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A REVIEW OF THE INDIAN LITERATURE ON WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, India has seen an increase in study on different elements of women's lives, with early emphasis on social aspects of their status giving way to studies of women's place in the economic realm, a change spurred by the worrying decrease in female involvement. While farm pressure groups and protests have long been a part of Indian history as a result of deep-rooted structural problems such as colonial extraction, manipulative cropping patterns, corporatization of agriculture, and low investments, recent farmer protests have seen a historical trend emerge: the participation of female laborers, women farmers, farm widows, and the consequent viability of agriculture. This article examines the academic literature on women in agriculture, identifying gaps and suggesting topics for further research.

KEYWORDS: Agriculture, Farming, Indian Women, Women in Farming.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, women's role in social production has been the subject of extensive research. The proclamation of the women's decade, and thus governmental acknowledgment of the significance of researching different aspects of women's involvement in production/reproduction, sparked a worldwide boom in theoretical/empirical literature of India, between 1975 and 1985, there was a boom in study on different elements of women's lives[1]. Though the study initially focused on the social elements of women's status, the worrisome decrease in women's involvement highlighted in the Committee on the Status of Women's report turned emphasis to women's role

in economic output. Studies on the participation rate have primarily focused on attempting to (a) explain the long-term decline in female employment, (b) measure the extent of the decline, (c) comprehend the factors underlying the striking regional variations in female work participation rate, (d) assess the adequacy of existing modes of data collection on women's work, and (e) develop alternate methods of capturing women's work. Despite the agricultural sector's overwhelming significance for female employment, research on women in agriculture is a relatively recent topic of interest[2]. The existing research on female involvement in agriculture has mostly focused on the paradox of a growing proportion of female farm laborers in the female workforce despite a decreasing overall participation rate. Inter-regional differences in the prevalence of female agricultural laborers, as well as the potential consequences, have been studied. In the context of the Green Revolution plan, technological development and its effect on female employment in agriculture has become an important topic of research.

Micro-level empirical studies aiming to evaluate the employment impact on labor-use per acre have dominated research in this field. Only a few have attempted to combine the different aspects of technical change's effect on salaries and earnings, access to productive resources, and general changes in women's status as assessed by nutritional levels, mortality rates, and other factors[3]. The description, to some degree, of the gendered division of labor in agriculture has been an important part of this literature on technological development. There has been no effort to develop techniques to quantify the intensity and productivity of women's labor, to evaluate the complementarity of women's work to men's work, or to evaluate the relationship between women's work and the production structure. So yet, the findings of different research have not been knitted together into a cohesive whole. The difference between sex-sequential and sex-segregated tasks is an important typology that has emerged from the literature on African women's position in the industrial system and may be effectively integrated into the studies in India. Rural development programs have been a key approach for reducing the escalating conflicts that have resulted from the introduction of new technologies[4]. Women have had a minor role in the majority of these programs. On the other hand, programs aimed specifically at women were created due to a lack of awareness of the specific aspects of women's involvement in agriculture.

Furthermore, such programs are founded on an uncritical acceptance of patriarchal ideology's societal standards towards women. In such a scenario, collective action is the only feasible option for protecting the interests of landless women. The role of women has been largely overlooked in studies on the process of organizing the landless. There has been a rise of battles in the agricultural sector since the 1970s, with women playing a major part[5]. What effect does this involvement have on women's lives? Has women's involvement in the fight resulted in changes in the movement's slogans and style? What function do women's organizations play? What ties do they have to other social groups? All of these are crucial issues that have yet to be addressed. (a) Women's lower participation rate in the Indian economy is one of the most noticeable characteristics of their involvement. In India, a combination of class/caste hierarchy and patriarchal ideology determines the amount of female involvement in production. The amount and types of women's productive labor would be determined by a family's position in the caste/class hierarchy in a hierarchical society based on households. It's worth noting that, although the Sanskritisation process women's retreat from physical labor is significant, the difference between the taboos against 'out-door' and 'inside' labor is much more important. Aside

from the extremely wealthy landowners' families, physical labor linked to agriculture and processing is an important component of the job done by women in rural households. The majority of pre- and post-harvest labor is done in the house complex rather than in the field, and most peasant women perform a significant part of it.

