
Role of Women in Agriculture And Rural Development

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Abstract:

Agriculture is the spine of the Indian Economy as over 70% of rural family depends on agriculture as their primary means of livelihood. Agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in developing countries where it is the main occupation of poor. 70% of its population is rural and 70% engage in agriculture as their main source of income. Gradually, it has been realized that rural women play a vital role in agricultural development as their essential involvement in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors, but regardless of women's far-reaching and stippled contribution in agriculture, they carry on to have less admittance than do men to modern agricultural inputs. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia.

With a decline in their status from the ancient to medieval times, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. n. Rural Women form the most important productive work force in the Indian economy. Agriculture sector employs 4/5th of all economically active women in the country. 48% of India's self-employed farmers are women. Women's dependence on agricultural wage labour as a source of income has also increased in the regions with the destruction of many household based industries employing mainly women. The women farmers' constraints include mainly lack of land for farming, credit facilities, costly and late input delivery. Women farmers have contributed immensely, to food production, processing and preservation of foods. Serious attention should be paid to their constraints because women are the backbone of agricultural development and food security in India.

Introduction

As we know India is developing country. The main occupation is agriculture, because 70 per cent of the population is involved in this occupation. Many women in developing countries are occupied in agriculture. Women occupation in agriculture in low income countries in Asia is between 60-80 per cent. In almost, Asian countries, the number of women employed in agriculture as a percentage of the economically active population is higher.

Women continue to provide a large proportion of the labour that goes into agriculture. Food and Agricultural Organization's (FAO's) estimates show that women represent a substantial share of the total agricultural labour force, as individual food producers or as agricultural

workers. It further stated that around two-thirds of the female labour force in developing economies is engaged in agricultural work.

Rural women is able to manage multifaceted works ,which include producing agricultural crops, nursing animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining all the household chores without any hassles , numerous of these activities are not defined as “economically active employment” contributing to the GDP of nation even though they are indispensable part for the wellbeing of rural households.

Agriculture is the core option available for Rural Women, and it should approach with enhanced admittance to land and resources for the anticipation, adaptation and alleviation of climate change, collective with rural women learning how to deal with cultural confrontation and adapting to various demonstration of this phenomenon. Women make essential contribution to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries.

Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector.

Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing foods, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes.

Women put in their full effort in agriculture and rural economic activities, their roles differ significantly among and within section of the world where financially viable and societal forces are changing the agriculture sector

Objective

- ❖ To know the position of women
- ❖ To assess the role of women in agriculture and allied activities
- ❖ The main objectives of this study are mentioned below.
- ❖ To find out the role of women in agriculture and its allied fields.
- ❖ To find out main obstacles in women growth in agricultural sector.
- ❖ To analyze the gender differences in roles and activities in agricultural sector.
- ❖ To measure the season wise employment of woman labour in agriculture.
- ❖ To examine the distribution of woman workers .
- ❖ To find out the various ways and means to reduce gender differences and to improve the role of women in the agriculture sector.

Literature Review:

Ashok sah (20014) has pointed out in his article entitled “Production Hazards, Marketing Risks” mentioned that majority of women is self-employed and work in dangerous environments. Their daily tasks includes keeping and caring for the livestock at farms. They grow grains, cotton, fibers, fruit, and vegetables. The crop farmer plants, tills, fertilize, sprays, harvests, packs and stores the product. The livestock farmer feeds and cares for animals, while the horticulture farmers produce ornamental plants and nursery products.

Ram balak mahto (2015) in his research paper entitled “NDP Irrigation Reforms Lack Gender Equality” argued that despite gargantuan efforts and uncasing participation in socio-economic field, women role has been discarded.

Vijay yadav (2015) has mentioned in his paper “Role of Rural Women” that role of women in agriculture sector is as important as men, therefore, women should educate themselves in agricultural. He also highlights the importance of education to rural female and proposed to educate women in floriculture and food preservation.

Anil kumar (2016) has pointed out in his article entitled “Production Hazards, Marketing Risks” mentioned that majority of women is self-employed and work in dangerous environments. Their daily tasks includes keeping and caring for the livestock at farms. They grow grains, cotton, fibers, fruit, and vegetables. The crop farmer plants, tills, fertilize, sprays, harvests, packs and stores the product. The livestock farmer feeds and cares for animals, while the horticulture farmers produce ornamental plants and nursery products. Lalu kumar (2016) The per capita income of the millions of agricultural workers is less than half a dollar per day. These workers are deprived of basic human needs like health, food, education, clean water, and shelter. In addition, their women are frequently tortured by the landlords and their thugs. Farmers, particularly women, face a high degree of economic, legal, and institutional uncertainties when investing in their land and other resources. Successful implementation of such programs stem from in the motivation and attitude of individual farmers and newly instituted government policies to providing incentives to farmers to manage their natural resources efficiently and in a sustainable way.

Contribution of women in Agricultural Development

Women play a vital role in building this economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors.

Rural Women form the most important productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture varies greatly from region to region. But regardless of these variations, women are actively involved in various agricultural activities.

