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## The Role of Tribal Farm Women in Agricultural and Allied Activities of Manipur State

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### **Abstract:**

*Tribes have a distinct culture and unique way of life. This uniqueness gives them a separate identity. This aboriginal population in India has their own culture, religious and societal norms. While some of the Indian tribal societies have merged with the mainstream, most of the tribes are rooted to their native culture even today. Tribal farm women have played an important role in agriculture, undertaking a wide range of activities relating to food production, processing and marketing. In agriculturally backward areas, tribal farm 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. The present work, study the gender participation in agricultural and allied activities among the tribal farm women of Manipur state. Data were collected and analyzed by using appropriate statistical technique. Tribal farm women were actively participating in a wide range of farm activities such as from land preparation till the crops were harvested.*

**Keywords:** Tribal farm women, Participation, Gender, Agriculture activities

### **1. Introduction**

India's tribal are a diverse and heterogeneous group. Some are still in the food gathering stage, others practice shifting cultivation, yet others may be pursuing primitive forms of agriculture. Tribal are a pre-class society united by a 'fabric of kinship'. They have had a historical role in the evolution of human society. Though historically there are seven major tribes represented in India, they have over the years split into hundreds of different sub-tribes, each with their own language, tradition and customs. The lifestyle of the tribal people is conditioned by and in alignment with natural eco-systems and their resources. Mostly inhabiting in remote hilly and forest areas, tribal are predominantly said to live in 'traditional' societies with 'indigenous' cultures, secluded and cut off from the 'mainstream' (Padia, 2008).

Farming in India is mainly a family occupation. Most of the family members are acutely engaged in farming. The farming capabilities for taking timely and judicious decisions by the farm families have a direct bearing on the agricultural development in the country. There has been little realization about the contribution of women in the economic activities of a country. This was a position in most of counties till recently and India is no exception. The female population constitutes nearly half of the total population. It is a well recognized fact that more than 60 % of agricultural activities have been traditionally handled by women. In other area men are reluctant to share control with women. They also play a pivotal role in agriculture and livestock management. They still continued to share number of farm activities with men from early ages of invention of agriculture to the present day of modern agriculture (Chauhan, 2011).

Most of the women perform various works for their livelihood and agriculture is considered as the biggest unorganized sector where large number of Indian rural women takes part actively. These rural women who work in the farm participate in a wide range of farm activities by slogging alongside with men in the field as well as taking care of the home and children, thereby performing a dual role that of a homemaker and of a partner in the farming activities outside home (Reddi, 2003).

Farm women are the backbone of Indian agriculture. Growing food has been an interminable saga of her life. Like other rural women, tribal farm women also play an important role in agriculture. No field activities is beyond the reach of women. They take important decisions in the home and outside the home (Antoniades and Papayiannis 2000). Considering the multiple role of tribal farm women the present study was an attempt to explore the role of tribal farm women in agriculture and allied activities, with the following objective: to know the socio-economic profile of the tribal farm women, to analyse the role performance of tribal farm women in agriculture and allied activities and find out the gender differential performance.

**2. Methodology**

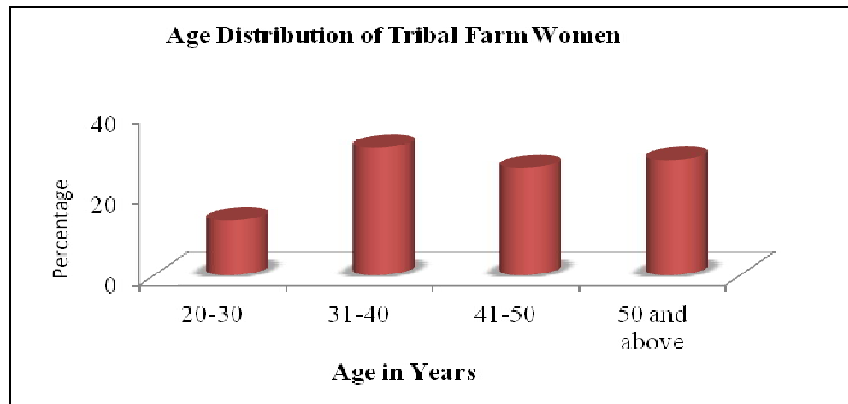
The present study was carried out in Manipur state, located in the Northeast region. Tribal farm women who engaged in agriculture as their occupation were selected from Ukhrul and Senapati Districts. Applying stratified random sampling method; 10 villages were selected from the two districts and 20 tribal farm women each from the selected villages, making 200 tribal farm women were selected as subjects for the study. The data were collected with the help of pre tested interview schedule and analyzed with appropriate statistical technique.

