



WOMEN FARMERS IN GLOBALIZED ERA: POLICY AND PRACTICES

Dr. Ritabrata Tarafder
Asst. Professor, S.R.F.College, Beldanga.



ABSTRACT :

The emphasis on women's empowerment through their involvement in mainstream development projects is a recent phenomenon even though the constitution of India vowed for equal opportunity and social justice through its fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy. However, the equal participation of women in national economy and development process is a distant dream as they are either underpaid or underrepresented or subsumed in the name of their family or male counterpart. Their vulnerability become more profound as India signed the 'GATT agreement' in 1991 which opens up a galore of new opportunities but threw new challenges to the economy as a whole and women in particular. Urban side are expanding while rural side are facing the disincentives of worsening security in villages, employment opportunities, subsistence farming becoming less and less rewarding and unable in meeting their basic needs. The natural breadwinner male out-migrate leaving the women with the land he once cultivated. The positive side is that it gives women to get access to traditionally male-dominant farming practices thereby giving autonomy to some extent but if the policies and practices relating to agriculture are stagnated it will only add burden to their lives. This paper will try to enquire the condition of women farmers in agricultural policy in the realm of globalization. The paper is mostly theoretical in nature and based on secondary sources.

KEYWORDS : Women, Agriculture, Government Policies.

INTRODUCTION

India signed the 'GATT agreement' in 1991 which opens up a galore of new opportunities as well as new challenges. After twenty five years of its initiation, the issue is still relevant for academic discussion because of its multidimensional spillover effects in every sphere of the society. The good side is of course the start up of economic growth process. India is now one of the fastest growing economies of Asia experiencing a rapid growth of income. Her public investments in rural areas have significantly contributed to agricultural growth, improvement in real wages and non-farm employment. However, the negative side is that this growth processes are observed to be region specific, sector specific and also gender specific. Urban side are expanding while rural side are facing the disincentives of worsening security in villages, employment opportunities, subsistence farming becoming less and less rewarding and unable in meeting their basic needs. The natural breadwinner male out-migrate leaving the women with the land he once cultivated. Again, the possibilities of conflicts between positives and negatives open up. The positive side is that it gives women to get access to traditionally male-dominant farming practices thereby giving autonomy to some extent but if the policies and practices relating to agriculture are stagnated it will only add burden to their lives. Not only that it will induce food insecurity in close future if poorly skilled, women are increasingly adopt less intensive farming practices as well as abandoning agricultural lands. The broader objective of this paper is to examine the probable impact of the process of feminization in Indian agriculture at the backdrop

of globalization. The paper is mostly theoretical in nature but uses the techniques of tabular representation of data when needed.

WOMEN AND INDIAN AGRICULTURE IN DEVELOPMENT REGIME:

The performance of Indian agriculture through the planned development regime is broadly categorized by three phases. The first phase covering pre-green revolution period upto mid-sixties laid emphasis on development of irrigation, land reforms, community development and restructuring rural credit institutions. Despite those policy initiatives the result was far from satisfactory that called for another major break through named green revolution. The seventies and eighties were the green revolution phase. Following the implementation of macro economic reforms in the early nineties, India enters the second phase of globalization and diversification. Trade and exchange rate liberalization and reduction of protection in domestic industry led to the improvement in the terms of trade in agriculture thus providing greater incentive to private investment in agriculture. However, public investment continued to decline over the period.

Traditionally, women always share a considerable part in total labour use in crops like paddy and cotton, wheat, groundnut and vegetables in all these three phases. They work in field preparation, transplanting, threshing, maturing, harvesting. They have specialized knowledge of seed selection, storage techniques, transfer of biomass and soil fertility. But what they don't have is the rights of land they cultivate. They are generally regarded as support service providers neglecting their potential and present contributions. As per Census 2011, Sixty five percent (65%) of the total female workers in India are engaged in agriculture. Of the total cultivators (118.7 million), 30.3% are female. Out of 144.3 million agricultural labourers 42.6% are Women. In 2001, female agricultural labourers were 21% which was increased to 23% in 2011.

