

ANALYSIS OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN FARM ACTIVITIES IN RURAL KASHMIR –SOME MAJOR FINDINGS

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ABSTRACT

In the present paper an attempt has been made to study various facts of women participation in farm activities. The major focus was (i) to find socio-educational life pattern of women, (ii) to locate factors compelling them to work, (iii) to identify their socio-economic and family background, (iv) to delineate various positive and negative aspects of their working conditions, (v) to find the level of earnings of women and its impact on household income.

In the present study random sampling technique has been used. At the first instance two blocks Keller and Pulwama of tehsil Pulwama were selected because of agrarian nature of the people of the tehsil and concentration of women workers in farm related activities. In the second attempt 200 households from three villages which have higher concentration of women workers working in the fields have been selected randomly. Thus a sample of 100 respondents (50 male and 50 female) has been taken from the village Tengenpora and 50 respondents (25 male and 25 female) from village Qasba Yaar and 50 respondents (25 male and 25 female) from village Kalampora has been selected. The respondents (both male and female) were interviewed as per the objectives of the study and comparison of responses was done..

Keywords: Women participation, domestic work, childcare, poverty, education, health, illiteracy, sex

INTRODUCTION:

In India, agriculture accounts for 32 per cent of the national product. About 70 per cent of the total working population of women are involved in agriculture. Statistical data demonstrate that there is a progressive increase in the number of women involved. In the rural scenario, there is hardly any agricultural activity where women are not found contributing except probably ploughing field. They have to do varied field operations like tilling, manuring, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing and storing. They also have to look after dairy animals, poultry, fuel needs, food processing and drawing and storing of water. Activities within house are classified as house work and not considered as contribution to the economy and most of their work is invisible. The statistical data show that poor the family, the more it depends on the economic productivity of its women. The type and extent of agricultural activities in which women are engaged vary in different regions of the country. Broadly they are engaged in agricultural operations in three ways. They work as paid labourer, cultivators — doing labour in their own land as unpaid workers, and managers — by way of labour supervision, etc.

About 90 per cent of rural women are unskilled and 80 per cent are illiterate, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation. Low levels of nutrition and frequent pregnancies make them prone to poor health and thus limiting their productivity. Thus with the realisation of their role in the country's economy which is mainly agro based, the government agencies have started many new science technology projects and other programmes for their uplift and welfare. Yet they are facing many problems.

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN FARM ACTIVITIES:

The vast majority of the south Asian population is rural: 81 percent in India 1971, 74 percent in Pakistan, 93 percent in Bangladesh, and 96 percent in Nepal. Rural inhabitants experience more extreme poverty than do urban residents, in part because of the frequently high levels of both seasonal and permanent under and un employment in agricultural sector. Women's agricultural labour in most developing countries has probably been consistently under counted and undervalued. An economist in Pakistan remarked that men acknowledged that women's contribution "in their heart of hearts" but not in the sense that would permit female participation in institutions or decision making. In Bangladesh, "the farmer is valued on the basis of rice he grows, but his wife's part in processing is not considered an economic activity. Nor is her role in poultry rising, growing vegetables, fruits, making household clay utensils, mats, fans and preservation of seeds, pickles, dry fish, dehydrated rice, etc. ever taken into account".

Women have been the first agriculturalists, as the step from gathering roots and seeds to planting and cultivating is but a small one. As agriculture has developed it is possible to recognize male and female farming systems. In the extensive, shifting, non-plough agriculture of tropical Africa and South and South-East Asia most of the work in the fields is done by women and the system is deemed to be female. Both men and women are equally involved in the intensive irrigated agriculture of South-East Asia. This explanation of general roles is attractive but easily becomes a form of agricultural determinism. At the local level relationships between types of farming system and female participation are very complex.

When there is a labour shortage at busy times of agricultural year women will often be expected to sacrifice their remaining leisure time for additional frame work, acting as reserve labour force. In Srilanka, women work 560 hours per month as compared to 426 hours per month of men in peak seasons. Despite their major contribution to agricultural production, women strictly do almost all the house work and the collecting of wood and water and are responsible for most social and religious duties. Consequently, they have much less time than men for leisure throughout the year and at peak agricultural season sacrifice an hour a day of their sleep and leisure time for extra frame work despite reducing the time they spend on their reproductive tasks. Thus, women hours in rural areas of the dry – zone of Srilanka average over 18 hours per day in the peak season compared to 14 for men.

