

Role of Agricultural Women Labour in India: An Overview

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Abstract

In India, the adult population consists of nearly 50 percent women, 77 per cent of the Indian adult population lives in rural areas. Rural women participate for Agriculture and related activities. They contribute 75 per cent of the labour required for operations. The women Labour work with family unit but the women like to work independently. Women face many problems like illiteracy to less the burden of men. In this village there is a practice of child marriage. The husband does not work properly, and if they earn, they don't give the money for the house expenses. The men's harsh the women by scolding, beating, etc., so the women go in search of a job by which they can look after the responsibilities and care for their children. The wages are not paid properly to them, and the wage given to them is not fulfilled. So, these are the problems faced by women in agriculture.

Keywords: Agriculture, Women, Labour

Introduction:

In Indian society, women have a multi-dimensional role. They also have a major role to play in the development process. For the last few years, programs for women have been receiving particular attention under community and rural development programs. Desirable socio-economic development can only be achieved when women are stimulated and motivated to accept and adopt new techniques. The largest numbers of women in India are engaged in farming operations, either as cultivators, supervisors, or agricultural laborers. They are the main decision makers and participants in various agricultural operations like seed sowing, transplanting, and weeding, harvesting, threshing, application of manure, storage of seeds and food grains; and post-harvest home level processing. Apart from all these, they are also involved in bringing fodder from the field, chaff cutting, feeding and cleaning of cattle, maintaining cattle sheds, making compost, etc. In view of all these things, women are recognized as partners with men in agriculture, and they are included in the effort to bring new technology to the farmers because of their intimate involvement in agriculture as managers, decision-makers, and laborers. The status of rural women is improving day by day. Their participation in various functions of farming is as follows.

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Nature of Women Labour in Agriculture

About 36 million women are engaged in farm operations as main workers; from sowing to harvesting and storing in bins and bags. They also participate in off-farm activities like the processing and marketing of farm products. Women play a significant role in farming and farm management activities, though most are engaged either as cultivators, helpers to cultivators, or as agricultural laborers. They are actively involved in agricultural development and allied fields, including crop production, livestock production, horticulture post-harvest operations, agro- and social forestry, fishing, etc

Women Labour as Independent Labour:

As the fleets grow, changes are bound to occur in the mindsets and attitudes of women towards labour. Women would like to work as independent labour's outside their family units and go in search of work in villages surrounding their native place. In the sample taken for the study, there were 30 female labours most of them 20 from backward communities and 10 from other communities. In SCs and STs there is an equal number of women labours who choose to work independently. The changing times and changing attitudes and beliefs in self-dependency on the part of women allow them to work as independent workers.

Objectives of the Study:

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To study the significance of women's role in agricultural development.
2. To assess the contribution of agricultural women laborers to farm development.
3. To suggest measures to promote gender equality for the all-round development of women.

Methodology:

The study is based on secondary data; the source was collected from various departments i.e., Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report-2021-22, Government of India. The study utilizes secondary sources including government reports, academic publications, and statistical data.

Women as Agricultural Labour

Women contribute about 3/4th of the labour required for agricultural operations. Their involvement in agricultural operations goes beyond their usual domestic work. Most of the contributions made by women to the farm sector also go unaccounted for as they are not directly paid.

Table-1 clearly indicates that agriculture has the highest estimated percentage distribution of female workers, followed by manufacturing. The government has taken various steps to improve women's participation in the labour force and quality of their employment. A number of protective provisions have been incorporated into the labour laws for equal opportunity and a congenial work environment for women workers. These include an enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, provision for mandatory crèche facilities in establishments having 50 or more employees, permitting women workers to participate in safety measures, etc.

Table-1: Percentage Distribution of Women Work Participation in India – 2021-22

Sl. No.	Various Sectors	Female (%)	Male (%)
1	Agriculture	38.1	62.9

2	Mining & Quarrying	0.4	0.1
3	Manufacturing	11.8	11.2
4	Electricity, Water, etc	0.7	0.2
5	Construction	15.6	5.0
6	Trade, Hotel & Restaurant	14.7	5.9
7	Transport, Storage & Communications	7.5	1.2
8	Other Services	11.2	13.6
	All	100	100

Source: Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report-2021-22

As per the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report 2021–22, the estimated female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in Haryana on usual status for age 15 years and above is 19.1%. The contribution of female labor towards agricultural production is always greater than that of male labour in all types of landholding sizes, as shown in table-2.

The jobs, traditionally done by the farm, women in the order of importance are mainly in the kitchen: gardening, harvesting, seedling raising, and transplanting.

