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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LIFE OF TRIBAL WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURER IN GAJAPATI DISTRICT OF ODISHA: A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This paper emphasizes on the present situation of women in agriculture and suggests possible roadmaps to mainstream women in development process. Women's contribution in any economy is inevitable. Their roles vary region to region, work to work, state to state, and country to country. The poor tribal farmers that make use of low cost renewable inputs family and community labour for solving the food crises through their traditional practice or traditional wisdom which need documentation make the future agricultural sustainable practices. According to Swami Vivekananda "There is no chance for welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved". The poor tribal are practices own ideas and own traditionally agricultural wisdom though the people had changed their cultivation pattern from traveller's cultivation to settled cultivation, but some of the practices have remained unchanged among many group of farmers. The poor tribal or valleys tribal are practices own ideas through their cultivators land like a jhoom cultivation, traveller cultivation and mixed cultivation. On This paper identified that women agricultural labourers are practiced on their own cultivators land i.e. highest in sowing, weeding, picking, threshing and transplanting.

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Introduction:-

Agricultural labourers constitute the most neglected class in India rural structure. Their income is low and employment irregular. Since they possess no skill or no training, they have no alternative employment opportunities. Socially a large number of agricultural labourers belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Therefore, they are a suppressed class. They are not organised and they cannot fight for their rights. Because of all these reasons their economic lot has failed to improve even after four decades of planning. According to the national commission on labour "an agricultural labourer is one who is basically unskilled and unorganised and has little for its livelihood, other than personal labourer. The classification of agricultural labourers can be divided into four categories i.e. (i) landless labourer, who are attached to the land lords. (ii) Landless labourers, who are personally independent and who work exclusively for others. (iii) Petty farmers with tiny bits of land who devote most of their time working for others. (iv) Farmers who have economic holdings but who have one or more of their sons and dependents working for other prosperous farmers. The main features, characterizing Indian of Agricultural labourers i.e. agricultural labourers are scattered, agricultural labourers are unskilled with lack training, next is unorganised sectors mean-agricultural labourers are not organised like industrial labourers, they are illiterate and ignorant. Another is low

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social status mean- most agricultural labourers belong to the depressed classes, which have been neglected for ages, they are low caste and depressed classes have been socially handicapped and they had never the courage to assert themselves. In some parts of India, agricultural labourers are migratory, moving in search of jobs at the time of harvesting (*Padhi, K: 2007*).

The status of women in a society is a signification reflection of the level of social justice in that society. Women's status is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education, health and fertility as well as their roles within the family, the community and society. In tribal communities, the role of women is substantial and crucial. They constitute about half the total population but in tribal society women are more important than in other social groups, because they work harder and the family economy and management depends on them. Even after industrialization swamped the tribal economy, women continued to play a significant role. Collection of minor forest produce is done mostly by women and children. Many also work as labourers in industries, households and construction, contributing to their family income. Despite exploitation by contractors and managers, tribal are more sincere and honest than non-tribals. The tribal women face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders. Tribal women have adjusted themselves to live a traditional life style in the local environment and follow occupations based on natural resources.



Tribal women known for their deep association with the forests are an economically active lot but nevertheless, they suffer disproportionately more from illiteracy, poverty and social abuse. Tribal women are found to be lagging in most development indicators, their occupations largely agriculture based, their integration with the forest related economic activities at low level and their manufacturing enterprise in need of modernization (*Ghosh,N:2007*). The tribal people's dependence on the forests is well studied and noted for its intensity and immeasurability. The tribal women are spend considerable time, 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 (*Arnold.,J.E.M: 1994*). Over 80% of tribals work in the primary sector against 53% of the general population. About 45% are cultivators against 32.5% of the general population. A tribal women can participates actively in all agricultural operations including, ploughing, digging, sowing, manuring, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, and preparing the granary, threshing, winnowing and storing food grains. In agriculturally back ward areas, tribal women are forbidden to touch a plough and cannot dig the ground but in all other agricultural operations, women participate actively and traditionally these are a female's job. Processing of food grain is exclusively a women's job. Every morning tribal women dehusk millet and paddy in husking levers and then clean the grains and cooks them. They not only save money, but also earn it, unlike females of other communities. 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. Tribal women are important for the improvement and progress of tribals. They are the pivot