The women are the backbone of agriculture work force, but worldwide her hard work has mostly been un-paid. In India around 70 percent of population earns their livelihood from agriculture (EIU, 1997). Rural population accounted for 71 percent (1991 census). In 1992 – 93 only 9.2 percent of the households were female – headed (ESCAP, 1997).

In the rural scenario, there is hardly any agricultural activity where women are not found contributing except probably ploughing field. They have to do varied field operations like tilling, manuring, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing, and storing. They also have to look after dairy animals, poultry, fuel needs, food processing, drawing and storing water activities within house are classified as housework and not considered as contribution to the economy and most of their work is invisible. The statistical data shows that poor the family, the more it depends on economic productivity of its women, which is true as per the present study as well.

Women have key role to play in farming system throughout the world. In majority of the developing countries, women play too major roles in rural areas-household responsibilities for child rearing, food preparation and other chores; and other role they are paid or unpaid workers in agriculture of off the farm. Most of the areas in

the world women are important to agriculture. Households headed by women make up 20-25 percent of rural households in developing countries, excluding china and Islamic countries. Women are active at every point in the food chain and are often responsible for protecting the integrity of food and ensuring its wholesomeness and safety. Women work remains invisible in family enterprises at present in rural India about 33 percent of cultivators and about 47 percent of agricultural labourers are women. Female agricultural labourers are high in some states compared to other. Agriculture in most backward districts attracts larger percentage of women than men at the same time; more prospective districts have less number of women than men.

Total work time in India is 391 minutes per day for men and 457 minutes for women. Thus, female work time as a percentage of males work is 117 percent. On an average woman spent about 35 percent of their work time on market relating activities and against 92 percent by their counterpart men. Thus even after doing more work than men, women's labour is not recorded in the estimation of national accounts. The long pending demands of women's movement for correcting the definition and measurement of women's productivity in 1991 census enabled women's work in the formal sector to be capture for first time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Though there are a lot of empirical studies available at both international and national level. On the basis of these studies we shall first review international studies; this will be followed by a review of national and state level studies. At the national level there is a lot of literature available regarding participation of women in both farm and non-farm activities. In the following pages, an attempt has been made to briefly present a review of literature related to this aspect.

Pillai (1952) studied the methods of recruitment and working conditions of quarry workers and found that the recruitments where both by direct and indirect methods. Munshis were in charge of recruitment. The indirect method was through contractors. Most workers were recruited through friend and relatives. Sometimes the management gave contract to labourers themselves, in such cases; they acted as head coolies and paid other workers. The respondents recruited through contracts were not provided housing and medical facilities. They were over taxed and paid low wages. Those recruited directly by the management were provided a few welfare facilities. Most of the quarries provided no rest shelters and where there were shelters, they were of brick walls and thatched roofs. The kilns emitted smoke heavily charged with carbon monoxide which was injurious to lungs. The workers were not provided any safety devices. The blasting operations made shattering noise which resulted in nervousness among workers. The kiln workers worked in stooping postures for several hours. The drinking water was available from wells nearby. The female respondents were mainly involved in the loading and unloading operations. The klin workers provided housing facilities near the quarry. Canteen, crèches and washing facilities were not provided in the sampled quarries.

Prabbakar (1955) in his work on working women in a stone quarry found that majority of the women migrated from villages are engaged in stone quarries. About 95 percent of them have children below the age of six months and carry these infants to their work place. Out of the sampled women who had older children in house, 25 percent of them put the young children under the super vision of the older ones.

Padamini Sen Gupta (1960) advocates improvement and total emancipation of working women in certain trades like mining cotton and jute mills agriculture, silk and woolen industry, engineering works, coal mines construction works plantation transport and health services, the author delineates women workers working conditions and ways and mains of improving them. The author found that women workers, working in these industries and mines face lots of problems like, unhygienic conditions, low wages, hours for long working, being exploited, harassed by employers and their male counter parts etc. the author has concluded that the working women are unaware about the labour laws governed by labour department especially those working women who are working in mines and construction places.

