

INTRODUCTION

“Be the Change You Wish to See in the World”

- *Mahatma Gandhi*

The arrival of the new millennium has been heralded by numerous vision documents about the long-term prospects of the Indian economy. Development strategies and policies, particularly those focused on agriculture and rural areas, would be a critical factor influencing the agricultural scenario as it actually unfolds in the decades to come (Rao and Jeromi, 2000). Agriculture in India is the backbone of the country and is regarded as the largest sector of the country's economic activity. About 80 percent of the Indian population, either directly or indirectly, depends on agriculture (Padmaji and Reddy, 2003).

Agriculture plays an important, though declining role, in the economy. Its share in overall GDP fell from 30 per cent in the early nineties, to below 17.5 per cent in 2006. During 2009-2010, agricultural sector contributed to approximately 14.6 per cent to the India's GDP (at 2004-2005 prices). The share of agriculture and allied sectors in GDP is estimated to be 14.2 per cent in 2010-2011 (Economic-Survey, 2011). Despite declining share of agriculture in the economy, majority of workforce continue to depend on agricultural sector for employment and in rural areas dependence on agriculture is higher, as nearly 75 per cent of rural population is employed in this sector (Sharma, 2007). Agriculture and its related goods contribute 38 per cent in the total exports of the country (Anon., 2007).

Rural women form the most important work force in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India. Agriculture, the single largest production endeavour in India, is increasingly becoming a female activity. Agriculture sector employs 4/5th of all economically active women in the country. Forty eight per cent of India's self-employed farmers are women. Tribal women are found to be lagging in most development indicators and their occupations largely agriculture based (Ghosh, 2008).

Agriculture in India is still a family enterprise where the family participates as a unit and the share of women is half of the human resource in

farming. The social, economic and cultural conditions of the area determine women's participation in home and farm activities. It also varies from region to region and within a region their involvement varies among different farming systems, castes, classes and socio-economic status (Borgohain and Akand, 2011).

Agricultural labourers, mostly landless, constitute the poorest segment of the Indian agricultural population. They belong to the economically backward and oppressed section of the society. They mainly belong to the scheduled castes and other backward communities. They are basically unskilled and unorganized and work in farms of prosperous big farmers as casual workers on wages for a larger part of the year (Padhi, 2007).

Agriculture continues to play an important role in most non-industrial economies, as a major contributor to the country's export earnings and as a source of employment and livelihood. Official statistics often underestimate the value of women's work and their overall contribution to national wealth. Women continue to provide a large proportion of the labour that goes into agriculture (Bello, 2003). FAO's estimate shows that women represent a substantial share of the total agricultural labour force, as individual food producers or as agricultural workers and that around two-thirds of the female labour force in developing economies are engaged in agricultural work (Garcia, 2004).

Today, women play a vital role in agricultural management and production activities in addition to their responsibilities at home. They are the backbone of the agricultural workforce. They do the most tedious and backbreaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and homes (Sidhu, 2011). Women are involved in all aspects of agriculture and allied enterprise from land preparation to processing and marketing. Many households in rural areas are headed by a single parent, usually a mother because men migrate with their limited literacy skills to urban areas for secondary jobs leaving the illiterate women behind with the land and children leading to 'feminization' of agriculture. These women despite the fact that they are performing several farm activities, their roles have been over looked by agriculturists and policy makers. A major reason for the failure of

developmental planning lies in treating women as “end products” rather than “agents of changes”. A substantial part of this mystification has occurred because rural women are treated as “farmers’ wives” and not as “farm women” (Reddy and Gidda, 2003).

According to the Census of India (2001) there are nearly 12 million cultivators, 107.5 million agricultural labourers and 6 million other farm workers engaged in livestock, forestry and plantations. Of the total agricultural labourers, 38.0 per cent were female and 61.9 percent, male workers.

Women’s unpaid work on family farms is not reflected in national accounts. As a consequence, this non-economic or unpaid work goes unnoticed and is not reflected in the design of agricultural policies. This neglect of women’s ‘invisible labour’ contributes to the marginalization of women in the economy. However, women’s work is often integral to the functioning of smallholder farms by carrying out sustenance activities and participating in post-harvesting. Furthermore, in many countries women are also the main providers of food for their household (Garcia, 2004). Indian woman, especially in the poverty group spends above five hours per day more than the Indian man in work, including the visible burden of family. As per recent findings, women in India are major producers of food in terms of value, volume and number of hours worked (Dash, 2000).