of tribal agriculture, performing many household and agricultural jobs (Awais, M., et al: 2009). Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist describes that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel. Women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna. They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance. That women play a significant and crucial role in agricultural development and allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production, horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/ social forestry and fisheries. The nature and extent of women's involvement in agriculture, no doubt, varies greatly from region to region. Even within a region, their involvement varies widely among different ecological sub-zones, farming systems, castes, classes and stages in the family cycle. But regardless of these variations, there is hardly any activity in agricultural production, except ploughing in which women are not actively involved. Studies on women in agriculture conducted in India and other developing and under developed countries all point to the conclusion that women contribute far more to agricultural production than has generally been acknowledged. Recognition of their crucial role in agriculture should not obscure the fact that farm women continue to be concerned with their primary functions as wives, mothers and homemakers. It may not be out of place to mention here that considering their dual responsibilities within and outside the home, it would be in the fitness of things that more and more in the village training is organized for rural farm women to suit their convenience with due realization that institutional training is important in its own place. In order that farm women get a fair deal at the hands of change agents, one of the remedial measures that needs to be undertaken is to induct a sizeable number of well trained women personnel in training and extension programmes of agricultural development agencies at all levels and more so at the grass-root level. (Lal, Roshan., et al: 2011).

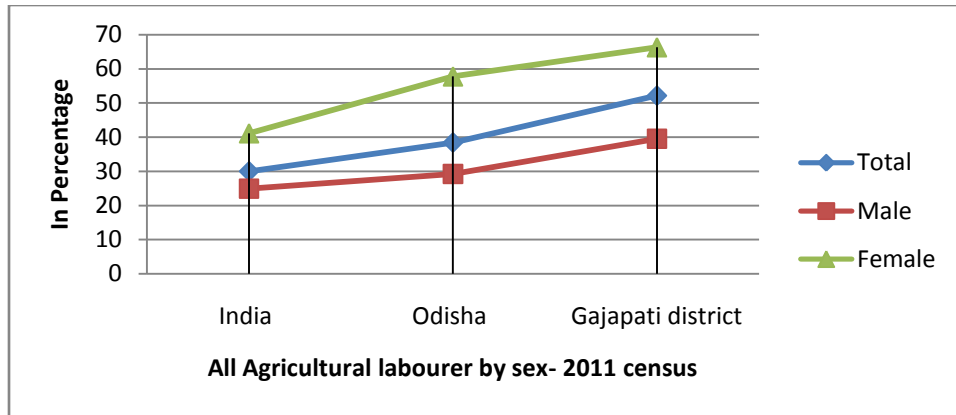
The comparison between the women agricultural labourer of so many different situation brought out the following difference. We found in Odisha seasonally different from all district women agricultural labourer. During summer session in Cuttack district, the women agricultural labourer mostly got employment for harvesting sugarcane, bond work, work in betel farm and harvesting groundnut. In Dhenkanal district women agricultural labourer were engaged for collection of fuel, for kendu leaves and bidi making, collection for palm leaves mat making and brass handcraft as caste professional and another making in cow-dung cake preparation for household cooking purpose. But in Gajapati district women agricultural labourers were engaged the comparison between the following districts. Women agricultural labourers were engaged collection for fuel, collection mahuli flower, plantationing turmeric and engaged in rice harvesting.

In rainy season, majority of women agricultural labourers were more than 80% in irrigated and more than 70% in non-irrigated were employment in transplantation for most be 24-60 days respectively. In both the situation more than 80% of women agricultural labourer were engaged in weeding. At the time of rainy season they did different type of part time activities like moping clayhoure, fuel collection, winning of milled rice, rearing animals, cow-dung cake preparation, calf rearing and cleaning cow-shed without any wage (Mishra, S: 2009). The economy of schedule tribe area is primarily subsistence oriented and based upon a combination of agricultural, forestry, wage labourer and the key role of farm women in crop husbandry, animal husbandry, fishery, forestry and post harvest activities and kitchen gardening in homestead land, inadequate attention both from scientific and administrative sides is given for the training of farm women (Hans, A: 2014). The work done report a majority of the women, in the state of Odisha is unnoticed and unaccounted. As per the 2001 census, women work participation rate in Odisha is 41 percent against national average of 39 percent. This major segment of the state's resources, however, is absorbed in the unorganised sector that is plagued with poor or irregular wages, no structured work environment, and no labourer union to voice the issues of the women workers. As most of them are engaged in work that fall in the unpaid category, the work goes unrecognised. These poor women have no alternative than to resort to poor wages and simultaneous exploitation and marginalisation (Satapathy, S. S: 2014).

