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IMPORTANCE OF THE WOMEN AGRICULTURE IN INDIAN

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ABSTRACT

Rural women from the most important productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. Women Workers are engaged in almost all the activities of agriculture. From sowing to selling farm products, women's role in agriculture has been globally recognized. Women constitute 43% of agricultural workers in much of the developing world, most of whom are forced to make do with less access to resources such as water, fertilizer and market outlets than men. Women in India are major producers of food in terms of value, volume and number of hours worked. Women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/ social forestry, fisheries, etc. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt, varies greatly from region to region.

Keywords: - significance, role, government initiatives, problems and suggestions of women in agriculture sector in India

INTRODUCTION:

The women is the backbone of agricultural workforce and are a vital part of 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, food security, horticulture, dairy, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. Women form the backbone of agriculture, in India, Comprising the majority of agricultural laborers, women have been putting in labour not only in terms of physical output but also in

terms of quality and efficiency. With various targeted efforts, her enlightenment will change the face of rural India. Rural women are responsible for production of more than 55% food grains and comprise 67% of total agricultural labour force. The role of woman in agriculture varies from country to country. Asian woman contribute to about 50% of the food production. Generally, the poorer the family, the greater the involvement of women in agricultural activities. Despite women's significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields, they have virtually access to agricultural information, services or production assets and have very limited control over their earnings. In view of the critical role of women in the agriculture and allied sectors, as producers, concentrated efforts will be made to ensure the benefits of training, extension and various programmes will reach them in proportion to their numbers. The programmes for training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development and other occupations allied to agriculture like horticulture, livestock including small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. Are expanded to benefit women workers in the agriculture sector. The agricultural sector is the largest employer of women. Majority of the female workforce (84 per cent) works in rural India. A very large share (73 per cent) of this female workforce toils in the agricultural sector, mostly (96 per cent) in rural areas. In most farming systems, females participate in all phases of agricultural production, although their roles (including decision-making) and control over resources and incomes varies greatly from place to place.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To measure significance of women in Indian agriculture
2. To measure role of cooperatives for women agriculture in India
3. To measure government initiatives for women agriculture in India
4. To measure in Indian to measure problems of women in agriculture sector in India
5. To examine the suggestions of women in agriculture sector in India

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature is pertaining to the study indicates that women play significant role in agriculture.

Zar Quresh (2005) study highlights the importance of education to rural female and proposed to educate women in floriculture and food preservation.

Nisha N (2008).study brings out that the labourers got maximum number of days of employment in weeding followed by harvesting and postharvest operations. The woman labour had maximum unemployed days in summer as this is the off season for agriculture in the study area which compelled the woman labourers to seek employment opportunities like NREGS activities, construction work, tile making etc. The study also concluded that woman unemployment in agriculture has caused a severe impact on the income of

labourers, family expenditures, and their saving and debt position. It also caused migration of labourers to other activities and places. Increase workforce participation rates do not always indicate increase in the level of welfare. So it must be accompanied by higher educational capabilities and asset and income.

Tahir Munir Butt et al. (2010) study indicates that the fact that rural women along with men play an important role in the agricultural sector like crop production, livestock production as well as cottage industry. But they have incomplete access to resources, agricultural extension, education services and newest technical knowledge and information sources.

“ We can't neglect the importance of women who comprise half of our population in nation building the upholder of tradition must also be ushered for modernity ,we should look to science for greater social justice and equality of opportunity” —The Late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi(1988) Agriculture in India defines familial tradition, social relations and gender roles. Female in the agricultural sector, whether through traditional means or industrial, for subsistence or as an agricultural laborer, represents a momentous demographic group. Agriculture is directly tied to issues such as economic independence, decision-making abilities, agency and access to education and health services and this manner has created externalities such as poverty and marginalization, and compounded issues of gender inequality. Agriculture continues to play an important role in most non-industrial economies, as a major contributor to the country's export earnings and as a source of employment and livelihood.

SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN AGRICULTURE IN INDIAN

The condition of women was far better in ancient India. In early period Aryans treated men and women alike in all religious rituals and social functions. But condition of women has declined gradually. 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. In those primitive days, when men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating. Since then, women have played and continue to play a key role in crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/ social forestry, fisheries, etc. Significance 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. 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. While agriculture's share in India's economy has progressively declined to less than 15% due to the high growth rates of the industrial and services sectors, the sector's importance in India's economic and social

