

Collective and Organic Farming in Tamil Nadu: Women's Participation, Empowerment and Food Sovereignty

Dhruv Pande¹ & Munmun Jha¹

¹ Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India

Correspondence: Dhruv Pande, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Department of Humanities and Social Science, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur – 208 016, India. Tel: 91-512-259-6213. E-mail: dpande@iitk.ac.in

Received: May 1, 2016 Accepted: May 10, 2016 Online Published: July 7, 2016

doi:10.5539/ass.v12n8p184

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n8p184>

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the notion of women's participation, empowerment and food sovereignty among the marginalized women farmers in the state of Tamil Nadu in India. The women farmers who belong largely to the so-called lower castes have been marginalized due to the persistent presence of the patriarchal structure and the continued oppression and discrimination in a caste-ridden society. This is supported and supplemented by the policies and politics of globalization through the state apparatus. This research, based on the fieldwork method, highlights the hitherto undermined role of women farmers in the wake of their efforts at establishing enhanced and sustainable socio-economic relations in connection with the local agricultural land which accounts for their economic and social independence and sovereignty, especially food sovereignty. The process marking this transformation includes collective and organic farming based on millets leading to the creation of an inherent and integral food sovereignty vis-a-vis the increasing usurpation of agricultural land through the nexus of the state government and private companies. The paper also analyzes the issue of land ownership, litigation cases involving women, and the role of community organizations which impel the hitherto marginalized women towards self-sustainable, self-sufficient and self-governed environment in rural agricultural economy.

Keywords: informal political economy, land disputes, rural farming, women's collective

1. Introduction

This paper outlines relationship between the three concepts of women's participation, empowerment and food sovereignty. It seeks to show how these three concepts are inter-related through collective and organic farming practices by the marginalized women in rural hinterlands of the state of Tamil Nadu, India. It critically examines the nature and scope of the practices of collective and organic farming in the village communities, in rural Tamil Nadu. The recent trends in the globalization policies bring with them a number of activities and practices that are barely questioned due to their imposition and implementation through the neo-liberal hegemony. Subsequently, this affects the environment, especially in the developing countries. The paper reflects upon the specific policies of globalization that need to be addressed in order to protect the natural habitat and ensure a basic minimum standard of living for the women of these communities.

This paper is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the creation of food sovereignty through the practices of collective and organic farming. The initiatives as part of these practices are based on a context: location, situation, time and physical environment. These initiatives are original, innovative and formulated by the local women in these villages. They are differently adapted, variable according to the predominant factor of availability of the natural resources in each village and the interest factor reciprocated as a consequence of the efforts made by the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective (TNWC), a non-governmental organization that is active in some specific districts in Tamil Nadu. Hence, collective and organic farming bear the notion of not only changing the course or nature of agricultural economy and practices in this part of rural India, but also introducing a variety to the existing paradigms of women's socio-economic upliftment, especially in relation to women belonging to the lower castes in rural Tamil Nadu.

The second section deals with the issue of land ownership rights and litigation cases involving the so-called lower castes, specifically the dalit women. This section highlights aspects of the legal-constitutional framework from the perspective of women and gender as a sociological construct. The women and their constantly emerging

relation with land bears significance to the right to life or the right to live with respect and dignity. Do these cases promote their land-ownership rights? Or do these cases merely benefit other members of the family, especially the male patriarch? Here too, what role does the TNWC play in providing support and guidance to these women? These are some of the questions that will be discussed in this section.

This paper argues for alternative models of the rural agricultural economy. These models are based on local practices initiated by the local rural women. The demarcation of villages on caste lines gives rise to a need for a more equitable living and working conditions. Hence, the two sections of this paper highlight the close relation the women populace have with collective participation, empowerment and the construction of food sovereignty. The paper also highlights the strategies that the women undertake towards the protection and safeguarding of land as a natural resource from the imposition of neo-liberal globalization policies implemented through the state apparatus.

The framework and guidelines of these practices bear an everyday dynamics in the light of new, innovative strategies and techniques used not only for safeguarding land but also for ensuring a sustainable livelihood with respect and dignity in the long run. Economic self-reliance brings with it self-governance and self-rule that results in self-dependence rather than dependence on external institutional factors which in any case often prove to be ineffective. The state government, however, of late has shown some signs of efficient functioning and regulating the mechanisms of rural agricultural economy.