Today, 44 per cent of world’s food is produced by women which indicate the important roles of women in farming. Rural women in general and farm women in particular are engaged in different activities. Despite their substantial contributions, women continue to be marginalized, undervalued and unrecognized. There is a tendency among most administrators and policy makers to see “men as farmers” and women as “farmer’s wives” and highlight their ‘supportive role’ rather than ‘productive role’ (Gupta, 2008). Except for ploughing, harvesting, threshing and some time grazing the livestock, which is symbol of male domination, rest of all other activities in agriculture and animal husbandry are in the exclusive domain of women and thus their contribution in total work input of agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry is more than 85 percent (Negi and Rawat, 2010). Most of the women perform various types of work for their livelihood and agriculture is considered as the biggest

unorganized sector where large number of rural women take part actively (Reddy and Gidda, 2003).

Most of the world's farm and plantation workers are women. They have been the most affected by the restructuring of agriculture and agricultural trade as well as the intensive use of toxic chemicals. They suffer from chemical induced illnesses and greater deprivation within families. Women agricultural workers face greater health problems due to the increased use of chemicals to boost farm production and the greater intensity of work on the farm and at home to bolster dwindling incomes (Nair, 2009). The occupational health and safety of farmwomen is the most neglected area in agriculture and animal husbandry. The technological empowerment of farmwomen with occupational safety and better work output is the need of the day (Badiger and Huilgol, 2003).

Rural women do not benefit as they should from training and extension for the improvement of their skills, working conditions and productivity. Compared to urban women, rural women suffer from relative high illiteracy rate and workload of domestic and agricultural tasks that limit their participation in training sessions and extension. Extension staff is still predominantly male, which generally limits communication, for cultural reasons: the number of females graduated in agriculture degree is still small and few of them hold decision making positions. Female extension agents generally work in offices and often deal with traditional home economics matter. Rural women's access to credit for investment in agriculture and allied activities is still limited. Schemes adapted to the local context including agricultural banks, co-operatives and social funds for development are still being experimented. There is no specific extension programme on agriculture targeting women. The new technologies are mainly used by men in medium and large units, while women use traditional practices. The new technologies focus on the large scale units while it was demonstrated that women who work in small scale units, participate for more than 50 per cent to the food production in the world. The existing environmental associations, the number of NGOs dealing with gender in agriculture in particular is weak (Salah, 2000).

Lal (2011) had mentioned in his study that the obstacles that hindered the growth of women in agriculture sector as only few women were holding agricultural productive resources such as land, animals and machinery. Women did not participate in decision making process, either inside or outside the home. Women performed all un-mechanized agricultural tasks and performed multiple tasks, which added more burdens to them. Women workers in agriculture are highly illiteracy rate and are dropouts. Women earn fewer wages, especially in joint, informal and private sector. Women are not aware of their legal rights. Women farmers are frequently ignored in the developing strategies and policies. In most of the developing countries, both men and women farmers do not have access to adequate resources but women are even more constrained because of cultural, traditional and sociological factors.

FAO defined Gender as 'the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution' (FAO, 1984, 2003). This definition, gender issues and its focus on women brought the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs. Gender relations affect household security, family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life (Baumann, 2000).

The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development sets forth a number of goals, strategic objectives and actions to be taken for the advancement of gender equality and has specific suggestions for the agricultural sector. In addressing sustainable development, the necessity is highlighted on mainstreaming women's concerns into effective agricultural and rural development policies, plans and programmes in order to ensure household and national food security and an adequate livelihood for rural women. Extensive participation of women in all aspects of agricultural production, the mainstreaming of gender into the agriculture sector is a key strategy not only for the promotion of equality between men and women, but

also for sustainable agricultural and economic growth in Commonwealth countries (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008).

Gender roles are visible not only in the division of work but more significantly in the allocation of wages, rewards and recognitions in the society. Certain expectations and roles are taken for granted for women simply because of the fact that they are women while others are considered fit for men. This clearly shows the gender bias institutionalized by the society. The same differentiation holds true for children. By virtue of being born female, certain expectations and roles are ascribed to girls, which are very different from the consideration towards boys (Salah, 2000).

Gender roles in agriculture vary from one country to another and even within the region. The share of women active in agriculture is thirty per cent. However, their real participation is largely underestimated because of the definition for economic activity used in census and national income accounting. The definition does not include family work in agriculture as an economic activity, because it is not recommended. They do not earn salary. In reality, the work that women perform in agriculture, finds up to 90 per cent in certain countries in certain villages or areas (Salah, 2000).

