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RURAL WOMEN AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Women are economically and socially empowered. They become a potent force for change. So they play a significant role in domestic and socio-economic life of the society. On the other hand agriculture is the back bone of Indian economy. Based on the 2012 data, India is to the fourth largest agricultural sector in the world. The rural women in India found that above 84% of them are depend on agriculture for maintaining their livelihood. It includes 33% of them are cultivators and remaining 47% women are agricultural labourers in the agricultural field. On that basis the roles are broken into 3 categories like productive, reproductive and community roles. The productive role is performed both by men and women in economic activities. The reproductive role, which is based on household activities is exclusively done by women. Community role is often dominated by women and it is related to the welfare of the community. Women's participation in agricultural fields is in different categories. They are found mostly 47% in tea plantation, 46.84% in cotton cultivation, 45.43% in oil seeds and 39.13% in vegetable production. While these crops require labour- intensive work, the work is considered quite unskilled. Women are probably found in the agricultural field on the basis of help. The reason behind that women engaged in agriculture are educational barrier, arrange marriage and caste system. Hence this study was initiate with the objectives of the role and importance of rural women in agricultural field and the bridging gap between men and women in access to resources, service, support and opportunities. On the other hand a lot of opportunities are available on the basis of government and non-government organization on which women can develop in agricultural sector and rural development. Consequently, availability of resources, gender equality to agricultural field, more policies and programmes has to given for successful agricultural development.

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INTRODUCTION

"In order to awaken the people, it is the women who have to be awakened. Once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves."

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Agriculture is the science and art of cultivation and livestock which is the key part of human civilization. The history of agriculture trace back thousands of years ago. It simply refers to when the human being have knowledge regarding the collection of food instead of searching food directly by nature. The major agricultural products can be broadly grouped into foods, fibers, fuels, rubber, grains, vegetables, fruit, oils, milk, fungi etc. Over one- third of the world's workers are employed in agriculture.

Development is a process which refers to growth, progress and positive change. Development is visible and useful but not immediately but an aspect of quality change and the creation of conditions for a continuation of that change. Agricultural development is the ability to develop some "better" system of agricultural production. For many rural poor the world over, human labour is a major constraint to gather agricultural production. Labour constraints during the ploughing, weeding or harvesting seasons are where they can most easily fill the gap between what people can do and what they would like to do. Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy. In many years it is seen that the role of women in agricultural development and their contribution is still growing faster and faster in various field of agriculture like sowing, harvesting, weeding etc along with the other works like food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries and other allied sectors.

Rural Women form the most important productive work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. They often manage more complex household work and hold various livelihood strategies every day. They mostly doing multiple works including producing agricultural crops, tending animals, preparing food, working as a labour in the agricultural field for the wages, collecting fuel and water, washing clothes, engage in marketing, rearing the children and caring the family members and overall maintaining the whole house. They works number of labour intensive job in the agricultural field like weeding, hoeing, grass cutting, picking, cotton stick collection, plucking vegetables and plucking sunflowers, separating of seeds from fibre, keeping of livestock etc and in home relating to the production like milking, preparation of ghee, curd, chesses etc. Many of these work are not the economically activities employment in the national level but still these are essential for wellbeing of maintaining rural households. As per Census 2011, out of total female main workers, 55 per cent were agricultural labourers and 24 per cent were cultivators. However, only 12.8 per cent of the operational holdings were owned by women, which reflect the gender disparity in ownership of land holdings in agriculture. Moreover, there is concentration of operational holdings (25.7 per cent) by women in the marginal and small holdings categories. As per Census 2011, out of total female main workers, 55 per cent were agricultural labourers and 24 per cent were cultivators. However, only 12.8 per cent of the operational holdings were owned by women, which reflect the gender disparity in ownership of landholdings in agriculture. Moreover, there is concentration of operational holdings (25.7 per cent) by women in the marginal and small holdings categories.