The working and functioning of these models thus pose a formidable challenge to the imposition of globalization and privatization regimes which seek to set up a large number of establishments for the benefit of a single enterprise but on the other hand, provide negligible advantage to the farmers whose lands are being taken away in the wake of the neo-modern development paradigm. As Folmer, Dutta and Oud (2010, p. 375) have observed:

A farmer's *professional* status is assumed to be determinant in that it indicates one's interest in, among others, the adoption of new production techniques and exploring new avenues such as Rural Industrial Entrepreneurship (RIE). We hypothesize that the higher the professional status, the higher the farmer's probability that he/she will start an RIE. This train of thought is based on the assumption that a farmer with a relatively high professional status in agriculture will strive for an even higher status, which may take the form of starting up or running an RIE.

The promise of employment opportunities as part of this paradigm remains unfulfilled as the consequences of such privatization practices are severe on the ecology of nature, natural resources, livelihood, social, cultural and economic practices of the affected population in a rural set-up.

Tamil Nadu is a state in the southern part of India with 32 districts and a population of 72 147 130 (as per the 2011 census) and a literacy rate of 83%, the sex ratio being 996 females per 1000 males. Climatically, Tamil Nadu is a tropical region with less than average rainfall as compared with other parts of the country.

In the context of widespread poverty and environmental degradation, this means an increased work burden, lower nutritional intake and consequent lower health status. Women's subordination can be overcome through an institutional structure which allows: (a) poor and landless women access and control over productive resources; (b) regenerates the environment; (c) provides house-hold food security; and (d) ensures sustainability of these efforts (Datar & Prakash, 2001, p. 224).

2. Methodology

The fieldwork for this research was undertaken in six districts of Tamil Nadu, namely Thiruvallur, Vellore, Madurai, Sivagiri, Tirunelveli and Chennai. The districts were chosen due to the work carried out by Tamil Nadu Women's Collective (TNWC) in these districts. In each of the districts, five villages were selected on the basis of active participation of TNWC staff in the farming practices and the involvement of women farmers. TNWC as a rural-women based organization was the medium through which these districts were chosen as case-study of this research. The staff of TNWC in the villages acted as intermediaries between the researcher and the subjects, that is, rural dalit women farmers. The staff of TNWC also acted as language translators for facilitating communication between the researcher and the subjects. Interviews were conducted with 30 women farmers in each district and focussed group discussions were carried out with self-help groups in each of the village. The fieldwork was carried out in two phases: from August to September 2013 and in March 2014. Documents relating to land litigation cases were collected and studied.

The daily patterns of their activities in the light of studying their farming practices, the need for a proliferation of these practices and their subsequent outcomes were also observed. By visiting a village each day, interviews were conducted with the women farmers. Interviews conducted were formal as well as on an informal basis.

Hence a kind of dialogue was generated between the researcher and the subjects.

3. Collective and Organic Farming: Food Sovereignty

The concept of collective farming, a relatively contemporary phenomenon in rural agricultural economy (since the last decade) is varied according to the local circumstances and contexts. It is closely related to the notion of grassroots groups.

Grassroots Groups are community-based, generally small in scope and scale, and focus on issues that directly impact members' lives. The groups provide a space for women to articulate their experiences, listen to others and consider individual and collective challenges to injustices. Participation in such groups can be critical for the deeply disadvantaged, such as poor women, who have accepted silence and repression as part of their lives. But initial facilitative leadership is required for organising such grassroots groups (Subramaniam, 2011, p. 73).

The collective farming technique used in each village was different from one another. The number of women in a collective varied from 5 to 30 members. This practice is in contrast to the traditional farming practices which includes farming solely by men or by individual families. The impetus to this practice was provided by the TNWC since the early 1990s, more specifically 1992. This practice was carried out by the system of rotational cropping and also seasonal cropping, as the collective decisions taken by the members were eventually for the benefit of all the members of the collective. This included the decision to sow seeds in the fields at a particular time in order to ensure maximum yield.

Closely linked to collective farming is the notion of participation.

I conceptualize participation not merely membership but as involving interest and commitment to the group. Initially, one becomes nominally a member of a group which is typically measured as membership of attendance. This is followed by participation in group activities such as discussion and decision-making, and speaking up or voting in the group. It includes leadership action that may occur in a distributed and non-hierarchical form; a diffused form of leadership which becomes salient in older groups (Subramaniam, 2011, p. 75).