As per Census 2011, out of total female main workers, 55 per cent were agricultural labourers and 24 per cent were cultivators. However, only 12.8 per cent of the operational holdings were owned by women, which reflect the gender disparity in ownership of landholdings in agriculture. Moreover, there is concentration of operational holdings (25.7 per cent) by women in the marginal and small holdings categories.

In India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture is as high as 70%. In 2009, 94% of the female labor worked in cereal production, while 1.4% worked in vegetable production and 3.72% were engaged in fruits and spice crops. Agricultural extension efforts should help women improve food production while allowing them to shift more of their labor to export production. Similarly, changes in legal, financial, and educational systems must be undertaken in order to enhance women's social and economic contributions to rural development in the long term.

The bulk of the development projects for rural women over the 1976-85 period provided training in traditional female skills (e.g. sewing, cooking, and crafts), credit programs for microenterprises, and income-generation schemes to bring rural women in to the market economy.

Significance of women in indian agriculture:

Women's contribution to agriculture, whether it is in subsistence farming or commercial agriculture, when measured in number of tasks performed and time spent, is greater than men. Gender is the word used especially for the female population of the society. Many historians believe that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming.

Their contribution in agriculture is aptly highlighted by a micro study conducted in Indian Himalayas which found that on a one hectare farm, a pair of bullocks work for 1060 hours, a man for 1212 hours and a woman for 3485 hours. Generally, operations performed by men are those that entail use of machinery and animals. Contrary to this, women always rely on manual labour using only their own energy.

In rural India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture for their livelihood is as high as 84%. Women make up about 33% of cultivators and about 47% percent of agricultural laborers. The National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture (NRCWA) has assessed occupational health hazards of farm women in coastal Orissa some years back and results are furnished in Table

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Table 1: Share of Farm Women in Agricultural Operations

Activity	Involvement (%)
Land preparation	32
Seed cleaning and sowing	80
Inter cultivation activities	86
Harvesting reaping, winnowing, drying, cleaning and storage	84

Source: Registrar General of India, New Delhi, 2001

Obstacles in Women Growth in Agriculture Sector:

- ❖ Few women holding of agricultural productive resources such as land, animals, and machinery.
- ❖ Women absence from decision making process, either inside or outside home.
- ❖ Women perform all un-mechanized agricultural tasks and perform multiple tasks, which add more burden to them.
- ❖ Women workers in agriculture suffer from high illiteracy rate among them and drop-out of schools.
- ❖ Women earn less wages, especially in joint, informal and private sector.
- ❖ Women do not know their legal rights. Miss applying some laws and regulations in favor of women such heritage legislation.
- ❖ Gender biasness is one of the major problems faced by the women.

Problems faced by women in agriculture Development

- ❖ Lack of awareness and lower access to modern technologies.
- ❖ Constraints on time and mobility due to various other household responsibilities.
- ❖ Lack of training and less access to productive resources.
- ❖ Lack of opportunity and meager exposure.
- ❖ Low wages and incentives.
- ❖ Physical and mental stress.
- ❖ Non recognition of women despite of their active contribution.
- ❖ Health and safety issues

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Equal wage and incentive schemes should be provided for equal work.
- ❖ Women should be exposed to new technologies.
- ❖ Women club and organization should be setup for open discussions.
- ❖ Minimum and equal wages should be fixed by state government for women
- ❖ agricultural labours and the rates should be reviewed periodically.

- ❖ More facilities should be provided to poor rural women for land, agricultural and livestock extension services.
- ❖ Measures should be taken to enhance women's literacy rates. A separate education policy for women may serve the purpose.
- ❖ Women must be involved in decision-making bodies that have the potential to introduce structural changes. This action will bring some changes in the gender relations in the society.
- ❖ Conscious efforts are needed for training of female agricultural workers in the rural areas in alternative skills.

Conclusions

Rural women are the major contributors in agriculture and its allied fields. Her work ranges from crop production, livestock production to cottage industry. From household and family maintenance activities, to transporting water, fuel and fodder. Despite such a huge involvement, her role and dignity has yet not been recognized. Women's status is low by all social, economic, and political indicators. Women involvement in agriculture is on the increase compared to men, therefore they should be given appropriate types of technology to cater for the labour intensive farm activities, good financial support and access to more farm land through appropriate land reforms.

Men alone cannot achieve success in farming without women. Women are now acknowledged with the status of "agricultural worker". Though discrimination of wages and in working status still prevails for women labour but due to implementation of various policies and initiatives taken by government the invisibility of women as an agricultural worker is plummeting and will further diminish in future. In Indian society, women have a multi dimensional role.

The largest number of women in India is engaged in farming operations either as cultivators or as supervisors or as agriculture laborers. Women contribute about $\frac{3}{4}$ th of the labour required for agricultural operations. Women do not enter the labour market on equal terms when compared to men. Their occupational choices are also limited due to social and cultural constraints, gender bias in the labour market, and lack of supportive facilities such as child care, transport and accommodation in the formal sector of the labour market.

Women's labour power is considered inferior because of employers predetermined notion of women's primary role as homemakers.

As a result of discrimination against female labour, women are concentrated in the secondary sector of labour market. Their work is low paid, low status, casual and lacks potential upward mobility.

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