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Women empowerment through goat farming in Punjab

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Abstract

Women are the most important segment of human resources who need attention for their development. The important indicator of female development is the work force participation of females in economic activities. In recent census, women considered as workers making significant contribution in the agricultural operations like sowing, harvesting, transplantation, tending cattle and other miscellaneous works leading to increase in work force participation rate in agricultural and related works. One of the study revealed that most of the difficult, noncash generating activities like care & management of pregnant animals & new born kids, collection and sale of manure, fodder carrying, cutting & chopping and taking animals for grazing were actively performed by 80, 76.66, 63.33 and 60 percent of rural farm women. Teaching to the rural women and formation of women goat keepers' groups (8-10 in no.) living in the same region having 40-50 does under each group can be encouraged to uplift their socio-economic status. Hence, it is summarized that through strengthening of extension work, financial and technical support in the goat farming by government and NGO's could lead to overcome the obstacles of rural women's earning right from their home.

Keywords: Women, empowerment, goat, Punjab, India

Introduction

India is amongst the fastest growing countries in the world today, with a GDP of 8% during the 11th plan period. Such high level of growth can only be attained when all sections of the society specially women become equal partners in the development process. Gender equality and empowerment would thus need to be a core development goal if the growth planned in the twelfth Plan has to be achieved.

Empowerment is an important process through which women are enabled to realize their identity and full powers in all spheres of life (Sarada *et al.* 2015) ^[14]. It is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives (World Bank, 2002) ^[18].

Mahatma Gandhi ji says, "You educate a man, you educate an individual. You educate a woman, you educate an entire family".

Women Status in India & Punjab

30% of the world's total illiterate population is accounted by India and out of which 70% are women. As per 2011 Census data, women constitute 48% of the total population in India, with a total literacy rate of 53.7% as compared to 75.3% in males. The literacy rate among rural women is 46.1% as compared to 72.9% among urban women; is still lower than literacy rates among than rural and urban men stands at 70.7% and 86.3% respectively (Kaur S, 2017).

In Punjab 62.25 percent of its total population and 70 per cent of its total workers live in villages which strengthened the idea of Punjab to be predominantly a rural economy (GOI 2011) ^[9]. 8,250,716 are the females out of the total 17,344,192 rural population. The average literacy rate for the rural population is 71.42. Rural male literacy rate is 76.62 whereas rural female literacy rate is 58.9. This is far below the average literacy rate of state as well as national level.

Status of Employed Women and Their Earnings in Punjab

Only 19 percent of all women age 15-49 were employed (India: Standard DHS, 2015-16). Among employed women, 96 percent earned cash. 76 percent of employed men worked in non-agricultural occupations whereas eighty-eight percent of employed women worked in this sector.

According to the survey by the Union ministry of health and family welfare, the number of women having a savings bank account in Punjab has gone up from 14.6% in 2005-06 to 58.8%

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in 2015-16. For women in urban areas, the figure is 65%, while that for rural areas is 54.9%.

Need for Women Empowerment

Reasons for need of women empowerment in Punjab and India are enlisted as below:

1. Women along with their children face high risk of malnutrition.
2. The female foeticide is not an uncommon phenomenon.
3. The male female ratio though improved over last few years is still far from satisfactory.
4. The female literacy rate is also lower than the male literacy rate.
5. Deprivation, degradation and exploitation of women especially women from rural areas and those belonging to deprived sectors of the society.

Parameters for Women Empowerment

The parameters of empowerment have been identified as:

1. Developing ability for critical thinking
2. Strengthening decision-making and action through collective processes
3. Ensuring equal participation of both men and women in developmental processes
4. Enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence in women (Singh *et al.*, 2017) ^[15]

Government Schemes for Women Empowerment

With time the government of India try hard to empower the women through various schemes. Some of these schemes related to women empowerment in India are-

1. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
2. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)
3. Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
4. Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD)
5. Marketing of Non-Farm Products of Rural Women (MAHIMA)
6. Assistance to Rural Women in Non-Farm Development (ARWIND) schemes
7. Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDPs)

Women Contribution in Farm Practices

In India, more than 75 percent women contribute in agricultural work force (Singh and Vinay, 2012). There had been a number of research studies present that had proved with time their participation in various agricultural activities having complementary roles, sharing agriculture related activities with their male counterpart (Oyesola, 2004) ^[10]. Women's role and participation in various agricultural activities is always higher than that of men (Prakash, 2003 and Tacio, 2003) ^[11]. They are engaged in various agricultural activities from crop selection to land preparation, seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing and processing (Ghosh *et al.* 2014) ^[5].

