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AGRICULTURE SECTOR AND TRIBAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

The importance of women in agriculture is acknowledged in this article, which delves into how the agriculture industry and the empowerment of tribal women connect. The study's overarching goal is to find ways to empower tribal women by analysing the specific obstacles they encounter in the agricultural sphere, such as a lack of knowledge, resources, and technology. An examination of programmes and policies that have increased the involvement of indigenous women in farming (from planting seeds to selling their produce) is the focus of this study. Examining aspects like revenue production, community development, and the general welfare of tribal households, the article also delves into the socioeconomic effects of empowering tribal women in agriculture. This paper aims to shed light on how the agriculture sector can empower tribal women, promote gender equality, and foster sustainable agricultural development in tribal communities. It does this by conducting a thorough literature review, analysing case studies, and analysing empirical data. We hope that by sharing our results with policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders, we may shed light on how tribal agriculture might best foster empowerment and inclusion. Women in indigenous communities have an essential role in many parts of the agricultural value chain, which is vital for the survival and prosperity of these people. But obstacles including a lack of educational opportunities, rigid gender norms, and underrepresentation in decision-making impede female empowerment. The goal of this study is to find programmes and models that have helped tribal women become more independent farmers by using an interdisciplinary approach that draws on research in agriculture, gender studies, and rural development. Taking into account factors like food security, poverty reduction, and social cohesion, it will also investigate the larger community's impact of such empowerment.

Keywords: Tribal Women, Agriculture Sector, Empowerment, Gender Equality, Sustainable Development

Introduction

The empowerment of tribal women in the agricultural sector is an important endeavour that may result in a variety of positive outcomes. When it comes to agricultural development, it is very necessary to take into consideration the distinctive requirements and goals of tribal women. This is because the intersection of gender and indigenous identity presents a set of difficulties and opportunities that are one of a kind. Many times, indigenous groups are in possession of traditional knowledge and environmentally responsible farming techniques that have been handed down from generation to generation. However, their full involvement and contribution to the industry is hindered by structural constraints such as restricted access to resources, concerns over land tenure, a lack of education, and discrimination based on gender. In order to empower tribal women in agriculture, different methods are being implemented. These strategies include education and skill-building programmes, access to land and resources, financial inclusion, and the promotion of gender-sensitive policies and institutions. Enhancing the capabilities and agency of tribal

women not only contributes to the advancement of gender equality but also helps to generate sustainable development, food security, and community resilience. This introductory section lays the groundwork for a further investigation into the intricate factors that are at play within the agricultural sector with regard to the empowerment of tribal women. We have the ability to harness the potential of tribal women as catalysts for good change in rural economies and beyond by taking a comprehensive strategy that recognises their cultural history, that tackles structural injustices, and that supports inclusive growth.

Not only does the empowerment of indigenous women in the agricultural sector have the possibility of improving individual lives, but it also has the potential to transform whole communities. The creation of societies that are more egalitarian and robust may be accomplished via the active participation of women in the decision-making processes and economic activity.

Additionally, the empowerment of tribal women in agriculture is in line with wider development goals, such as the elimination of poverty, the preservation of the environment, and the promotion of social justice issues. The promotion of biodiversity, the mitigation of climate change, and the preservation of cultural legacy are all areas in which tribal women play a significant role. They are the guardians of natural resources and it is their responsibility to preserve traditional knowledge.

However, it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge that in order to empower indigenous women in agriculture, it is necessary to have a comprehensive awareness of the many experiences and identities that they possess. The development of successful interventions and policies requires the utilisation of intersectional methods, which take into account a variety of characteristics like ethnicity, caste, social class, and geographical location.

Throughout the following sections, we will dive deeper into the issues that tribal women confront in the agriculture sector, investigate successful programmes and best practices, and offer solutions for fostering the empowerment of tribal women. We have the ability to develop an agricultural system that is both inclusive and sustainable via discourse, collaboration, and coordinated action. This system will be of benefit to all parts of society, particularly those who have been marginalised and excluded throughout the course of history.

Economic Empowerment:

Engaging tribal women in agriculture can provide them with opportunities for income generation. By enabling them to participate in various aspects of farming, such as crop cultivation, animal husbandry, or even entrepreneurship in agribusiness, they can contribute to household income and reduce economic vulnerability.

