



Research Paper

AGRI-Woman Entrepreneurship: Understanding a Journey from Periphery to Centre

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Abstract:- Rural female's participation and contribution in the development of the rural sector have been one of the most neglected and discriminate assessed area of the study. Various efforts have been made and studies have been done so far on the diversified growing participation of urban females in development activities of different sector. But active involvement of rural as well as non-rural sector has been overlooked by passed, under estimated. The journey of a woman in agricultural sector is very long from a supporting role to centre role, however this journey not ended. The role of women in agribusiness is now a days creating her individual identity as an entrepreneur and increasing the opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Agriculture sector, Rural Sector, Agribusiness, Entrepreneurship

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Role of women: Rural Scenario: -

Women are parts of labor force. She produces not merely goods and services but is a prime source of accelerating human race. Thus, from the point of view of increasing labor force as well as of involving themselves in production and service activities, their active and positive participation can not be overlooked. But throughout the world the rural women have been under-represented in the development process. Economic contribution implies economically productive participation of physical or mental activity leading to production of goods and services either for consumption or for sale or for exchange. Household activities such as cooking, laundering, rearing children, cattle servicing which do not result in the production of goods or visible income do not obviously and all under the preview of this definition. Since most of rural females in comparison to urban females are engaged in such unproductive and unremunerative activities their economic contribution in terms of production employment and earning have been overlooked and labeled as, 'supplementary', 'casual', 'optional' and 'supporting'.

Table 1: Number of Workers by Usual Status and Annual Growth during 1983 to 2005.

		Employment (Millions)				Annual Growth Rate (Per Cent)			
		1983	1993-94	1999-2000	2004-05	1983 to 1993-94	1993-94 to 2004-05	1993-94 to 1999-2000	1999-2000 to 2004-05
Rural	Male	153.9	187.8	196.7	219.0	1.91	1.41	0.78	2.17
	Female	90.6	104.7	104.0	124.0	1.39	1.55	-0.11	3.58
	Total	244.4	292.5	300.7	343.1	1.72	1.46	0.47	2.67
Urban	Male	47.2	64.6	77.0	90.4	3.04	3.10	2.98	3.25
	Female	12.2	17.2	19.0	24.0	3.36	3.08	1.65	4.82
	Total	59.4	81.8	96.0	114.4	3.10	3.10	2.70	3.57
Total	Male	201.1	252.4	273.8	309.4	2.19	1.87	1.37	2.48
	Female	102.7	121.9	123.0	148.0	1.64	1.78	0.15	3.78
	Total	303.8	374.3	396.7	457.5	2.01	1.84	0.98	2.89

Note: Economic and Political Weekly, Volume XLII No 3, dated: January 20-26, 2007, titled: Growth of Employment (1993-94 to 2004-05): Illusion of Inclusiveness? By J. Unni and G. Raveendran.

Women in Agriculture:-

“Today, 53% of all male workers, 75% of all female workers and 85% of all rural female workers are in agriculture. An estimated 20% of rural households are de facto female headed due to widowhood, desertion, or male out-migration. The increased feminization of agricultural work and labor must be taken into account in any policy document.”¹

Rural women's productive participation in the rural development process can broadly be classified as laborers/workers, cultivators and producer and trader. The unique feature of female participation throughout the India is that they are worker, laborers, cultivators, producers and trader besides performing all the household duties which are considered to be unproductive. In cultivation except ploughing, leveling and irrigating the field all other works such as sowing, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, stocking of straw and the output, husk drying and storing are generally shared by both male and females. Moreover there are some states and regions where female have specialized skill and hence have a monopoly. Paddy cultivation, rubber plantation and tea-leaf picking are some monopolies. In whole southern region, specially in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, in Bihar, West Bengal, and Orissa the paddy farming is done by females.

In Kerala found that in some areas where there is a ratio of 3-5 females to a single man. In North Kerala women were responsible for all the functions after ploughing and leveling and it was rare to see a man in the field.