fabric goes well beyond this indicator. First, nearly three-quarters of India's families depend on rural incomes. Second, the majority of India's poor (some 770 million people or about 70 percent) are found in rural areas. And third, India's food security depends on producing cereal crops, as well as increasing its production of fruits, vegetables and milk to meet the demands of a growing population with rising incomes. To do so, a productive, competitive, diversified and sustainable agricultural sector will need to emerge at an accelerated pace. India is a global agricultural powerhouse. It is the world's largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices, and has the world's largest cattle herd (buffaloes), as well as the largest area under wheat, rice and cotton. It is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, farmed fish, sheep & goat meat, fruit, vegetables and tea. The country has some 195 m ha under cultivation of which some 63 percent are rainfed (roughly 125m ha) while 37 percent are irrigated (70m ha). In addition, forests cover some 65m hectare of India's land. Impact of Green Revolution Based on 2012 data, India is home to the fourth largest agricultural sector in the world.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems of women in agriculture are more acute and distressing manner. When addressed in a women-centric manner, the potential for increased productivity, restoration of ecological balance, for high positive social impacts like increased status, self-confidence and food security for communities which all are increased much more tangibly than working in a gender-neutral manner. The problems relate to land ownership, security of tenure, land quality issues in cases where land ownership is assured, and finally, land management issues in agriculture and the support systems are required. Any changes in land ownership and agricultural patterns affect women far more than men (positive or negative), given the existing gender roles that women are expected to fulfill, mainly related to management of the household in their reproductive roles – fuel wood collection, fodder collection, livestock tending in general, food security needs and so on. Women are equally working with men in agriculture but still there is wage difference between male and female for the same type of work.

ROLE OF COOPERATIVES FOR WOMEN AGRICULTURE IN INDIA

Cooperatives have been long seen as a social institution providing partnership, solidarity and resources to women farmers as well as tackle gender inequality. In India they have had quite a success. In many instances in which women are barred from participation, women only cooperatives are critical in empowering and educating. Yet female participation in cooperatives is still relatively low and some argue because men are still seen as primarily in charge of agriculture and income generation. Only 7.5% of women participate in cooperatives as compared to 92.5% of men. Of India's 450,000 cooperatives with a membership of 204.5 million, there are only 8,171 women cooperatives with a total membership of 693,000 women. Despite that, women-only cooperatives, which include cooperative banks, stores, food vendors,

have done quite well and provided a whole range of services to their members. In India, with a view to involve women in the process of decision-making in local self-governing bodies including cooperatives, a 33% representation has been instituted and in a number of states all boards of directors have women serving on them. International organizations such as the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) have been working quite successfully in India with partners to form a membership of 1.24 million women in India. Fifty four percent of members are agricultural workers.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN AGRICULTURE IN INDIAN

Efforts have been made by department of agriculture to incorporate gender issues into development agenda and ensure full and equitable participation of women in all agricultural development programmes. In an effort to 'engender agricultural process' the DOAC implemented special programmes/ schemes for women in agriculture sector, where a composite package of training, extension, input, managerial and entrepreneurial support was provided to selected farm women beneficiaries. Different approaches were followed in all these projects to provide a complete support package to women farmers. The technical back-stopping was provided through a blend of 'skilled-based' capacity building exercises coupled with extension support through "On field Demonstration", "Mahila-Goshties" and "Study Tours". Agriculture Extension Services Women farmers contribute enormously to the Indian agriculture. This has been proved by various researches. The results of these researches, however, could not get due recognition in the planning and implementation of agricultural related programmes. Agricultural extension is one such effort taken by the Government and non-Government agencies that aims at reaching to farmers. The efforts include bringing about a positive change in knowledge, attitude and skills of the farmers by providing training and technical advice and also assisting them in taking decisions in adoption of new research results. Importantly, the clientele of such programmes and efforts is inclusive of both farmers and farm women. The agricultural extension services in India has limited in its operations to a larger extent on male farmers only and it has failed to tackle the great structural problem of invisibility of female farmers. Women farmers are bypassed by male extension workers. It would be correct to state that women farmers in India have failed to get their due share in extension services. Extension services in India need to be refined, modified and redesigned so as to reach farm women effectively. Integrated approach In 1980s' integrated approach was started that attempt to integrate women in the mainstream of development by structurally making them beneficiaries up to an extent of 40 per cent. A number of services supportive for women's socioeconomic empowerment viz., Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Indira Mahila Yojna, Mahila Samridhi Yojna, Self-Help Groups etc. were implemented. These approaches were not directed towards fulfilment needs for agriculturerelated services and concentrated mainly on the issue of employment and social empowerment. In 1993-94, a project aimed at gender-gap reduction among women farmers of the Northern India was launched by the Government of India. The limited coverage of this

project shortens its impact. Such programmes need to be appreciated for being the pioneering one in this regard. Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) ICAR is another important system for transfer of farm technologies all over the country. This system has operated through various frontline extension programmes, all of which now have been merged with the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) since April 1996. In KVKs, provision for special training programmes for women are made. These programmes restricted mainly in the areas like home economics and ignored women's productive role in agricultural operations. The efforts made so far in this direction appear to be localized and remain largely invisible. Involvement of women in agricultural development process by ICAR has been further strengthened when the concept of Farming Systems approach to research/extension was institutionalized by several ways including assessment and refinement of agricultural technologies through institutionalizing village linkage programme. Still these efforts are very limited to make a substantial dent on the overall agricultural scenario. From the very beginning Non Government Organizations (NGOs) have involved women component in their mandate. They too have given more emphasis on issues related to social empowerment of women. They also have given little attention on women's role in agriculture. Therefore, all the major extension systems in India, the participation and benefits accrued to women farmers are minuscule. There is a need to delineate and discuss the reasons attributable to poor access of farm women to extension services in India.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN INDIA