The need for collective farming arises out of women's concern for supporting their family due to low income of the male-head or little source of income in many rural families, especially the Dalits. This also enhances the collective social spirit by working together in a communion, in cooperation, ensuring each other's well-being and welfare which was otherwise not apparent in isolated living within a family or suppressed living conditions under the male-heads or the domination of in-laws in many families. Hence, holistically the practice of collective farming began to be looked up as a long-term sustainable way of living by many of the marginalised women. Thus, as Schein (2003:132) points out correctly:

Five categories emerged as reflective of the meaning of work-related group participation for the women: no longer marginalised, social and emotional support; group and organising skills; technical skills; and rights awareness and protection.

Moreover, the requirement for introducing this alternative method in farming has also come about due to the deteriorating condition of agriculture in India. In this context, the grassroots resistance was a result of the emerging crisis:

The largest struggles against displacement in rural areas were triggered by government and private measures to implement the Green Revolution...They include resistance to reforestation projects that would replace native forest with commercially attractive monocultures.... (Angotti, 2012, p. 394)

The nature and character of grassroots resistance has been described thus:

This grassroots resistance brings together scientists, educators, and activists and provides information about the environment, energy and public health. Its activists have contributed to the movements to save the forests and bring to environmental issues an approach that incorporates social justice. They produce and disseminate environmental information through workshops, publications, and other media that are accessible to a wide audience. They are one among many local movements that have alternately criticized and allied with the political parties and government agencies supporting independent development (Angotti, 2012, p. 395)

The introduction of millet farming has supplemented the process of collective farming. This has introduced a variety of seeds with assured yields. Erratic rainfall leading to a scarcity of water resource has led to a need for cultivating millets as these require minimum or negligible amount of water. Millets are made available through

the TNWC and subsequently guidance is also provided by the TNWC staff members with the help of agricultural experts in order to facilitate effective implementation of this kind of farming.

The TNWC holds regular meetings to analyze the success and failures in different settings of millet farming, so as to curb the ill effects, and to fulfil the aims, goals and objectives. Hence questions and concerns are raised about the variety and type of seeds and also the farming techniques used with an optimum combination of timely sowing of seeds, providing the basic minimum required amount of water, timely harvesting and above all timely rotational system of cropping.

These factors mentioned above are significant in determining the successful implementation of millet farming and also the effective functioning of collective farming as rotational cropping itself becomes one of its prominent features. Rotational cropping is important in light of the practical feasibility of not being completely dependent on just one kind of cropping pattern or variety of crops for a higher expectation of higher yields; rather with rotational cropping a trial method is put into practice by ensuring maximum yields in a limited period of time.

Another significant feature worth mentioning is that all of the practices, manners, methods and techniques are carried out depending on the informal education received by the women farmers through the TNWC. This informal education itself suggests a system of training garnered through the everyday farming practices. The knowledge and awareness generated through these training sessions and the technical know-how imparted makes these women capable of managing such farming practices effectively on an everyday basis.

The returns from the joint practice of collective and millet farming are mostly for local consumption. The returns are equally divided among the number of women involved in each activity. A small part of the produce is also sold at the nearby local market.

One of the significant impetus provided to such farming practices comes from the training provided by the TNWC to the women farmers: these include prohibiting of the use of pesticides, and using alternative forms of manures and techniques to ensure fertility of land. The training sessions are quite significant in light of the lack of knowledge of agricultural mechanics and also a lack of spirit of a functional collective in village communities.

Apart from collective farming, another kind of farming practice – organic farming – has been introduced in an effective manner considering the availability of natural resources. Organic farming has enhanced the growth of an agricultural economy by introducing new, innovative techniques and practices of farming which are least dependent on the natural rainfall conditions. Besides, it has also supplemented the financial-social sovereignty of the rural women by giving the entire process of this farming in their own hands, thus enhancing an educative communion among them by sharing their individual experiences of organic farming and the returns or benefits that they have achieved in their individual cases.