Skill Development:

Training programs tailored to the needs of tribal women can equip them with valuable skills in sustainable farming practices, land management, and small-scale enterprise management. These skills not only enhance their productivity but also enable them to adapt to changing environmental conditions and market demands.

Access to Resources:

Empowering tribal women in agriculture involves improving their access to essential resources such as land, water, seeds, and credit. Addressing issues of land ownership and tenure, providing access to microfinance services, and promoting women's participation in decision-making bodies can enhance their ability to engage effectively in agricultural activities.

Nutritional Security:

Tribal communities often face challenges related to food security and nutrition. By empowering women to grow diverse crops and engage in kitchen gardening, they can contribute to improving household nutrition and dietary diversity. Additionally, promoting the cultivation of indigenous crops and traditional food practices can help preserve cultural heritage while enhancing nutritional outcomes.

Social Empowerment:

Engaging tribal women in agriculture can also lead to social empowerment by challenging gender norms and promoting gender equality within communities. As women gain visibility and recognition for their contributions to agriculture, they may also gain greater autonomy and decision-making power within their households and communities.

Environmental Sustainability:

Tribal communities often have deep-rooted connections to their natural environment and traditional ecological knowledge. By empowering women as stewards of the land and promoting sustainable farming practices, such as agroforestry, organic farming, and water conservation, they can play a crucial role in preserving biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Community Development:

Lastly, empowering tribal women in agriculture can contribute to overall community development by fostering resilience, fostering social cohesion, and promoting inclusive growth. As women become active participants in local agricultural value chains, they can also contribute to the broader economic development of their communities.

What women do in agriculture and rural employment

The agricultural and rural economies of every part of the world are significantly impacted by the considerable contributions made by women. On the other hand, it is frequently challenging to determine the precise contribution, both in terms of its volume and the type of the contribution itself, and there is a significant amount of variance between nations and areas. Within the scope of this study, an overview of the evidence concerning the roles that women play in agriculture and in rural labour markets is presented. In addition to this, it investigates the demographic shifts that are occurring in rural regions with reference to the gender makeup of the rural population.

Women in the agricultural labour force

Time usage surveys, which document the amount of time spent by men and women in various activities, and statistics on the percentage of women in the economically active population in agriculture are two forms

of data that might contribute to the measurement of the contribution of women in the agricultural labour force.

Economically active population in agriculture

The data on the economically active people in agriculture are available for a number of nations, and they offer the most thorough measurement of the engagement of women in agriculture. For the purposes of this measure, an individual is considered to be a member of the agricultural labour force if they state that agriculture is their primary economic activity. On the other hand, these statistics could significantly underestimate the number of women who work in agriculture for the reasons that will be described further below. It is also important to exercise caution when interpreting changes over time because advancements in data collecting might be responsible for some of the changes that have been seen.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Both Visora and Koregoan villages, which are located in the Wadsa block of Gadchiroli district in Maharastra, were the locations where the research was carried out. It was decided to choose the villages of Vishora and Koregoan by a combination of random and purposeful selection. The district Gadchiroli and the block Wadsa were chosen since they had the highest number of tribal females. The total number of houses in the sample is 150, and across the two villages, seventy-five households were chosen to represent each of the two villages. In order to acquire primary data, we conducted structured personal interviews with individuals, while secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, including books, journals, and websites. Using percentages and the overall amount of time spent converted into man-days, the data are analysed and tabulated in order to summarise the information. A discussion of the findings may be found in the tables that follow.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the findings, there is a discussion over the percentage of women who participate in various farm tasks, pay inequality, and the limits that tribal women face.

