A STUDY ON TERRACE FARMING AND ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN ERNAKULAM DISTRICT

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Abstract: A silent revolution is taking place on rooftops across Kerala. Most families in the state have converted terraced roof of their houses into small and large farms, where they grow organic vegetables, flowers, fruits, medicinal plants free from poisonous chemical fertilizers and pesticides which leads to serious diseases. The practice of terrace farming is becoming part of every type of people in rural and urban areas. Kudumbashree and other organizations are taking initiatives for women empowerment through terrace farming. Through our study we found that women are becoming independent, their standard of living is improving, they are able to contribute to family and society, they get respect in the society, and they can face challenges of their life confidently.

Key words: Women empowerment, Kudumbashree, Haritham, terrace farming, Ernakulam district

I. Introduction

Women have their own difficulties due to responsibilities of home and workplace. But her inborn talents are not recognized by the society. This is the barrier for their development. Women empowerment is a process in which women find time and space of their own and begin to re-examine their lives. It enables women to analyze their environment and situation, recognize their strength and inborn potentials, alter their self-image, access new kinds of information and knowledge, acquire new skills and initiate action for gaining greater control over resources of many kinds. When women are empowered, a society with stability is assured. There are many programmes for women empowerment and Kudumbashree is one of them. Kudumbashree is implementing a project of Rs.7.28 crores named “Haritham” which aims at cultivating vegetables needed by Ernakulam Corporation. Haritham includes cultivation of vegetables in the Panchayats neighbouring the Corporation and the cultivated vegetables shall be collected and marketed. Terrace gardening existed since the days of Babylon, today it has a new meaning in India and other parts of the world. Since various developments are taking place, we started losing our agricultural lands. With the buildings on land and its cost in urban areas, there is scarcely any space for a garden. So if vegetables were to be grown domestically the only way is terrace which gives the ideal space.

II. Scope of the Study

The study concentrates on terrace farming and its role on women empowerment with special reference to Ernakulam district.

III. Objectives

a. Conduct a preliminary survey of terrace farming in Ernakulam district.

b. Analyze the role of terrace farming in women empowerment.

c. Make suitable recommendations for women empowerment.

IV. Literature Review

According to Monica Augustin (headmistress of Chempaka Kindergarten, Pallimukku), their founder Daphne Gomez inspired them to start terrace farming. They have a ‘Vegetable day’ and the children get enthused and involved when they see how vegetables are actually grown. Their teachers buy the produce and the money collected is invested for farming activities. [1]

Joji Mathew, a web developer, has introduced the concept of ‘weekend farming’ for those who love to take up farming but are tied up with many other things. They take land on lease and these people can come there on weekends and tend to the plants. [2]

Manjula Bharathi, COO of the Kudumbashree State Mission said “The Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)”, a woman farmer empowerment programme, has been launched by the Government of India which recently was decided to implement in Kerala. The programme aims to promote terrace farming in urban spaces,
empower women economically and to fulfill their dreams, promote the organic farming of vegetables on terraces in urban spaces. [3]
Priyesh Kumar (president, Mararikulam panchayat, 2010) said that Kerala state is dependent on other states for vegetables. People are giving priority to homestead organic vegetable farming. To boost cultivation, Panchayat Development Society gives small incentives for growing vegetables and has built up a good marketing system. [4]
Gopakumar, a retired PWD superintending engineer, who has been into terrace farming for over 10 years said initially terrace farming was an isolated effort by individuals and small groups which now has become a trend. Rooftops of houses in semi-wild areas like Idukki and Wayanad, and major cities like Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode are dotted with fruit and vegetable laden plants.  [5]

V. Methodology of the Study
For this study both primary and secondary data are used. Primary data is collected through questionnaire and secondary data is collected from published sources.
(A) Analysis
Data analysis is done through graphs.

Chart No.1 Showing ability to negotiate and bargain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Greatly improved</th>
<th>Fairly improved</th>
<th>Not improved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data

Chart No.2 Showing monthly savings before starting terrace farming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Savings</th>
<th>Below 10000</th>
<th>10000-15000</th>
<th>15000-20000</th>
<th>Above 20000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Savings</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data

Chart No.3 Showing monthly savings after starting terrace farming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Savings</th>
<th>Below 10000</th>
<th>10000-15000</th>
<th>15000-20000</th>
<th>Above 20000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Savings</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data
Findings
1. 35% of the respondents were housewives.
2. 45% of the respondents earn 15000-20000 monthly income.
3. 69% of respondents conduct terrace farming jointly.
4. The ability to negotiate and bargain, the ability to face personal and official problems, ability to face critical situations, the communication skill, ability to participate in Parents Teachers Association of schools/ college, decision making power in family, feeling of self confidence and the total contributions to family of women has greatly improved after doing terrace farming.
5. 39% of them got the motivation from friends.
6. 96% of them are supported by their family.
7. 55% had new ideas and suggestions.
8. All the respondents are happy with their current situation and their dependence on their family for their needs reduced after terrace farming.
9. 78% are willing to expand their unit.
10. 47% of them were doing terrace farming between 1-5 years.
11. 76% of them had only a savings of below 10000 before doing terrace farming and it improved to 10000-15000 after doing terrace farming.
12. They got new knowledge on ability to handle finance, deals with banks and banking transactions, about rights of women and awareness on nutrition, dangers of using pesticides and seasonal diseases after doing terrace farming.

Suggestions
1. Awareness should be created in the society on qualities of fresh organic vegetables.
2. There should be more schemes to include women in terrace farming.
3. Activities should be taken up so that the unemployed youths are attracted towards this field.
4. Government should encourage women doing terrace farming by giving incentives and subsidies.
5. Programmes of interaction with women who are successful in terrace farming will help in motivating other women.

VI. Conclusion
Terrace farming has become a trend in the Ernakulam district. It is now becoming popular in the urban areas. People can cultivate different vegetables and fruits on their terraces. They can get fresh vegetables which are free from poisonous fertilisers. Women are now getting independent through this terrace farming. It is evident from the study that majority of women got respect in family and society through this.

References
[2] www.samskrithi.in