While women from impoverished peasant families may also help out in the field, ladies from upper-class households would never do so. The significance of this distinction between 'outside' and 'inside' labor is clearly shown by enumeration of agricultural activities. She outlines the distances involved in these jobs, the distances permitted for women, and the boundaries beyond which the labor becomes 'outside' employment and therefore not suitable for women. The significance of this difference for the Narsapur lace-makers, for whom it translates into never-ending individual battles to preserve social status[6]. Most macro-level research on the determinants of female labor participation have failed to find any obvious relationships that women enter the labor because they need a certain level of money. The supply curve for female labor is thought to be goes on to say that a substantial decrease in family income is required before women may be attracted into the labor due to hefty household duties. This raises the issue of domestic labor: what are the activities, how are they categorized, and how much work is there? (i.e., number of hours). Despite the fact that it is well accepted that a poor woman's working day in India may last anywhere from 12 to 16 hours, there are few comprehensive studies on how women divide their time between different tasks. One thorough research was, who surveyed 127 families in three villages in Rajasthan and West Bengal over the course of a year[7].

Women in the age ranges 19-34, 34-44, and 44-70 spend more time than males in a variety of activities, according to this data. In Rajasthan, women are more likely to engage in 'visible' labor such as grass cutting, cow grazing, and milking, while in Bengal, women's employment is more homebound, with rural Bengali women spending more than half of their time on non-agricultural activities such as patchwork, weaving, and begging. In Bengal, cooking is a more time-consuming procedure than it is in Rajasthan approximately 3.5 hours' compared to 2.23 hours. In Himachal Pradesh the critical role of women in animal care women spend 3.07 hours per day on this activity, compared to 2.87 by males[8]. Women are important to subsistence production, according to the same research, since they dominate the activities of transplantation, weeding, and harvesting in their own farm labor. In a research conducted in Karnataka the significance of women's collecting activities, such as gathering fuel, which takes almost two hours per day—in fact, women spend 56% of their time on survival chores, compared to 31% for males. Women in Andhra's arid villages participate in a variety of tasks for the family's survival. Certain activities, such as collecting fuel and vegetables, are so intertwined with other chores that males are unaware of them, despite the fact that they are essential to the family's survival. This 'invisibility' of women's labor, household duties, and other responsibilities stems from a cultural ideological framework that prioritizes males as the main breadwinner[9]. It may also be a holdover from a previous societal structure in which women were mainly responsible for sustenance, thus their contribution to the family's material reproduction is not regarded as economically significant. Controlling women's mobility (i.e., sexuality) is an important part of the Indian economy's property system, and it disproportionately impacts women from rural communities. As a result, the social norms of purdah limit the possibilities of outside wage-work for these women, as well

as peasant families' willingness to recognize women as wage workers when they are pushed into such wage-work[10].

DISCUSSION ON THE PARTICIPATION OF INDIAN WOMEN IN FARMING

In other words, a woman was only recorded as a worker if the product of her duties made it into the trade network. As "in an economy that is only partially monetized, there is analytically no meaningful difference between domestic labor and agricultural activity whose output is consumed inside the house" this is just a reflection of cultural prejudice. In this context, propose that NSS's domestic labor activity code be replaced with three more specific activities: child care, cooking and washing, and fuel and water collection. This may not be enough to address the issue of undercounting or non-inclusion, since many activities' output is consumed and sold in different ways. Furthermore, how should one factor in the preparation of a mid-day lunch for agricultural workers or the cleaning of cow sheds? Surprisingly, no thorough analytical tying up" of the home economy to non-domestic social production has been done, which is necessary for any meaningful evaluation of the effect of development on women's life. As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the literature has focused on the issue of distinguishing between housework and the spectrum of activities that make up 'productive' labor. One tangible consequence of the discussion has been a heightened awareness among data collecting organizations in the nation namely, the NSS and census to give more attention to evolving ideas and methods of collection that would net in as many women workers as feasible. This is reflected in the instructions to census enumerators, as well as the more comprehensive enumeration of jobs performed by women who identify themselves as housewives in the.

