

AN STUDY ON ROLE OF WOMEN IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE

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Abstract

Gender, that is socially constructed relations between men and women, is an organizing element of existing farming systems and a determining factor of ongoing agricultural restructuring. 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. India has a predominantly agrarian economy. 70% of women population is rural of those households, 60% engage in agriculture as their main source of income. Agriculture has always been India's most important economic sector. In this important sector women's are the backbone of the development of rural and national economies. The impact of liberalization and globalization on women is important not only because they represent almost half of the total population, but also because they face constraints, which make them less beneficial from the liberalization. Once different impacts are ascertained well designed policy responses may aid women in taking advantage of greater openness to agriculture. Nearly 78 percent of all economically active women are engaged in agriculture as compared to 63 per cent of men. Almost 50 percent of rural female workers are classified as agricultural laborers and 37% as cultivators. About 70 percent of farm work was performed by women. 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. It is observed that women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. However, an attempt is made in this research article through available literature & studies to study the role of women in Indian agriculture.

Keywords: Indian Economy, Agriculture, Gender Discrimination, Women development.

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Introduction

Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields. 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. The agricultural production in India encompasses field crops, fruit crop, plantation crop, livestock, forestry, fishery etc. So overall it is a huge industry which recruits or engages 52 % of overall manpower of India.

According to Swaminathan (1985), the well-known agricultural scientist describes that it used to be girl who first domesticated crop flowers and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out searching in search of food, girls started out gathering seeds from the native vegetation and started out cultivating these of hobby from the factor of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel. Women have played and proceed to play a key position in the conservation of simple life aid structures such as land, water, plants and fauna. They have covered the fitness of the soil thru natural recycling and promoted crop safety through the protection of varietal diversity and genetic resistance.

As per Census 2011, out of total female main workers, 55 per cent were agricultural laborers 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. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, varies greatly from region to region and even varies widely among different ecological sub-zones, farming systems, castes, classes and stages in the family cycle. But regardless of these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production, except ploughing in which women are not actively involved. Studies on women in agriculture conducted in India and other developing and under developed countries all point to the conclusion that women contribute far more too agricultural production than has generally been acknowledged. Recognition of their crucial role in agriculture should not obscure the fact that farm women continue to be concerned with their primary functions as wives, mothers and homemakers.

According to (Prasad & Singh 1992) Women have played and continue to play key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance. Therefore, without the total intellectual and physical participation of women, it will not be possible to popularize

alternative systems of land management to shifting cultivation, arrest gene and soil erosion, and promote the care of the soil and the health of economic plants and farm animals

Beyond the conventional market-oriented narrower definition of 'productive workers', almost all women in rural India today can be considered as 'farmers' in some sense, working as agricultural labour, unpaid workers in the family farm enterprise, or combination of the two. Moreover, several farm activities traditionally carried out by men are also being undertaken by women as men are pulled away into higher paying employment. Thus, Rural India is witnessing a process which could be described as Feminization of Agriculture.

Gender issues in Agriculture

Women's contribution to agriculture, whether it is in subsistence farming or commercial agriculture, when measured in quantity of duties performed and time spent, is higher than men. Their contribution in agriculture is aptly highlighted through a micro learn about conducted in Indian Himalayas which observed 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 guys are those that entail use of machinery and animals. Contrary to this, ladies usually remember on guide labour the usage of solely their own energy. Not solely are women overworked, their work is greater hard than that undertaken by means of men. Further, because women's work is generally based on human electricity it is regarded unskilled and therefore much less productive. On this basis, ladies are continually paid less wage notwithstanding their working harder and for longer hours. This makes the woman's work invisible

Agriculture in India

Agriculture Sector of Indian Economy is one of the most significant parts of India. Agriculture is the only means of living for almost two-thirds of the employed class in India. The agriculture sector of India has occupied almost 43 percent of India's geographical area. Agriculture is still the only largest contributor to India's GDP even after a decline in the same in the agriculture share of India. Agriculture also plays a significant role in the growth of socio-economic sector in India.

In the earlier times, India was largely dependent upon food imports but the successive story of the agriculture sector of Indian economy has made it self-sufficing in grain production. The country also has substantial reserves for the same. India depends heavily on the agriculture sector, especially on the food production unit after the 1960 crisis in food sector. Since then, India has put a lot of effort to be self-sufficient in the food production and this endeavor of India has led to the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution came into

existence with the aim to improve the agriculture in India. India has a national tradition bound to agriculture fertility. In the North, the Indus valley and Brahmaputra region are critical agricultural areas graced by the Ganges and monsoon season. Based on 2011 World Bank data, only 17.5% of India's gross domestic product (GDP) is accounted for by agricultural production. Yet for a majority of the country, an estimated 72% of the 1.1 billion people who live in rural India, it is a way of life

The Indian government also set up Ministry of Food Processing Industries to stimulate the agriculture sector of Indian economy and make it more lucrative. India's agriculture sector highly depends upon the monsoon season as heavy rainfall during the time leads to a rich harvest. But the entire year's agriculture cannot possibly depend upon only one season. Taking into account this fact, a second Green Revolution is likely to be formed to overcome such restrictions. An increase in the growth rate and irrigation area, improved water management, improving the soil quality, and diversifying into high value outputs, fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, medicinal plants, and bio-diesel are also on the list of the services to be taken by the Green Revolution to improve the agriculture in India.