Randhawa's (1975) study on women workers in agriculture reveals that women do every kind of field labour except driving the plough or the cart. He finds that the general reluctance on the part of men folk to encourage female education was partly because they apprehended that women cease to work hard if they become educated. Hiranand and krishan kumar(1980) found out the extent to which their men folk consulted them in decision making on farming and domestic issues. This study concluded that setting of marriage; purchase and sale of land, borrowings, purchase and sale of animals and education of daughters are five major areas in which women often influence the decisions.

M. Ashfaq *et.al* (1980) reveals that women's role as farmers as well as wage labourers has often being ignored. The main reason is the non- availability of reliable statistics on the actual size and sex composition of the agricultural work force. Women participation in day-to-day farm and off farm activities is very extensive. The main objective of this paper was to study and quantify the share of women in household's farm income and productivity of wheat crop in Faisalabad district. Multiple linear regression model was used to analyze the data.

The results of the study showed that area under wheat crop, quantity of seed, quantity of fertilizer and female working hours were significant variables that contributed towards the productivity of wheat. Female working hours were also having positive impact on the overall income of the farm households.

METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based on multi-stage sampling technique. Firstly two blocks Keller and Pulwama of tehsil Pulwama were selected because of agrarian nature of the people of the tehsil and concentration of women workers in farm related activities. At the second instance the 200 households from three villages which have higher concentration of women workers working in the fields have been selected randomly. Thus a sample of 100 respondents (50 male and 50 female) has been taken from the village Tengpuna of block Pulwama and 50 respondents (25 male and 25 female) from village Qasbha Yaar and 50 respondents (25 male and 25 female) from village Kalampora both from block keller has been selected. The respondents were interviewed and meaningful conclusions were drawn.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

In our society the women are considered as the caretaker of all domestic affairs and she is overburdened with the work at farm land. Women are having a busy schedule of work from morning till late in the night. It has become evident from the earlier analysis that the women in rural areas suffer from the problems of various kinds arising out of her familial and rural situation. In the present study some of these problems are analyzed to bring forth the factors responsible for the same.

The women are mostly illiterate and are very poor. The educational status for male increases as we move towards higher qualification and for female respondents it goes on decreasing as 2 percent women are post Graduates in the sample area and 62 percent the highest are illiterate.

From the above findings it may be concluded that mostly women are illiterate and their involvements is certainly to be highest in farm activities.

Majority i.e. (76%) of the households are nuclear in structure, they are of the opinion that in nuclear structure, one is not bound by the rules and regulations of in-laws and also one can do the work according to his own will but there is more work load at home and at fields.

Majority of the households are of medium sized as 33.5 percent of them have family members ranging from 7-9. It is obvious that in these families, the women had to work both at home and at the farm fields. In these families, the women have less say in deciding about her own leisure time.

Majority of the female respondent's i.e. 38.5 percent are married. After marriage, the household responsibility of women increases as is true as per the present study as well.

Family income is the key determinant in determining the status of women and the fruits enjoyed by them. In this study majority (47%) of the respondents belonged to the families having their monthly expenditures ranging from 1000-5000 means that they belong to the BPL families. This signifies that those women had to work more hours and days in their own farms and had to do the labour at elsewhere as well. Majority of the respondents (55.5%) has agriculture as their lone source of income; this means that they are largely dependent on the agricultural produce.

Managing the household is an artistic task, women in rural as well as in urban areas has a busy schedule in managing the house. There are numerous tasks which a woman is supposed to perform by herself alone or with help of her in-laws. In the present study majority of tasks are performed by women alone, except a few where she gets help from her in-laws particularly in rearing the children, if his/her mother is working. Women spent on an average 9 hours a day on domestic work leaving the field work aside. This signifies the overload of work on women.

Decision making is a critical element in the family, women perform all the household activities like a coolie and served the family members like a servant, but when it comes the time of taking a decision, they are not included. In this regard only 8 percent women are included as per this study.

