

## **A Study Of Stress Of Working Women In Vaishali District**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Even after more than fifty years of Indian democracy the struggle of Women to get equal rights and opportunities continues all over the country. Nonetheless, over the years, while the status of Women in the states of south India has shown signs of significant improvement, the other states, particularly the Hindi heartland states, which include *Vaishali district* Bihar, have lagged behind. Much has been said about the endemic nature of social and economic backwardness in *Vaishali district* Bihar. The point that we wish to emphasize is that the pervasive nature of Bihar's social and economic backwardness has prevented researchers in focusing on vital social sectors concerning *Vaishali district* Women. As per Census 2011 out of total population, 6.7% people lives in Urban areas while 93.3% lives in the Rural areas. The average literacy rate in urban areas is 74.2% while that in the rural areas is 66%. Also the Sex Ratio of Urban areas in Vaishali district is 890 while that of Rural areas is 895. The population of Children of age 0-6 years in Vaishali district is 601893 which is 17% of the total population. There are 316129 male children and 285764 female children between the age 0-6 years. Thus as per the Census 2011 the Child Sex Ratio of Vaishali is 904 which is greater than Average Sex Ratio (895) of Vaishali district. Vaishali district of Bihar has total population of 3,495,021 as per the Census 2011. Out of which 1,844,535 are males while 1,650,486 are females. In 2011 there were total 626,087 families residing in Vaishali district. The Average Sex Ratio of Vaishali district is 895.

**KEYWORDS:** *Vaishali. Bihar, Womens, Population, wages, rural, urban.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Woman typically work 16 hours per day on both paid and unpaid labour; Most Women have no leisure time; Women bear the greatest responsibility for household chores, including many tasks related to income generation; Women generally assume full responsibility children; Rural Women perform a wider variety of tasks; While both men and Women recognise that Women's household activities constitute important work, they fail to grasp the extent of its economic value ;Livelihood insecurity, lack of employment, lack of strong local collectives in terms of Self Help Groups, the failure of sustainability of SHGs, lack of information on government schemes, law, scarcity of drinking water, illiteracy, health problems and associated expenditure, lack of infrastructure and above all lack of Government support where more than 40% of the population live below the poverty line and in *Vaishali district* more than 80% of the population live in the pitiable conditions of rural Bihar, to talk of the

marginalisation of Women has been considered meaningless. However, there is a catch in this situation, and this pertains to being a victim of double discrimination.

1. Being a Women
2. Being member of a backward region

This research has tried to situate the general condition of both working & non-working Women in *Vaishali district* Bihar in terms of their health, education, empowerment, autonomy, access to productive resources, participation in work and the institutional efforts in order to reach Women.

## VAISHALI DISTRICT BIHAR WOMEN SO STRESSED OUT

These stresses have serious ramifications for India's continued economic growth. More than half (55%) of the Indian women interviewed have encountered workplace bias severe enough to make them consider scaling back their career goals, reducing their ambition and engagement, or quitting altogether, feeding into the very biases they grapple with and dealing a sharp blow to the country's demographic dividend, a key factor in India's growth which is experiencing its own stress. Household structure in rural Indian society is generally male-headed because men are usually the bread-earners and have dominance over the access to resources and decision-making. Nevertheless, due to the flood, there was increase in distress migration and the male heads of households migrated to other area for work since the land was submerged under water for three to four months. The male members moved to other areas for work, but the women had to stay back and look after home, children, and older people. The absence of the male makes the women the head of the family. This becomes a dual burden for women. For a woman-headed household, it is difficult for the woman to bear the burden of family, such as caring for children and elderly and doing the household chores, and at the same time work for income. During and after the devastation, women were the first to lose their income. Lower class women who worked as wage earner in the field, or grew vegetables or sold forest products lost all their income. These women were excluded from the list of beneficiaries prepared by the panchayats, as the local patriarchal communities did not recognize women as heads of households. The dual burden shouldered by women in the aftermath of a disaster in balancing and sustaining their family is barely mentioned in existing studies, so it is hoped that this research may raise awareness of the problem.