Mainstreaming gender is an important component of the Policy Framework for Agricultural Extension (PFAE) developed by the Ministry of Agriculture (Government of India). The Indian National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) has stressed the need to mainstream “Gender Perspectives” in the process of development and envisages women specific interventions, where there are currently gaps in policies and programmes. The National Agricultural Policy of India (2000) has highlighted the need for incorporating gender issues into the agricultural development agenda to provide recognition of women’s role as farmers and producers of crops and livestock, users of technology, active agents in marketing, processing and storage of food and agricultural labourers (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2003).

The European Council views that gender mainstreaming is to promote gender equality by improving policy processes rather than to tackle the market

forces underlying the gender inequalities that lie outside the realm of policy-making (Mosesdottir, 2011). Gender mainstreaming involves the full participation of women in all aspects of life and addresses access issues to increase women's participation in sectors where they are weakly represented (Gibb, 2001). Gender mainstreaming helps to understand the difference roles of women and men within the community. Gender mainstreaming thus becomes necessary for taking into account the social concerns in the community as they act as catalyst for gender-just training. Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally (Douma, 2006).

Women are critical to the well-being of farm and households. Aside from raising children, women are expected to prepare all meals, maintain the homestead and assist in crop and animal production, all the while tending to the general health of their families. Perhaps, ironically, it is because they have so many responsibilities that they have been overlooked by agriculturalists and policy makers (Mundy, 2011). Women's farming roles are usually gender differentiated that is, certain tasks or responsibilities are handled only or mostly by the women and may vary by crop (Reddy and Gidda, 2003).

The women irrespective of caste and tribe are the efficient workers and skilled labourers. Starting from sowing to weeding and from harvesting to threshing, women play a crucial role. Right from sunrise or before it rises, women starts their journey from home to the agricultural field. They engaged themselves whole heartedly all round the day in agricultural field during Khariff and Rabi seasons. A woman is more conscious about taking care of the crops and other agricultural operations. She does not take rest until and unless the crops are harvested and brought home. Apart from agricultural operations, a woman is the sole active person in family activities too. She engages herself in cooking, household work and serves her family members from early morning till evening before and after the agricultural work. In general, woman works for more than 12 hours a day for her family purpose (Behera, 2010).

Tribal women represent more than 50 per cent of the population living in the hilly regions and actively participate in the social, cultural and economic activities and are major contributors to labour for agriculture, livestock, domestic and forest resource collections/utilization systems etc. Women living in the mountain regions work harder and for longer hours than men and have vital role in conservation and management of sustainable ecosystem (Chandra *et al.*, 2009). While women workers share all the vulnerabilities of men of their own class, they have added disadvantages which make them more vulnerable. They have even less assets, most of them are illiterate and unaware of their rights as workers or as women and the seasonality of rural employment makes them even more dependent on their employers as the source of work or loans in times without work. For women, such loans may represent a life and death choice for their children and themselves. The same compulsion also makes them work more for fewer wages and forces many to accept sexual harassment from potential employers or their agents (Mazumdar, 1990).

Today, majority of the tribal areas, which overlap with the country's major forest areas, are also areas with the highest concentration of poverty. Agriculture in tribal areas is predominantly rain fed and mono-cropped. Horticulture is marginally developed in the tribal areas with the present area under fruits, vegetables and spices accounting for only about 2.5 percent of the cultivated area. Women participate in all agricultural operations except ploughing and sowing of paddy, contributing between 70 to 80 percent of the total labour. In spite of favorable resource conditions, tribal regions perform poorly in terms of infrastructure, returns from agriculture and almost all human development indicators (Nisha, 2008).

Tribal women performing agricultural operations have been classified into four categories:

1. The landless agricultural labourers
2. Women cultivating their own piece of land and also working as wage labourers
3. Women working in their own land
4. Women supervising the agricultural operations performed by labourers (Padmaji and Reddy, 2003).

Tribal people depend on the forest for their livelihoods, including the non-timber forest products. They obtain foods such as fruit and oil from forest and necessary items for their home such as bidi, brooms, baskets, mats, rope, home-made toothbrushes, leaf plates and medicines. Some forest products are also sold for a small cash income. This work is hard and is made more difficult by the fact that women often walk a long way to get to the forest, suffer scratches from thorny bushes and work in the heat without water (Vettivel and Kumar, 1997).

Tribal women spent considerable time in collecting fuel wood, lac, honey, silk cocoon, medicinal herbs and fruits as part of their domestic chore but since they also often sell the surplus if possible, the border between household and commercial motivation becomes extremely porous (Ghosh, 2008). Women's agricultural work takes place largely from July to November (five months). The first peak period of work in agriculture is June or July through August whence from morning until night, women engage in breaking up sods of earth, sowing and weeding. The second peak period is October through November, when women are involved in harvesting, drying, pounding and dehusking paddy. Agricultural lands are often far away from homes and men and women must leave for work early in the morning, usually without having food (Vettivel and Kumar, 1997).

