

Chapter-3

KVK: The Farm Women

S K Acharya, B K Mohanty and A P Kanungo

The participation and contribution of women in Indian agriculture are not only integral but also comprehensive. Farm women are participating to tune of 70 - 80% in all agriculture operations. Their participations are very much distinct in raising of seedlings, intercultural operation, weeding, harvesting and post harvest value addition activities. The other side of story is that they are getting only 15 - 20% of the return against their 70-80% contribution to the total productions. It is reality that almost all over India; they are getting less wages than their male counterpart, the reasons behind the discrimination.

- 1) Women fall victim to both class deprivation and gender discrimination.
- 2) In most of the states, the female literacy rate is below the male literacy rate and hence a cultural subordination has been crippled into.
- 3) They have got a poor level of capacity building because they are less trained and less accessed to.
- 4) The technology used in Agriculture is grossly unsuitable for women.
- 5) The women are constrained by the injudicious stress of domestic chores and trimmed recess. Hence, it has been very difficult for them to get involved in any training Programme by sparing their family responsibility.

The Krishi Vigyan Kendras have got clear cut mandates for up gradation farmwomen in term of capacity building through training, demonstrated campaign and sensitization programme. While child nutrition and mother care have become the prime issues to the nation, the KVK are organizing different vocational training for the women. Some of the trainings are specially designed for the women so that they can earn and sustain their family through remunerative enterprise like vermi compost, kitchen garden,

KRISHI VIGYAN KENDRA: THE LIGHT HOUSE

ISBN: 978-81-930585-6-5

11

tailoring, fabric, preservation of fruits and vegetable/nursery, floriculture, pisciculture ornamental fish etc.

3.1 Effect, impact and outcome

Subsequent to big bang, the space started expanding, time started ticking on. So, the effect of big bang is the creation of time and space. The outcome is expansion of space towards infinity.

In social science the effect is the output that just has come out. It is primarily a physical parameter; for example the effect of certain millimeter of rainfall can be perceived in terms of certain quintal of grain harvested.

The effect of KVK functioning on the surrounding farmers can be estimated through certain number of technology transferred to them. The impact of KVK can be estimated either in terms of change of adoption levels or creation of technology gap, generally after five years of any functioning.

The outcome of KVK functioning has been perceived the long term contextual and structural change, for example, change in social status, change in behavioral disposition and change in level of technology socialization. Here in this study, the impact of KVK has been perceived as the midterm effect on the surrounding farmwomen in terms of cognitive changes, motivational pursuits and operational proficiency.

Women are the backbone of rural economy. They play a significant role in domestic and socio-economic life of the society. National development is not possible without developing this important and substantial segment of any society. To achieve anything, women are obliged to surmount most of the obstacles. The difficulty in gaining access to land, credit and agricultural inputs hampers their potential as producers who feed the world. Barriers of tradition and discrimination have limited their access towards technology, training and education. Moreover, the extension approaches and strategies usually followed for transfer of technology to women are not keeping match with their specific needs and problems. The World Food Summit convened by FAO in 1996 drew up a plan of action to address the major impediments to universal food security. It also called for the full and equal participation of both the genders so as to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women.

The majority of the world's agricultural producers are women. Out of 6514.75 million present world population, women constitute 48.98%. In our country, women constitute 48.26% against the total population of 102.86 crores and 72.69% women live in rural areas. Similarly, out of the total population of 3.6805 crores in Orissa, 49.30% are women and 85.64% remain in rural areas. This indicates that the women constitute almost half of the total population. They produce over fifty percent of the food that is grown world wide. Women are usually responsible for food processing and also make a major contribution to food storage, transportation and marketing although they seldom control the revenue generated. In almost all societies, rural women tend to work longer hours than men.

It is now recognized all over the world that, the status of women in society, both in developed and under developed countries continues to be inferior to men. In spite of their crucial role in the family and household economy, women have not given equal rights in social, economic and political fields. In third world countries, the contribution of women in agriculture is quite significant compared to men. Women are generally involved in wide range of farm operations in one way or other. Further, their farm activities are also changing due to mounting demographic pressure on land as well as environmental degradation resulting in increased rural poverty and male migration off the farm sector in search of employment. Therefore, improvement in the status of woman has now been recognized all over the world as an important aspect of national progress and development. It is also felt that, the problem of poverty can not be tackled without providing opportunities of productive employment to women for providing necessary economic base and improve their social status. But, it is still a fact that women in many countries are facing discriminating attitude in varying degrees on ground of sex in employment and working conditions.

