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A Study On Women Role In Agricultural Industry In Rural India

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ABSTRACT

A key failing of past efforts to reduce hunger and increase rural incomes has been the lack of attention paid to women as farmers, producers and farm workers – both wage and non-wage. It's not too late to integrate the lessons we've learned and avoid the pitfalls of the past. To move forward, however, the world community must make a significant shift in its thinking about women, food security, agriculture and the global marketplace see women as key economic agents of change in rural communities who in their own right contribute to local, national and global food security and economic growth.

Key Words: WOMEN, AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The agriculture sector as a whole has developed and emerged immensely with the infusion of science and technology. But this latest emergence is not capable of plummeting the ignorance of women labour as an integral part of this industry. In developing countries like India, agriculture continues to absorb and employ female work force, but fails to give them recognition of employed/hired labour. Women constituted 38 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. It is also estimated that 45.3 per cent of the agricultural labour force consists of women. But a large number of women have remained as invisible workers. [1]

India is a developing and predominately agrarian economy. 70 per cent of its population is rural, of those households, 60 per cent in agriculture as their main source of income.

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Agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in developing countries where it is the main occupation of the poor. Many women, in developing countries, are major producers of food. Nearly 63 Per cent of all economically active men are engaged in agriculture as compared to 78 Per cent of women. It is observed that women play a significant role in agricultural development and allied activities including main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post-harvesting operations etc. About 70 Per cent of farm work is performed by women. Women farmers do not have equal access to productive resources and this significantly limits their potential in enhancing productivity. [2]

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are few books and articles pertinent to the research topic, they are follows.

A number of studies show that women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. However, the nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture differs in different agro production systems (NishuBala, 2010). Even, within a region, their involvement varies widely among different ecological sub-zones, farming system, caste, classes and socio-economic status of families (Swaminathan, 1985; Sethi, 1982; Unni, 1999; Sreekumar, 2001; Mies, 1980). Nata Duvvury (1989) observes that the extent of female participation in production in India is determined by a nexus of class/caste hierarchy and norms of patriarchal ideology. She pointed out that most peasant women do a significant proportion of the work involved in pre and post-harvest operations that are done in the home compound rather than in the field. According to her while women of poor peasant households may in addition go for assisting in the field, women of the households on the upper end of the hierarchy would never go for 'outdoor' work. As Dak and Sharma (1988) point out that the dominant cultural norms accept women's manual work on the family farm, but working for others is considered to bring about a lowering of this status. The taboo against women's outside work is stronger among the higher castes as compared to the

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backward castes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Martha Chen (1989) also observes that there are marked differences in women's agricultural work according to agro-ecologic zones. In general, female labour force participation rates are lower in the wheat growing belt of the north-west relative to the rice growing eastern and southern states. Variations are also observed in participation of female.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on descriptive and documentary analysis to covered women role in agricultural industry in rural India. This study only secondary data which were collected from journals, government reports, News Papers, and Website.

OBJECTIVES

1. To measure the status of women's labour in agriculture
2. To examine the women agrarian performance in agriculture industry in India.

IMPROVEMENT OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE

The history of agriculture in India dates back to Indus Valley Civilization Era and even before that in some parts of Southern India. Today, India ranks second worldwide in farm output. Agriculture and allied sectors like forestry and fisheries accounted for 13.7 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) in 2013, about 50 per cent of the workforce. The economic contribution of agriculture to India's GDP is steadily declining with the country's broad-based economic growth. Still, agriculture is demographically the broadest economic sector and plays a significant role in the overall socio-economic fabric of India. Most of its agriculture exports serve developing and least developed nations. Indian agricultural/ horticultural and processed foods are exported to more than 100 countries, primarily in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, SAARC countries, the EU and the United States. Based on 2012 data, India is home to the fourth largest agricultural sector in the world. India has an estimated 180 million hectares of farmland with 140