The role of Gender in Agriculture

The term 'gender' describes the socially determined attributes of men and women. This includes male and female roles in economic and non-economic functions, differential access to and control over resources and differences in knowledge and skills. The term 'sex' denotes the physical and biological differences between males and females. The sexual division of labour for both agricultural and domestic tasks varies greatly by community and ethnic group and it is difficult to make generalizations about the roles that men, women and children play. The Indian National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) has stressed the need to mainstream "Gender Perspectives" in the process of development and envisages women specific interventions, where there are currently gaps in policies and programmes. The National Agricultural Policy of India (2000) has highlighted the need for incorporating gender issues into the agricultural development agenda to provide recognition of women's role as farmers and producers of crops and livestock, users of technology, active agents in marketing, processing and storage of food and agricultural laborers.

Rural girls performs several labor intensive jobs such as weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cotton stick collections, separation of seeds from fiber. Women are additionally predicted to accumulate wooden from fields. This timber is being used as a most important fuel supply for cooking. Because of the increasing population pressure, over grazing and desertification, girls face difficulties in looking out of furnace wood. Clean drinking water

is some other most important trouble in rural areas. Like series of wood, fetching water from far off areas is additionally the obligation of women. Because a rural woman is accountable for farm activities, retaining of farm animals and its other associated activities like milking, milk processing, and preparation of ghee are additionally carried out by using the women. Poultry farming is one of the main sources of rural economy. The rate of female in poultry farming at family stage is the central in hen industry. Even though rural female are not the usage of current administration techniques, such as vaccination and accelerated feed, however their chicken corporation is impressive. Every year, income from fowl farming has been rising. In order to generate more and more income, rural ladies frequently promote all eggs and hen meat and left nothing for personal use. Due to poverty and lack of required degree of proteins most of ladies have got a very poor health. Most of girls suffer from malnutrition.

Feminisation of Agriculture

Economic Survey 2017-18 says that with developing rural to city migration via men, there is 'feminization' of agriculture sector, with increasing variety of girls in more than one role as cultivators, entrepreneurs, and laborers. Globally, there is empirical proof that ladies have a decisive function in making sure food security and maintaining local agro-biodiversity. Rural women are accountable for the integrated management and use of various natural assets to meet the everyday family needs. This requires that ladies farmers need to have stronger get right of entry to to assets like land, water, credit, science and education which warrants quintessential analysis in the context of India. In addition, the entitlements of female farmers will be the key to enhance agriculture productivity. The differential gets admission to of girls to assets like land, credit, water, seeds and markets wishes to be addressed.

A Multi-Dimensional Role of Women in India

Rural Women form the most important productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. Agriculture, the single largest production endeavor in India, contributing about 18% of GDP, is increasingly becoming a Female Activity. Agriculture sector employs 4/5th of all economically active women in the country. 48% of India's self-employed farmers are women. There are 75 million women engaged in dairying as against 15 million men and 20 million in animal husbandry as compared to 1.5 million men.

- 1. Agricultural Activities:** - Sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer application, plant protection, harvesting, winnowing, storing etc.

2. Domestic Activities: - Cooking, child rearing, water collection, fuel wood gathering, household maintenance etc.

3. Allied Activities: - Cattle management, fodder collection, milking etc.

Measures Taken by the Government for Upliftment of Women in Agriculture Sector

- The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare implements various programmes of farmers including women in agriculture sector.
- As per directives for the Women Component Plan, the State Governments have been asked to ensure flow of funds to the tune of 30% for the benefit of women farmers.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)

- Empower women in agriculture by making systematic investments to enhance their participation and productivity
- Create and sustain agriculture based livelihoods of rural women.

National Food Security Mission (NFSM)

- Providing cropping system based training to women farmers to create awareness on improved technology for increasing production and productivity of crops.

National Horticulture Mission

- Women are organized into Self Help Groups and farm inputs and technological & extension supports are provided to make women self-reliant.

ICAR- Central Institute for Women in Agriculture (ICAR-CIWA) has been in the forefront undertaking research on issues affecting women in agriculture.

Conclusion

The women are the backbone of agricultural sector and plays important part in Indian economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their contribution in the field of agriculture, horticulture, food security, dairy, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. Women form the backbone of agriculture, in India, Comprising the majority of agricultural laborer's; they have been putting in labour not only in terms of physical and quantitative output but also in terms of quality and efficiency. Perhaps, ironically, it is because women have so many responsibilities that they have been over-looked by agriculturalists and policy makers it has been more convenient to label men as farmers and women as child raisers and cooks. In truth, women are involved in all aspects of agriculture, from crop selection to land preparation, to seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage,

handling, marketing, and processing. Whatever the reason for this neglect, the importance of developing farming technologies relevant to women has only recently been recognized. Despite the advancements in agricultural sector, it is important to understand that what could be the major issues to address in contemporary agrarian economy. Agriculture impacts women's livelihood and income security, and also has secondary impacts in terms of increased violence against women. Secondly, as globalization shifts agriculture to capital intensive, chemical intensive systems, women bear disproportionate costs of both displacement and health hazards. And thirdly, Women carry the heavier work burden in food production, and because of gender discrimination get lower returns for their work.

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