

Position of Women Farming Community in The Five Year Plans Vis A Vis The Constitution of India: A Critical Assessment

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Abstract: *Women have become an omnipresent workforce into the fabric of agrarian sector in India. In addition to caring for their families' overall health, women prepare meals for their family, maintain the household, and assist with crop and animal production while raising children. Today, feminisation of agriculture is a common phenomenon worldwide and India is not an exception to this. Considering the importance, the government of India has implemented a variety of initiatives, policies, and regulations, as well as a number of activities, to better the position of women farmers. Since five year plans has been a vital tool for development in India, we would like to examine as to how the women farmers are placed in the various Five Year Plans of India.*

Key Words: *Five Year Plans, Sustainable Agriculture, Constitution of India, Census, Feminization of Agriculture.*

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Introduction

Women produce half of the world's food. Women farmers also serve as environmental stewards. They have gradually learnt how to cope with and adapt to climate change e.g. they have developed drought-resistant seeds, low-impact or organic soil management practices, community-based reforestation and restoration programs, and environmentally friendly sustainable agriculture are all options.¹ Over time, the Indian government has implemented a variety of initiatives, policies, and regulations, as well as a number of activities, to better the position of women farmers. The purpose of this study is to look at how women working in agriculture are treated in light of India's Constitution and many five-year plans.

Feminisation of Agriculture

Consumption-driven economic growth has hastened the development of an intensive agricultural production system over the last century, with far-reaching social and environmental consequences. Women form the cornerstone of agriculture in India. Women, who make up the majority of agricultural labourers, have helped to improve the physical output as well as its quality and efficiency. Women play an important role in households' well-being as well. According to the 2010-11 Agriculture Census, women accounted for 30.3% of the expected 118.7 million cultivators. Similarly, 42.6% of the anticipated 144.3 million agricultural labourers were female. The 2011 Census shows that the number of female agricultural workers increased by 24% between 2001 and 2011. According to the 2011 Census, 55% of female primary labourers were agricultural labourers and 24% were cultivators. According to the Economic Survey 2017-18, as more males relocate from rural to urban regions, the agricultural economy is becoming more "feminised," with more women working in a variety of jobs such as labourers, farmers, and entrepreneurs.² In addition to caring for their families' overall health, women must prepare all meals, maintain the household, and assist with crop and animal production while raising children. Women are active in all aspects of agriculture, from crop selection and land preparation to seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing, and processing. Given the expanding importance of women's participation in agriculture and other industries, it is critical to keep women at the forefront of India's policy initiatives. Rural women are responsible for using and managing a wide range of natural resources in an integrated manner to meet daily family needs.³

Women's significant contributions to agriculture in rural India are an important part of the agricultural revolution that has been overlooked nationally. Agriculture employs 78 percent of Indian women. According to the Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2021-2022, agriculture has the highest female labour force participation rate, with 62.9% expected.⁴ Although they are usually workers on their own farms rather than "farmers," rural women in India have long contributed to this business.

Assessment of Five Year Plans

The Planning Commission was established on March 15, 1950, and the plan era began on April 1, 1951, with the goal of ensuring economic stability, social welfare, and the provision of efficient social services, regional development, comprehensive and sustainable development, economic inequality reduction, and social justice in Independent India.

In 1939-40, a subcommittee was formed to advise the National Planning Committee on issues concerning women. This committee was much ahead of its time. It stressed the importance of women's economic independence and advocated for women to have complete control over their earnings. Under the Indian union's federal structure, state governments are primarily responsible for providing welfare services (education, health, and social security) and economic support. Since planning has been a vital tool for development in India, we examine the role of women in the national Five Year Plans, including the suggestions of the Planning Commission's sub-group for women in agriculture in preparation for the Eleventh Plan. Let's take a look at the developments that occurred under the many important Five Year Plans.

First Five Year Plan (1951-56)

The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) attempted, among other goals, to 'improve the welfare of women' in that society. Women's perspectives on family health and nutrition were essential to this. Motherhood, family planning, women's health, and education all gained visibility. Because the family became the basic unit for development and women were absorbed inside it, land reforms and other social justice measures implemented during this time period disregarded women. The same can be argued about the green revolution's policy framework, which neglected to include women's demands and impacts; nonetheless, as we have shown elsewhere, the green revolution had a significant impact on women's work participation. Indeed, many observers believe that the emphasis on technical self-sufficiency and individual agency (rather than 'community development') during the green revolution excluded women from agricultural decision-making.

Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) was the first to address women farmers' technology demands. The Ministry of Agriculture, with UNDP backing, developed the 'Farmers Training and Education Programme' (FTEP), which established a network of 150 farmer training centres to introduce new technology to farmers through the media, primarily radio broadcasts, and functional literacy initiatives. Initially, the inputs were shared by both men and women, but as men and women's requirements differed, several state governments established unique training programmes for women within the FTEP framework.

Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79)

The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) expanded this goal by creating the Training and Visit (T&V) System of Extension. However, because this method was predicated on the premise that information or training given to one member of the family (often the more visible male head) would spread to all members, it eventually failed to reach women (Ahmed S, 2006). The true success of the aforementioned programs is that they recognised women as farmers in their own right. In 1974, the government established the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) to track progress towards gender equality. This committee's report is titled 'Towards Equality'. The research stated that, with the exception of a few gains, planned progress over the previous two and a half decades had resulted in a worsening of women's conditions on multiple fronts. The steep drop in women's labor-force participation rates as a result of the collapse of some old occupations and the advent of new technology in others was particularly surprising.

Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-85)

The Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-85) emphasised the necessity of independent employment and income in boosting women's social status. However, this has been associated to fertility behaviour, lower birth and infant mortality rates, and improved child nutrition (GOI, 1979). Thus, women's employment was viewed as a tool for achieving development in general, and plan goals in particular, rather than a strategy for increasing women's socioeconomic status or emancipation from patriarchy. According to the Sixth Five Year Plan, the government will make every effort to offer joint titles to husband and wife when land and housing sites are distributed under anti-poverty measures. There is no data available on the implementation of this measure in various states, as well as the problems faced. India has witnessed a paradox in which food production has increased yet a huge proportion of the population suffers from landlessness, poverty, and malnutrition. The emphasis on gender elements of poverty and landlessness has highlighted the invisibility of women's labour in supplying subsistence items and services such as water, fuel, and fodder. The rural poverty problem, reduction in common property resources, deforestation, rising commercial fuel costs, and insufficient planning to provide basic minimum needs (drinking water, shelter, fuel, health care, and so on) have all added to impoverished women's normal work day. A critical topic that has gotten little attention from policy makers is the link between the growing shortage of energy resources in rural areas and the impact on women's workload, health, and nutrition, as well as productive capacity. Firewood, crowding, and crop waste provide for around 90% of the countryside's cooking energy needs. National initiatives are increasingly focussing on the issue of rural drinking water, fuel, and fodder demands for disadvantaged households.

Seventh Plan (1985-1990)

The Seventh Plan (1985-1990) built on this idea. The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) outlines goals for women's overall development. The National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector released a thorough study named "Shramshakti" that examined the issues affecting a large number of women in the informal sector and the efforts required to improve their situation. The Seventh Plan (1985-90) emphasised science and technology for women farmers, with a focus on developing existing abilities in fodder development, post-harvest processes, plantation, horticulture, fisheries, and dairying.

The minimum percentage of women recipients in both initiatives has been adjusted to 40. Under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, women are guaranteed 30% of employment chances. In 1990-91, women accounted for roughly 24% of employment generation under JRY. The Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), which began in 1982-83 to promote rural women's access to jobs, skills, training, credit, and other support services, reached 187 districts in 1990-91.

The programme employs a group approach. The Seventh Plan established around 28,000 women's groups. The Seventh Plan also included efforts to improve women's farming abilities. Agricultural extension services under the Training and Visit System held gender sensitisation

training camps, enlisted women contact farmers, and made special efforts to impart knowledge to female farmers. Operation Flood II and III trained rural women in various milk production tasks as part of a cooperative dairy development initiative. In 1989, 14% of the 68.85 lakh members of dairy cooperative organisations were women. Women's cooperatives for milk and dairy products were established in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. Some women's cooperative societies have also been established in the fishing sector. Women were given short-term training in fish processing, preservation, and other areas. Nearly 52,000 women are estimated to have benefited from the special livestock breeding programme, with a 10% target set for women beneficiaries. Krishi Vigyan Kendras and the "Lab to Land" program also aided women in agriculture and related fields.⁵

Eighth Plan (1991-96)

The Eighth Plan (1991-96) expressly supported women's employment and saw women as producers as well as workers, as evidenced by explicit rules for fostering women's cooperatives and producer groups (GOI, 1992). During this time, agriculture was pushed within the larger context of rural development, and donor agencies like as DANIDA and the Royal Netherlands Embassy financed the mobilising of women farmers through the 'Women in Agriculture' Programmes. These projects formed farm women's Self Help Groups to improve access to technical and support services and to develop their leadership abilities as extension workers. During the Eighth and Ninth Plans, the state implemented similar plans to stimulate and mobilise farm women to create groups, which were then given technological inputs, entrepreneurial skills training, and finance.

Ninth Plan (1997-2002)

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002): In terms of increasing women's interest in macroeconomic policy, the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) marks a significant step forward. This plan included 'empowerment of women' as one of its primary goals and adopted the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001), which established specific goals, targets, and policy prescriptions, as well as a well-defined Gender Development Index to track the impact of its implementation (GOI, 1997). The Ninth Plan recommended adequate legislative and institutional measures to address the many obstacles that Indian women farmers face. These steps could include separate training for them; preferential participation in rural cooperatives; access to technology, credit, and marketing; and imparting new skills through a combination of teaching, practical demonstrations, and hands-on field experience.

