

Drudgery of Rural Hill Women Engaged in Agricultural Practices in Kumaon Himalaya: A Study

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ABSTRACT

Uttarakhand, a mountainous state which constitutes more than 80 percent of its land as hilly is a northern state of India and tenth in the category of Himalayas states. Agriculture is the main occupation still in the hill state though its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is decreasing day by day but more than 70 percent population dependent on agriculture, Horticulture and livestock rearing for their livelihoods. The study area is the Eastern part of state and named as Kumaon region which touches its international boundaries with China, Nepal and Tibet. Agriculture practice is mostly done by women folk in this region from sowing seed in the field to harvesting the crop. Not even in agricultural fields but a big part of indoor and outdoor chores comes in the account of women in the region. They are involved in household's economic activities through agriculture, horticulture and livestock rearing but their economic and overall empowerment is comparatively less than men in family. The present study is conducted on women associated to agricultural activities of district Almora in Kumaon region in Dwarahat development block. Primary as well as secondary data is adopted for the present study.

Keywords: *Empowerment, Agriculture, Kumaon, Rural Hill Women*

INTRODUCTION

It we consider the Global population gender wise the women constitute nearby half it and its participation in total labour force aroused one third of the total labour force, as they play an important role in each and every aspect of life. But they have to face many types of discrimination in male dominated society, especially in rural areas of country. Even though the role of women in rural parts is significant in development of agriculture, horticulture, livestock rearing etc. or it can be said that they are active part of the rural household economy.

Uttarakhand is a mountainous State with having more than 80% of its part hilly with typical terrain. The living conditions are not easier in the hills for daily life. Women is the centre of all activities of a household in the rural part in hilly areas in Uttarakhand. Women of this Hill states are very hard worker. They work through the day, starting with family works, nurturing children and livestock going out for fodder, fuel, drinking water and NTEP collection for sustaining livelihoods¹. They contribute in all works of daily life from collection of fodder from jungle to making practice in agriculture fields, fetching water, fuelwood for preparing food, maintaining the household and activities are their main responsibilities in family. In rural Uttarakhand, Women contribute up to 90 percent of the total work in agriculture². As they are active is all in house chores in family and have less time for their own due to the heavy workload on them. Keeping in mind the present study is conducted in district Almora of Uttarakhand which falls in Kumaon region of this state. To understand the drudgery problem of rural hill women is investigated in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature is reviewed for the present study keeping in mind the the active participation of rural hill women engaged in agricultural practices. **Qureshi and Ahmed³ (2001)** concluded their study titled "women participation in hilly areas of Uttarakhand and India: An analytical study" finds that woman farmers and undoubtedly play a unique role in the Socio-economic setup of the of this region..... Hill agriculture is absolutely dependent on women. **Pratibha Joshi et.al.⁴ (2014)** done a study which is conducted on women who are involved in agricultural activities found that many agricultural operations and household activities performed by women involve a list of

physical strain, which create serious problem in long run. *Jethi and Chandra*⁵ (2013) in their study found that negative effect of malnutrition among women are compounded by heavy work demand, poverty, child bearing and rearing and special nutritional needs of women, resulting in increased susceptibility to illness and consequently higher morbidity. *Bhandari and Reddy*⁶ (2015) conducted a study on "impact of out migration on agriculture and women work load" shown that by and large the work load of women who belong to those households where the member of family and migrants have increased perceptibly.

THE STUDY AREA

Uttarakhand is a carved from its mother state Uttar Pradesh on 9 November 2000. The state is divided in two regions for administrative purpose on behalf of its typical terrain. The study area Kumaon consists of six of districts namely (Almora, Nainital, Pithoragarh, Champawat, Bageshwar and Udham Singh Nagar) out of total thirteen districts in Uttarakhand. Only District Udham Singh Nagar and a partial part of district Nainital lies in plain region of the state which is pronounced as Bhabhar and Terai region and rest part is mountainous with typical living condition for daily life. The plain region of Kumaon is concentrated with better living conditions while in hilly region there are much more disparities in both regions.

