



AGRICULTURAL CRISIS AND FEMALE LABOUR IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural crisis means obstacles or hindrances in achieving agricultural production. It is generally observed that in agricultural aspect only capital and production are considered, labour is ignored.

I tried to focus on the condition of agriculture labour specially female labours, their problems in India. It shows how women and female children of poor rural households bear a disproportionately high share of the burden of poverty. This is manifest especially in a systematic bias against females in the intra-household distribution of food and health care. However, there are significant cross-regional differences in the extent of the bias which is much higher in the north-western states relative to the southern. Some of the likely factors - economic, social, historical - underlying these differences are discussed here. The specific problems of female-headed households are separately considered.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a vital role in Indian economy. Over 58% of rural population is dependent on agriculture as it is their main means of livelihood. Agriculture is the art and science of cultivating the ground which includes crop harvesting, rearing and management of livestock; tillage or husbandry.

Agricultural crisis means obstacles or hindrances in achieving agricultural production. Crop production also includes farmers and their economic condition, labourers, condition etc. Agricultural crisis means obstacle in crop production with degenerated economic status of farmers, villagers, labourers due to poverty, malnutrition, unemployment are increasing in rural areas. Here I tried to focus on aspects of agricultural crisis and female labour's condition. Out of 120 million agricultural workers (census of India, 1971) as many as 45 million are engaged as agricultural labourers. Among them every third agricultural labour is a female.

OBJECTIVE:

The objective of my study is to highlight some aspects of agricultural crisis in India as well as poor condition of female labour in India.

METHODOLOGY:

It is descriptive research based on secondary data collected from various sources like journals, magazines, government websites, articles in newspaper etc.

Limitations of my study:

The study is entirely based on secondary data.

Aspects of agriculture

There are three aspects of agriculture, viz. production, marketing and market research and farmer as consumer. All these three aspects and their present status are discussed here briefly.

Agricultural production :

Land, water, insecticides, medicines, crop- sprays human efforts and machinery are necessary to save the crop. In India the farmers who own their land is very less, it is very less, it is even below two acres of national average. Most of them are landless and working as labourers on others land. Capitalization has spread its tentacles in agriculture also. The farmers have to buy seeds, pesticides, pumps, electric connections to run the pumps and



other equipments. The rate of these farming materials are continuously increasing. National and International companies of agricultural products are earning huge profits, robbing the poor farmers by leaps and bounds.

Agricultural marketing

The governments have handed over the agro-products to open market under new liberal policies. The farmers have to sell their commercial crops like cotton, soyabean, wheat, rice, jowar, bajra, cereals, fruits and vegetables in the open and uncontrolled market in which agro market is in the hands of businessmen and merchants instead of farmers. The government talks to save the farmers but the reality is far away and contradictory to it. The farmers cannot even get the fundamental cost of their crop. As a result, the farmers are compelled to take loans from local money lenders, banks and government where interest rates are too high to repay. More than 40% of the farmers are compelled to borrow money from money lenders on 4% to 10% monthly rates. The poor farmer who is already in loss is deeply drowned in debts. His condition becomes worst due to timely floods, droughts crops infected by insects and pests or hailstone fall. As a result the poor farmers find no solution to their financial downfall, and commits suicides or leaving farming and choosing to work as a labourers.

Farmer as a consumer

Farmer has a fundamental right of food, house, clothing, education, health, entertainment and transportation. But he is deprived of these rights due to capitalist system. Capitalist governments which believe in the golden principles of liberalization and new inventions, ignore social services and social securities. Farmer's families are victims of unhygienic and unhealthy life. Many farmers due to poverty, unhygienic and unhealthy life styles, fall sick or even sometimes die. Their kids are deprived of basic education. Instead of taking the farmers out of these miserable condition, the capitalist systems dips them down in the mire of poverty and deprivations. Our society is in the chain of superstitions and caste system and the farmers have to pay for these ills of societal-norms. Rational thoughts, knowledge and wisdom are suppressed.

Women, who are often a crucial resource in agriculture and the rural economy, face constraints that reduce their productivity. Women's participation in rural labour markets varies considerably across regions, but invariably women are over represented in unpaid, seasonal and part-time work, and the available evidence suggests that women are often paid less than men, for the same work. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes.

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Women's contribution to agricultural production :

Women play a significant role in the agricultural labour force and in agricultural activities, although to a varying degree. Consequently their contribution to agricultural output is undoubtedly extremely significant, although difficult to quantify with any accuracy. It has often been claimed that women produce 60-80 percent of food. However, assigning



contributions to agricultural outputs by gender is problematic because in most agricultural households both men and women are involved in crop production. It can be attempted to allocate output by gender by assuming that specific crops are grown by women and others by men and then aggregating the value of women's and men's crops to determine the share grown by women.

Women do not usually produce food separately from men. Most food is produced with labour contributions of both men and women in a collaborative process. Quantifying the share of food produced by women involves making arbitrary assumptions about gender roles in the production process, which are not likely to hold universally. For example, if men typically provide the labour to clear the field and women plant and weed the crops, both men and women are involved in harvesting. In these and other similar cases it becomes impossible to separate output by gender.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the contribution of women to agricultural and food production is clearly significant. However, it is impossible to verify empirically the share produced by women because agriculture is usually a venture among household members and involves a range of resources and inputs that cannot be readily assigned by gender. Women's participation in rural labour markets show much heterogeneity at the regional level, but women are over represented in unpaid, seasonal and part-time work, and the available evidence suggests that women are often paid less than men, for the same work.

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