The husbands are mainly responsible for land preparation, spraying, staking, tying plants to stakes, hauling, and crating or "sacking" the produce. In larger farms, wives take on the added tasks of hiring, supervising and paying the field laborers. In some cases, those with capital become traders and buy other farmer's vegetable produce to sell them in the city market and they become as small-time money lenders to obtain an exclusive right to buy the lendeer's produce. Over 80 per cent of the tribals work in the primary sector against 53 per cent of the general population. About 45 per cent are cultivators against 32.5 per cent of the general population. According to available data, the number of tribal who were cultivators, declined from over 68 per cent to 45 per cent in 2001, whereas agricultural labourers increased from about 20 per cent to 37 per cent, an indication that tribals are steadily losing their lands (Awais *et al.*, 2009).

Tribal women farmers are recognized for their fundamental role in producing food and thus ensuring food security for the household. Food security exists, according to Clay (2002), when family members have physical, social and economic access at all times to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Rice production in the country has long been a women's domain, hence seed selection, uprooting and transplanting of seedlings, and storing of grains are part of their major role (Garcia, 2004). Moreover, studies on women's involvement in rice and vegetable production show that the majority (93 per cent) of women also spray pesticides (Rengam, 1994). In commercialized vegetable production, recent data (Javier and Catacutan, 2005) reveals the women's principal tasks to consist of planting, weeding, harvesting, and sorting the size/quality of the produce.

Tribal women work as men's partners in agriculture, yet their status remains the same. Tribal women work very hard for the livelihood of the family but live a poor life, in spite of their many contributions in the house and on the farm. Role of tribal women is important for the improvement and progress of tribal. They are the pivot of tribal agriculture, performing many household and agricultural jobs. Without them, tribal welfare in agriculture is meaningless (Awais *et al.*, 2009).

There is increasing realization of the critical role of women in agriculture and of the fact that empowerment of women is necessary for bringing about sustainable development at a faster pace. They still continued to share a number of farm operations with men from early ages of invention of agriculture to the present day of modern agriculture (Chauhan, 2011). However, much is needed to be done to ensure that women get direct benefit particularly those in underdeveloped areas and underprivileged communities. The farming systems are more complex in resource poor, rainfed areas and socio-economic factors also influences the production systems. Illiteracy, lack of awareness, low level of skills, suppression and lack of appropriate technology, extension and training programmes are the main factors which need to be tackled for mainstreaming of tribal women in agriculture.

Only gender mainstreaming can ensure that attention to gender equality is a central part of all agriculture and rural development interventions in areas such as research, policy advice and legislation as well as in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects. With this background the present study “**Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture in the Selected Tribal settings: A Comparative Analysis of Tamil Nadu and Manipur States**” was taken up with the overall objective:

- To understand the prevailing status of gender concepts among the tribal farm women in the tribal settings of Tamil Nadu and Manipur States and initiate efforts to enhance and sustain gender mainstreaming efforts in their agriculture and allied activities.

Specific objectives: To

- know the socio-economic profile of tribal farm women in the selected settings.
- study the participation of women in agricultural operations and analyse the gender differential performance.
- identify the training needs of tribal farm women.
- train the selected tribal farm women in agriculture and gender issues.
- assess the awareness created among the tribal farm women on agriculture and gender issues.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses framed for the present study would help in scientifically interpreting the findings of the research work. They are as follows:

- There is no difference in participation in agricultural operations of tribal farm women of Tamil Nadu and Manipur states.
- There is no difference in participation in allied operations of tribal farm women of Tamil Nadu and Manipur states.
- There is no difference in decision making pattern in agricultural and allied operations among the selected tribal farm women of the two states.
- There is no difference in the awareness on agriculture and gender issues before and after the awareness training programme.

Agriculture being the prime occupation in India, and woman form the most integral part in this endeavor discusses her contribution in agriculture needs to be focused. Several seminars and conference both at National and International level have deliberated much about the women's role in agriculture and allied activities, similarly print and visual media expose women's participation to a great extent. But still, gender discrimination persists in several parts of the country specially with tribal women. Studies like this, though carried out in a micro level can give a clear and vivid picture about 'gender mainstreaming' in both the States that is Tamil Nadu and Manipur located far apart in the Indian continent. The outcome of this study may be of use to the policy makers for framing appropriate programmes and meaningful schemes to the targeted community, i.e., Tribal Farm Women.