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million of which are planted and continuously cultivated. Yet India's agricultural profile is shadowed by the controversial impacts of Green Revolution policies that were adopted in the 1960s and 70s with pressure from the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank. The Green Revolution brought a modern approach to agriculture by incorporating irrigation systems, genetically modified seed variations, insecticide and pesticide usage, and numerous land reforms. It had an explosive impact, providing unprecedented agricultural productivity in India and turned the country from a food importer to an exporter. Yet the Green Revolution also caused agricultural prices to drop, which damaged India's small farmers. India's agricultural sector today still faces issues of efficiency due lack of mechanization with poorer conditions of farmers, as well as small farm sizes. In India traditional agriculture is still dominant as many farmers depend on livestock in crop production, for manure as fertilizers, and the use animal powered ploughs. According to 2011 statistics, the average farm in India is about 1.5 acres, minuscule when compared the average of 50 hectares in France and or 178 hectares in United States and 273 hectares in Canada. The small farmer tradition of India can be drawn back to the first farm reforms of independent India. Known as the Laws of Divided Inheritance, the reforms were meant to limit the conglomeration of land, by mandating redistribution as land was divided among male inheritors from the prior generation. The perpetuation of these laws not only limits farm size, but also bars women from ownership or inheritance. Furthermore, as small farmers face the increasing competition with larger farm operations an increasing number of men migrate to city centers for higher wages and employment.[3] Women are in turn left to support the family structure and support small farm lifestyle. In 2011, the agricultural sector workforce in the subcontinent was 75 per cent women. In rural India, the percentage of women who depend on agriculture for their livelihood is as high

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as 84 per cent. Women make up about 33 per cent of cultivators and about 47 per cent of agricultural laborers. These statistics do not account for work in livestock, fisheries and various other ancillary forms of food production in the country. In 2009, 94 per cent of the female agricultural labor force in crop cultivation were in cereal production, while 1.4 per cent worked in vegetable production, and 3.72 per cent were engaged in fruits, nuts, beverages, and spice crops. Women's participation rate in the agricultural sectors is about 47 per cent in tea plantations, 46.84 per cent in cotton cultivation, 45.43 per cent growing oilseeds and 39.13 per cent in vegetable production. While these crops require labor-intensive work, the work is considered quite unskilled. Women also heavily participate in ancillary agricultural activities. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, Indian women represented a share of 21 per cent and 24 per cent of all fishers and fish farmers, respectively.[4] Despite their dominance of the labor force women in India still face extreme disadvantage in terms of pay, land rights, and representation in local farmers organizations. Furthermore, their lack of empowerment often results in negative externalities such as lower educational attainment for their children and poor families health. 5

Extreme climatic changes are among the factors that have begun to jeopardize agricultural production globally. India's agricultural sector, which depends greatly on the variations in climate and weather is defined mainly by the monsoon season. The appropriate levels of precipitation that last from June to September, predicate a bountiful agricultural yield later on in the year. Monsoon seasons with insufficient or excessive precipitation, hurts the agricultural sector. Increasing temperatures and erratic precipitation has begun to exhaust agricultural land and create high variations of land. In the past couple of years these trends have made a noticeable impact in India, causing droughts and unpredictable rainfall. Just one season

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of such weather patterns can be devastating to the livelihood of farmers, who can find no resilience in small farms.

The loss of biodiversity in India and specifically food crops is a serious concern of food security and sustainability of the agricultural sector in India. The connection between women farmers and environmental health is not simply for subsistence and survival. It also stems from a long existing cultural valuation of India's agricultural fertility in ritual and practice. Women's connection to land is reflected in their almanac-like knowledge of plant varieties. Rituals and ceremonies in various parts of the country show this close relationship. There is Lohri, the harvest festival of Punjab or navadhanya puja, which translate to the worship of nine cereals, celebrations that take place in southern India. Both ceremonies celebrate the role of women in agriculture and fertility and the importance of the environment and biodiversity.

Furthermore, traditional agricultural methods heavily utilized by women subsistence farmers boast environmentally friendly features, such as seed preservation, natural fertilizers and crop rotation techniques that do not exhaust the delicate soil. In the wake of Green Revolution's reforms, it is clear that many of the high yield recommendations had severe environmental impacts. The negative environmental impacts of the Green Revolution are barely beginning to show their full effort. The widespread chemical pollution in communities that utilize pesticides and herbicides is creating a public health problem, which has disproportionately impacted women.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the female role in the agricultural industry has severely declined. This means that the female workers are moved from agricultural activities to non-

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agricultural activities and also women are equally working with men in agriculture, but still there is empolyment difference between male and female for the same type of work.

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