**3. Results and Discussion**

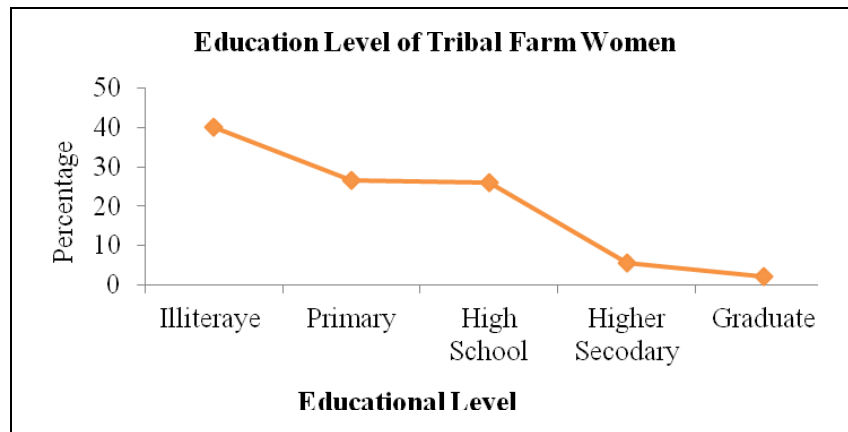
*3.1. Socio-economic profile of the tribal farm women*

3.1.1. Age wise distribution of the respondents

Age distribution shows that higher percentages of women in the age group of 31-40 years were involved in the farm activities. In the age group of 50 and above, 28.5 per cent of the tribal farm women were involved in agricultural and allied activities.



3.1.2. Education wise distribution of the respondents



Educational status of the tribal farm women shows that 40 per cent were illiterate and 26.5 per cent were attended primary level of education. Surprisingly, two per cent of the tribal farm women had attended the graduate.

### 3.1.3. Profile of the tribal farm women

Aspects	Percentage (n=200)
Type of family	
Nuclear	80.5
Joint	19.5
Family size	
1-3 members	13.5
4-6 members	54.5
>6 members	32
Monthly family income	
2001-4500	62.5
4501-7500	18.5
7501 and above	19

Table 1: Profile of Tribal Farm Women

An interesting feature to mention is that 80.5 per cent of the tribal farm women belonged to nuclear family. Fifty four per cent of the tribal farm women were belonged to medium size of the family (4-6 family members). The distribution of families' income shows that 62.5 per cent earn monthly income of Rs 2001- 4500 from agriculture. It is interesting to note that 19 per cent of the families of tribal farm women had their monthly income of Rs 7501 and above from agriculture.

### 4. Gender Performance in Agricultural Activities

Agricultural Activities	Percentage of respondents		
	Women Manipur n= 200	Men Manipur n= 200	Both Manipur n= 200
Field preparation			
Cleaning and preparing the land	95	-	5
Basal application of Farm Yard Manure (FYM)	20	24	56
Land ploughing and leveling	-	68	32
Forming ridges and furrows	14	54	32
Forming drainage channel	12	54	44
Basal application of chemical fertilizers	1	49	-
Sowing			
Sowing/ transplanting	87	8	5
Seed treatment	87	3	10
Cultivation			
Weeding	48	29	23
Digging to loosen the soil	8	52	40
Irrigation	10	52	38
Plant protection measures	51	24	25
Top dressing of fertilizer	5	27	18
Harvesting			
Reaping the crops	24	40	36
Bundling	76	6	18
Transporting of harvest to threshing yard	58	12	30
Post harvesting			
Threshing	33	20	47
Winnowing	45	11	44
Drying	90	-	10
Storing	88	-	12
Marketing			
Identification of sources, Actual marketing	88	-	12

