



Women agriculture labour - A study of Telangana State

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Abstract

Agriculture the heart of Indian economy provides employment to nearly 52 per cent of the population. But it contributes only 16 per cent to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Agricultural growth is given top priority by Indian Government as around 70 per cent of the population lives in rural India. Whose occupation is agriculture and allied activities? Agriculture plays an important role in economic development in providing food to the nation, enlarging exports, transferring manpower to non-agricultural sectors. It aides capital formation and secures markets for industrialization. Indian agriculture is highly gender sensitive as 75.38 per cent women work force are engaged in agriculture, with 94 per cent women in crop cultivation. Women form backbone of agricultural workforce and vital path of Indian Economy. The key role of women in agricultural development and their contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, dairy, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sector is recognized all over the world. Women supply labour to produce physical output with quality and efficiency. Although most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women plough fields and harvest crops while working on farms; women weave and make handicrafts while working in household industries; women cook food and gather wood while working in the informal sector.

Key words: capital formation, gender sensitive, Women plough fields

Introduction

The women are the backbone of agricultural workforce but worldwide her hard work has mostly been unpaid. She does the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and homes. The research efforts at the ICAR institutes have been tried to relieve her of the drudgery by providing time and labour saving tools. Vocational trainings are also being conducted, to impart skills to undertake different avocations. In extension activities the women is now the centre point and activities are being planned keeping her in view. Her enlightenment will change the face of rural India. Several

programmes started at the National Centre for Women in Agriculture and Krishi Vigyan Kendras, are the right steps in this direction.

The National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture (NRCWA) has been functioning at Bhubaneswar, Orissa, for developing methodologies, for identification of gender implications in farming systems approach and to develop women specific technologies under different production systems. There are 16 ongoing research projects in the areas of gender study on agriculture and household economy, management of coastal agro-eco system, extension methods for farm women,



standardization of women specific field practices, occupational health hazards, reducing drudgery of women in agricultural operations, improvement of farming system suited to farm women, eco-friendly pest management technologies for vegetables among farm women, evaluation of interactive learning modules, technological needs in empowering women in rural aquaculture, and improvement in storage practices of seeds and grains. Under project on Development and testing of extension methods for farmwomen in eastern India, the extent of participation of farm women in different farming systems and farm enterprises and the role of change agents in that context, were studied. Contrary to the situation at coastal tract the male extension agents maintained higher contacts with farmwomen than the lady extension agent. The studies under Identification and improvement of farming systems suited to farmwomen in Eastern India project revealed that there is intense involvement of farmwomen in vegetable cultivation necessitating to take follow up supportive activities and interventions in the area of vermin composting, natural plant pesticides, biological control and IPM. Under the project Standardization of women specific field practices in rice in Orissa data were collected from women heads of 50 farm families on participation of women in relation to varying operations in rice cultivation. Women of family contributed highest hours per season (61.66) in harvesting and post harvesting operations and participated lowest in land preparation. Same pattern was observed from the paid women and total women (family + paid labour). Under project on Occupational health hazards of farm women in coastal Orissa the health hazards faced by women in household

activities, farm activities, post harvest activities and livestock management were assessed. Under the project Identification and evaluation of interactive learning modules for dissemination of homestead technologies ergonomic assessment was carried out on the traditional and improved method of paddy parboiling procedures. During paddy parboiling using improved technology (paddy parboiling unit) the heart beat rate and energy expenditure were significantly reduced and the output also increased from 35 kg per batch to 75kg per batch. The time duration of carrying out this activity also reduced from 2 days to 6 hours. Considering the significant utility of paddy parboiling unit, an interactive learning module is being developed on paddy parboiling unit, which will be useful for trainers in disseminating the technology.