The organisational structures supporting smallholder organic agriculture in India fall into four forms: farmers organised by a company, (2) farmers operating under NGO initiatives, (3) farmers organised or facilitated by government, and (4) farmers forming their own organisations (cooperatives, associations, self-help groups, etc.). However, in many instances, these basic organisational forms coexist with one another, giving rise to more complex structures (Das, 2007, p. 2243)

The women farmers have enhanced their self-knowledge in the area of farming and cultivation and hence fortified their relation with the local land. The self-knowledge gained from working in their own fields has been replicated by working in another's fields as well, thus producing optimum returns, benefitting all in the wider village community. Despite the absence of formal school education, the women, through the strong support of TNWC, have gathered financial and social benefits for the community by motivating other suppressed women folk in neighbouring villages as well.

However, the context of usurpation of agricultural land by the state in nexus with private companies and enterprises has affected the terrain and fertility of the land apart from considerably reducing the availability of land for agricultural purposes. The schemes and programmes of the state-sponsored mechanisms – such as marking of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), setting-up of privately owned educational institutions, industrial establishments and others – are constantly questioned as these pose serious ecological concerns apart from the loss to financial and social capital otherwise generated by rural initiatives.

The participatory rural appraisal held at regular intervals, bring together the women farmers and the TNWC staff members. This appraisal is in the spirit of a deliberative democracy from the grassroots; gives authority and power in the hands of the women farmers to assess and make a collective decision about the usage of land, in response to external forces such as state-sponsored constructions and schemes of the state-supported private enterprises. As Subramaniam (2011) has noted such practices which challenge the view that poor women only

organize around economic issues in a passive and defensive way, which denies them agency and consciousness.

4. Land Ownership Rights: Litigation Cases

Entitlements to land are determined by diverse socio-economic systems that have evolved over time and sometimes exist concurrently. In South Asia, for example, inheritance patterns in land vary within and between countries and further by region, religion, caste, community and ethnicity. The social norms and institutions that constrain women from claiming and controlling land vary region by region. They cause disadvantage to women more in certain region than others. Variations persist, as in India as a whole, in relation to inheritance of agricultural land in the tenural enactment of different states (Velayudhan, 2012, p. 507).

One of the prominent features arising from this study relates to a negligible or absence of land ownership rights for women, especially the Dalits, in rural Tamil Nadu. The ownership of land usually resides in the name of male heads of the family. This is despite the contributions made by women in building up a strong relation with the land, including providing constant physical labour.

The theoretical approach to understand land ownership among women refers to social, economic, political, and legal structures and processes that play a role in maintaining the status quo and deepening of gender inequality and discrimination or opportunities and support that these could provide. Awareness among women and initiatives taken by women to ensure their legal rights are also considered to be equally important aspects. ...The women's empowerment framework focuses on women's participation in law making, political institutions, governance and such avenues for ensuring women's land ownership and land rights. Which agency is effective in ensuring gender equality is also a point of research/academic inquiry (Vasavada, Rajgor, & Ganguly, 2015, p. 276).

The wage per day for the work done by women is determined by the number of hours of physical labour in the fields: women work in their own family-owned fields or hired as a field-workers. The payment of daily wage does not bear a standard and is different in different districts of Tamil Nadu.

Even in the labour exchange system, a woman farmer has to work for two days against a day's work provided by the male farmer if he is not related to her. There is a huge difference in wages paid to men and women, not only due to the perceived physical strength required for the work but also because of the perceived difference between men and women (Panta & Resurreccion, 2014, p. 232).

Furthermore, individual case-studies of court cases around dalit women highlight the nature of land disputes in which women are used as mere subjects in the hands of the parental and the in-laws' family in order for the latter to gain benefits. However, the presentation of litigations in the local courts do bear this suppressed gender perspective as the women who are involved in the court hearings have the support of a legal advisor provided by the TNWC. Thus, apart from being merely subjugated, the voice of the women does find a place in the proceedings. This brings forth their perspective, the question of the right to life, and hence the discourse of human rights concerns.

The individual case-studies of court cases bring to the fore the nature of law, legality and the legal processes in dialogue with this section of the rural society. Hence what has been invoked is a case for the legal pluralism in the social scientific research framework. The existence of such cases as an active component of this mechanism provides a perspective of law which has otherwise been undermined due to the women traditionally being subjected as mere tools in the hands of individual domestic households.