Further women are involved in some of the most vital, arduous and hardest work in agriculture field. She works under difficult climatic conditions and also on the lowest wage rate. This includes bending for hours while weeding and transplanting in a knee-deep water and mud. No man can keep standing whole day long in this situation.

Rural women as an Entrepreneur:-

In household industries and construction side, rural females never seem to be less efficient than man. Building in rural areas, cattle sheds female labor seems to be more actively engaged than male. Here their economic participation neither can be overlooked or it can be underestimated. Some prominent female dominated rural cottage and household industries are weaving, coir cashew and bidi industries, village dairies, basket knitting, dyeing and printing etc.

Rural women have also been productively engaged in some trade and business activities with in the rural and semi-urban areas. Although they are earning little their economic participation can not be overlooked. Fish trade in coastal areas, vegetable and fruit vendors making and selling of dairy products like milk, curd, ghee and khoya etc. Collection and selling of grass firewood and cowdung cakes, picking and selling of flowers are such activities in which most of the rural females are actively involved and provide financial support to her family. These are some areas where productive involvement of rural women can easily be assessed in agriculture and related subjects.

An extension component has undertaken the database on rural women and aboriginal knowledge. It has suggested several pathways for empowerment of rural women with reference to their participation and decision making roles in farming and allied activities as per indicators of qualitative data. The pathways have highlighted on empowerment of knowledge, skill, decision making; economic and social empowerment. The data base on indigenous knowledge has strongly suggested for empowering women with knowledge on locally available plant sources for ensuring health security.

The Panic Reality:-

A middle class rural and semi rural women only work in a crisis situation. Where she widowed or deserted her work. It has been estimated that about 30-40 % of women worker are sole supporter of their families. About 60% contribute the major income of family. They will work when male sit back and refuse to work for low wages. Many more suffer from alcoholism, illness and depression and in this crisis their wives are the main stay of family. Women have always been working in and outside the house. They always had to work for sheer survival for their family. This is a clear under estimated discriminatory assessment of their contribution. Thus if we talk about improving the condition of rural women we should first of all recognized their work at the official and accounting level.

The numbers of female workers are engaged in various duties. Due to the privatization policies of agriculture there is a growing demand of cheap labor, it increase the employment opportunities for females in agriculture and its allied sectors but it is not effective for rural women enlistment.

The females from age group 5 and above engaged in various unrecognizable jobs. The State wise data (rural and urban females engage) is given below in the table:

¹ National Policy for Women in Agriculture April 2008

Table (3) : Percentage of females engaged in domestic duties at States/ UT level (according to usual principal status).

