

Contribution of Women in Agriculture

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture forms the backbone of India. Economic growth is possible only by boosting the rate of growth in the agricultural sector. According to 2002-2003 budget, economic growth at the rate of 6% per annum is possible only by accelerating the agriculture sector.¹

Though agriculture sector is given more importance for economic growth but the agricultural labours particularly women who are responsible for such growth are not given due weight. Most women find employment in the unorganized sector and the chief among these are that they are involved in agriculture and household chores. The work performed by women as a household is such that it is neither visible nor paid.

Women play an important role in agriculture in most countries. According to recent studies 50% to 90% of all agriculture activities are carried out by women, who produce 44% of world food. In India women constituted half of the population and 77% of them belong to rural area. The major occupation of rural women is agriculture and related activities thereby contributing three-fourth of the labor force required for

agricultural operations. In India nearly 222.52 million that is required for agricultural operations. In India nearly 222.52 million that is 33.45% are main workers and 22.09 million that is 3.22% are marginal workers of these main workers 79.80% are male and 20.20% are female, and of marginal workers 15.57% are male and 84.43% are female. While the proportion of men in agricultural employment decreased from 70% to 64% the proportion of women remained virtually unchanged at above 80%.² The above statistics clearly indicate that women are farmers in India.

According to United Nation 1975, Women toil two-third of the world's working hours, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than hundredth of world's property, together with this women bear the double burden of paid and unpaid domestic works.³

In India the situation of women both rural and urban women is pathetic. First taking the rural women, most of them are engaged in agricultural activities and in household activities. According to 1991 census 27.06% of rural women are found to be workers, of whom 20.20% are main workers and 80% are marginal workers, of

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the main workers, 31.68% are cultivators and 48.83% are agricultural laborers. Agriculture therefore is a major field of women’s employment. The rural India is witnessing a process which could be described as “Feminization of Agriculture”.⁴

The agricultural jobs are low paid and household jobs are not paid. A women is not mobile like a man as she is bounded

by her home and family responsibilities, while men attend farmer’s camps and training to learn about the latest agricultural technologies women remain at home. They are then told that they are ignorant and thus unfit to handle scientific methods or new technology. There is high concentration of women in occupations characterized by low skill requirement, low productivity, low income, low stability and less security.

PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTION OF MALE AND FEMALE WORKERS IN AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS

Name of the operation	Power used	Men(%)	Women(%)
Clearing of fields	Human	30	70
Ploughing	Bullock	100	-
Sowing	Bullock	95	5
Plucking of seedling	Human	100	-
Transplanting	Human	-	100
Weeding and Moving	Human	10	90
Irrigation	Mechanical/Human	80	20
Harvesting	Human/Mechanical	50	50
Winnowing	Human	10	90
Bagging	Human	20	80

The above statistics clearly reveals that the contribution of female in agriculture

is more when compared to male in Tamil Nadu.

Trend to show Agricultural Labourers in Rural Tamil Nadu (1971-2001)

Year	Primary Sector (Lakhs)	Cultivators(Lakhs)	Agricultural Labours (Lakhs)	Male Labours (Lakhs)	Female Labours (Lakhs)
1971	89.23	44.21	41.81	26.13	15.69
1981	113.89	53.67	56.48	29.50	26.97
1991	132.00	54.32	74.16	38.69	35.46
2001	122.91	47.26	75.65	36.68	38.97

Source: Census of India 2001

The above statistics show that the participation of male in the agriculture

sector is decreasing while the participation of women in the sector is increasing.

Working Pattern and Wage Structure of Agricultural Labourers

Type of Operation	Wages	
	Male Agricultural (Rs)	Female Agricultural (Rs)
Ploughing with bullock	500	Not done by female
Ploughing without bullock	300	Not done by female
Plucking of seedling	400	Not done by female
Transplanting	Not done by Male	100
Weeding	Not done by Male	120
Manuring	300	Not done by female
Harvesting/threshing/winnowing/bagging	250	250

Source: Primary Data

Agriculture wage employment is the main source through which labour earn income to satisfy their needs. Agriculture employment is seasonal and labourers earn maximum income during peak season.

The above table shows that in agriculture sector deals with operations like ploughing, transplanting, plucking of seedling, weeding, harvesting etc carried either by male or female or by both. Ploughing, seedling plucking, manuring are the operations exclusively carried out by the male whereas transplanting, weeding are the operations exclusively carried out by the female and there are certain operation like harvesting which is carried both by male and female.

The wage in agriculture depends on working hours, type of work, stress and strain. Male labourers receive high wage for ploughing, plucking of seedling and manuring whereas female fetches high income in the operation of harvesting.

Conclusion

Development of a society require the full participation by all sections of population in genral and women in particular. The paper reveals that when compare to female, male are getting better wage and that there is no exploitation of agriculture labour even they are getting above the minimum wage fixed by the government which is Rs. 100 for male and Rs. 85 for female.

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