Now, among the important changes that have taken place over these phases that have special bearing to women's work in agriculture are the following:

- Increased cropping intensity raised the demand for labour in certain pockets;
- Intensification of market economics;
- Mechanization of some agricultural operations;
- Reduced size of land holding;
- Privatization of common property resources;
- Expansion of agriculture allied activities under the globalization process;
- Periodical government interventions.

The impact of these changes is not homogeneous in nature. Vishwanathan (1994) has provided a detailed conceptual mapping of the impact of modernization on women which will be delineated as follows. This empirical evidence did not support the earlier observation that technical upgradation always have an adverse effect on women.

Table 1: Impact of Agricultural Development on Different Classes of Women

Intervention	Landless women	Land poor women	Land owning women
<i>HYV</i>			
Seeds	Increases labour demand	Increases work load	Increases work load
Fertilizer	Displaces labour	Conserves energy	Conserves energy
<i>Mechanization</i>			
Tilling	Minimum impact	Minimum impact	Minimum impact
Planting	Displaces labour	Saves energy	Saves energy
Harvesting	Displaces labour	Saves energy	Saves energy
<i>Labour Saving Devices</i>			

Routing chores	Displaces labour	Saves energy	Saves energy
Agricultural work	Displaces labour	Saves energy	Saves energy

Source: As cited in Vishwanathan (1994).

Another study by Chen (1989) provided a detailed study on women's role in different agro climatic regions in India.

Table2: Women's Role varying by Agroclimatic Regions

Agro-eco Zone	Female Wage Labour		Female cultivator	
	Incidence	Problems	Incidence	Problems
<i>Irrigated Paddy</i> A.P. &T.N.	High	Wage differential	Moderate	No land rights
<i>Rainfed Paddy</i> W.B.,Odisha and parts of Bihar	Moderate	Wage differential	Low	Status norms/ Male migration
<i>Irrigated Wheat</i> Punjab,U.P., Haryana	Low	Segmented labour	Low	Status norms/ Male migration
<i>Rainfed Wheat</i> Maharashtra, Hill regions	High, Low	Wage differential, Restricted labour market	High, High	No land rights, No, infrastructure & male migration

Source: As cited in Chen (1989).

From the above observation we can say that women always remained as significant stake holders in Indian agriculture but the impact of development on them is very much skewed across region and class. Now let us analyze whether the impact of globalization adhere to the same trend.

WOMEN AND GLOBALIZATION CHALLENGES:

As far as women are concerned globalization may be conceived as a double edged process. On the one hand, majority of women in India and other developing countries find themselves stripped off the benefit of social security, government subsidy protection of labour rights and government safety nets. Moreover, there are possibilities of better education facilities and opportunities at the transnational sense also. Employment in technological and other advanced sectors, which have global bearing, has opened up for suitably qualified women. With changing attitude towards women, especially in the urban areas, women enjoy more egalitarian set of gender relationship; but for the underprivileged farm women globalization has affected both the quantity and the quality of work available to them.

Now, the technical conditions for different forms of agricultural production demonstrate the link between forms of production and gender relations. This relationship pattern has been portrayed in the following table.

Table 3: Forms of Production vis-à-vis Gender relation

Product	Subsistence	Extended	Capitalist
	Use value	Use & exchange	Exchange
Use of land	Extensive or intensive	Intensive	Intensive
Household labour	Dominant	Partly	None
Labour:			

<i>Communal</i>	Possible	Possible	None
<i>Wage</i>	None	Partly	Only
<i>Tech. labour</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Sexual div.</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Specialization</i>	Gender basis	Gender basis	Gender basis
<i>Output</i>	Low	Low	High

