positive for rural males are Construction, Mining & Quarrying, Hotels and Restaurants, Transport-Storage-Communication and Other Services (table 1). However, except construction, there is a deceleration of employment growth in these sectors. Simultaneously, wages rates for regular male workers accelerated in this period. But, on the other hand, in Mining and Quarrying and Hotels and Restaurants it was even negative. Also, the growth of real wages for males also decelerated in case of casual employment in these sectors (table 3).

For rural females, at the same time, Electricity-Gas-Water Supply, Construction, Transport-Storage-Communication, Health & Social Work and Education are the major sectors where employment growth has remained positive but decelerated, except casual employment in Electricity-Gas-Water Supply where it accelerated (table 1). The notion that positive growth of employment in these particular sectors accompanies with an increment in the real earnings, does not really work. It works merely for regular employment in Construction and Education and casual employment in Transport-Storage-Communication. Besides, there is deceleration of wage rates in other sectors mentioned above, for both regular and casual employment. It was even negative for workers in the Health & Social Work (table 3).

### **Gender Differences and Disparity in Rural Earnings**

Considering the year 1999-00 as base, real earnings of female workers have always being humbled in all periods. Indeed, the gap between earnings of males and females has widened in the

last decade in all rural operations. Although female earnings have been remunerative, the differences in incomes among both have not been bridged over the time. Significant differences between earnings of males and females were found in all the three periods.

<b>Table 4- Gender Gap in Average Real Earnings in India (At 1999-00 Factor Cost)</b>				
<b>Type of Operation</b>		<b>Female Earnings as Percentage to Male<sup>#</sup></b>		
		<b>1999-00</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
Manual	Ploughing	77.8**	64.7**	77.9**
	Sowing	72.4**	73.6**	66.4**
	Transplanting	74.4**	72.7**	73.3**
	Weeding	73.0**	71.7**	76.7**
	Harvesting	74.4**	72.5**	80.8**
	Total Cultivation	71.0**	69.1**	75.4**
	Other Than Cultivation Activities in Farm Sector	67.9**	71.9**	64.7**
	Non-Farm	55.7**	56.0**	64.5**
Non-Manual	Cultivation	51.8**	54.8*	73.7**
	Other Than Cultivation	67.3**	67.6**	67.9**

*Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.*

*# Applying Independent Sample's t-test to the Un-weighted Sample Data, Positive values indicate a favourable condition for Male Workers. \*\* Significant at 0.01 level, \* Significant at 0.05 level.*

In terms of total difference, it is more wider in relatively remunerative tasks such as manual work in non-farm sector, manual work in other than cultivation in farm sector and non-manual work in other than cultivation. However, manual cultivation alone displays a comparatively modest but significant gender differences in all the periods; smallest extent of gap could be recorded in harvesting (table 4). In all periods, manual non-farm and non-manual cultivation experienced highest degree of gender disparity in favour of males.

Sectoral allocation of real wages for rural casual workers depicts some significant gender differences. Recently, in 2009-10, wholesale and retail trade was the only sector where females out-performed males. In all periods, Construction along with hotel and restaurant, education, other services and agriculture experienced a gradual augment in the income of female workers as a percentage to male. On the contrary, forestry, fishing and related services along with mining and quarrying, health and social work sector experienced a decline in the real income of females. Other sectors such as manufacturing, electricity-gas-water-supply and transport-storage-communication once showed a downfall in the real income of females in 2004-05 and then again increased in 2009-10. It explains the vulnerability for female workers in these sectors during 2004-05, a drought affected year (table 5).

Among regular workers, the real income for rural females is dwindling gradually in most of the sectors in 2009-10. Such sectors are agriculture, wholesale-retail trade, hotel and restaurant, transport-storage-communication, computer and related services, health and social work and electricity-gas-water-supply. On the contrary, real earnings of females as a percentage to males were once slumped during 2004-05 and again raised in 2009-10 in some sectors such as manufacturing, education, other services, mining and quarrying and forestry-logging-fishing. In forestry-logging-fishing, mining and quarrying and electricity-gas-water-supply, the females have a relative advantage over males.

At all India level, it can be posited that real income of rural females in both regular and casual category came down once in the year 2004-05. Also, the gender gap seems to be higher in regular category. Among regular