S.No.	State/Uts	Rural		Urban		Rural+Urban	
		15 years and above	5 years and above	15 years and above	5 years and above	15 years and above	5 years and above
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Andhra Pradesh	28.0	22.7	54.3	43.7	34.9	28.2
2	Arunachal Pradesh	22.7	17.1	56.0	40.2	26.9	20.0
3	Assam	69.9	51.1	68.3	52.1	69.8	51.2
4	Bihar	76.8	54.6	73.3	51.3	76.4	54.3
5	Chattisgarh	25.2	19.8	59.6	47.2	30.9	24.0
6	Delhi	83.4	53.9	66.0	52.8	67.1	52.9
7	Goa	58.2	47.8	58.6	48.7	58.4	48.1
8	Gujarat	46.6	37.9	69.3	55.8	54.4	43.9
9	Haryana	66.8	51.5	66.6	53.3	66.7	52.0
10	Himachal Pradesh	26.4	20.9	45.0	35.7	28.0	22.1
11	Jammu & Kashmir	73.9	55.7	70.2	53.8	72.9	55.2
12	Jharkhand	54.0	41.1	63.4	49.6	55.8	42.6
13	Karnataka	32.6	26.5	60.4	48.8	41.2	33.3
14	kerala	47.8	39.8	48.6	40.9	48.0	40.1
15	Madhya Pradesh	41.8	31.4	65.6	49.9	47.7	35.8
16	Maharashtra	28.7	22.9	61.2	49.2	41.8	33.3
17	Manipur	45.5	36.3	53.5	40.9	47.4	37.4
18	Meghalaya	13.6	9.9	27.6	21.4	15.9	11.7
19	Mizoram	28.9	22.0	36.5	28.3	32.1	24.6
20	Nagaland	28.5	21.6	41.4	31.9	32.5	24.7
21	Orissa	55.2	44.1	59.3	47.2	55.7	44.5
22	Punjab	78.5	61.5	66.3	53.6	74.5	59.0
23	Rajasthan	48.1	36.4	65.6	47.9	52.4	39.2
24	Sikkim	34.6	25.6	59.0	47.0	37.5	28.0
25	Tamilnadu	29.7	24.1	53.3	44.0	38.9	31.7
26	Tripura	67.6	52.7	56.5	47.2	65.9	51.9
27	Uttaranchal	38.9	29.7	63.0	49.7	45.0	34.4
28	Uttar Pradesh	68.4	49.3	72.5	52.8	69.2	50.0
29	West Bengal	72.8	54.5	69.2	57.6	71.8	55.3
30	A & N Islands	57.6	46.7	61.3	48.1	58.9	47.2
31	Chandigarh	79.0	60.4	60.1	48.2	61.7	49.3
32	Dadra Nagar Haveli	56.5	42.8	81.4	66.7	59.5	45.5
33	Daman & Diu	67.6	53.5	51.9	44.1	60.9	49.7
34	Lakshdweep	72.7	55.6	61.4	47.9	66.6	51.5
35	Pondicherry	40.6	35.3	59.9	47.9	52.7	43.4
	All India	51.8	39.7	63.1	49.8	54.8	42.3

Source: NSSO Report No.518(61/10/4); Participation of Women in Specified Activities alongwith Domestic Duties; 61st Round; July 2004- June 2005.

Females involve in farm and related occupations are facing the different health hazards. The different plant pesticides, harvesting and post harvesting activities are the major causes of health hazards. There is a need of identification and improvement in farm technologies and methodologies which are directly effect the health. The Table shows the types of health hazards and percentage of women faced by it.

Types of health hazards faced by farm women	
Activities	Health hazards reported
Farm activities	
Transplanting	50%
Harvesting	26.5%
Post harvest activities	
Threshing	50%
Drying	33%
Parbolining	67%
Livestock management	
Shed cleaning	47%
Fodder collection	23%
Milching	27.5%

Source: www.nrcwa.com (National Research Centre for women in Agriculture)

Changing Scenario in Agriculture:-

In India, almost in all states there is special reservation for female in agriculture Universities. This definitely result in most of the females admit to Universities and get their degree as well as post graduate qualification. A degree holder female starts floriculture unit or even nursery which is good source of family income. Most of urban females are busy in this nurseries and flower decoration units. Most of the females are seen in the agriculture related services, administration at state as well as national level. Now a day's females are also active in the field of research activity and also in the teaching of the agriculture and related subjects at various agriculture universities. Women in agriculture have been active from rural labor to even senior scientists in the laboratories.

The National Research Centre For Women in Agriculture (NRCWA) has been working in Orissa (Bhubaneshwar) for developing new methodologies for recognition of gender inference in farming approach .And according to that develop women centric technologies and methodologies for different production systems. Women are the backbone of agriculture and allied workforce . The research efforts at the ICAR centre have been triedto provide her new time saving methodologies and tools to relieve her from drudgery. Apart from this centre also conduct vocational training programs to improve the skills. Women are the centre point and agricultural activities are planning now keeping her in mind. Her enlightenment will change the face of rural India.