The poor and destitute women were rarely aware of relief funds and were barred from entering their names in the list of victims of the flood. The women are socialized as caregivers and spend all the relief funds and material for their families, while the male members habitually uses the funds to feed their addictions (alcohol or cannabis), even during the crisis. Relief providing agencies also consider women to be less aware and alert about the funds. Women living in shelter homes feel unsafe and insecure and face sexual and physical harassment. Life in a tent is most unsafe for them. The precarious condition of having to provide necessities for their families make them prone to this type of harassment. They are victims of stress and trauma not only outside but within the family, and this is aggravated by flooding. The frustrated husbands beat their wives either because they feel stress at being

incapable of providing for their families or because they habitually use alcohol or ganja (cannabis).

**VAISHALI DATA AS PER CENSUS 2011**

As per the Population Census 2011 data, following are some quick facts about Vaishali district.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Children (Age 0-6)	601,893	316,129	285,764
Literacy	66.6%	62.49%	46.91%
Scheduled Caste	738,031	387,827	350,204
Scheduled Tribe	2,274	1,232	1,042
Illiterate	1,568,281	691,959	876,322

**CASTE-WISE POPULATION - VAISHALI DISTRICT**

Schedule Caste (SC) constitutes 21.1% while Schedule Tribe (ST) were 0.1% of total population in Vaishali district of Bihar.

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Schedule Caste	738,031	387,827	350,204
Schedule Tribe	2,274	1,232	1,042

**RELIGION-WISE POPULATION - VAISHALI DISTRICT**

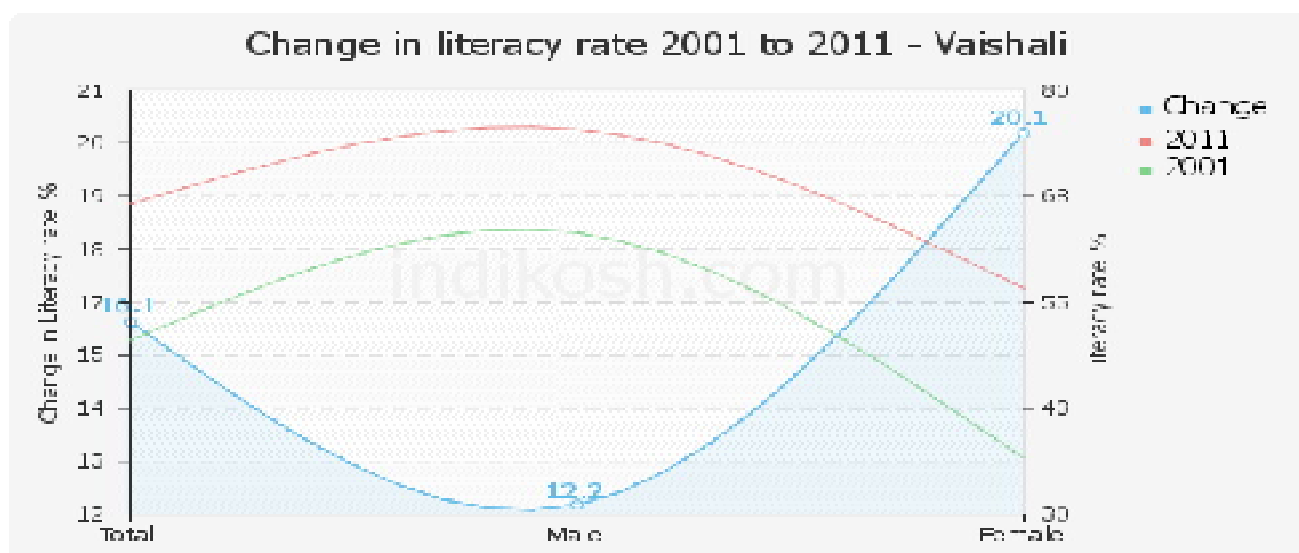
<b>Religion</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Hindu	3,152,346	(90.2%)	1,666,953	1,485,393
Muslim	333,980	(9.56%)	172,906	161,074
Christian	2,203	(0.06%)	1,136	1,067
Sikh	707	(0.02%)	354	353
Buddhist	362	(0.01%)	186	176
Jain	246	(0.01%)	131	115
Other Religion	71	(0%)	41	30
No Religion Specified	5,106	(0.15%)	2,828	2,278

**LITERACY RATE - VAISHALI DISTRICT**

The total literacy rate of Vaishali district was **66.6%** in 2011 which is greater than average literacy rate 61.8% of Bihar. Population-wise, out of total 1,926,740 literates, males were 1,152,576 while females were 774,164. Also the male literacy rate was 75.41% and the female literacy rate was 56.73% in Vaishali district.