**Table 5- Gender Gap<sup>#</sup> in Average Real Earnings in Rural Areas across Sectors (At 1999-00 Factor Cost)**

Current Daily Industry	Female Earnings as Percentage to Male					
	Regular Salaried			Casual Labourers		
	1999-00	2004-05	2009-10	1999-00	2004-05	2009-10
Agriculture, Hunting	78.9**	81.5**	65.7**	69.4**	69.5**	75.0**
Forestry, Logging, Fishing	70.3	69.1*	395.9	72.7**	45.6*	45.5**
Mining & Quarrying	41.8**	29.7**	107.8	66.3**	66.9**	65.0**
Manufacturing	41.2**	34.7	47.2**	63.1**	58.2**	66.5**
Electricity-Gas-Water-Supply	63.7*	104.4	104	200.8*	29.1	61.9*
Construction	70.1	83.2**	71.6	66.4**	70.7**	74.1**
Wholesale, Retail Trade; Repair	92.8	76.8*	57.9**	75.5	68.7*	103.2
Hotel and Restaurant	78.4	49.1**	43.5	47.5	70.4	90.9
Transport-Storage-Communication	78.8	100.4**	99.8	74.0**	61.0**	63.4**
Computer & Related Services	-	38.7	36.8	-	-	-
Education	71.3**	51.8	53.3**	31.4**	68.8	85.7**
Health & Social Work	68.1**	69.6	41.7**	61.9	80.1	55.5
Other Services	58.3**	31.0**	35.2**	56.2**	62.8**	78.1**
<b>Total</b>	<b>73.4**</b>	<b>57.8**</b>	<b>62.1**</b>	<b>63.2**</b>	<b>63.0**</b>	<b>69.2**</b>

Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.

# Applying Independent Sample's t-Test to the Un-weighted Sample Data, Positive values indicate a favourable condition for Male Workers. \*\* Significant at 0.01 level, \* Significant at 0.05 level.

workers, during 2009-10, it is widest in other services followed by computer and related services, health and social work, hotel and restaurant and manufacturing (less than 50 percent as a percentage of males). In Education, it is slightly more than 50 percent. Among casual workers in the same period, forestry and related services was the only sector which experienced less than 50 percent. Health and social work, electricity-gas-water-supply, transport-storage-communication, mining and quarrying and construction show 50 percent to 75 percent

followed by agriculture, other services, education, hotel and restaurants and wholesale and retail trade with more than 75 percent of the males.

Males enjoy advantageous and commanding position in rural labour market in terms of getting earnings in all rural operations; altogether biased against females (table 6). Disparity index reveals that level of gender disparity once increased during 1999-00 to 2004-05, decreased in 2009-10 at even the

level less than that of 1999-00 for some rural operations viz. manual work in weeding, harvesting and manual work in cultivation as a whole. Along with manual work in the non-farm sector, there is a high level of gender disparity in manual work in other than cultivation in farm sector, sowing, non-manual work in other than cultivation and non-manual work in cultivation.

Recent trend depicts that highest level of disparity ciphered in non-manual type of tasks in other than cultivation sector followed by manual tasks in other than cultivation in the farm sector and manual tasks in the non-farm sector. The two very important sectors in terms of providing employment for rural labour in the post-liberalised economy viz. manual non-farm and non-manual other than cultivation offer biased and unbalanced earnings to the rural females. However, manual cultivation has rendered fairly a low level of gender disparity.

Level of disparity has gradually increased since 1999-00 in transplanting. In ploughing, weeding, harvesting and cultivation as a whole the level of disparity once increased in 1999-00 and 2004-05 and then decreased in 2009-10. In sowing, manual work in other than cultivation in farm sector, non-manual work in other than cultivation, the level of disparity once decreased in 2004-05 and then increased in 2009-10. Although the level of disparity in manual non-farm and non-manual cultivation is higher as compared to other operations yet there is a continuous

decrease since 1999-00 (table 6).

Type of Operation		Value of Disparity Index*		
		1999-00	2004-05	2009-10
Manual	Ploughing	0.135	0.232	0.143
	Sowing	0.17	0.159	0.23
	Transplanting	0.155	0.169	0.175
	Weeding	0.162	0.17	0.146
	Harvesting	0.155	0.168	0.121
	Total Cultivation	0.179	0.192	0.159
	Other Than Cultivation Activities in Farm Sector	0.21	0.181	0.279
Non-Farm	0.358	0.339	0.294	
Non-Manual	Cultivation	0.364	0.351	0.18
	Other Than Cultivation	0.346	0.334	0.378

*Data Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.*

*\* Positive values of the index indicate an advantageous position for Males over Female.*

Gender disparity is higher among regular workers as compared to casual workers. Since 1999-00, the level of disparity has been swelling continuously among regular workers (table 7). On the contrary, it has decreased for casual workers in 2009-10. In case of regular employment, in 2009-10, primary sectors of production (farm and mining) indicate its lesser extent as compared to the other sectors such as highest in manufacturing followed by hotel and restaurant, construction, wholesale and retail trade and agriculture. Mining and quarrying sector has experienced a favourable condition for females in the same period. Along with transport-storage-communication and electricity-gas-water-supply sectors also come up with a decline.