It is found that, a woman continues to bear the major load of the household work. Her primary role is often viewed by the society as housewife. This is very much visible with rural households. While women bear the major burden of housekeeping, functional decision making powers did not necessarily rest with them, especially in the areas of major capital investment. The other most common feature is the differential treatment to the female child in the break down of allocation of resources i.e. food, clothing, expenditure on education and so on.

In the agricultural production process, end users or farmers are very important. The farming community comprises three distinct groups - farmers, farm women and young farmers including boys and girls. Participation of women in agriculture in developing countries has been silently appreciated without much recognition and recording their contributions. They have not been prepared for active involvement in the development process. By and large, they are remained as invisible workers. Since 1970s, a global concern for the participation of women in general and farm women in particular has been expressed in so many ways aiming at improving the working environment and raising their standard of living.

Despite the recognized facts and a considerable amount of development, women are still restricted in their role as farmers by unequal rights as well as access to and control over resources especially land. For example, fewer than 10 percent of women farmers own land in India, Nepal and Thailand. In Kenya, although 98 percent of women work full time in agrarian sector, only 5 percent have land ownership titles. In addition, women still carry out their work without much help from agricultural support mechanisms such as extension agencies, input suppliers as well as credit institutions. Women farmers receive less than 5 percent of extension services worldwide.

In many parts of the world today, there is an increasing trend towards what has been termed as the 'Feminization of Agriculture'. Men are becoming increasingly absent from farms in rural areas. In the era of economic change, men are migrating from rural areas to towns and cities in search of paid employment. Women are therefore taking more and more responsibilities for agricultural production. Besides working for longer hours than men in the agrarian sector, women have also been largely responsible for aspects like family food security, maintaining the bio-diversity through preservation of seeds etc. Their contribution has been substantial towards improving rural economy. The women who constitute almost half of the total population are seen as strong, potential work force to be tapped in strengthening the economy. Feminization of agriculture being an important issue in this direction needs active participation of women in agriculture as worker, manager and entrepreneur. But development among the vast segment of women population have not been taken care due to male dominancy, perpetuation of socio-cultural restrictions and non-realization of women's capabilities to produce by the planners and policy makers. What

we see today, women are embodiment of dependence characters and multi-purpose roles without social recognition.

India is the second largest country in the world in terms of population. It has also a large segment of women population. Nearly 80 percent of the economically active women are engaged in agriculture, out of which nearly 54 percent are classified as agricultural labourers and 37 percent are women cultivators. Indian farming community represents a complex social system including its heterogeneous nature, economics and social inequalities, class and caste differentiation, traditional social structure and system, regional imbalances in development, underdeveloped village institutions, low level of literacy and a relatively fixed and expected role of women.

Women in Indian society had a distinct place of honour in ancient times. She was treated with great respect for her feminine virtues. Maitriyee, Gargi, Seeta, Savitree are still held honour and symbols of intelligence, wisdom, purity and endurance. Women in India by tradition and culture have, for generations, taken a self efficiency role. They have been kept down and always been dependent on father, brother and husband. Being women, the responsibilities of motherhood, household work, maintenance of social relations, obligations, socialization of children, care of aged and young, observations of rituals etc. are typically associated with them.

Indian women have a multifunctional personality. She is the pivot around whom the whole household revolves. Hard working and dedicated, she shares most of the duties and responsibilities of a family. House keeping, child rearing, assisting in agriculture and industry, cattle rearing are parts of her duties. Most of the rural women do not find a place in the planning & mechanism of development. Though women make a substantial contribution to the family income through home-based activities, this is usually treated as supplemental and hence it goes unnoticed. Since a long time, it is generally believed all over the world that the place of women is at home. However, this institutional belief has been radically transformed particularly since the beginning of the twentieth century due to political, economical and social changes in the attitude and outlook of the people towards women and their role in the society.