Ruche Thakur (2018) estimate as India is a developing and predominately agrarian economy out of the total population 70% of them are found rural household in which 60% of them are made agriculture is the main sources of economy. Women in the rural area have to manage multiple works including work in agricultural field, maintaining household, making food etc. But still in the national level they are not defined that women are not economically active employment. They are physically weaker. But she proves that both in agricultural development and allied sector women are show their capacity and working skill. During the past couple of years, India witnessed massive agricultural distress. Due to the low price of farm production and demanding loan waiver the farmers who are purely dependent on agriculture have come to protest. It is seen basically on women farmers. This is because of illiteracy, limited resources, land allocation for farming and sometimes due to the debt, crop failure and poverty. So improve the capability on agriculture among the women, it is necessary to provide information on advanced agricultural practices. On the other hand different policy should be implementing for the equal wages comparing to the men. One of the major issues among the women farmers is the lack of land rights. So first of all to change the inheritance practice that women have not a farmer. Further, we should give land rights to the female members and try to develop the efficiency on sustainable agricultural practices. Skill development training in agriculture basically organic farming is one of the best ways to develop the knowledge and capacity among the women farmers. Technological advancement also play an important role how farming processor can easy for the women farmers. Improving vetrynity knowledge can a better option among the rural women who are involved in animal husbandry. SHG groups

also play a vital role to improving the status of women in rural farmers for financial support in terms of loan.

Women's involvement in agriculture and allied activities:

According to Swaminathan, "some historians believe that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and there by initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel". In India women producers are focused on value, volume and number of hours worked for producing food. But some works like collecting fuel, fodder and water, growing vegetable, farm production are unrecorded in the census country. The women who have work on family land also not recorded as a workers but 78% of women are found who are engaged in agriculture particular in the rural area. They are found as third workers on the land. The traditional gender division of labour ensures that these women get on average 30% lower wages than men. Women's livelihood strategies and their support on food security are diverged and complex, from cultivating crops, rearing the family, gardening etc. They make above contributions unequal access to land, inputs and information. Women have played a key role for improving the agricultural production and other allied activities in India. It is prove that the women farmers performance in labour intensive job like weeding, picking, cotton stick collection etc. During the harvesting and weeding time the women labour is needed in the work of transporting by carrying a bundle of crops and weeding from the field. The physical strain among the female workers is high because of the heavy work in agricultural activities. Multiple works like transporting, land preparation, cleaning of animals sheds, feeding the animals and disposal of cow dung which have directly effects on women health. Due to poverty most of the women face lack of required protein which has got a very poor health.

Women are work in agriculture in order to eradicating poverty, ensure food security, increase their stake in agriculture, economic contribution. So they regarded as the backbone of the rural scene. Most of the women perform various types of work in agriculture to consider as an unorganized sector where poor and illiterate rural women take part of this sector and get benefits to maintain their livelihood pattern. So they do the multi-dimensional role like

- In agriculture: sowing, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer, harvesting, transporting, storing etc.
- In domestic: cooking, child rearing, water collection, fuel wood gathering, household maintenance etc.
- In allied activities: cattle management, fodder collection, milking etc.
- In horticulture: vegetable production, flower production, fruit production
- In sericulture: silk worm rearing, cocoon production

Challenges faced by the women in agriculture: A woman has three important roles such as reproductive, productive and community management role. Rearing and bearing of children are included in reproductive role, in productive role a woman can support services to her husband in the agricultural fields or its allied services and cottage industries, and the third one community management role includes managing the community resources like forest, land, water resources. But the problem is that these activities of women are not count as