**Table 7- Gender Disparity in Average Real Earnings across Sectors in Rural India (At 1999-00 Factor Cost)**

Sectors	Value of Disparity Index*					
	Regular Salaried			Casual Labourers		
	1999-00	2004-05	2009-10	1999-00	2004-05	2009-10
Agriculture, Hunting	0.11	0.10	0.20	0.16	0.17	0.14
Forestry, Logging, Fishing	0.17	0.19	-1.49	0.15	0.37	0.38
Mining and Quarrying	0.43	0.66	-0.04	0.19	0.19	0.21
Manufacturing	0.41	0.51	0.37	0.21	0.25	0.20
Electricity-Gas-Water-Supply	0.23	-0.03	-0.03	-0.33	0.58	0.23
Construction	0.17	0.09	0.18	0.19	0.16	0.15
Wholesale, Retail Trade, Repair	0.03	0.13	0.26	0.13	0.17	-0.02
Hotel and Restaurants	0.11	0.34	0.39	0.34	0.17	0.05
Transport-Storage-Communication	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.14	0.23	0.22
Computer and Related Services	-	0.49	0.60	-	-	-
Education	0.18	0.37	0.39	0.53	0.18	0.07
Health and Social Work	0.20	0.20	0.50	0.22	0.10	0.28
Other Services	0.27	0.60	0.59	0.26	0.22	0.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.17</b>
<i>Source: Unit level data from Various Quinquennial Rounds by NSSO.</i>						
<i>* Positive values of the index indicate an advantageous position for Males over Female.</i>						

Among casual workers, the level of gender disparity seems to be higher in forestry and related services followed by health and social work, electricity-gas-water-supply, transport-storage-communication, mining and quarrying and manufacturing in 2009-10. Lowest level of disparity was observed in wholesale and retail trade followed by hotel and restaurants, education, other services and agriculture sector. Moreover, wholesale and retail trade offers relatively higher income for females than males in the same year (table 7). In forestry-logging-fishing, mining and quarrying and transport-storage-communication sectors, there is a continuous increase in gender disparity in the casual employment since 1999-00. At the same time, construction, hotel and restaurant, education and other services show a continuous decline in it. Also, the rural sector as a whole, manufacturing, electricity-gas-water-supply and

wholesale and retail trade were showing an increase in the disparity level in 2004-05 and decrease recently. Here, it would be worth noting that the drought prone year of 2004-05 was unfavourable and vulnerable for rural workers, particularly for females.

#### **Concluding Remarks**

Trends in earnings for males and females across various operations suggests that- (1) there is a significant difference in their earnings in favour of males. Levels of disparity is discernible in the non-manual types of work rather than in manual, (2) the levels of gender disparity were found relatively higher among workers engaged in the non-manual work other than cultivation followed by those in the manual non-farm sector, other than cultivation in farm sector and sowing, (3) Non-manual rural operations offer more remunerative income for both males and females

rather than in manual types of work, (4) Recently, most emerging rural occupations (manual non-farm and non-manual works) in terms of providing better remunerative employment opportunities indicate a higher but gradually declining level of gender disparity.

Gender disparity is higher among regular workers as compared to casual. Since 1999-00, the level of disparity has been widening continuously among regular and casual workers. However, from 2004-05 to 2009-10 it has remained significantly low among casual workers, even as compared the same between 1999-00 and 2004-05. Sectoral distribution of real income suggests that- (1) in rural casual and regular employment, gender disparity exists conspicuously in favour of males, (2) the level of gender disparity was found relatively higher among regular workers as compared to casual workers, (3) Among casual workers, relatively higher level of gender disparity was found in forestry-logging-fishing followed by health and social work, electricity-gas-water-supply, transport-storage-communication, mining and quarrying and manufacturing; among regular workers, it was relatively higher in computer and related services followed by other services, health and social work, education, hotel and restaurants and manufacturing, and (4) rural workers have more remunerative earnings in regular employment. From 1999-00 to 2004-05, decline and stagnancy in real wages of regular workers and casual labourers respectively seem to be an outcome of monsoon failure. In case of casual workers, there is a deceleration of agricultural income for male and female in the period from 2004-05 to 2009-10 in comparison to the previous period i.e. from 1999-00 to 2004-05. Recently, wholesale and retail trade, construction, education and hotel and restaurants sectors have been emerging as propitious and more remunerative options for female workers in general and for female casual workers in particular.

No concordances were found between a positive growth of employment and increments in real earnings of both males and females in some particular production sectors. The belief that

positive growth of employment in some particular sectors is an outcome of increase in real earning, does not really work. Rather, it seems to be driven by the type demand which is available in the labour market. Moreover, lower levels of the wage rates in all types of work (manual/ non-manual/ regular/ casual) across all sectors of production strengthens the argument that females are more likely willing to accept lower wages.

### Notes and References

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As per NSSO's Definition, *“A job essentially involving physical labour was considered*

manual work. However, jobs essentially involving physical labour but also requiring a certain level of general, professional, scientific or technical education were not termed as 'manual work'. On the other hand, jobs not involving much of physical labour and at the same time not requiring much educational (general, scientific, technical or otherwise) background were treated as 'manual work'. Thus, engineers, doctors, dentists, midwives, etc., were not considered manual workers even though their jobs involved some amount of physical labour. But, peons, chowkidars, watchman, etc. were considered manual workers even though their work might not involve much physical labour. A few examples of manual workers are cooks, waiters, building caretakers, sweepers, cleaners and related workers, launderers, dry cleaners and pressers, hair dressers, barbers, beauticians, watchmen, gate keepers, agricultural labourers, plantation labourers and related workers”.