In rice cultivation women perform all the activities at farms, only ploughing which is nowadays done by tractors is the male dominated activity. Majority of the activities like watering (55%), field preparing (64%), weeding (27%), harvesting (63%), bounding of rice into sheaves (67%), threshing (79%), etc. are done jointly by both male and female respondents. There are certain tasks which are dominated by men alone, but certain tasks like transporting (81%), transplanting (83%) and storing (59%) is dominated by women alone.

Cultivation of maize is a female dominated activity. In the present study, all the activities- sowing of seeds (32%), digging under plants (80%), harvesting (90%), threshing (82%) and storing (86%) is done by women alone.

Fruit production is at peak throughout the Kashmir valley, and Pulwama tehsil is not lagging in this venture. Apple is cultivated on a large scale in the sample area, and is a joint venture as most of activities like

application of fertilizers and insecticides (72%), plucking of apples (100%) and packaging of apples (72%) is done by both male and female jointly.

Regarding the effects of over work on women, they suffer from several ailments. Majority (60%) of women are suffering from backache, as the work they perform is mostly done back bended. Women had to work in extreme weather conditions and this do added to their miseries.

Women are very hard working and they in order to support their family economically do perform lot of handicraft works. In spare time they do not sit idle, but perform knitting (43%) and other handicrafts (22%). They knit sweaters, gloves, mufflers, etc. Majority (93%) of female respondents likes their work and there is no compulsion or force behind them.

Property rights are one of issues of great concern, like all over the world women work more than men but they do not own any property. In this study the same is true as only (4.5%) of women has access to property by one or the other reasons.

SUGGESTIONS:

The strategies for women development in rural areas may include the following:-

- There needs to be further investigation into the position of the rural unpaid family workers. This group of workers includes a large part of the rural work force, especially the women involved in subsistence farming. Therefore, ways must be found to include them in the legally defined labour force and thereby see that they are involved in the ongoing or future developmental scheme.
- All services for women in rural areas should be integrated and offered as a package programme. The centre of all these services- agriculture, education, health care, nutrition, vocational training must be directed towards improving women's earning capacity, increasing their productivity, and making economic activity less burdensome.
- Access to new knowledge and technology for the agricultural tasks they perform must be provided to women.
- The general principle in developing agro-based and small-scale industries and services should aim at locally needed goods and services, e.g. processed food garments, accessories for schools, child care, general health care and household equipment, etc.
- Agricultural labour unions should be organised, for both men and women, but there should be separate women's wing to work against wage discrimination. Such organisations should be given state protection to curtail attempts by powerful employers to crush them.
- Steps should be taken by the government and voluntary organisations to make the women skill oriented by opening the adult training centers.
- The problem of housewives is directly related with poverty and illiteracy of the family. There should be every possible effort on the part of government and voluntary organisations.
- New legislations should be enacted to reduce the workload of women.
- The economic conditions of rural areas should be improved.
- Along with general education vocational education should be imparted to the women to make them economically sound.
- Women should be given more opportunities in the government jobs.
- Legislations should be enacted to curb the women participation in tedious tasks.
- Women must be encouraged to join co-operatives, training centers and credit institutions, etc. for fisheries, horticulture, animal husbandry and sericulture since they do major work in these industries.
- Women's work in family enterprises should be recognised by according to the status of workers and estimating the values of their unpaid labour. Denial of this recognition contributes to their invisibility and results in discrimination in the provision of development service.
- Mass media should be used to increase the effectiveness of specific programmes.
- Text books should be revised to emphasise a more positive and participatory role of women.
- Health and hygiene facilities should be made available to each and every woman in rural areas.
- Women participation should be banned in insecticide and fungicide applications, as this may be harmful to them, particularly for a pregnant woman.
- To encourage women to take further training or to involve them in productive work outside the home, or to ease their domestic work load if they already are involved in agricultural or wage employment or self- help, day care centers should be set up in rural areas.
- Women should be made aware of their rights by organising seminars, debates, etc.
- Data on women related problems are scarce. National and state systems must be put in place together and

analyse globally comparable data.

- There is a need for policy and action oriented research which ought to have a grass-root level component, particularly focusing in women and their economic activities.
- The existing laws should be revived in order to implement the laws of women welfare properly.
- New legislations should be enacted in order to give women equal share in property.
- Poverty elimination schemes enacted by the government should be made women friendly in nature, so that poor women may get benefit from those schemes.

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