Agriculture, being the backbone of the Indian economy, the status of women in the economic front has to be primarily viewed in relation to the major trends affecting agricultural sector. Some of the data indicating the

economic status of rural women reveals that women suffer from certain inadequacies and limitations. The unpaid work, the women do such as collection of fuel, fodder, water and minor forest produce for sustenance and household maintenance, for long, has been considered as non-economic activities. The custom and social norms create a barrier in the participation of women in areas where men are important actors. Social attitudes continue to project male. The inequalities inherent in our traditional social structure based on caste, community and class have a very significant influence on the status of women in different spheres.

Socially accepted rights and expected roles of women, norms governing their behaviour and of others towards them vary among different groups and regions.

The Constitution of India provides adequate safe guards for the socio-economic development of the disadvantaged sections such as women, SC, ST, as well as other backward communities. The level of development of these sections is not in desired extent and direction despite plenty of developmental programmes implemented during the last five decades. More than fifty percent of these sections have been living in the vicious circle of poverty due to skewed distribution of developmental opportunities and low level of motivation and aspiration for better future.

Over a period of time, most of the asset less families of these disadvantaged sections have developed a dependency syndrome expecting government to do everything for their development. Women are mostly considered as weaker than men and hence they require social and economic protection. This attitude has constrained their mobility and consequently lack of opportunities for development of their personality. So, women have lagged behind in the field of education, self-development and employment. Their work is also generally undervalued in economic terms.

Women constitute a significant part of our work force in agriculture, which tops above all sectors of our economy in its contribution of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As per the 2001 census, out of the total population of women 72.6 percent live in rural areas and nearly 97 percent of rural women are under below poverty line (BPL). Women also make roughly 75 percent of total labour force. Similarly, out of the total working women in our country 32.51 percent are cultivators and 39.43 percent are the agricultural labourers. It is also noticed that poorer the families, the

greater is the dependency on women's economic productivity. Enhancing their economic productivity is an important strategy for improving the condition of the people of India particularly families below poverty line (BPL). There is also a significant gap between the rural women's potential and productivity due to several social, cultural and religious taboos.

Agriculture is the main base of the economy in Orissa. Nearly 75 percent population depends on this age-old profession for their livelihood. Farming operations are invariably carried out by all the members of the family and each one has definite duty and responsibility. But the role and contribution of women members is not documented in spite of its significance. The engagement of women on farm other than usual household responsibilities has been interpreted in social context rather than economic. At the same time, small holdings dominate agriculture in Orissa and there is a greater division of work in agricultural production. This is again related to the deep-rooted cultural norms and behavioural pattern in the rural society. Apart from their daily routine of house keeping activities, farm-women form a large number of agricultural activities which are also location, time and tradition specific.

In the process of agricultural modernization, major attention so far has been devoted to the farmers overlooking the role of farm women. However, there is an increasing realization in recent years regarding the central role, the farm-women plays in agricultural production. She can make significant contribution not only through farm operations, she performs directly but also through many farm decisions in which she assists. Yet, the status of farm women in general is much lower than that of their male counterparts largely because of the customary male dominance in the society, inherent shyness of women, lack of opportunities and poor accessibility to modern technology. The role of farm-women as producer of farm commodities remained almost completely neglected. Therefore, there is a direct need to create congenial atmosphere in social, economic and cultural spheres for their development through empowerment.

Empowerment is a process where by women become able to organize themselves to increase self reliance to assert their independent right to make choice and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination (Suguna. 2002). It is the process by which individuals, organizations and communities gain control and mastery

over social and economic conditions (Satapathy, 2003). In a predominantly agrarian country like ours, nearly 75 percent of economically effective women are engaged in agriculture in comparison with 63 percent of their male counterparts. Almost 50 percent of rural female workers are agricultural labourers and 37 percent are cultivators. At the same time, around 70 percent of total farm work is performed by women only.

According to census report, there is an increase of 11.67 percent of male cultivators and 31.48 percent male agricultural labourers in our country from 1991 to 2001, but the corresponding increase for women cultivators and women agricultural labourers is 45.23 and 36.15 percent respectively. The total female work force in agricultural sector is almost 78 percent. This shows the contribution of female work force in farm sector in our country. Coming to Orissa, 2001 census report revealed that, 24.62 percent of the total workers are female and 27.1 percent are rural female worker