economic activity and not reported in the national income statistics. However, society underestimates these contributions by the woman. In rural area, women's participation in agricultural field is just for the employed in nature. They work in their own fields as a routine activity to ease the burden of their husband. When they do as a labourer in other's fields in the rural area, they are not paid equal wage with the men. Because there are a surplus of women agricultural labourers and their bargaining power is restricted. This leads to the marginalization of women. In agricultural sector women are doing the same work of men. But they have found unequal land rights. They have limited access to use of productive resources. Women are performing multiple tasks which had more burdens to them due to the lack of equipment. It directly affects the health conditions of women farmers. On the basis of decision making process, women had got a few chances to take decision inside and outside of the home which affects the resources that are for their labour stability. Due to illiteracy they do not know their legal rights and earn fewer wages both in informal and private sector. They also find it notable to purchase technology to adopt climate change for agricultural services and inability to invest things such as improve seeds and fertile soils. They also face lack of market intelligence and inadequate information for that in many times they face weak bargaining from the buyers.

Status of women in agricultural field and other allied sectors: Globally women constitute half of the world's population and produce half of the agricultural products. It indicates the contribution of women in agriculture as a cultivator, agricultural labourers and casual helpers. Women are important economic agents particularly in the context of poverty in India. Women play a key role in the conservation of basic life support system such as land, water, flora and fauna. They protect the health of soil through organic fertilizer and crop security through varietal diversity and genetic resistance. The extent of women's involvement in agriculture varies from region to region. India constitutes the patriarchal family system. The status of women in family is low. On that basis it is said to be that the status of women in agriculture is low. But according to the Economic survey 2017-18 the growing rural to urban migration by men which is the cause of feminisation of agricultural sector, a number of women play multiple roles as cultivators, entrepreneurs and labourers. They are forced to work in agriculture in their village because they aren't allowed to migrate. It is clearly seen that the gender differences in workload management. Most of the women who are landless and homeless labourers, they socially and economically depressed. The society particularly in rural area is not still ready to accept changes in women's work, their role and position and status because of the conservative thinking in villages. Now rural women are taking responsible for the integrated management. It needs resources like land, credit, water, seeds and markets to fulfil the needs of the women. Globally millions of women engaged in agriculture with a heterogeneous group like different realities, opportunities and challenges. Now the changing role among the women is the part of evolving social, environmental, cultural and economic context.

This makes them to improve gender equity in agriculture. Fabiyi E.F *et al* in 2007 studied the role of women in agricultural development and their constraints in Biliri local Govt area, Gombe state, Nigeria. With the help of simple random sampling technique, 60 women farmers from 6

villages were selected for this study on their socio-economic characteristics, farm activities, farm production and their constraints. The data was analyzed in descriptive statistics. The result of the study showed that the women were involved in all farm activities from land clearing to harvesting, processing and marketing of produce. They plant different crops, rear animal and keep poultry. The women farmer's constraints include mainly lack of land for farming, credit facilities, costly and late input delivery. Women farmers have contributed immensely, to food production, processing and preservation of foods. Serious attention should be paid to their constraints because women are the backbone of agricultural development and food security in Nigeria. The economic status of women pulled them for broader participation in society. This is because of trouble by women in child bearing and rearing. Modern education and the development of technology and information have introduced Nigerians to new cultural concepts and norms. As culture is not static, social change may be expected to lowering the barriers against women's economic opportunities. Women have little access to capital and other assets to make agricultural production easy and profitable. But still women in the study area are more involved in farm activities apart from the role of wives and mothers. Nishi Slathia has explained that agriculture is an engine of growth and poverty reduction in developing countries where agriculture is the main sources of income among the poor. In developing countries all economic activities men are engaged nearly 63% comparing the women are 78%. It was observed that women play a significant role in agricultural field and other allied sectors like crop production, live-stock production, horticulture, post-harvesting operations etc. Women farmers do not have equal access and opportunities to productive resources and limits their potential in enhancing productivity.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the role and importance of rural women in agricultural field.
2. To find out the bridge gap between men and women in access to resources, service, support and opportunities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area: Bhadrak district is one of the major district in Odisha, owes its origin in the name of Hindu Goddess 'Bhadrakali' and situated on banks of river Salandi. Agriculture is the main sources of income of the district. The geographical area of the district is 2,46,529 hector of which 1,85,970 comes under cultivable area. The paddy is grown as the main crops in kharif covering 1,70,000 hector which constitute 94% of this total cultivable area. During kharif season about 47% of cultivable area is rain fed and likely to remain exposed to the gambling monsoon and natural calamity. 9% of the cultivable area is up-land, 36% is medium calamity and 55% is low land. The study was conducted in the Kaupur panchayat of Bhadrak district. The panchayat is consisting of 3,951 population in which 1926 population consist of female category. It is the place distances from 10 km from the district headquarter. This area is famous for the female worker in agricultural sector. This study was collected information on the number of female workers and non-workers females were excluded from this study. The data was collected randomly selected 60 working women through simple random sampling in the study area. Both exploratory and descriptive