Role of Women in Goat Farming

Goat rearing is the most useful way of women's earning those who stay at home (Rokonuzzaman M and Islam MS, 2009) ^[13]. One of the study revealed that most of the difficult, noncash generating activities like care & management of pregnant animals & new born kids, collection and sale of manure, fodder carrying, cutting & chopping and taking

animals for grazing were actively performed by 80, 76.66, 63.33 and 60 percent of rural farm women (Rajkumar *et al.*, 2004). The women's share of involvement in rearing small ruminants increased with increasing number of animals reared. Literate women were more involved in the physical activities of goat management (herding, grass cutting, feeding, watering and health control) than in decision making (planning and marketing). The management of goats and sheep, especially small flocks in village systems is more the purview of women than that of men (Devendra C, 1988) ^[3].

Why Go for Goat Farming?

About 10-12% of the rural families are landless and 80% of the land holders are marginal and small farmers, owning less than 2 ha land (Government of India 2013b) ^[8]. Small land holdings, low agricultural productivity and lack of employment opportunities have compelled the rural population in Punjab to live in poverty and goat farming can be a major source of their livelihood.

Advantages of Goat Rearing

1. Goats need very less investment.
2. Goat is a multi-functional animal.
3. They supply precious animal proteins of high biological value in the form of meat, milk, plus essential minerals and fat-borne vitamins to poor people, pregnant mothers and young children (Acharya RM, 1982 & Anon, 2012) ^[1].
4. Goats are easy to handle & market.
5. Farmers can make extra money by selling goat manure (Gokhale *et al.* 2012) ^[6].
6. Goats have very few demands of housing and management. They hardly need separate housing and happily share their homes with their owners or his other livestock.
7. Goats can be raised by landless agricultural labourers, ladies and children because they can thrive well on variety of leaves, shrubs, bushes, kitchen waste etc.
8. Goat farming can be a profitable occupation for a farmer and can fit well into mixed farming.
9. Goats are cheaper to maintain, easily available and have a friendly disposition.
10. Goats are capable of adapting to various agro-climatic conditions ranging from arid dry to cold arid to hot humid.
7. Goats are more tolerant to hot climate than other farm animals.
11. Goats suffer from fewer ailments than other large animals.
12. Goats have got increased digestibility of crude fibre and can produce even on poor quality roughages.
13. Goats give more production per unit of investment.
14. Goats can be milked as often as required, preventing milk storage problems and refrigeration costs.

Goat Development Programmes in India

The only goat development programme in India during the Eleventh Five Year plan (2007-2012) was the Integrated Development of Small Ruminants and Rabbits, to support establishment of 108 clusters of sheep and goats, with 100 units in each cluster (GOI, 2013a) ^[7]. Each unit comprised of 40 females and 2 males. The programme covering free training and orientation and 25 to 33% subsidy for establishment of individual units, was implemented through the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). This scheme naturally did not include the vulnerable target groups like small farmers and women (Deo *et al.*, 2015) ^[4].

Suggested Strategies for Empowering the Women Goat Farmers in Punjab

- **Imparting Training to the Women Farmers:** Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Extension Education, Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana organizes “Specialized Goat farming” training programmes round the year for small and marginal livestock farmers.
- **Strengthening of Livestock Extension Service:** Only three women extension workers out of 8 animal scientist in the 20 KVK s of the Punjab are dealing with livestock. So, Strengthening of Livestock Extension Service is much needed to empower women of Punjab through Goat farming.
- Formulation of Self Help Group/Women Goat Keeper Groups/Self Employed Women association
- i) **Formulation of Self Help Groups:** Self-help groups are mainly facilitated by NGOs. NABARD also supports Self Help Groups for opening and smooth functioning of goat farms by women. NABARD establishes link between Self-Help Groups and the formal microfinance institutions and commercial banks.
- ii) **Women Goat Keeper Groups:** Groups of 8 to 10 women belonging to homogeneous socio-economic status living in the same hamlet were formed to bring 40 to 50 does under each group.
- **Support Indigenous Technical Knowledge System (ITK):** Women ITK acts as a vehicle for promoting participatory development and enhancing communication between w extension workers and local people.
- Credit Facilities for Women

Conclusion

- Rural literacy rate of women is increasing in India.
- There is a major contribution of women for goat sector in rural areas.
- Goat farming is still in the hand of landless laborers, small & marginal farmers.
- Though many agencies offer loans to women goat farmers. But sometimes the process is cumbersome.
- The time has arrived to realize the relevance, in a rapidly developing country like India, of education and livestock management for leadership-building, especially for women-something which can be achieved only through Higher Education and their participation in economic activities.

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