	<b>Vaishali district</b>	<b>Bihar</b>
Female	56.73%	51.5%
Male	75.41%	71.2%
Total	66.6%	61.8%

Total about 19.3 lakh people in the district are literate, among them about 11.5 lakh are male and about 7.7 lakh are female. Literacy rate (children under 6 are excluded) of Vaishali is 67%. 75% of male and 57% of female population are literate here. Overall literacy rate in the district has increased by 17%. Male literacy has gone up by 12% and female literacy rate has gone up by 20%.



**Change in literacy rate 2001 to 2011 - Vaishali**

**BANKS PLAY A VERY CRUCIAL**

Banks play a very crucial role in the economy of a region. In the area of our survey slightly less than half of the regions seem to have banking facility. Across the four districts, **47.2%** of the respondents reported having banking facilities in their vicinity. Surprisingly, the district of Vaishali that otherwise seems to be the most developed of the four district reported lower presence of banking facility in its area. While **38%** respondents in East Champaran and **41%** of the respondents in Vaishali district reported having banks in their area; **52.2%** of the respondents in Kishanganj and **57.7%** of the respondents in Madhubani district reported having banks in their area. with just **15.3%** of the respondents in Kishanganj district reporting presence of Post office in their area. The number of people surveyed

reporting presence of Post Office in the other 3 districts was **46.2%** in East Champaran, **64%** in Madhubani district and **53.2%** in Vaishali district.

## **URBAN/RURAL POPULATION - VAISHALI DISTRICT**

As per the Census 2011 out of total population of Vaishali, 6.67% people lived in urban regions while 93.33% in rural areas. The total figure of population of urban population was 233,079 out of which 123,314 were males while remaining 109,765 were females. In rural areas of Vaishali, male population was 1,721,221 while female population was 1,540,721.

The average sex ratio in urban regions of Vaishali was 890 females per 1000 males. Also the Child (0-6 age) sex ratio of urban areas in Vaishali was 899 girls per 1000 boys. Thus the total children (0-6 age) living in urban areas of Vaishali were 35,373 which is 15.18% of total urban population. Similarly the average sex ratio in rural areas of Vaishali was 895 females per 1000 males. The Child sex ratio of rural areas in Vaishali was 904 girls per 1000 boys.

The average literacy rate in Vaishali for urban regions was 74.23 percent in which males were 80.31% literate while female literacy stood at 67.38%. The total literate population of Vaishali was 1,926,740. Similarly in rural areas of Vaishali, the average literacy rate was 66.04 percent. Out of which literacy rate of males and females stood at 75.05% and 55.95% respectively. Total literates in rural areas of Vaishali were 1,779,987.

	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Population %	93.33%	6.67%
Total population	3,261,942	233,079
Male population	1,721,221	123,314
Female population	1,540,721	109,765
Sex ratio	895	890
Child sex ratio (0-6 age)	904	899
Child population	566,520	35,373
Literates	1,779,987	146,753
Average literacy	66.04%	74.23%
Male literacy	75.05%	80.31%
Female literacy	55.95%	67.38%

## **OCCUPATION OF WORKERS**

The wages are dependent on the nature of seasonality related to work. Roughly **80%** respondents said that their wages depended on the seasonality of work while **20%** said that it was not so in their case. It was further found during our survey that **34.5%** respondents said that they received equal pay for equal work while **65.5%** said that their case was