In agricultural production, in India, three forms are in simultaneous existence: subsistence production- where the product is consumed directly, commodity production- where it is exchanged and expanded production where there is investment for capital accumulation and development for productive capacity. Naturally, globalization calls for expanded production where as agricultural women in distress favour subsistence production. While social division of labour by class and caste exist between production units, sexual division of labour exists across technical, social and reproductive sphere. Now in India, all of these forms are overlaid with gender aspects; as commoditization in agriculture in globalization era expands the inputs like land, labour, water become commodities, the non-market ties become more and more undermined. Given women's inferior access to land, labour and other means of production they have less potential for direct gains in market terms. Thus, women farmers have to operate in a transitional economy where pre-capitalist domestic modes persist along with an increasingly monetized, commercial market economy. Domestic technology has neither been changed nor have market substitutes emerged to diminish the need for household labour use. In most cases, women-labour continues to be in non-contractual informal form mainly defined by family conjugal obligation. The traditional role of women in agriculture, livestock and animal husbandry, Khadi and village industries including handicrafts, handlooms fisheries, etc, is being undermined because mechanization and automation is becoming prevalent in the market based economy which will adversely affect the village based traditional economy. Trade liberalization will allow MNCS to enter into food processing and other industries which will lead to reduction in low skilled women labour. Open market economy leads to price rise in food and other basic necessities. Women who have to directly deal with family subsistence have to cope with such changes. With male migration on the increase from the rural to urban sectors, the women have to bear the triple burden of caring, farming and paid employment in the rural sector.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES:

The government, both at the central and state levels, is well aware of the fact that the globalization of agriculture requires proper focus on host of aspects like rural development, education, health, child care and proper gainful employment as well for the underprivileged at the initial stages. There are also sector wise schemes through Small Farmers Development Agency and other schemes of the Department of Agriculture, schemes of the Dairy Development Boards in the dairy sector, schemes of Forest Corporation in the forestry sector etc. The main goal of the Department of Women and Child Development is to empower women and to bring them within the purview of the mainstream development process.

But reality is harder than the nice promises offered by the different programmes of the government. If we look into the participation of women in the mainstream development programmes we will find that the acknowledgement of women as a beneficiary in development programmes is only a recent phenomenon.

Table 4: Share of Women in Mainstream Development Programmes in India

Mainstream beneficiary oriented programmes	Year	Participation of women to total beneficiary (%)
Community Development Programme	1950	17.0
Land Reform Programme (in post-independent period)*	1951 onwards	No more than 16.0
Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)	1980-81 to 1999	34.0
Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)	1989 to 1999	25.8
Employment-Assurance Scheme (EAS)	1993 to 2002	27.4
Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)	2002-08	27.9
Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY)#	1999 onwards	68.2
National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)	2005 onwards	53.0

Source: Planning Commission; Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.

Note:*Women benefited through joint pattas and also land titles for single women.

#Percentage of all women SHG to total SHG. SGSY was restructured in FY 2010-11 for implementation as Aajeevika- the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. In November 2015, the programme was renamed as Deendayal Antayodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM).

However, recently a new range of programmes come for the upliftment of women in agriculture. They are:

1. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme, Support to States Extension Programme for Extension Reforms, mainstreaming gender concerns in agriculture is being addressed by ensuring utilization of minimum 30% of resources on programmes and activities for women farmers and women extension functionaries. In order to encourage women farmers' participation in planning and decision making process, their representation in Farmers' Advisory Committee at Block, District and State level has been provided under the Scheme's guidelines.

2. Under Sub Mission on Seed and Planting Material (SMSP), the training is provided under the components of the Scheme Seed Village Programme and Quality Control Arrangement of Seeds in which women farmers are equally benefitted. State Governments are also advised to allocate adequate funds to women farmers.

3. Under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) implemented in 28 states, 30% of allocation of fund is being earmarked for women farmers. There is also an intervention under NFSM providing cropping system based training to farmers including SC, ST and women farmers to create awareness on improved technology for increasing production and productivity of crops. State governments are implementing the NFSM as per the provisions of the guideline.

4. Under the National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP), 30% of budgetary allocation is being earmarked for women beneficiaries/farmers. Concerned implementing agencies will be responsible for monitoring implementation of these components i.e. allocation of resources for SC/ST/Women beneficiaries and maintenance of database for the same.