“A large number of women are being trained in IPM approach under the farmer field schools organised by Central and State Governments. In the FAO-EU IPM Cotton Programme, almost thousand women have been trained in farmer field schools in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh in the current financial year. Women are also being increasingly involved in the production of bio-control agents in various parts of the country.”²

The various training and development programs conduct by state and central government for enlistment of women. The National Policy of Women in Agriculture provides the information related to different activities conducted and planned by them. Like³:-

- Protecting , promoting and upgrading through appropriate training programmestransitional knowledge in agriculture, livestock breeding, fisheries, growing ofmedicinal plants etc. possessed by women;
- Developing woman-sensitive agri-practices and technology in research andextension for better convergence and dovetailing of women-oriented schemes andprogrammes ,

² National Policy for Women in Agriculture April 2008

³ ICAR report Dec.2008

⁴Kamla-Raj 2006 J. Soc. Sci., 13(2): 147-149 (2006), ‘Development of Entrepreneurship among Rural Women’, Department of Extension Education, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab

- To ensure adequate and equal availability of services like irrigation, credit, insurance, technology, extension, information, training and markets for women in agriculture sector.

Several programs started at NRCWA and Krishi Vigyan Kendra's are the right ladder in this route.

We should recognize them as human resource and if this human resource is engaged in production or supporting work, we should give them a proper reorganization. If their economic value established then we should also increase their economic value by investing more on their health, education training etc. In real sense every activity of rural females concerning, production, trade, a household job, whatever its level may be, is vital and has an economic value.

Role of SHG and Women Empowerment:-

The lack of knowledge and communication gap generates the problems for implementation of new technologies and resources for female work force (conducted by government, KVK, ICAR, NRCWA). To provide the new technology and skills to bottom of the pyramid various governmental programs developed the Self Help Groups. The women SHGs are the effective strategy to reach the actual users. Self help groups were formed by women which helps the women upliftment. The various training and development programs for crop management, harvesting, post harvesting, aquaculture, handicrafts etc. are conducted by SHGs. This helps to generate the employment opportunities and the rural women enlistment.

Some of the projects under self help groups in different places, Table shows the details:-

Details of Enterprises in SHGs			
Name of Taluka	Total SHGs	No. of members	Enterprises
Rahuri	4	50	Dairy, Goat rearing, Backyard poultry
Kapargaon	2	26	Consumer store
Shrirampur	8	127	Dairy, tailoring, backyard poultry, goat rearing
Sangmner	16	285	Gas agency, hotel, Vermicompost unit, dairy, vegetable selling, masala, noodles unit, goat rearing, bakery, general
Rahata	76	10	Flour machine, dairy, goat rearing, tailoring, backyard poultry, floriculture, processing unit
Total	106	498	



Saturday and Sunday bazars—innovative marketing outlets for SHGs

Source: KVK, Report June 2008



Vermicomposting-An income generation activity taken up by women in SHGs



Vegetables in nutritional gardens

Kirishi Vigyan Kendra has taken initiative for SHGs. Under the different programs in various rural and semi urban areas are run by KVK to encourage the female participation in agricultural and allied sectors. The activities like local bazaar, nursery training, mushroom cultivation, goat, vermiculture, herbal medicines etc. these generates the employment opportunities as well as the helps to female enlistment in agriculture and allied sectors.

Conclusion:-

Women are almost half of the adult population and thus contribute every possible help in agriculture from labor to research, housewife to teaching, construction of mud house to higher administrative services. Women account for a large share of labor force in agriculture. They contribute about three-fourth of the labor required for agriculture operation in addition to their usual domestic work. But much of these work are not paid for whenever they are paid wages, they receive less than men even for similar type of work. The initiative taken by government and different units like KVK, ICAR and NRCWA is the milestone for the women encouragement. The huge contribution of women in agriculture and other sectors could not avoid. The long journey of an Agri-Woman from periphery to centre requires the attention from us because-The overall growth is not possible without the women enlistment.