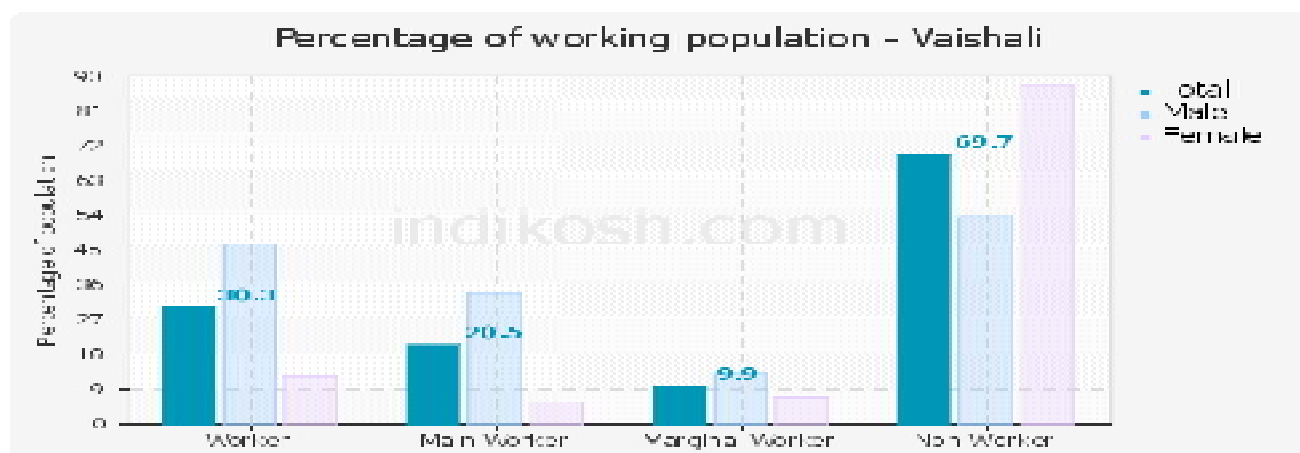
different as they never received equal pay for equal work. District wise situation varied greatly in this regard. Surprisingly **96%** respondents in Kishanganj district said that they received equal pay for work performed in which male members were also participants whereas only **1.6%** respondents in Vaishali said that they received wages equal to their male counterparts. The reason perhaps could be that while in Kishanganj majority of the labour force was engaged in tea plantation the wages for all labour, whether male or female was fixed, whereas, in Vaishali district agriculture was the main occupation of the labour.

**WORKING POPULATION - VAISHALI DISTRICT**

In Vaishali district out of total population, 1,060,344 were engaged in work activities. 67.5% of workers describe their work as Main Work (Employment or Earning more than 6 Months) while 32.5% were involved in Marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6 months. Of 1,060,344 workers engaged in Main Work, 206,593 were cultivators (owner or co-owner) while 285,634 were Agricultural labourer.

	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	716,006	622,933	93,073
Cultivators	206,593	188,152	18,441
Agriculture Labourer	285,634	243,893	41,741
Household Industries	22,657	15,730	6,927
Other Workers	201,122	175,158	25,964
Marginal Workers	344,338	235,715	108,623
Non Working	2,434,677	985,887	1,448,790

Vaishali has 30% (about 10.6 lakh) population engaged in either main or marginal works. 47% male and 12% female population are working population. 34% of total male population are main (full time) workers and 13% are marginal (part time) workers. For Women 6% of total female population are main and 7% are marginal workers.



**Percentage of working population - Vaishali**

**UNACCOUNTED HOUSEHOLD WORK PERFORMED BY WOMEN**

Household chores occupy most of the time of Women. Their participation in the household chores goes unaccounted. Majority of the respondents reported to be doing it without any change. Similarly taking care of children and elderly in the family as well as assisting children in schoolwork was the responsibility of Women. In other household chores like cooking, cleaning, fetching water, washing clothes, collecting wood for fuel, looking after animals, fodder & preparing cow dung cakes etc, is also done by them.

**THESE JOBS ARE DONE BY MOST OF THE WORKING AS WELL AS NON-WORKING WOMEN.**

They make indispensable contributions in all areas of rural life and economic activity, particularly in household maintenance, agriculture, and income-generating activities. The burden on working woman increases considerably as she has to work on two fronts – in home and at work place which is always invisible. *Thus, it can easily be said that there still exists gender discrimination when it comes to doing household chores. Women carry a triple burden.* Increased workload with little rest often leads to health problems, which are neglected by the Women. Statement that **96.34%** Women respondents were the first person in the family to wake up early in the morning and **78.50%** of them were the last person to go to bed.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Household surveys are not the appropriate strategy of investigating violence against Women, thus tools of community analysis was also employed. These include focus group discussions (FGDs) with men and Women, key informant interviews with elderly members, local political leaders, and local NGOs. The graph indicates that **28.95%** Women face considerable social insecurity due to being financially unsound. The study reveals that domestic violence and conflict are interlinked with economic insecurity (money). For example, men consider their wages as their own income and on alcohol, etc. is a major concern for **15.01%** Women respondents. The so-called breadwinners consider their income to be a private property whilst Women are left to manage the household with the meager amount given by their husbands. If they ask for money they become victims of physical violence. The study also reveals that the incidence of physical and verbal abuse of **13.42%** wives by their husbands over suspicion about their character is also very prominent. Sex is another reason of conflict for **13.30%** Women. **13.78%** respondents suffered physical abuse at the hands of their in-laws. If the food was not ready on time the wife had to face violence. If the husband interferes in the domestic task it leads to conflict between the two. A whopping **70.50%** Women respondent agreed to being abused verbally and **66.34%** of them said that the fight resulted in physical abuse. A fewer **6.34%** Women respondents said that they faced sexual abuse. **63.14%** of the respondents also felt emotionally abused. We found that Women were not afraid in answering to the kind of abuse even in the presence of male members of their family.