Agriculture is the primary occupation of hills which is being practiced in scattered, rainfed, terraced fields with traditional technique in the study area and mostly done by women. The study area falls in hilly district Almora, which is one of the villages in development block chaukhutiya. The chaukhutiya block contains 46039 people. The gender wise distribution of population shown that there is 43.51 percent male and 56.48 percent female. The literacy rate in development block is 80.71 percent (Male 94.19 percent and female 70.83 percent). The work participation rate between male and female is 50.12 percent and 56.55 percent respectively. The women work participation rate its high due to their association with agriculture and livestock farming. 18046 people are working as main workers and 6697 as marginal worker in development block. 13629 people are engaged is fulltime farming in Chaukhutiya development block. The sex ratio of studied village is 1105 due to the out migration of

male from the family for employment. So, the females stay in village to look after family and engaged in agricultural activities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of present study are -

1. To study the Socio-economic profile of respondents in study area.
2. To find the time distribution for in-house and other chores of respondents.

HYPOTHESIS

1. H_0 : There is no relation between the Age and the time consumed in household chores by respondents.

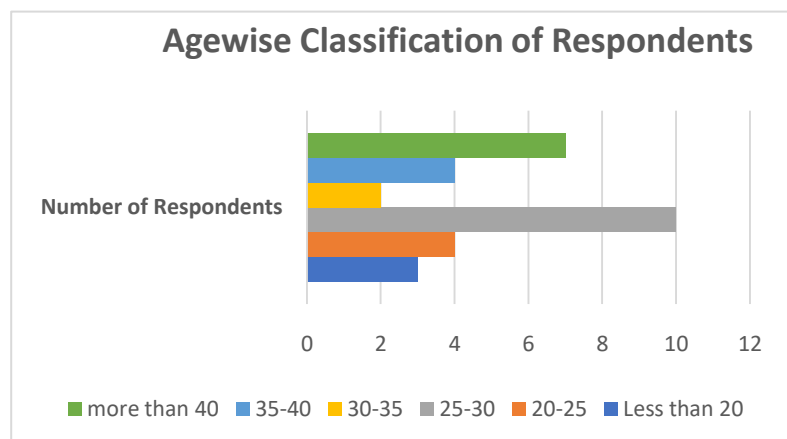
SAMPLE SELECTION

The present study is conducted in Pan village of Chaukhutiya block in district Almora. The selection of sample village is done through purposive sampling method and 30 female respondents were selected through random sampling for the present study. A well-prepared interview schedule, personal interview and pilot survey is also conducted to collect the primary data. Secondary data is adopted from various secondary sources including internet too.

INTERPRETATION

Socio-economic Status of Respondents

While discussing the socio-economic background the table 01 reveals that average age of the respondents in study area is 31 years and the highest percentage is in the age group of 30-35. Only 10 percent of the respondents are illiterate which falls mostly in the age group of more than 40 years in sample area. The highest percentage (33.3 percent) of respondents has



Source: Primary Data

completed high school as their schooling followed by Intermediate (30.0 percent) and only 6.6 percent of the respondents has completed their graduation. Which is the lowest percentage of their standard of schooling. Majority of the respondents belongs to general category (73.3 percent) and rest on Schedule Caste category (20.0 percent) and Other Backward Class (6.6 percent). The marital status of respondents shows that majority of the respondents falls in the category of married. The type of family of the respondents shows that 56.6 percent respondents belong to joint family followed by 43.3 percent in nuclear family.

While asking about the family occupation, agriculture is the main occupation with the frequency of 60 percent respondents. It means that their family totally depends on agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry for their livelihood in terraced fields with less irrigation facilities and more dependency on rainfed farming and maximum chores comes in account of women members in family. The average landholding size of the sample households is marginal and it is about 0.71 hectare which reflects the subsidiary farming in most households in sample study area. While questioning about the nature of house and facilities at the premises, 66.6 percent respondents responded that they live in pacca houses and other 26.6 percent answered that they reside in mixed houses with the facility of sanitation and electricity at their premises. The average per month family income of the respondents from the interpretation of data shows that it is approximately Rs. 15,000.00 which also includes the income earn from agriculture produce or horticulture or livestock rearing.

Time Expended in House Chores (Daily)

Table 02 reveals the hours of time expended by the respondents in different chores shows that per day an average woman spends approximately 13 hours 51 minutes for in and outside daily chores of daily life. The drudgery of hill women is enormous as they work for about 14-16 hours per day in outdoor and indoor activities⁷. Most of their time spends in outside chores which is about 8 hours 46 minutes per day. The highest frequency in in-house chores (24.40 percent) followed by agriculture work in fields (17.75 percent). Agriculture activities in hours per day shows approximately more than two and half hours per day is allotted for the agricultural activities and it is expanded at the time of sowing or harvesting the crop. Fodder and livestock rearing is another

important work in the account of women in the family in which the sample respondents about two and half hours per day. Caring of the kids/ old in family and fetching water for drinking from nearby 'Naula' are other chores done by them per day. So, the average time for their own is about 10 hours 8 minutes including the sleeping at night. During their leisure time they generally spend with talking friends, family members, use the mobile (only mobile users), watching television, craft work, religious activities etc. to entertain themselves.