Design refinement in sitting type groundnut decorticator for women workers for better ergonomic performance—These refinements included increase in handle length from 32 to 37cm, increase in sitting stool height from 20 to 30 cm and change in wooden base design for easy packing and transport. The output of improved prototype was 30 kg/hr. The women workers liked the equipment as the work could be done in sitting posture and the force required for its operation was less than the standing type decorticator. This equipment has been taken up for prototype production and 55 units were fabricated and sent to various places for demonstration and use.

Comparison of heart rate responses in three types of dibbling methods for maize i.e. traditional method, with Naveen dibbler and with rotary dibbler— The



parameters used for comparison were heart rate (for evaluation of work load), increase in heart rate in beats/ m² of area dibbled and output in m² /hr. The output with rotary dibbler was found highest i.e. about 9- times greater than traditional method and Naveen dibbler. The heart rate data showed no significant difference in the dibbling with traditional method and with Naveen dibbler. But the women workers liked the Naveen dibbler as the mainly husk and bran that needs to be removed before its utilization. Presently it is done using traditional practice of pounding which is tedious and time consuming. As ragi is used in tribal areas as staple food, there is a need of a suitable manual machine for its pearling. A grain testing mill was selected to carry out preliminary investigation on ragi pearling with respect to grain moisture content, emery roller speed and residence time. The response of these parameters was studied on degree of polishing, husk and bran removal, broken grain and power consumption. The initial husk content in the grain was determined to be 3.1% (mass basis). During preliminary study trial, it was observed that with 13.2% moisture content (wet basis), the husk and bran removal increased from 3.3% to 4.7%, 3.9 to 5.6%, 4.4 to 6.6% and 4.7 to 6.6% with increase in emery roller speed from 1,150 to 1,450 rpm for the residence time of 60, 80, 100 and 120 sec, respectively. However, the broken percentage of endosperm was higher at the emery roller speed of 1,450 rpm with residence time of 120 sec.

The project Management of coastal agro-eco system affected by super cyclone in Orissa was started with objectives — Nutritional status assessment of the families and intervention, intervention through development of nutritional

garden in homestead areas of the families; and preparation of material for nutrition education to the farm families.

History of Agricultural Women Labor

Women have played and continue to play a 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. Their fore, without the total intellectual and physical participation, it will not be possible to popularise 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."

Financial reasons, non-financial reasons are behind women's employment. The financial reasons are economic pressures, other economic needs ambition for higher standard of living. The nonfinancial reasons are personality traits, making proper use of time and traditional occupations. In India, women have been participating in agricultural activities mainly due to economic reasons as rural poverty is higher and compiling factor. There are some traditional occupations, wherein women labour is absorbed and utilised to increase production and to obtain economic gains for the family and society as a whole. In Andhra Pradesh also, women's labour is a traditional and economically needed activity. In the study area, as per the answers provided by the women labourers causes for women labour are classified as those which are traditional in nature. Even today there are many



families who do not believe that education is necessary for women.

Nature of Women Labor in Agriculture

About 36 million Indian women are engaged on farm operations as main workers; from sowing to harvesting and storing in bins and bags. They also participate in off-farm activities like processing and marketing of farm products. Women play a significant role in farming and farm management activities, though most are engaged either as cultivators or helpers to cultivators or as agricultural labourers. It has been found that women from weaker sections of the society and possessing small or no land holding participate in larger proportion in agricultural operations than women from middle class socio-economic status. They are actively involved in agricultural development and allied fields including crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post-harvest operations, agro and social forestry, fishing etc.

Migrant Women Labour

Social customs conventions economic prospects improve the ability to migrate. Migration has become a leading factor in the process of economic development. It provided prospects to labourers of all categories. The opportunities available encourage men and women to migrate when the head of the family migrates, the entire family is bound to migrate in search of opportunities. Indian women are described as a most migratory of the population. The migration can be called as sociological because it is a result of marriage. The new work avenues also forced women to migrate along with the

families. Women do not migrate to longer places. Career based migration is an important aspect of Indian labour.