**INFORMAL SECTOR IMPORTANT SOURCE OF WORK FOR WOMEN**

More Women were found to be involved in undocumented or “disguised” wage work than in the formal labor force. The finding reveals that over **90%** of working Women are involved in the informal sector and not included in official statistics. This is justified in the World Bank study, 1991. The informal sector includes jobs such as domestic servant, artisan, or field laborer on a family farm, vegetable vendor. Most of these jobs are unskilled and low paying and do not provide benefits to the worker. Research has estimated that female laborers in Vaishali (**1.82%**) and Madhubani (**27.72%**) do not receive equal pay for equal work. The percentage is very low in comparison to Women workers in Kishanganj (**96%**) and E. Champaran (**76.10%**), where the picture is somewhat different with regard to wage differential. It appears very likely that here men and Women have same wage differential.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

The district is home to about 35 lakh people, among them about 18.4 lakh (53%) are male and about 16.5 lakh (47%) are female. 79% of the whole population are from general caste, 21% are from schedule caste and 0% are schedule tribes. Child (aged under 6 years) population of Vaishali district is 17%, among them 53% are boys and 47% are girls. There are about 6.3 lakh households in the district and an average 6 persons live in every family.

The majority of the population, nearly 93% (about 32.6 lakh) live in Vaishali District rural part and 7% (about 2.3 lakh) population live in the Vaishali District urban part. Rural population density of Vaishali district is 1632 and urban population density is 6212 persons per km<sup>2</sup>.



**Caste wise male female population 2011 - Vaishali**

## HEALTH PROFILE

Achievements made in the area of health in Bihar in comparison with other states have been anything but spectacular. The public health scenario has been dominated by several centrally sponsored vertical programmes dealing with the control of diseases like malaria, leprosy, tuberculosis, and more recently HIV/AIDS. The data on wages and expenditure on health shows that more than **50%** of the Women spend **50-70%** of their savings on health related problems of their family members leaving little amount for other household activity. There is very poor health infrastructure in rural areas. Easily treatable diseases are widespread. Many Women die during childbirth due to a complete lack of maternity services. Because of poor or inadequate training, village doctors and 'Quacks' or 'jhola chaap' doctor (unregistered medical practitioner) often fail to recognise life-threatening complications. The nearest hospital is over 10-20 km away; it is private and much too expensive for the people to afford. they give only a small amount to the Women for meeting the family needs. Wages for agricultural work, even when paid to the Women, are usually taken over and household is controlled by men. The squandering of money by the men

## CONCLUSION

In some ways and for some groups, Women's lives have changed dramatically over time. Social, economic, and legislative improvements and scientific advances have allowed Women to gain greater control over their lives. Women are much more valued and respected in the family than before. Women seem to have a more active role in family decision-making, and even to enjoy the freedom of leisure time and vacation that were previously only experienced by men. But sadly, this promising picture is far from universal across different strata of society in the Vaishali which were covered under our study. Our study has revealed that this changing trend among *Vaishali district* Bihar is mostly limited to the upper and upper middle classes, which form only a miniscule portion of the Indian population. Overall, Women remain the largest group that experiences poverty, despite the fact that Women constitute **50%** of the work force. But growth in Women's jobs has mainly been in low-paid, part-time, temporary work that does little to improve Women's desperate poverty, much less offer them a way. Women's vulnerability to poverty and their low positions in the labour market are a result of a combination of economic, social and cultural factors, including their continued role as homemakers and primary caregivers for family. A division of labour by gender within both paid and unpaid work exists in almost all societies in *Vaishali district* Bihar. Whatever the cultural, economic, caste-based, religious, social, and other differences, a few factors are universal: Women are seen as being responsible for the home and family, and the image of Women earning as much as or more than men would be threatening to many men. The economic dependence of Women on men harms many, but is absolutely devastating for Women such as widows or wives of abusive alcoholics, for whom there is no steady and safe support available from male relatives.

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