Tenth Plan (2002-07)

The Tenth Plan (2002-07) aims to close gender inequalities in literacy and salaries by 50% by 2006-07. This is a watershed moment for empowering women, building their capacities, and improving their access to inputs such as land, credit, and agricultural technology in the agricultural sector, as the Agricultural Policy 2000 highlighted gender issues, as well as the recognition and mainstreaming of women's roles in agriculture and related activities.

Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12)

The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) stressed equitable growth and decentralised government. FYP 11 also proposed devolving agricultural planning to the district level. It established the National Food Security Mission, often known as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) or the National Agricultural Development Programme. Furthermore, the planning commission established a sub-group to provide proposals for women in agriculture under the eleventh plan. The recommendations include the following:

- To focus on the entire interconnected agricultural system, including the export and import systems, as well as food security;
- To enhance the purchasing power of women and ensure minimum wages and equal pay for equal pays;
- Women's landownership rights must be strengthened;
- Women's skills and talents, as well as access to technology, must be increased;
- Gender mainstreaming policies are scattered across various ministries;
- A satellite account should be set up to cover women's unpaid work. A special fund should be established to assist women in agriculture who are struggling.
- Gender disaggregated statistics on all essential factors, such as women-led households and asset ownership by women, must be preserved.
- Despite the lengthy list of proposals given by the women's committee, the eleventh plan says nothing concerning women specifically.

Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017)

The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) states that 12% of all rural households are now headed by women with modest holdings who rely on agriculture for sustenance. As a result, the National Food Security Mission aims, among other things, to promote and expand improved technologies such as seed, integrated nutrient management (INM) including micronutrients, soil amendments, integrated pest management (IPM), input use efficiency, and resource conservation technologies, as well as to build farmer/extension capacity. It has established some criteria for identifying locations and people, such as under—

- The execution of the Special Component Plan (SCP) for Scheduled Castes and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) for Scheduled Tribes would get 16% of the overall allocation for SCP and 8% for TSP, respectively. SC/ST farmers will receive an allocation according to their population in the district.
- Small and marginal farmers will receive at least 33% of the grant.
- A minimum of 30% of the fund will be allocated to women farmers.
- All farmers are eligible to receive help from the Mission for various components up to 5 hectares per season.

The Constitution of India, 1950

Following independence, the Constitution of India (1950) incorporated the principle of equality for all regardless of caste, creed, or gender (Articles 14 and 16) and provided for mandatory instruments for affirmative action by the state in the form of reservations and

special measures (Article 15 (3), overriding the fundamental right to equality, if necessary, in favour of women and children. The Directive Principles of State Policy were responsible for determining the specific tactics needed to achieve equality. The Indian Constitution guarantees equality under Article 14, which states that “the State shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.” Article 15(1), which states that “the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.” Furthermore, Article 15(3) leaves scope for affirmative action for women: “nothing in this Article shall According to the country’s National Mission for Empowerment of Women, the government is committed to “strengthening the process that promotes holistic development of women, gender equality, and gender justice through inter-sectoral convergence of programmes impacting women.” One of the mission’s key focus areas is violence against women. Unfortunately, the country fares poorly on gender inequality, and was ranked 132 out of 187 countries in the Gender Inequality Index of the UN Development Programme (UNDP).⁶ The country’s National Mission for Empowerment of Women states the government’s commitment to “strengthening the process that promotes holistic development of women, gender equality and gender justice through inter-sectoral convergence of programmes impacting women.”⁷ It highlights violence against women as one of the key focus areas for the mission.⁸

Part IV of the Indian Constitution addresses several topics with farming and women in general, rather than in particular. Article 43 declares that the state shall make every effort, through appropriate law or economic organisation, or in any other means, to provide all workers, agricultural, industrial, or otherwise, with a minimum salary and working conditions that ensure a fair standard of living.⁹

Article 253 of the Constitution grants Parliament the authority to enact laws for India’s entire territory to implement treaties, agreements, conventions, and international decisions. In this context, the CEDAW amendments proposed at the 1995 Conference to which India was a party must be incorporated into India’s legislative framework.

Conclusion

Based on the preceding discussion, it is possible to conclude that the Government of India has made a number of initiatives to improve the general status of Indian agriculture. There is a critical need to boost this part of society, give them their due respect, and make them feel empowered. When women own property, their bargaining and decision-making power in the home grows; this is also a gender-sensitive land ownership law. This necessitates improved access for women farmers to resources such as land, water, credit, technology, and training, which needs careful consideration in the context of India. Furthermore, the entitlements of women farmers will be critical to increasing agricultural output. It has also launched a comprehensive plan to empower women in the context of feminisation of agriculture in Indian society, as is happening in other areas of the world. However, implementing the above-mentioned strategy

and program launched by the Indian government in this diverse community is a significant challenge. Problems in this stratified society vary, and different types of programs have varying effects because women's statuses differ.

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