research design was applied for conducting this research. Exploratory design was used to analyze the role of women in agricultural field and descriptive design was used for the profile analysis of sample respondents. The data were collected through interview schedule and observation to include information on age, types of work, educational status, socio-economic status, caste, religion, types of crops, reason for working, time spend on the field, working processor, method applied in the field and wages. Primary, secondary and tertiary method was used to collect the data. After collecting the data it was analyzed in the tabular form with the help of SPSS and some data was represent on graphs with the help of Excel sheet.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Section-A

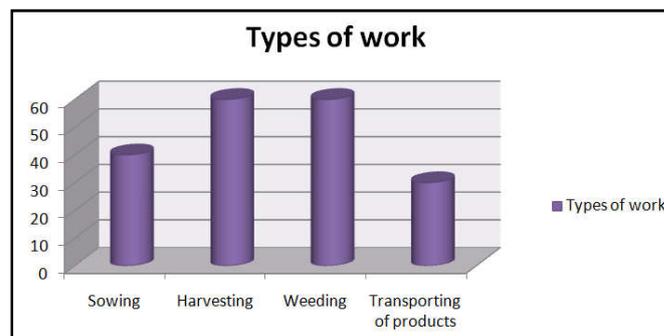
Table 1. Socio-economic background of the respondents

Socio-economic variable	Category	Frequency	Frequency distribution
Age	20-30	1	2%
	31-40	32	53%
	41-50	27	45%
Marital status	Married	54	90%
	Disserted	1	2%
	Divorce	-	-
	Widow	5	8%
Social category	General	2	3%
	OBC	7	11%
	SC	23	38%
	ST	28	46%
Religion	Hindu	60	100%
	Muslim	-	-
	Christian	-	-
	Any other	-	-
Level of education	Illiterate	26	44%
	Primary school	27	45%
	High school	7	11%
	Above	-	-
Economic category	BPL	35	58%
	APL	25	42%
	Atodaya	-	-
Occupation of husband	Farmer	21	35%
	Daily labour	39	65%
	Govt. job	-	-
	Private job	-	-
Family background	Rural	60	100%
	Urban	-	-
Types of family	Nuclear	15	25%
	Joint	43	72%
	Extended	2	3%

Source: field data by the researcher

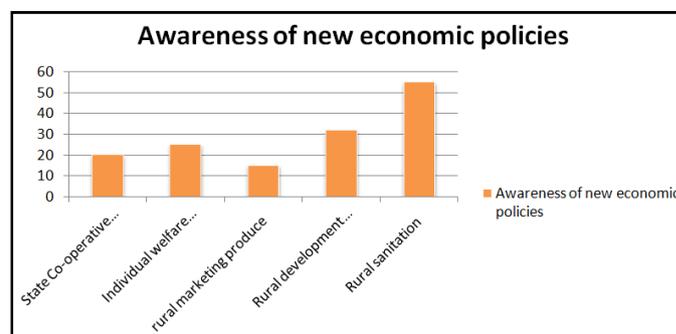
Table-1 presents the socio-economic background of the respondents. According to the table the highest number of women who are belonging in the age between 31-40 years followed by the women who are belonging in the age group of 41-50 years. The respondents are belonging in the rural background and Hindu community. The highest numbers of family have joint family system and the economy of the family was still low. So most of them have BPL cards. The levels of education among the respondents are found 45% are up to primary school, 11% are up to High school and 44% of them are illiterate. All most all of the women 90% are married who are belonging the social category of General 3%, OBC 11%, SC 38% and ST 46%. It seems that SC and ST women were more in numbers who are working in the agricultural field.