Table 2: Gender performance in agricultural activities

\*Multiple Responses

Source: As per the data collected by researcher

Gender wise participation of tribal farm women in agricultural activities shows that majority of the activities are carried out by women alone, such as cleaning and preparing the land, sowing/ transplanting, seed treatment, weeding, plant protection measures, bundling, transporting of harvest to threshing yard, drying and storing the agricultural produce by themselves. Above 40 per cent of the tribal farm women expressed that both men and women together were participating in application of farm manure, forming drainage channel, threshing and winnowing.

### 5. Gender Performance in Allied Activities

Allied Activities	Percentage of respondents stating *		
	Women (alone)	Men (alone)	Both (men and women together)
	MPR (n= 35)	MPR (n= 35)	MPR ** (n= 35)
<b>Dairy farming</b>			
Cleaning the shed	62	18	20
Feeding the cattle	20	20	60
Collection of cattle feed	8	32	60
Bathing the cattle	6	40	54
Grazing the cattle	-	97	3
Taking care of sick cattle	3	40	57
Milking	-	-	-
Marketing of milk and milk products	-	-	-
<b>Poultry keeping</b>	<b>(n=169)</b>	<b>(n=169)</b>	<b>(n=169)</b>
Feeding the birds	98	-	2
Cleaning the shed	92	-	8
Taking care of sick birds	91	-	9
Marketing the eggs/birds	98	-	2
<b>Piggery farming</b>	<b>(n=112)</b>	<b>(n=112)</b>	<b>(n=112)</b>
Feeding the pigs	90	-	10
Marketing of pork	90	-	10
Bathing	81	-	19
Taking care of sick animal	79	-	21
<b>Goat rearing</b>	<b>(n=10)</b>	<b>(n=10)</b>	<b>(n=10)</b>
Cleaning of animal shed	100	-	-
Feeding the goats	100	-	-
Collecting feeds	100	-	-
Grazing the goats	40	-	60
Care and maintenance	-	-	100
Marketing of goat	-	-	100

Table 3: Gender Performance in Allied Activities

\*Multiple Responses \*\*MPR- Manipur n: No of respondents

Table III shows that in dairy farming, the women themselves carried out the operations such as cleaning shed. Collection of cattle feed, feeding cattle, taking care of sick cattle and bathing of cattle were joint ventures by both men and women together.

In poultry farming, above 91 per cent of the tribal farm women had taken main role in carrying out the activities. A meagre percentage of men participate in rearing the poultry, because of the reason that it was giving lesser income when compared to other allied activities.

In piggery farming, above 79 per cent of the tribal farm women in Manipur state took the leading role and 10-21 per cent had joint ventures i.e., both men and women together.

In goat rearing, the tribal farm women alone carried out the activities such as cleaning of animal shed, feeding the goats and collecting feeds. Grazing the goats, care and maintenance, marketing of goat were joint ventures of both by men and women together.

The research findings are partially in line with that of Vijay et al. (2010) who conducted the study in Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu with a sample of 306 tribal household Which revealed that feeding and watering to animals (56.86 per cent regular and 37.26 per cent sometime), cutting of grass (56.86 per cent regular and 17.65 per cent sometime), chopping of straw (45.10 per cent regular and 31.37 per cent sometime), grazing of animals (50.98 per cent regular and 19.61 per cent sometime), care of sick animals (47.06 per cent regular and 37.25 per cent sometime) and care of newborn calf (62.74 per cent regular and 15.69 per cent sometime) were performed by the female respondents.

**6. Conclusion**

Tribal farm women play a vital role in agricultural development including crop production and livestock management, but they remain backward due to traditional values, illiteracy, superstition and many other social and cultural factors. To increase the production and self reliance of the tribal farm women, dissemination of information related to agricultural and allied activities is the need of the hour and it will pave way in bringing gender equality.

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