Since land constitutes the most important income-generating asset of the rural poor, a change in the agrarian structure due to changes in the distribution of land holdings reflects relative prosperity or destitution of different sections of the rural population...Naturally, alienation of the small and marginal farmers from their land, and their subsequent conversion into landless agricultural labourers put an end to their traditional form of self-provisioning and make them entirely dependent on the market for their basic needs, fulfilment of which depends on the availability of employment (Ghosh, 2009, p. 284)

5. The Elderly, Women Panchayats and Children's Panchayats in the Rural Agricultural Economy

Apart from the features mentioned above, some other factors of socio-economic-political milieu act upon directly and indirectly on the dalit rural women farmers in Tamil Nadu. In each of the village studied, there exists effective Elders' Groups, supported by the TNWC. The Elders' Groups actively promote savings among the elderly women and men in the villages. Savings arise out of farming practices apart from some basic financial support provided by the TNWC. These micro-savings, especially among the elderly women, help in maintaining land holdings which otherwise face a threat of diminishing over a period of time.

Women particularly from nuclear households face several constraints in rice farming. There are lack of access to technical knowledge related to new methods of farming including new seeds, lack of access to improved varieties which are tolerant to drought and submergence and personal problems (Paris et al., 2005, p. 2528).

Additionally, the active role played by Women Panchayat leaders in some villages help in the fortification of the rural informal economic paradigm.

The organisation of Childrens' Panchayats with a special focus on the role of the girl child has considerably paved the way for an enhanced social life for women in the village communities by invoking a ban on sale of alcohol in the neighbourhoods and by promoting campaigns against the use of plastic, and even the consumption of aerated soft drinks.

...changes in cropping patterns have brought about dramatic changes in women's participation in cultural practices, which were linked to various aspects of the production process of local food crops. Specific songs were sung during sowing, weeding and harvesting of different crops. Special harvest festivals were celebrated for specific crops. Women had the public space to sing, dance and celebrate. All this has stopped with the shift to new crops. There are no songs to be sung, no harvests to be celebrated. Women in many areas have virtually stopped the collective celebrations that were so much a part of their lives. This has further disempowered them, and restricted their freedom and creative expression (Ramdas et al., 2001, p. 184).

6. Conclusion

Collective farming is a progressive method used by the women, especially dalits as it empowers them through participation in decision-making in relation to agricultural practices whether it is about seeds, crop-cultivation, harvesting etc. They are not dependant on any external source or authority, no governmental or state apparatus support is required by them in the functioning of this kind of farming.

They also experience financial sovereignty in the sphere of domestic household with no support required from their male-counterparts or male-heads of the family. This enhances the scope and arena of rural agricultural economy by bringing in the marginalised women who were otherwise merely chained to domestic household tasks and activities.

This highlights the significance of the creation of food sovereignty, advocating its strong presence, utility and continued significance. The need for such sovereignty is felt all the more in the light of depleting economic and financial condition of dalit families who are affected by the stagnation of traditional methods of farming on one hand and the changing environmental concerns on the other.

A complementary effort is the role played by the TNWC in supporting and promoting the practices of food sovereignty among the individual as well as collective women farmers of Tamil Nadu. Food sovereignty is the need of the hour not only in Tamil Nadu but also other parts of the Indian sub-continent which face the challenge of non-performance or low performance by the state and central government as well as depletion in the availability of natural resources.

A significant part of this sovereignty is feasible and facilitated through the collective communions which have been successful in terms of their durability and local legitimacy within the local socio-economic, political and cultural atmosphere. Additional help provided by the Women Sarpanch leaders and Self Help Groups has led to a decent standard of living besides providing social empowerment.

A core part of what Gendering Agricultural Aid began to advocate from 1985 forward was gender 'mainstreaming'. With mainstreaming, the purpose was to have gender issues diffused throughout government and development bureaucracies, with gender integrated throughout all policies, programs and practices (Ransom & Bain, 2011, p. 52)

In the wake of preservation of the ecology of land amidst the 'human wars' are posited questions about preserving the integrity of the land, shielding it from an unnatural fabric of undesired 'development' under the name of modernity. The garb of generating employment opportunities, which usually stagnates after a period of time, results in the eventual loss – the loss of the land, the loss of the only source of survival—affecting the naturally-existing ecology. Moreover, the expansion of local knowledge of these women farmers eventually aids in expanding the nature of agricultural reforms and bringing in a new, alternative, and authentic modernity.

The political legitimacy and authority over land in rural India resides in the hands of the local population. Their demands and claims ought to be taken into consideration in order to arrive at an inclusive policy making.