Table 1: General profile of respondent Tribal

S. No.	Particulars	Category	Respondents in No.	Respondents in Per cent
1.	No. of respondents	Landless	6	4.00
		Marginal	103	68.67
		Small	32	21.34
		Medium	9	6.00
2.	Total family member	Landless	26	3.87
		Marginal	465	69.29
		Small	143	21.31
		Medium	37	5.51

3.	Working member	Landless	15	2.20
		Marginal	247	36.81
		Small	82	12.22
		Medium	21	3.1
4.	Total family size	Land less	4.3	-
		Marginal	4.5	-
		Small	4.4	-
		Medium	4.1	-
5.	Total Land holding	Landless	0	-
		Marginal	0.43	-
		Small	1.16	-
		Medium	2.27	-
6.	Education	Illiterate	58	38.67
		Primary education	69	46.00
		Secondary education	21	14.00
		Graduate	2	1.33
7.	Literacy rate		-	73.20
8.	Age	Young<30	23	15.33
		Middle 30 to 50	109	72.67
		Old >50	18	12.00

Source: Primary data

TRIBAL WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN VARIOUS AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

According to the data shown in Table 2, the total number of man-days contributed by tribe members was 189.90 per year all things considered. It was revealed that marginal had the largest number of man-days, which was 244.48 man-days per year. The biggest number of man-days was seen in the transplanting process, which accounted for 46.85 man-days annually in agricultural activities. (Jaiswal, 2018) The women who worked as workers in the agricultural sector in the state of Haryana received 127.96 man-days of employment in a single year. According to Naresh (2014), the average number of days that the indigenous women worked on farms in a year and earned was 158. Small farmers were found to have the largest number of man-days required for transplanting, which was 59.39 man-days per year. According to Jaiswal (2018), the procedure of transplanting accounts for the largest total number of man-days per year in the agricultural industry. This procedure requires 24.75 man-days per year. According to the findings of Shaman et al.

(2018), the total number of man-days required for the growth of rice, jute, and mustard in terms of man-days in various activities was 379.2, 280.4, and 472.4 man-days per year, respectively.

Table 2: As a percentage of rural households' total employment (man-days)

Operations	Landless	Marginal	Small	Medium	Overall
Field Preparation	4.51	10.44	10.76	12.27	9.49
Sowing	1.07	5.16	7.26	8.3	5.45
Transplanting	21.37	56.89	59.39	49.77	46.85
Irrigation	2.43	2.70	1.93	1.32	2.09
Weeding	28.75	68.00	51.3	37.79	46.46
Fertilizer/Manure/Plant Protection	0.63	4.78	2.89	4.27	3.14
Harvesting	34.12	59.28	50.81	39.17	45.84
Threshing	1.04	5.16	5.54	4.9	4.16
Winnowing	1.15	6.44	3.81	4.5	3.97
Grading & Packaging	1.78	5.44	9.39	8.06	6.17
Transport (Loading & Unloading)	2.65	13.54	16.88	8.65	10.43
Marketing	3.51	6.65	8.38	7.66	6.55
Total	103.01	244.48	225.45	186.66	189.90

Source: Primary data

The percentage of tribal women who were involved in agricultural activities was found to be 56.62 percent, as shown in Table 3. Among all the agricultural processes, the one in which tribal women participated the most was transplanting, which holds the first place with 97.87 percent of the total involvement. This was followed by weeding, harvesting, grading and packing, winnowing, and sowing, which each had ranks of II, III, IV, V, and VI, respectively. There is less engagement in irrigation, threshing, marketing, fertilizer/manure/plant protection measures, and field preparation, which are ranked seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and eleventh, respectively. Furthermore, they are not active in transportation (loading and unloading), which are ranked eleventh. Indeed, the findings of Mohanta (2018) are consistent with the findings of this study.

Table 3: Rate at Which Tribal Women Are Involved in Farming

Operations	Per cent	Rank
Transplanting	97.87	I
Weeding	95.74	II

Harvesting	93.34	III
Grading & Packaging	62.23	IV
Winnowing	51.12	V
Sowing	44.45	VI
Irrigation	24.45	VII
Threshing	22.23	VIII
Marketing	20.00	IX
Fertilizer/Manure/Plant Protection measures	11.12	X
Field Preparation	6.66	XI
Transport (Loading & Unloading)	0.00	XII
Total	56.62	-

REGARDING THE DETAILS OF HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYMENT IN VEGETABLE CULTIVATION AND GARDENING

Table 4 demonstrates that the harvesting process accounted for the largest total number of man-days per year that were contributed to the production of vegetables (3.56), followed by the transplanting process (3.40). In the process of grading, the lowest number of man-days recorded was 0.57 per year.