Women in agriculture spend time even seven to eight hours a day in the fields. In some of the agricultural activities they share the work with men. In some aspects women are not employed in any remunerative work. Women are more efficient than men in some aspects of employment. But most women lack confidence and lack of skills as their husbands are not interested in sending their wives to venture in such new occupations. In India, there are migrations based on career building, social compulsion and nature of families to which women belong. Sometimes, migrations are forced and they are induced, mass migration, child migration and rural-urban migration take place because of the power of man to decide the future of the family along with women labourers. Women migration in India bring out some economic and social problems. When women migrates family is forced to migrate either for shorter or for longer periods. The organisation of different sector, labour markets influence the migration character of women labour in India.

Constitutional Protection

The constitution recognizes three categories of weaker sections of society. It ensures protections which are meant for agricultural labourers also. The concept of socio-economic justice is elaborated by the members of the Constituent Assembly during the discussion of Objective Resolution. According to M.R.Masani, it clearly rejects the present social structure and the social status quo. It envisages far-reaching social change.



The change to ensure social justice in the fullest sense of term can be brought about through the mechanism of political democracy, and individual liberty¹¹⁰. Seth govind Das and Dr. B.R.Ambedkar have equated it with the commitment to socialism or socialization of production. Referring to socio-economic justice contemplated in the Objective Resolution Dr.S.Radhakrishnan had said. "It intended to effect a smooth and rapid transition from a state of serfdom to one of freedom. The preamble of the Indian Constitution reflects social reconstruction. Justice-social and economic, equality of status and liberty, dignity of individual and other radical humanist promises are spelt out. Thus, it can be said that "the Indian Constitution is first and foremost a social document". For the achievement of socio-economic justice Article 38 states. The state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

The state shall, in particular, strive to minimize the inequalities in income and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations. Articles 14 to 18 of the Constitution guarantee the right to equality to every citizen. Article 14 embodies the general principle of equality before law. In specific contexts the State is further forbidden to discriminate on grounds of race, religion, caste, sex, place of birth, residence, descent, class and language Additional provisions outlaw untouchability and

protect the citizen from certain kinds of discrimination by private persons and institutions. The protective discrimination incorporated in the Indian Constitution is an effective measure to strike a balance between haves and have not's. The poor agricultural labourers usually involve all their family members in the process of earning their livelihood irrespective of their age and sex. Their wives and children are the worse victims of several malpractices. The need of preferential treatment in favour of women and children is a world - wide phenomenon.

Article 39(1) provides that the State shall direct its policy towards securing that the tender age of children is not abused and the childhood and youth are protected against moral and material abandonment. Article 24 says that no child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment. Article 45 requires the State to provide for the free and compulsory education for all children below 14 years. The state may make any special provision for children according to Article 15(3) Considering the atrocities on women in the Indian Society, the Constitution prohibited any kind of discrimination on ground of sex. Agricultural labourers suffer from the both social inequality and economic inequality.

Under Article 39 the Constitution reaffirms the principles of policy to be followed by the State in securing: that the citizens, men and women equality, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to



sub serve the common good, that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment, that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women, and The health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter a vocation unsuited to their age or strength. The ideal of economic justice calls for an improvement in the conditions of agricultural labourers who even today from a considerable part of the population and have weaker position in comparison of others.

Conclusion

The women laborers are low and poor and status of women in rural community has not been changed. Maximum number of female agricultural labour household are living below the poverty line and they are not getting proper wage for their work. Very few women labour are receiving the benefits from the government schemes. The social conditions in which they live continue to be traditional, exploitative and anti-women in character and impeding the development of the agricultural labour in general and of the female agricultural labour in particular. while the number of rural female total workers is steadily increasing at the national, state as well as at the districts level, Thus, though the chunk of women labour are increasing, there are only a few government developmental programmes, which are of women specific, in the country as well as in the State. It is found that only privileged sections are benefited from these developmental programmes.

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