



WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN HILLY AREAS OF UTTARAKHAND-INDIA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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“Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their value system leads to the development of a good family, society and ultimately a good nation.” - DR. ABDUL KALAM (Former President of India)

Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: 3rd April 2021 Accepted: 21st April 2021 Published: 3rd May 2021</p>	<p>Agriculture sector as a whole has developed and emerged immensely with the infusion of science and technology. Agriculture can be an important engine of growth and poverty reduction. But the sector is underperforming in many countries in part because women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity. Women have always been working everywhere in each part of the society of the world since the beginning of human civilization. Women today are paid less and have lower status at work than men. In spite of legislation and pressure from women’s movements, equality at work and status is still only a remote possibility for most women in the third world countries.</p> <p>Women farmers have been an important workforce in agriculture. They are the backbone of agricultural workforce. As per 2011 census, women workforce in agriculture and allied sectors is 98 million, which is 37 percent of total wage workers. Rural women are much more over burdened then men owing to their multiple occupations, but worldwide their hard-work has mostly been unpaid.</p> <p>Agriculture is the main source of Indian Economy. More than half of the population is indulging in the sector for various purposes like food, employment, marketing, industrial purposes etc. as most of the agriculture practices are done in rural areas. It faces a list of issues, challenges and opportunities. The central problem being faced by agriculture in rural areas is low productivity which is due to high yield gaps, increased vulnerability due to the effects of increased frequencies of extreme climatic events, small and fragmented land holdings of farmers, quality of seeds being used, manures, fertilizers and biocide, irrigation challenges, lack off mechanization, agriculture marketing, inadequate transport facilities, inadequate storage facilities, scarcity of capital etc. discussing and resolving the issues of farmers, governments schemes are to be checked and make them available for the farmers to exterminate and liquidate the problems faced by agriculture in rural areas.</p> <p>The primary aim of the paper is to analyze the conditions and suggest development of women agriculture farmers and to study the issues & challenges of the same. The paper aims to frame a analytical study from secondary data collected for the development of the hilly agriculture and women’s participation to create a better India for tomorrow.</p>

Keywords: Women farmers, Hilly agriculture in India, Issues, Challenges, Opportunities

INTRODUCTION:

Women and children, who represent more than two-thirds (67.7 per cent approx) of the country's total population, constitute the most important target group in the context of the present day developmental planning. Reducing gender inequality is widely recognized around the world as contributing to agricultural growth and the attainment of food and nutritional security. Women constitute nearly half of the global population and approximately accounts for one-third of the total labour force. Women's question today is no longer an issue confined to the position of women within the family or their rights to equality with men in different aspect of social life. It is part of the total far broader question regarding the direction of change of that process' (Majumdar 1985). In socially and economically developed societies, women power is being absorbed, integrated and assimilated into the national main stream. This has, however, not been the case in the majority of the developing and underdeveloped countries. Much of the labour contributed by women, especially in the domestic chores and also outside is not usually considered as productive and helps in overall development of hilly agriculture women.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To analyze hilly area women's participation in agriculture with other duties.
2. To study hilly women's participation in socio-economic and political affairs.
3. To examine rural women's degree of freedom of movement in agriculture.
4. To analyze working pattern of rural women regarding outdoor, indoor and leisurely activities.
5. To establish the influence of lack of training and education, on women's working pattern.
6. To suggest some suitable ways through which the status of rural hilly women can be improved and government policies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research study has been carried out to establish the development of women's in hilly areas of Uttarakhand through Agriculture. The study is based on secondary data collection, to achieve the objective, secondary data is examined which is sourced from website, online sources and scholarly articles, magazines, books, internet, report and newsletters of various Ministries of Govt. of India etc.