Section-B



Graph 1. Types of work

The chart provides types of work done by the women in the agricultural field. The works like sowing, harvesting, weeding and transporting of products i.e 40%, 60%, 60% and 30% are done by the women. In the study area basically rice, sunflower, vegetable production are found mostly. So the women are involving these types of work both in their own field and work as a labourer. Most of them are involved as a labourer in rice production and in the same time they produce vegetables in their own field. Grams and sunflower as the cash crops, they cultivate their own field which helps them to improve their economic standard. Along with the works in the agricultural field the women are involve in other farm production like pigs, goats and sheep, poultry etc. in which they got more extra income to maintain their family.



Graph 2. Awareness of new economic policies

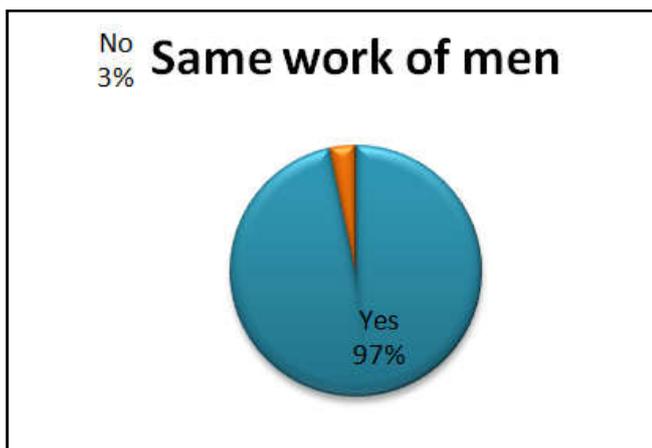
The graph presents the awareness of new economic policies. The policies likes state co-operative, 80% of the women knew and using for their whole agricultural production. Some of them are take loan from the state co-operative which helps in the agriculture. The next policy i.e individual welfare schemes are used by 25% women and rural marketing produce 15% and rural development programs is 32%. It reveals that the women were aware towards the scheme which helps them for the development of agriculture. They invest the money in agriculture through the loan from co-operative society. After production they sold their crops through the help of co-operative society with highest value. It helps for got more profit from the co-operative society. Besides of the development programs for agriculture it needs to the irrigation facility. For irrigation they use mostly canal, river and lift irrigation. In proper time they got facilitate sufficient for the crops by the lift and canal provided by the water resources management. Table 2 shows different methods applying in the field by the female farmers. The methods are both in the starting time and harvesting time.

Table 2. Methods applying in the field (starting part) * Methods applying in the field (harvesting time) Cross tabulation

Count		Methods applying in the field (harvesting time)		Total
		New methods applying during harvesting	Old methods applying during harvesting	
Methods applying in the field(starting part)	New technical method during the cultivation	29	12	41
	Old methods during the cultivation	13	6	19
Total		42	18	60

The study found out 60% of the women are used modern technology while starting part of the cultivation and remaining 40% are still uses the old methods. On the other hand in the time of harvesting 70% of the women farmers uses the modern technology and the remaining 30% are not uses the modern technology. They still depend on the old methods. According to this cross table in which the women who are using new technical methods during the cultivation 29 (48%) of them also use new methods during the harvesting and 12(20%) use old methods during the harvesting. 13(22%) of women who use old methods during the cultivation use new methods during harvesting and 6(10%) of them use old methods during harvesting.