Table 1:- All Agricultural labourer by sex- 2011 census (In Percentage)

All Agricultural labourer by sex- 2011 census (In Percentage)			
Person	India	Odisha	Gajapati district
Total	30.0	38.42	52.12
Male	24.9	29.25	39.54
Female	41.1	57.78	66.33

*Census of India-2011, Directorate of census operation Odisha.

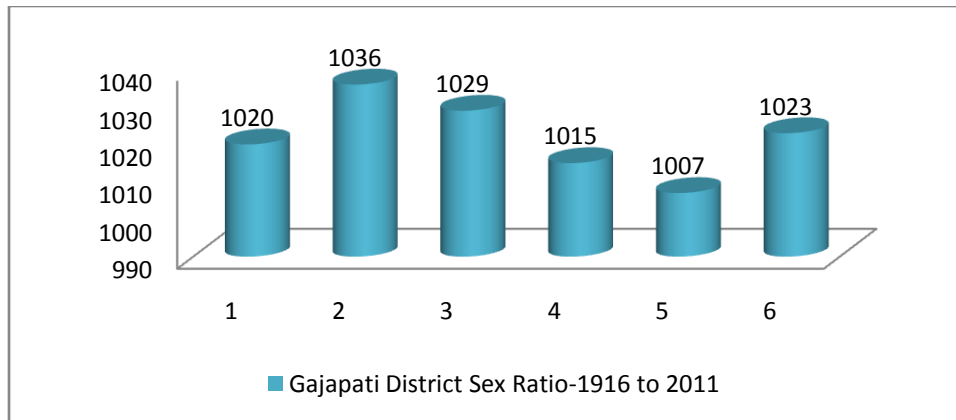


The table-1 and figure-1 shows all agricultural labourers by sex-wise in 2011 census. We define i.e. India women agricultural labourers in 2011 census were 41.1 percentages but in Odisha women agricultural labourers were 57.78 percentages out of total Odisha agricultural labourers. In Gajapati district total agricultural labourers by sex-wise as 52.12percentage but in this years women agricultural labourers are more than all women agricultural labourers i.e. India and Odisha. The Gajapati district women agricultural labourers are 66.33 percentages.

Table 2:- Tribal Sex Ratio in Gajapati District- 1961-2011

Tribal Sex Ratio in Gajapati District- 1961-2011						
Years	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Sex Ratio	1020	1034	1029	1015	1007	1023

*Source: Census of India ' 1961to 2011, Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India 2013.



Sex Ratio: Sex Ratio is the primary variables that are necessary for almost all classification related to population characteristic. Sex ratio (females per 1000 males) is an important indicator to study the gender balance among the tribal in Gajapati district. The Gajapati district tribal Sex Ratio among shows from 1961 to 2011 census, i.e. 1020, 1036, 1029, 1015, 1007 and 1023 district tribal sex ratio respectively (See table-2&figure).

Table 3:- Occupational categories of Respondents (in per cent)

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
Agri- farmers	76.9	-	33.3
Daily wage workers	23.07	97.05	65
Housewives	-	2.94	1.66
Total	99.97	99.99	100

Figure- Occupational categories of Respondents (in per cent)