NSS 32 round. When women involved in household duties i.e. activities such as fuel, feed, and water gathering are added to women who identify themselves as workers, the participation percentage of women increases. This involvement percentage is considerably higher than the men's average of 63.66 percent. More interestingly, the coefficient of variation in the female labor force participation rate across states falls from 0.452 to 0.124, leading to the conclusion that "the observed variation in female labor force participation rates across states is an artifact created by the unjustified exclusion of a considerable range of women's tasks from so-called "economic activity". Another significant result is that the percentage of women involved in poultry, dairy, and kitchen-gardening all activities indicating access to resources has a substantial negative association with the traditionally defined labor force participation rate. Unfortunately, the NSS data does not include time disposition information, which is critical for assessing these women's availability for paid employment.

Due to time and cost constraints, large-scale time disposition studies by national statistical organizations are impossible, and there is a pressing need for more region-by-region micro-studies on the model of the Jain and Chand study to better understand (a) the nature of India's domestic economy, (b) regional variations, and (c) the stresses and strains on the economy. Another feature of the participation rate is the downward tendency seen throughout censuses. One point of contention in the discussion over the reported decreasing trend is the degree to which the decrease is fictitious and just a reflection of definitional changes. Variations in women's participation rates are mainly due to definitional changes, and that there is no decrease between the 1931 and 1961 censuses, which are similar in terms of concepts and therefore coverage. Even with the post-1971 Census survey estimates, claims that the 1961 and 1971

censuses, particularly with regard to women, are not comparable. A comparison of the 1961 census estimate with NSS estimates for 1972-73 and 1977-78 shows that the participation rate of rural females did not decrease. Women had to battle hard inside the organization for their rights to own property when land was seized for redistribution. Despite the fact that their right to land had been recognized, the state refused to give it to women. Women from various villages got 150 acres of the 800 acres re-distributed after a long battle with district authorities. A subsequent battle revealed that these women's access to a fundamental productive resource provided them with the strength to fight for their identity. "Didi, previously we had tongues but couldn't talk, we had feet but couldn't walk," one lady said eloquently. We have the power to talk and move now that we have the land.

So far, the debate has focused on certain kinds of technical developments in the agricultural industry. It should be noted that the majority of the current research has focused on the effect on agricultural production employment. There has been few research on the other impacts of technological development that we discussed at the beginning of this article. Furthermore, most of the data presented so far has been in terms of labor time, with no discussion of the implications for the quantity of agricultural laborers or the stock of agricultural laborers. The total effect of new technology on female employment would be mainly determined by the degree to which it is adopted, the pace of production growth, and the new technology's employment elasticity. We discussed the class and caste aspects of female involvement in the previous section, but most of the research on technical development has been done in isolation from these factors. We'll try to tie these threads together in this section. Since the mid-nineteenth century, when the commercialization process began, there have been major changes in the social organization of production.

Many of these developments, as well as their consequences, have been the subject of the now-famous 'modes of production' discussion for an overview of the problems involved. Changes in agricultural relationships have intensified with the introduction of HYV technology. In India, for example, evictions of tenants and landlords' resumption of personal agriculture have been extensively documented. In the regions of HYV technology, there has also been an increase in the concentration of land, assets, and incomes. Overall, these changes in the agrarian system have resulted in a massive rise of agricultural laborers, which has been extensively reported. As previously stated, between 1961 and 1981, the proportion of female agricultural laborers quadrupled, while the absolute number of female agricultural laborers rose from 13.8 million to approximately 30 million. When considering the HYV technology's effect on employment, it's important to note that its use has mainly been restricted to the wheat bowls of Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, as well as portions of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and perhaps Gujarat. The highly unequal pattern of agricultural development reflects the geographical narrowness of this technology for the most recent data. Furthermore, technological development has been extensive and has only been applied in the case of a few crops, notably rice and wheat, and to a lesser degree cotton. The semi-arid regions' essential food crops have been largely unaffected.