1. Gender Division of Labor in India:-In India, the typical work of the female agricultural laborer or cultivator is limited to less skilled jobs, such as sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting, that often fit well within the framework of domestic life and child-rearing. Many women also participate in agricultural work as unpaid subsistence labor. According to United Nations Human Development Report only 32.8% of Indian women formally participate in the labor force, a rate that has remained steady since 2009 statistics. By comparison men constitute 81.1%.

2. Literacy:-An estimated 52-75% of Indian women engaged in agriculture are illiterate, an education barrier that prevents women from participating in more skilled labor sectors. In all activities there is an average gender wage disparity, with women earning only 70 percent of men's wage. Additionally, many women participate in agricultural work as unpaid subsistence labor. The lack of employment mobility and education render the majority of women in India vulnerable, as dependents on the growth and stability of the agricultural market.

3. Time allocation:-In addition to rigorous agricultural work that is undervalued and underpaid, women are also responsible for the well-being of the household. They care for their children, provide nutrition or usually take part in subsistence agriculture, and do chores around the house. Based on time allocation studies, which pinpoint exactly how a woman's hours are spent throughout the week, Indian women spend about 25 hours in a week doing household chores and five hours in caring and community work. Besides the 30 hours of unpaid work, women spend the same amount of time as men carrying out agricultural work. Daughters typically supplement or substitute for mother's unpaid work around the household. Considered female tasks, the opportunity cost of girls' time for school is higher than that of sons. Girls do significantly more housework than boys, which compromises their schooling.

4. Property Ownership Rights of Indian Women Critical resources such as land are also unevenly distributed by gender. Women seldom enjoy property ownership rights directly in their names. Even with land in their names, they may not have actual decision-making power in terms of cropping patterns, sale, mortgage and the purchase of land. In India only 14.9% of households are female headed. Access to credit is difficult, since women lack many of the prerequisites for lending such as assets or ownership of property. Without access to capital or household decision making abilities women lack the resources that are necessary for their labor stability and stability of their households. Land ownership opportunities also have a critical impact on human development with freedom from violence. According to a 2005 study of marital violence and property ownership, 49% of property less women experience physical violence and 84% experienced psychological abuse. Ownership rights saw a drastic decrease in violence. Among women who owned both land and house there was only 7% physical violence and 16% psychological abuse.

5. Rural Credit:-Moreover, the access of women to the most crucial input "credit" is limited since they are not land owners, the credit flow generally goes in the name of male members i.e. owners. Credit policies of various banks and other organizations need orientation towards women by granting them the status of a producer.

SUGGESTIONS OF WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN INDIA

1. Skill empowerment By training in the area of various operations : i. Field operations ii. Conservation of biodiversity iii. Nutritional bio-security iv. Vocational training v. Organic farming
2. Technology development for women a. Designing of tools for various field operations b. Animal husbandry i. Artificial insemination. ii. Veterinary knowledge c. For side income i. Mushroom cultivation ii. Floriculture.
3. Creation of self help groups i. For financial support ii. For generation of employment

4. Projection of contribution of women by collecting and analyzing data i. Collection and display of data ii. Projection of successful women in agriculture iii. Representation of their contribution in economic terms
5. Providing Financial Powers Giving representation in land holdings

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the female work participation rate has drastically declined from 27.9 percent in 1961 to 25.7 percent in 2001. This means that the female workers are moved from agricultural activities to non- agricultural activities. Besides, laborer is a wage differences for the same type of between male and female workers which discourages the female workers to involve in agriculture. The Justice Verma Committee has emphasized the need for looking at the status of women in its totality. Nearly 40 crore women out of the total of 60 crore female population depend upon crop and animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry, agro processing and agri-business for their livelihood, yet are handicapped by their inability to obtain equal access to natural resources such as land and water because of male-biased laws. Therefore, it is exceedingly important that we re-examine the current status of women's empowerment in the field of farming. Government has to take interest in solving their problems, government should not only invent "the schemes but they have to see whether the schemes are working successfully or not. By this, the agriculture women labour will come out of these problems and can lead a better life.

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