Section-C



Graph 3. Same work of men

Chart 3 shows the same work between men and women. According to the table all most all of the women 98% were done the same work with the men and the remaining 2% were not done the same work. They work in their own kale yard for self purpose. In agricultural sector the women are done the same work as a man like sowing, weeding, harvesting etc. Comparing to the work the time limitation was same for both man and women. All most all the women are working 6 hours like a man but the wages in case of rice field women are getting the same money but in grain and sunflower field as they have their own cultivation, the women are only work without any pay. After doing the work in the field they also engage for preparing food, maintaining the entire household where as their husband take relaxation after the work. It proves the women's empowerment in the working area and develops in agricultural sector.

DISCUSSION

In India gender discrimination found in every sphere relating to the capability of women relating to men. In agriculture gender discrimination is found on the wages, types of work,

time duration of work and proper caring. It was still happen due to the lack of education, proper policy implementation, awareness etc. But the level of working capacity and wish to do the work is still continue among the rural women farmers. Poverty and unemployment can't bind them to fulfil their wish towards agriculture and other allied sectors. SHG groups and other economic policies help s the rural women to increase the capacity to develop agricultural development. The present study proves that the agricultural development is one of the parts among the rural women. According to the socio-economic variable the age group between 31-40 years married women who are more interest on agricultural production. Many numbers of ST women were found who are either illiterate and up to primary school depend on the agriculture to maintain their livelihood. As the study area is a purely rural area and crops are found such as rice, vegetables, gram and sunflower, the women are done the works like sowing, harvesting, weeding more in numbers. Along with the agriculture, the other allied sector like poultry is done by the women. For loan or other economical problem relating to the agriculture they uses the state co-operative more in number followed by individual welfare scheme, rural marketing and rural development scheme. They facilitate through canal, lift irrigation and river fir irrigation on crops more in numbers. The reasons behind the working in the fields are due to poverty 50% and the remaining 50% have their own choice. They feel happy and more interest on agriculture. Because it provides economic facility to maintain their livelihood and engage in work with new methods. But due to more time spent on the field they face some kind of health issue. Now they apply the new technical method during the starting part of cultivation and also during the harvesting time. It helps them to relax their health problems. Another major problem is the wages issue. In cash crop production they are not getting the same wages like a man and in poultry only the profit is the sources of income. They also need helps of other person for transporting the crops for selling in the market. It proves the involvement of women in agriculture and other allied sectors.

Conclusion

The whole study reveals that the women's involvement in agricultural development is too high. It leads towards a step for the women empowerment. It proves how women maintain the dual work as they work in the agricultural field and at the same time they maintain the household. They do the same work like sowing, harvesting, weeding and lastly also transporting the grains in the market like a man. Besides of the work in field they also involve in the farm production which is the extra part of income. It also seems that the reasons behind for working in the field are 50% of them have their own choice and 50% have due to poverty and unemployment. The wages comparing to the work of a man is differ from the crops. But still their involvement is too high. So it proves the role of rural women in agricultural development and it also proves the women

empowerment. It will more develop if new technical methods are provided to the female farmers for improve their skill and methods in agriculture. New policies like how to increase the literacy rate and to increase the wages rate relating to their work with men. How the women easily sell their crops with profit and knowledge regarding while they purchase the seeds with high quality and in less tome how they do more work with maintaining their households. The major significance of the present study is the women empowerment and status of women in the present society. As they are poor and low literate they still empower through the agricultural development. The findings of the present study will be useful for details about the working processor and their contribution in the agricultural field. It will help in more knowledge, awareness and empower among the other women. The findings also help to understand the significance and social aspects of women in agricultural field and agricultural development. The policy makers to formulate new policies and schemes to empower women regarding agricultural development as well as provide services for the rural women on which they get more benefits. The study also help to strengthen the intellectual discipline of subjects like Sociology, Economics, Gender studies which focuses on the dynamics of society.

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