AGRICULTURE IN UTTARAKHAND-INDIA:

Agriculture is the primary lifeline of Uttarakhand and is practiced by many people especially those living in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand. Many hilly people of Uttarakhand still have taken agriculture as their main occupation as it gives them bread and butter. The women of Uttarakhand are also involved in agriculture as men leave the hills to find better jobs in cities. Uttarakhand being a hill state offers great opportunity in agriculture and animal husbandry; about 75-85% of the people living in Uttarakhand are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. While those residing in the vulnerable parts are untouched by modernization so they lack knowledge about the new agricultural techniques which results in less produce. However, educating the agro-based communities about hybrid seeds, machinery, bio-techniques, organic farming, haphazard of insecticides and pesticides etc. can help them in raising their productivity. Uttarakhand has not been able to improve its agricultural growth in the past 15 years though the majority of its population and area are still classified as rural and the state government has a record of nearly 100% spending of its budgetary allocations. Hill farming is still awaiting special attention from the government as much of the state's agriculture budget comes from the Centre and most of the agri-development schemes are centrally sponsored. Experts and agriculture department officials say though the state has scope for development in other sectors, farming is the key to checking migration from hill villages.

"There is no alternative to a hill-centric agricultural action plan in the larger interest of the state. However, some important decisions have been taken in the recent past. For instance, the government has resolved to enact a new land consolidation act for hill areas," says Kedar Singh Rawat, a farmer who played a key role in framing the land consolidation act draft plan.

"This will benefit mainly the hills as farmers will have the opportunity to consolidate their holdings, bringing them together with the help of the local administration and increase their cropped area. Apart from this, those who have migrated from villages would also like to return to their roots with expectations to own consolidated large pieces of land."

Rural areas of the state are concentrated in nine hill districts and most of the agricultural production comes from the four districts of Haridwar, Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar and Nainital. Despite demands for a hill-centric development action plan very little has been done by successive state governments to promote agriculture. The contribution of agriculture to the state's domestic product is about 22% and 75-85% population depends on the occupation for livelihood. While the Uttarakhand government believes that development of hills is primarily linked to the development of agriculture it is yet to come up with a suitable policy boost for either mainstream agriculture or allied activities. Apart from promotion of local and traditional hill crops, farmers need to be given adequate cover in terms of welfare schemes. Besides this, adequate technical and financial support for water conservation measures must be provided to hill farmers. The hills are constrained in terms of development of large-scale industrialization as well as the service sector. Development of the agriculture sector, therefore, remains the state's economic lifeline.

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL AND OTHER WORK IN HILLY AREAS IN INDIA:

Women in India are under-privileged in all social, economic and political front and they have to face discrimination, exploitation and oppression in the male dominated world. The traditions and values, religious norms, caste rules and social taboos restrict women's lives and work opportunities and seek to confine women to traditional work, role and opportunities. Therefore it seems imperative to increase women's participation at the different decision making levels, without which, the changes they need for their empowerment may not materialize in favor of them. In spite of more than six decade of development, women in India continue in the grip of economic dependence, social neglect and political ignorance and are not in a position to attain their due place in society. Though women farmers plays a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and in the allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations and agro-social forest etc, they have little role in decision making particularly in matters related to agriculture and financial matters.

The position of women of hilly regions of Uttarakhand is more or less the same. Women farmers of Uttarakhand constitute the most important productive work force in the economy of this region. Majority of the agricultural workforce in this region comprises of women. In this area, the participation of women is more in operations like fodder collection, cleaning of cattle shed, milking of animal and preparation of milk products. Apart from these activities, they have to perform the duties in running the family, maintaining the household, all the domestic activities and extending a helping hand in rural artisanship and handicraft. In spite of discharging all these duties and responsibilities, her individual development is low.

Women farmers' undoubtedly play a unique role in the socio-economic setup of this region. Their socio-economic contribution towards family and community is highly significant but the reciprocal benefits conferred on them are disproportionate. Hill agriculture is absolutely dependent on women. Women generally work more than 15 hours a day, attending to agricultural work, cattle, and collection of fuel, fodder and water as well as the normal duties within their homes (Samal 1993).



ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITY RELATED TO WOMEN AGRICULTURE IN INDIA:

While the building and blasting has rendered the hills increasingly prone to landslides and flooding, incomes have seen only a marginal jump. That too has taken a bad hit after the disastrous flooding of the Kedar valley that killed thousands of pilgrims and wrecked many villages. So today, while the rich plains of Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar and Dehradun districts show an enviable average income of Rs 122,900 PA, in the hill districts, at Rs 59,791 PA, the average per capita incomes are closer to a backward state like Jharkhand. (Source: 2014-15 Uttarakhand Statistical Diary).

In days gone by farming was indeed a major activity in the habitable areas where, outside the forests, over 16,000 villages are located. But it was largely subsistence farming that kept the villagers free of dependence on hard cash. Today that kind of farming is crippled by repeated flash floods and droughts, increased man-animal conflicts and, last but not the least, a huge jump in young males migrating to cities in search of jobs. The departure of the able-bodied males has forced women to care for the family and also its landholdings.

This brings us to young women farmers, already burdened with caring for small children and elderly members, now overburdened further by taking care of the land and the milch cattle. In an area of increasing man-wild animal conflict, women are eking out a living somehow by hanging on to their land, rearing cattle and selling grass as they fend off attacks by homeless simians, wild boar and Bagh (leopards). In her meticulous record of interaction with women's groups organized over the last 25 years by the NGO Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi, Anuradha Pandey in her recently published book *Pahadi Striyan*, reports women farmers multitasking through the year to supplement the family incomes and educate their young. She reports that women farmers are supplementing the family income by Rs 1000 per month by selling leaves, green grass, cow dung along with various kinds of pulses, paddy and coarse grains.

A separate hill farming policy with emphasis on further developing irrigation infrastructure in Uttarakhand including the canal network and also lift canals, tube-wells, pump sets and others is the need of the hour, he said. Besides, the policy should also prioritise promotion of local and traditional hill crops. Farmers must also be given adequate cover in terms of welfare schemes, besides adequate technical and financial support for water conservation should also be extended by the state administration. Apart from this, steps should be taken to encourage improved agronomic practices for higher farm productivity, improved soil treatment, increased water holding capacity, judicious use of chemicals and enhanced soil carbon storage.

SUGGESTIONS:

The process of development has no meaning, unless women are fully integrated in this process. However, women are not being fully considered as a potential human resource and have been marginalized in term of benefits from the development programmes. The status and awareness of women can play a significant role in the social transformation. The awareness of women is determined by their education and education of women is governed by economic, social, political and cultural factors. Moreover it is the government which can influence all the factors responsible for women's education, status and awareness.

Women farmers must also be given adequate cover in terms of welfare schemes, besides adequate technical and financial support for water conservation should also be extended by the state administration. Apart from this, steps should be taken to encourage improved agronomic practices for higher farm productivity, improved soil treatment, increased water holding capacity, judicious use of chemicals and enhanced soil carbon storage. In fact, the contribution of hill women needs a fresh review in the light of their social-economic status, awareness, outlook and perception which have so far by and large been unsatisfactorily attended. Since women play a key role in hill economy, they should be the first persons to take decision and make plans. For development of women through agriculture, government should also provide some assistance by subsidies, effective loans, water supply etc.

CONCLUSION:

India also needs to improve its management of agricultural practices on multiple fronts. Improvements in agriculture performance has weak linkage in improving nutrition, the agriculture sector can still improve nutrition through multiple ways: increasing incomes of women farming households, diversifying production of crops, empowering women, strengthening agricultural diversity and productivity, and designing careful price and subsidy policies that can encourage the production and consumption of nutrient rich crops. Diversification of agricultural livelihoods through agri-allied sectors such as animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries has enhanced livelihood opportunities, strengthened resilience and led to considerable increase in labour force participation in the sector and this can lead to economic development in India.

"When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life" – Kofi Annan

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