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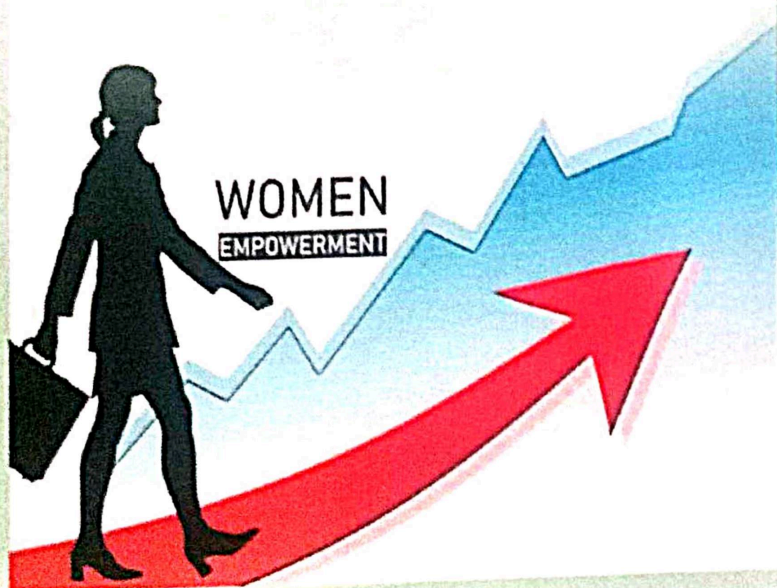
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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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“Role of Women in Agriculture Sector in Maharashtra State”

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Abstract:

In the agriculture sector, the primary focus is given to only one gender that is male. From earlier to till yet, women's role is neglected in development of agriculture sector. In fact, women are the backbone of the agricultural sector as well as rural and national economic development. Now we can say, women are playing a very vital & crucial role in agricultural development & allied fields. Women comprise 33% and 48% of the agriculture labour force and of the self employed farmers respectively. As farmers, labourers & entrepreneurs, women play an important role in the agriculture sector & make the development of rural economies. We can say that women farmers not only supporting to their families but also trying to make the country 'Sujlam Sufalam'. This paper examines the ways in which large integration through agriculture affects women. This paper finds that agriculture generates many jobs for women in agriculture sector.

Key Words: Women role, Economic Development, Agricultural Development, Sujlam Sufalam.

Introduction:

Jawarlal Nehru says, “You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women”. Therefore it is necessary to study the role of women and their empowerment in the nation. India is an agricultural country and primarily in this the focus is given to only one gender that is male. There were also seen the gender disparity in ownership of landholdings in agriculture. From earlier to till yet, women's role is neglected in development of agriculture sector. When considered in the context of agricultural sector, male farmers or male agricultural laborers are considered. But weeding, planting saplings, planting vegetables, cutting flowers, fruits, harvesting crops, the hard work of women who spend the whole year in the field is seen to be directly or indirectly ignored. Near about 7.5 crore women are playing a vital role in dairy production and livestock management. Of course, considering the importance of rural women in agriculture is an important aspect of gender relations. But it must be highlighted that in many countries the role of women in agriculture is considered only as "help".

But we are seeing that the number of women playing diverse roles like farmers, entrepreneurs, farm laborers in the agricultural sector is increasing. Women continuously contributing in the field of agriculture and allied sector, food security and their role has proved that they are the backbone of the agriculture sector.

Objectives of the study:

- 1) To study the role of women in agriculture sector in Maharashtra state.
- 2) To study the women empowerment in agriculture sector.

Research Methodology:

This study is based on secondary data. It is collected from books, journals, articles, research papers, Magazines, agriculture reports, other publications, internet, etc.

Needs & Significance of the study:

The need of this study is to focus on finding out the role of women in agriculture sector in the state of Maharashtra. Because women are involved in all aspects of agriculture, from crop selection to land preparation, seed selection, planning, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing and processing. And the second reason is we measure the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.

The significance of this study is to empower women to generate employment, self-employment, entrepreneurship, serve our farming community, contribute to agricultural development, family development and economic development of the state and country.

Role of Women in Agriculture Sector in India:



Agricultural scientist Mrinalini Manohar says, "Ever since the migration of men to cities for employment has increased, the role of women in farming has become stronger. Men moved to cities for jobs, women took up the complete responsibility of farming in villages. The women are the backbone of agricultural workforce & play a significant role in the contribution of nation's economy.

Percentage (%) of Female Operational Holdings in India:

Sr. No.	Size Group	2010-11	2015-16
1.	Marginal (below 1 hecter)	13.63	14.68
2.	Small (1 to 2 hecter)	12.15	13.44
3.	Semi-Medium (2 to 4 hecter)	10.45	11.76
4.	Medium (4 to 10 hecter)	8.49	9.76
5.	Large (above 10 hecter)	6.78	7.88
Total	All Size Groups	12.78	13.96

(Agriculture Census 2010-11 & 2015-16, Gender Perspective in Agriculture 2021-22)

On the basis of above table, the researcher shows that 12.78 (2010-11) and 13.96 (2015-16) of the operational holdings were owned by women respectively. We see that, there is rise in the participation of women in management or in the operation of agricultural holdings in the country. It is also termed as feminization of agriculture. According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) women constitute a third of India's agricultural labour force and contributes 55% - 66% to farm production. According to Oxfarm (2013), near about 80% of farm work is undertaken by women in India. However they own only 13% of the land. The latest agriculture census (2015-16) is shocking in terms of ownership of operational assets. The share of women operating asset holders in the total operating assets of Rs 146 million is 13.96% (20.38 million), an increase of almost one percentage point in five years. Owning agricultural land is not only an administrative aspect but is also associated with social, economic rights, decision-making capacity and self-confidence. This affects on their empowerment in short overall development.