The hypothesis is set for the relation between the age and the working time

H₀: Age does not affect the time consumed in household chores by respondents.

The correlation between both the variables is highly correlated with a value of (Pearson Correlation value: -0.80) which rejects the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The present study is an attempt to know the status of drudgery of rural hill women in study area. The study concludes that the women play an important role in the family in rural parts of the hills in study area. They are actively involved in both economically productive and economically non-productive in and out chores for running the daily life and their average consumed time is more than thirteen hours per day and approximately six hours they spend in inhouse chores and most time of their daily life spend in agricultural fields, livestock rearing, fetching water, fodder and fuelwood. Only ten hours' time which includes sleeping at night and their leisure time comes in their account. This shows a heavy drudgery among them. One of the main reasons behind this is the migration of male members in the family to other parts for earning because agriculture practices, livestock rearing and horticulture activities are subsidiary in study area.

Some of the suggestion for reducing the drudgery among the respondents that Government scheme 'Ujjwala Yojna' which is related to LPG cylinders for cooking is a good scheme to reduce the hazards of health and the burden of women for fetching the fuelwood should be totally subsidised for each cylinder the family consume in a year so that the household can bear the cost of cylinder. Fodder collection is another time-consuming practice for women and it is also life-threatening job. Fodder banks at village

panchayat level should be developed by the government to overcome this problem. Tapped water is another solution which can reduce the time they spent on fetching the potable water from the nearby resource to their village. As the agriculture and allied practices are subsidiary and mostly unproductive in terms of generating income for household the time expanded by the respondents is not valuable in terms of income generation. So, it is suggested that Self Help Groups can help to earn the respondents so that they transform their work from unproductive works to income generating works while staying at their home. This will be helpful in reducing their drudgery on one way and economically empower them on other hand.

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Note - ⁴It is a small spring covered in a house shape in mountain regions of Uttarakhand. Locally pronounced as Naula and the water is used for drinking.

Table 01
Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

(N=30)

| S.No. | Variables | Percentage |
|-------|--|------------|
| 1. | Age of Respondents (Average Age = 31 Years) | |
| | Less than 20 | 10.00 |
| | 20-25 | 13.30 |
| | 30-35 | 33.33 |
| | 35-40 | 13.33 |
| | More than 40 | 23.33 |
| 2. | Educational Qualification of Respondents | |
| | Illiterate | 10.00 |
| | Up to primary | 13.30 |
| | Junior high school | 06.60 |
| | High school | 33.30 |
| | Intermediate | 30.00 |
| | Graduate | 6.60 |
| | Post graduate | NIL |
| | Other | NIL |
| 3. | Caste of Respondents | |
| | General | 73.30 |
| | SC | 20.00 |
| | ST | NIL |
| | OBC | 06.60 |
| 4. | Marital Status of Respondents | |
| | Married | 20.00 |
| | Unmarried | 70.00 |

| | | |
|----|---|----------|
| | Other | 10.00 |
| 5. | Size of Land Holding (Average Land Holding Size = 0.71 Hec.) | |
| | Less than 0.5 hac | 10.00 |
| | 0.5-1.0 hac | 66.60 |
| | 1.0-1.5 hac | 23.30 |
| | Average land holding | 0.81 hac |
| 6. | Family Occupation | |
| | Agriculture | 60.00 |
| | Labour | 10.00 |
| | Service | 06.60 |
| | Self Employed | 16.60 |
| | Others | 06.60 |
| 7. | Nature of House | |
| | Pucca | 66.60 |
| | Kaccha | NIL |
| | Semi-Pucca or Mixed | 26.60 |

Source: Primary Data

Table 02

Average Hours Expended in House Chores (Daily)

| S. No. | Occupation | Average Hours per Women | Percentage |
|--------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| 1. | Agriculture | 2.40 | 17.75 |
| 2. | Water Fetching | 1.01 | 7.47 |
| 3. | Fodder + Livestock rearing | 2.30 | 17.01 |
| 4. | Fuelwood | 2.35 | 17.38 |
| 5. | In-House Chores | 3.30 | 24.40 |
| 6. | Caring Kids/old parents | 2.15 | 15.90 |
| | Total | 13.51 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data