Table 4: The number of man-days spent by each family tending to vegetable gardens and kitchen gardens

Business processes	Landless	Marginal	Small	Medium	Overall
Setting up the nursery	0.78	1.32	1.54	1.73	1.34
Get ready for the pitch	0.32	1.21	2.13	2.55	1.55
Sowing	0.12	1.78	1.83	2.71	1.61
Transplanting	1.78	2.76	4.93	4.15	3.40
Irrigation	0.11	0.54	0.82	0.97	0.61
Plant protection, fertiliser, and manure	0.2	0.29	0.86	0.98	0.58
Intercultural operation	1.63	2.78	3.07	3.94	2.85
Harvesting	1.43	3.79	4.38	4.64	3.56
Grading	0.27	0.53	0.64	0.86	0.57

Transport (loading & unloading)	0.73	0.84	1.49	1.23	1.07
Marketing	0.19	2.26	4.2	4.31	2.74
Total	7.56	18.1	25.89	28.07	19.90

Source: Primary data

Table 5: How many indigenous women grow their own food through kitchen gardening and vegetable plots

Operation	Per cent
Nursery preparation	100
Field preparation	68.89
Sowing	86.67
Transplanting	100
Irrigation	53.33
Weeding	91.11
Intercultural operation	93.33
Harvesting	100
Grading	46.67
Transport (loading & unloading)	28.89
Marketing	64.44
Total	77.96

Source: Primary data

According to the data shown in Table 5, the overall percentage of engagement of tribal women in the production of vegetables and kitchen gardens is 77.96 percent. In the areas of nursery preparation, transplanting, and harvesting, which account for one hundred percent of the total, the contribution of tribal women is the largest. The lowest percentage of tribal women who participated in transport (loading and unloading) was 28.89 percent, and forty percent of them participated in fertiliser, manure, and plant protection measures.

PER HOUSEHOLD EMPLOYMENT DETAILS IN DAIRY

According to the data shown in Table 6, the average number of man-days held by each household in the dairy industry is 25.55. In the dairy industry, employment opportunities for landless, marginal, small, and medium farmers constitute 5.89, 29.74, 35.7, and 30.89 man-days per year, respectively, each and every year. The maximum number of man-days that can be spent on providing feed and water is 5.42. The maximum number of man-days that small farmers are required to supply for water and feed is 7.82.

Table 6: Employment in the dairy industry as a percentage of total farmers' households (man-days)

Operations	Landless	Marginal	Small	Medium	Overall
No. of farmers	1	12	7	2	22
Cleaning of animals	0.63	3.61	4.72	4.78	3.43
Provide feed and water	1.23	7.32	7.82	5.32	5.42
Cleaning of sheds	0.78	3.97	4.34	4.37	3.36
Milking	1.29	4.36	4.29	3.62	3.39
Milk processing	0	0.53	2.1	1.44	1.02
Grazing	0.93	4.54	7.38	5.51	4.59
Marketing	0	2.03	2.72	3.64	2.09
Disposal of dung	1.03	3.38	2.33	2.21	2.23
Total	5.89	29.74	35.70	30.89	25.55

Source: Primary data

CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural advancement (including crop production, animal production, etc.), co-management of social and economic resources, and illiteracy are all issues that keep tribal women from reaching their full potential. There has to be a spot in the strategy for the tribal people's active engagement in bettering their living conditions via the complete exploration of natural resources and other potential applications. Compared to the contributions made by tribal males, this study found that tribal women are far more involved in agriculture activities. The study's findings highlight the important roles played by tribal women on marginal small and medium-sized farms. The average number of man-days spent farming by each family of tribal farmers was 250.07 per year. There was a total of 56.62% involvement of indigenous women in agricultural activities. When it came to agricultural activities, the task of transplanting had the greatest involvement percentage among tribal women at 97.78%, ranking first. Weeding came in second at 95.56%. Kitchen gardening/vegetable cultivation had the greatest involvement rate of 77.96% and rank position I among allied sectors, while dairy and poultry had participation rates of 54.05% and 46.15%, respectively, ranking second and third. They have not been acknowledged or valued for their active engagement and participation in the agricultural and related industries. Wage disparity between men and women is wider across all industries.

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