Role of Women in Agriculture Sector in Maharashtra State:

Famous agricultural scientist Swaminathan describes that women were the first domesticated crop plants and thus introduced the art and science of farming. Women contribute to agriculture through many roles such as farmers, entrepreneurs and laborers. Their work in the agricultural sector generates a large amount of employment. They have made great progress in the different fields. Women also have a huge contribution in agricultural business. Women are working equal to men in each & every field with their great achievements in various fields is skyrocketing. Utilizing the diverse qualities of women in the production of goods services will help contribute to national development & make the wheels of economic growth more dynamic. In short we can say that women farmers not only supporting to their families but also trying to make the country 'Sujlam Sufalam'. Keeping in mind the participation of women in agriculture, the Central Government had established the Central Agricultural Women's Institute in Bhubaneswar in 1996.

They are really true heroes of our country as they work tirelessly for the food security. Besides, they are also motivating a large population to work for the betterment of the environment. Thus, their work and dedication for a better future should be reflected in us too.

Therefore Women's Day is celebrated as a day of respect for women and their prosperity.

Proportion of Population of Maharashtra with Rural, Urban & Agriculture sector

Particular	Maharashtra	Urban	Rural	Rural Women in Agriculture Sector
Male	5,82,43,056	2,67,04,022	3,15,39,034	77,00,259
Female	5,41,31,277	2,41,14,237	3,00,17,040	
Total	11,23,74,333	5,08,18,259	6,15,56,074	

(Source: Census 2011)

Women are playing a very vital & crucial role in agricultural development & allied fields. Women comprise 33% and 48% of the agriculture labour force and of the self employed farmers respectively. The women playing a very vital role in agriculture sector in the state of Maharashtra. Because women are involved in all aspects of agriculture, from crop selection to land preparation, seed selection, planning, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing and processing. And the second reason is we measure the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.



Dr. Neelam Patel, agriculture advisor to NITI Aayog, says, 'Most women work in agriculture but their names are not taken because the mentality of the entire agricultural system is male-dominated. It is considered a male-dominated job. Whatever success was achieved in farming, there was no social audit of it, due to which it could not be known what was the contribution of women. "Only now have incentives for women been introduced in some schemes." Recognizing the contribution of women: Recognizing the presence and contribution of women in the agriculture sector requires an inclusive approach in agricultural policy implementation.

Additionally, better extension services and training programs targeted at women could address gender inequality. The Government of India has started the Women Farmers Empowerment Project. Women will be enabled to get equal rights through this scheme. Under the Women Farmers Empowerment Project, not a single rupee budget has been sent to 23 states during 2020-21. It is a scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development which was started in 2011. In the last two years alone, the amount released under this has reduced six times. If this continues, how will women farmers progress? The central government is taking several measures to increase the participation of women farmers in the agriculture sector. In some schemes, women are being given more help than men.

Now, to the purpose of improve the current status of women in agriculture sector & increase their empowerment opportunities, the Government of India has announced the "Mahila Shetkari Sakshikaran Yojana" (MKSP) as a sub-component of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). "Although Indian agriculture has improved, there is a need to reorganize the sector to address some challenges," the Economic Report 2022-23 said. The economic report describes the structure and development of the agricultural sector. Also, loan distribution should be made cheap, productive and inclusive farmers should be encouraged. Subsidy on bank loans taken under the scheme called Agricultural Clinics & Agribusiness Centers is 36 percent for men & 44 percent for women. In agricultural mechanization, women are getting 10 percent more financial assistance on the purchase of machines. Similarly, more than 75 financial institutions are providing self-employment to rural women farmers. This means developing the skills of women & developing the food processing sector – the focus needs to be on creating agriculture-related sectors.

Conclusion:

When women are entering the field of agriculture, the most important task to maintain their continuity in this work is to hand over land property rights to them. Once women farmers are listed as primary earners & owners of land assets, it will become easier for them to get loans from banks. Also, women farmers will be able to decide to grow crops using technology and machines & sell the produce to village traders or wholesale markets. In this way their identity as real & visible farmers will be ensured. Gender-sensitive formulation of laws, programs & plans, allocation of resources, etc. can be a powerful means of achieving 'gender mainstreaming' to ensure that the benefits of development reach women as much as men. Women continuously contributing in the field of agriculture and allied sector, food security and their role has proved that they are the backbone of the agriculture sector. As farmers, labourers & entrepreneurs, women play an important role in the agriculture sector and development of rural economies. Women farmers not only supporting to their families but also trying to make the country 'Sujlam Sufalam'.

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