The practice of collective and organic farming has introduced and made remarkable changes: enhanced awareness about farming and its significance for women, the utility and long-term effectiveness of farming as a dynamic practice rather than a stagnant one, imparting informal education on farming techniques and functioning of machinery and equipments, addressing environmental concerns by invoking a sense of belongingness, invoking a sense and a spirit of social, ethical and moral responsibility among the youth by taking into consideration their views and perspectives in participatory decision-making.

A successful framework for small farmer agriculture, which would also fulfil the tenets of a human rights approach to development, requires a substantially different kind of production collectivity...In particular from the lessons learnt we can suggest that collectivities should be framed around at least six principles: (1) Voluntariness, (2) small size, constituted of, say, groups of 10-12 or 15-20 farmers, (3) socio-economic homogeneity or marked social affinity among members, (4) participatory decision-making in production, management and distribution, (5) checks and penalties for containing free riding and ensuring accountability, and (6) group control over the returns and a fair distribution of the benefits, as decided transparently by the members (Agarwal, 2010, p. 67)

Nevertheless, what one learns and gains from another significant section of these models is the following number of characteristics among other results and outcomes: introducing a gender(ed) perspective to the reading of the law, showcasing to the other sections of the society the underlying importance of women to the land through depicting the strong relations they develop with their land, manifesting an important aspect of the concept of women's social and legal participation and empowerment, diversifying and declassifying the legal claims in the courts of law through women activists and women legal advisors themselves becoming torch bearers and proponents for a pertinent cause of gender social justice in the Indian society.

Thus the lessons learnt and benefits accruing are transcendental, cross cultural, inter disciplinary in social thematics, as the concerns, issues and perspectives are of significance not only for the Indian sub-continent but also other developing countries around the world.

Acknowledgments

This paper is based on the research project 'ALICE—Strange Mirrors, Unsuspected Lessons' coordinated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal. The project was funded by the European Research Council, under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007-2013/ERC Grant Agreement n. 267807).

References

- Agarwal, B. (2010). Rethinking Agricultural Production Collectivities. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLV(9), 64-78.
- Angotti, T. (2012). The Urban-Rural Divide and Food Sovereignty in India. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 28(4), 379-402. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0169796X12462735>
- Das, K. (2007). Towards a Smoother Transition to Organic Farming. *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 16, 2243-2245.
- Datar, C., & Prakash, A. (2001). Engendering Community Rights: A Case for Women's Access to Water and Wastelands. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 8(2), 223-246.
- Folmer, H., Dutta, S., & Oud, H. (2010). Determinants of Rural Industrial Entrepreneurship of Farmers in West Bengal: A Structural Equations Approach. *International Regional Science Review*, 33(4), 367-396. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0160017610384400>
- Ghosh, M. (2009). Dynamics of Agricultural Development and Rural Poverty in Indian States. *Margin—The Journal of Applied Economic Research*, 3(3), 265-295. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/097380100900300304>
- Panta, S. K., & Resurreccion, B. P. (2014). Gender and Caste Relations Amidst a Changing Political Situation in Nepal: Insights from a Farmer-managed Irrigation System. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 18(2), 219-247. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0971852414529482>
- Paris, T. et al. (2005). Labour Outmigration, Livelihood of Rice Farming Households and Women Left Behind: A case study in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 18, 2522-2529.
- Ramdas, S. R. et al. (2001). Changing Livelihoods, Livestock and Local Knowledge Systems: Women Stake Their Claim in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 8(2), 175-194.
- Ransom, E., & Bain, C. (2011). Gendering Agricultural Aid: An Analysis of Whether International Development

- Assistance Targets Women and Gender. *Gender and Society*, 25(1), 48-74. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0891243210392571>
- Schein, V. E. (2003). The Functions of Work Related Group Participation for Poor Women in Developing Countries: An Exploratory Look. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 15(2), 123-142.
- Subramaniam, M. (2011). Grassroots Groups and Poor Women's empowerment in Rural India. *International Sociology*, 27(1), 72-95. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0268580911423044>
- Vasavada, S., Rajgor, M., & Ganguly, V. (2015). Panchayati Raj Institutions and Women's Land Ownership: Learning from Gujarat. *Journal of Land and Rural Studies*, 3(2), 274-283. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/2321024915598901>
- Velayudhan, M. (2012). Contextualising Women's Rights and Entitlements to Land: Lessons from Gujarat. *Social Change*, 42(4), 505-526. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0049085712468144>

Copyright

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).