Table-2 shows the extent of women labour utilization in various field operations. From the analysis of the data (in table-2) obtained by the survey in Kashmir Valley in 1991, it can be seen that household duties constituted more than 60% of the total women labour followed by collection of cow dung with 12.98%, kitchen gardening with 10.79%, livestock and poultry raising (9.11%), harvesting with 2.57%, transplanting, etc. with 2.32%. It can be seen that there is no hired labour participation for the operation, like the collection of cow dung, household duties, and animal husbandry maintenance.

Table-2: Women Labour Utilization in Various Field Operations (Per Acre Land)

Sl. No.	Operation	Family women labour		Hired women labour		Total women labour	
		Women (Hrs)	% to total	Women (Hrs)	% to total	Women (Hrs)	% to total
1	Seedling raising & transplanting	19.26	1.58	9.78	33.53	29.04	2.32
2	Weeding & Manuring	6.89	0.56	1.6	5.49	8.49	0.68
3	Irrigation	7.2	0.59	2.54	8.71	9.74	0.78
4	Harvesting	20.72	1.7	11.42	39.51	32.14	2.57
5	Threshing	2.75	0.23	0.88	3.02	3.63	0.29
6	Kitchen	131.89	10.8	2.95	10.11	134.84	10.79
7	Collection of Cow dung	153.45	12.98	-	-	153.45	12.98
8	Household activities	761.67	62.38	-	-	761.67	62.38
9	Livestock of poultry raising	111.29	9.11	-	-	111.29	9.11
	Total	1,221.00	100.0	29.17	100.00	1,250.17	100.00

Source: Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report-2021-22

It has been noted that half of the workforce in agriculture is women; rural women participate in agricultural activities. They work in the areas of production, processing, preservation, and utilization of food. The role of women in agriculture differs from region to region and country to country. Women play a complementary role in crop production, livestock raising, fishing, and the care and use of forests. In the case of mechanized agriculture, the role of women is limited to household food production.

Existence of Women Labour in Agriculture

It is estimated that there are approximately 1.1 billion workers working in agriculture production. Out of them, nearly half of them work for wages. Among the agricultural labours who work for wages, women constitute a major part. Women play an important role in the implicit partnership and the equity of men and women in the world. During the passage of time, there was a transition; women working as single families from entering sufficient farming also extended their labour for home.

Manufacturing, this co-existed with factory labour in 19th century. The mid-20th century, along with its demographic change, technology, property rights legalization, and reforms, altered the status of women as agricultural workers.

Causes and Consequences of Women Labour

Women's employment is largely determined by socio-cultural factors. Certain situations force women to seek employment. The individual decision to work depends upon the family to which a particular woman belongs. Both economic and non-economic reasons are behind women employment. The motivational reasons vary with marital status. The reasons can be classified as economic and those rising from national necessity from increasing production.

1. Insufficient income of the main breadwinner necessitates supplementary income from women labours and others.
2. The breadwinners of the family may become incapacitated due to accidents, mishaps, and ill-health.
3. Women's desire to be independent economically to secure a higher standard of living.

Migration of Women Labour

Social customs and economic prospects improve the ability to migrate. Migration has become a leading factor in the process of economic development. It provided prospects to laborers of all categories. The opportunities available encourage men and women to migrate when the head of the family migrates; the entire families is bound to migrate in search of opportunities. Indian women are described as a most migratory of the population. Migration can be called sociological because it is a result of marriage. The new network avenues also forced women to migrate along with their families. Women do not migrate to longer places. Career based migration is an important aspect of the migration character of Indian labour. In India, there are migrations based on career building, social compulsion, and the nature of the families to which women belong. Sometimes, migrations are forced and induced, mass migration, child migration, and rural urban migration take place because of the power of men to decide the future of the family along with women labours. Women's migration in India brings out some economic and social problems

Suggestion for Improvement

1. Equality in decision making regarding household activities.

2. Equality in decision making regarding farm activities.
3. Equal treatment regarding health.
4. Equal sharing of property.
5. Equality in getting an education.
6. Equal participation in social organizations.
7. Equality in wage employment.
8. Equal sharing of household's activities, child care.

Conclusion:

Overall, by studying and seeing the difficulties of agriculture, we can say that women have lots of problems and women do not know how to face them. According to the study opinion, the government has to take an interest in solving their problems. The government should not only intervene in the schemes but also see whether they are working successfully or not. By keeping in mind agriculture, women labour will come out of these problems and can lead a better life.

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