As a result, these cautions must be considered in the discussion of the effect of HYV technology on per capita employment that follows. In contrast to the supply-side flooding of the rural labor market, available data suggests that there has been no concurrent rise in labor demand. Between 1964-65 and 1974-75, the average number of full days worked in agricultural activities decreased

for all age groups: men, women, and children the respective figures being 208 to 186 for men, 138 to 129 for women and 167 to 145 for children. Only the 1983 figures suggest a slight increase or at the very least no deterioration in overall agricultural employment for women. Until more comprehensive research is available, the focus must be on patterns from the 1970s. In addition to decreasing employment, RLE data show that the average number of days not worked owing to a lack of job involuntary unemployment has increased for men, women, and children, with women seeing the greatest rise 91 to 119 days in the case of females whereas the comparative figures for men and children were 47 to 74 and 51 to 72 respectively. One disadvantage of using RLE data is that it only includes employees whose primary source of income is agricultural wage-work, so we aren't obtaining the true overall demand for casual labor. The displacement of traditional wage-laborers by intermittent wage-workers from farming families may be contributing to the increase in involuntary unemployment. Given spotty evidence of landlords intentionally favoring own caste laborers who may also own land in some circumstances, this is a topic that needs to be investigated further. As previously stated, the HYV technology increases labor demand in some agricultural activities. This is supported by records from the Royal Labor Enquiry, which show that both women and men worked more days in transplanting, weeding, and harvesting, with women working more days. The increase of male and female labor days was not in 'gender-specific' activities. Even though weeding is a female-specific activity with the greatest increase in female labor days, male labor days grew even faster 136 per cent for female labor days compared to 143 per cent for male labor days. Similarly, in male-specific tasks such as planting and harvesting, female labor days increased faster than male labor days.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Though not exhaustive, the preceding survey of literature on women in agriculture has shown several gaps in the current literature and indicates to potential future research areas: (1) The current literature's most noticeable characteristic is its narrow emphasis on certain areas and crops. The literature has mostly focused on the Green Revolution regions of Punjab, Haryana, and the delta areas of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. However, rain-fed agriculture continues to dominate nearly two-thirds of Indian agriculture, largely unaffected by the Green Revolution. As a result, we know very little about the role of women in dry-land agriculture, or even tribal agriculture with the exception of the Telangana area. This is especially significant since these areas are among the poorest in the nation, and we know that poverty is a key factor in women being forced to work in agriculture. If we want to get an understanding for the nation as a whole, we will need to conduct studies on the women in these areas. Insofar as rain-fed agriculture is geared more towards subsistence production, such research would also offer a baseline for evaluating the effect of commercial agriculture. Men tended to take over the agricultural production cycle that had traditionally been the domain of women after a crop entered the market nexus, according to a Latin American research. Despite the extensive literature on the effect of the Green Revolution on women, there are still areas that need to be researched more and more thoroughly. One such area is the issue of mechanization's effect. Studies have shown the disparities between mechanized and non-mechanized farms. It is undeniable that agricultural mechanization in India has grown significantly during the last two decades. However, not only are some key types of mechanization such as combine harvesters mainly confined in Green Revolution regions, but they are also limited to pockets within those areas. As a result, if we

want a complete understanding of mechanization, we must examine the degree to which different kinds of mechanization are used. Only then will we be able to determine the degree to which conventional work patterns have been disrupted.

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