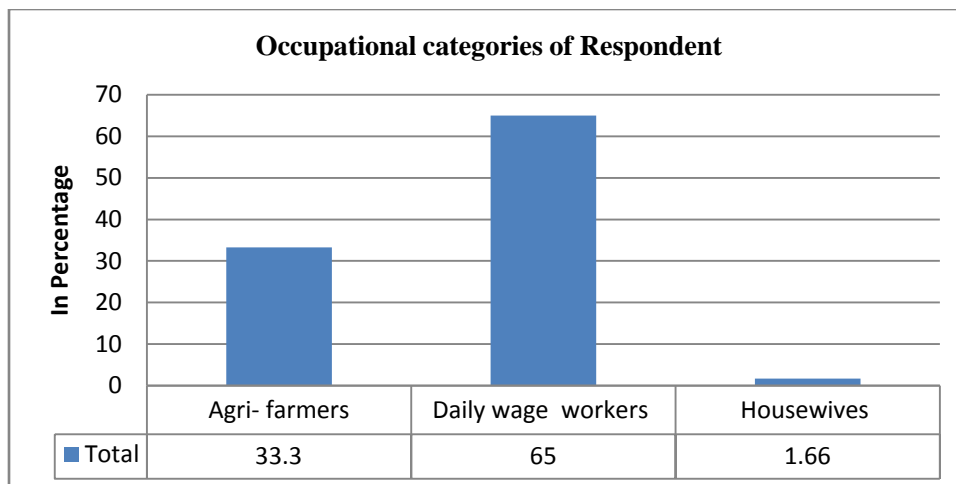
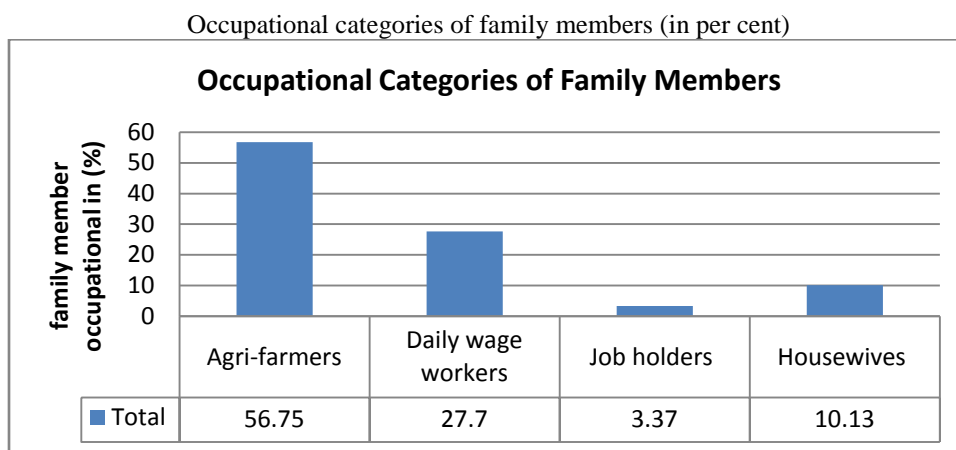


Table 3 reflects occupational structure of respondent. Among men 77 per cent are agricultural farmer and 23 per cent are wage labourer. From among our women respondent, 97 per cent are daily worker and 3% are housewives. But this daily wage worker among female also constitute agricultural workers (See table 3 & figure).

Table 4:- Occupational categories of family members (in per cent)

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
Agri-farmers	79.4	31.42	56.75
Daily wage workers	15.33	45.71	27.7
Job holders	5.1	1.42	3.37
Housewives	-	21.42	10.13
Total	100	100	100

Our study area reflects occupational categories of family members. Among men 79 per cent are agricultural farmer and 15 per cent are wage labourer. From among our women respondent, 46 per cent are daily worker, 31% are agricultural farmers and 21 percent are housewives. But this daily wage worker among female also constitute agricultural workers (See table 4 & figure).



Summary:-

Agricultural labourer under comes small farmers, who process very little land and therefore, has to devote most of their time working on the lands of others as labourers. Share croppers are those who, while sharing the produce of the land for their work, also work as labourers. Tenants are those who not only work on the leased but also work as labourer. Despite their importance to agricultural production women face severe handicaps. They are in fact, the largest group of landless labourers with little real security in case of break-up of the family owing to death or divorce; inheritance laws and customs discriminate against them land reform and settlement programmes usually

give sole title and hence the security needed for obtaining production credits to the husband. Agricultural development programmes are usually planned by men and aimed at men. Mechanization, for example alleviates the burden of tasks that are traditionally men's responsibility, leaving women's burdens unrelieved or even increased.

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