5. Under the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM), 31 drudgery reducing technologies for women in agriculture developed by ICAR are promoted through training, demonstration and financial assistance. Women beneficiaries are also provided 10% additional financial assistance for purchase of various agricultural machines and equipments. Farm Machinery Training and Testing Institutes

conduct training on Agricultural Mechanization for women farmers on regular basis and in the year, 2014-15, 936 women farmers were trained.

6. Under the National Horticulture Mission, women are organized into Self Help Groups and farm inputs and technological & extension supports have been provided to make women self-reliant.

7. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has established a network of 645 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in the country aiming at assessment and demonstration of technologies/products and its dissemination through number of extension programmes including training of farmers to update their knowledge and skill. During 2015-16, as many as 205 women specific income generation technologies related to technological empowerment of rural women were assessed in 394 locations covering 2917 trials under the thematic areas, namely Drudgery Reduction, Farm Mechanization, Health and Nutrition, Processing and Value. Thus, the initiatives have been stated but it requires a "central mission" rather than some adhoc programmes.

BASIC QUESTIONS IGNORED: RECOGNIZING WOMEN AS FARMERS-

Broadly, Indian agricultural policy is divided into four sets:

i. institutional reform; ii. public investment policies iii. incentive policies and iv. reform and globalization policies. In the first three plans, institutional policies and public investment packages dominated. But both of the policies failed to recognize women as a farmer. Without land rights it is very hard to establish one's right on the land she cultivates. It is a well-established fact that ownership of property (land for agriculture) is an important component in determining the economic, social and political status of a person. So assigning right to property in the form of land asset must be a crucial instrument by means of which women could be empowered in agricultural sector. Land Reforms have the potentials of offering the benefits of assigning right to land to the women when distributing the surplus lands. This objective of endowment of land to women is met either by issuing single pattas in the name of the women concerned or by issuing joint pattas in the name of the women concerned along with their spouses so that the women, in case of joint patta, would have an equal right over the land assigned to them by the government. Unfortunately, there is practically no state-wise information regarding the conferment of ownership of land to women. It is to note that land reform programme has only 16% of women beneficiary (see table 4).

In this very context, Agarwal (1994) depicted a message conveyed by a poor peasant woman to the Government of West Bengal. The poor peasant said:

"Please go and ask the Sarkar why, when it distributes land, we don't get a title? Are we not peasants?"

Incentive policies focused both on inputs and output. It was found that subsidies for agricultural inputs like irrigation, credit, fertilizers, and power had been increased considerably in the 1970s and 1980s. The objective of the subsidies was to provide inputs at low prices to protect farmers' interests and encourage diffusion of new technology. By contrary, on the output side, government took a comprehensive long-term procurement as well as distribution policy in the post-green revolution period. However, such public policy didn't have greater bearing on the farm women.

Well designed policies will result in more equitably distributed opportunities to acquire endowments and defuse intergenerational transmission of inequality particularly in the context of gender. But Agarwal (2000) pointed out that the government policies are based on male perception and fallacious assumption behind the definition of family. The formal definition of family as accepted by the Government of India provides the following view of intra-family gender relations as pointed out by her are: -- "i) men are the appropriate representatives of the family in public decision making forum, ii) men are the primary producers and thus the legitimate claimants to productive resources, such as land, iii) women are largely dependents and this dependent status is unproblematic, and even desirable...". These fallacious definitions very often served as the basis of land allocation in resettlement schemes, social security schemes, and cash compensations in rehabilitation projects. For this reason, the mainstream programmes were also insensitive to women's

participation. Very often women also have the gendered beliefs about their socio-economic roles and may be reluctant to adopt prescribed behavioural change by the government. So this type of mindset should be changed first rather than adopting any soft issues.

CONCLUSION:

In a changing economy, women in agriculture are caught in a trap of reduced resources within household and inferior opportunities outside. Government intervention may emerge as a big push. It will enable them to defend their rights in situations where they are violated by the power of community, caste or village. Moreover, the government efforts can mainstream women farmers through providing resources and skill they lack but government programmes are itself sometimes biased against women and failed to understand their particular needs.

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Dr. Ritabrata Tarafder
Asst. Professor, S.R.F.College, Beldanga.