

Decision Making Prototype of Tribal Women in Farm Related Activities

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ABSTRACT

The tribal population in India constitutes a significant part of the population and the women in a tribal society are found to play a significant role in an agrarian country like India where farming is the main family occupation. Thus the study was therefore designed to comparatively analyse the decision making prototype of tribal women of Jorhat district of Assam in farm related activities. The study was conducted among two of the distinct tribes- Miching and the Shyam which revealed that amongst the Miching tribe, apart from post harvest processing (76.67%), all other decisions related to crop production and farm management were either taken in conjoint or the tribal women did not participated at all. With regard to the Shyam tribe, independent decisions were however seen mainly in post harvest processing (80.00%), weeding (58.33%) and transplanting (55.00%). Pertaining to decision making related to kitchen gardening, independent decisions was found in almost all activities amongst the Miching tribal women baring a few. In case of Shyam tribe, independent decisions related to kitchen gardening was mainly seen in harvesting (75.00%), irrigation (66.67%) and seed sowing (61.67%).

Key words : *Decision making; Comparison; Tribal women; Farm related activities;*

India is a country well-known for its cultural diversity and rich heritage of the tribal peoples. The tribal's are considered as an integral part of India's social and cultural system and accounts for 10.4 crore of which 5.25 crores are men and 5.19 crores are women according to the Census of India, 2011. The tribal population of India are concentrated mostly in the central belt of India and parts of the North-East India. The North East region is considered as one of most culturally diverse regions of the country. Amongst which Assam is the homeland of various tribal communities with their own cultural heritage and is considered as a land of many *tribes*, cultures and religions. The total populations of Assam in 2011 census were 3.12 crores. Out of which 3,884,371 million were scheduled tribes (ST) constituting 12.45 per cent of the total population of the state. The state has 9 scheduled tribes in the plains districts and 14 in the hills districts i.e. in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. Among the scheduled tribes

Bodo represents nearly half of the total ST population of the state (40.9%) followed by Miri/Miching (17.8%), Mikir (10.7%), Rabha (8.4%), Kachari (7.1%), Lalung (5.2%), Dimasa (3.2%), Deori (1.2%), Khamyang/Shyam (0.11%) of total ST population of the state. The rest scheduled tribes are very small in population size (*Census, 2011*).

The Mishings and the Shyams (Khamyang) are two of the plains Schedule Tribes of Assam who have been maintaining their age-old tradition, culture and practices in spite of various socio-political trials and tribulations through the ages. Generally, women in a tribal society play a significant role in their social, cultural and religious ways of life and truly prove her as an asset to their society. The tribal women of these two tribes from time immemorial are resuming their role as custodians of traditional culture and management of all types of resources as well. Agriculture generally involves five stages viz., production, processing, consumption,

storage and marketing and these women participate actively in almost all the activities related to each stage. But in spite of their contribution in all the spheres of life, they still remain backward in decision making due to traditional values, literacy and many other social and cultural factors. This is also due to the customary outlook of the society which never wants to acknowledge their contribution in decision making as their knowledge, capacity and intellects are always undermined.

Through the proposed study on decision making of tribal women would provide a short profile of the tribal households in the study area and would bring into focus the indicators for action points for policy formulation, designing and implementing target specific Govt. and extension programmes leading to development of sustainable livelihood system. Further the decision making behaviour of tribal women are not same in all places, rather they vary according to the tribal group and the social structure. Hence, analyzing the decision making quo of the tribal women through a holistic approach would help later in assessment of their needs and status and would provide a deeper insight for policy interventions to provide work opportunities with better wages to tribal women. Keeping these points in view the present study entitled "Decision making prototype of tribal women in farm related activities" was conducted with the following objectives given here under:

- i. To appraise the decision making pattern of the tribal women in farm related activities.
- ii. To comparatively analyse the decision making pattern of both the tribes

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Jorhat sub-division of Jorhat district of Assam. From Jorhat district two blocks namely North-West development block and Titabar development block were selected. From these two blocks two villages, one from each block was selected using simple random sampling technique. From each of the village 60 tribal women were selected through simple random sampling. Thus total numbers of respondent were 120. Data was collected using structured interview schedule and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A brief profile of the respondents as follows -

Age: The distribution of respondents according to age is presented in the Table 1 which shows that in Miching tribe 46.67 per cent of the respondents belonged to the young age group. Similar findings were reported by *Pal and Haldar (2016)* whereas in the Shyam tribe 45.00 per cent of the respondents belonged to the lower middle age group. Findings similar with the Shyam tribe were reported by *Bellurkar (2015)*, *Hagone and Basunathe (2015)*, *Patel and Chauhan (2015)* and *Singotiya et al. (2014)* where they found that the highest percentage of the tribal women belonged to the middle age group.

Table 1. Distribution of tribal women according to their age (years) (N=120)

Category	Miching	No.	%	Shyam	No.	%
Young	18-34	28	46.67	18-36	24	40.00
Middle	35-51	26	43.34	37-55	27	45.00
Old	52<	6	10.00	56<	9	15.00

Educational Status: Educational status of the respondents of the Miching tribe reflected that 25.00 per cent of the respondents had educational level up to middle level, 21.67 per cent were up to Class X passed, 18.34 per cent were HSLC passed, 11.67 per cent were illiterate and 16.66 were HS passed. While only a small percentage (6.66%) can read and write only. Among the Shyam tribe the literacy level of the respondents revealed that 28.33 per cent of the respondents had educational level up to middle level, 26.66 per cent were HSLC passed, an equal per cent of respondents (15.00) were HS passed and studied up to class X and 5.00 per cent were illiterate. While only a small percentage (3.34%) can read and write. It is quite encouraging to note that 5.00 per cent respondents of the Shyam tribe were graduates and 1.67 per cent was post graduates.

Table 2. Distribution of tribal women according to their educational status (N=120)

Category	Miching		Shyam	
	No.	%	No.	%
Illiterate	7	11.67	3	5.00
Can read & write	4	6.66	2	3.34
Up to Middle	15	25.00	17	28.33
Up to Class X	13	21.67	9	15.00
HSLC passed	11	18.34	16	26.66
HS passed	10	16.66	9	15.00
Graduate	-	-	3	5.00
Post graduate	-	-	1	1.67

Decision making of tribal women related to farm related activities: The activities related to farm are

further divided into activities related to crop production, management of farm produce and kitchen gardening

Decision making of tribal women on crop production: Under farm related practices, a total number of 11 practices were included starting from selection of land to post harvest processing to assess the decision making pattern (Table 3).

As far as independent decision making is concerned except for post harvest processing (76.67%), most of the decisions related to crop production were either taken jointly or the some of the respondents did not participated at all. Out of which mainly harvesting (61.66%), time & type of seed sowing (56.67%), transplanting (50.00%), weeding (50.00%) and irrigation

Table 3. Distribution of tribal women according to decision making on crop production (N=120)

Activities	Ind. decision making (%)		Joint decision making (%)				No decision making (%)	
	Miching	Shyam	With husband		With Other		Miching	Shyam
Crop production			Miching	Shyam	Miching	Shyam	Miching	Shyam
Selection of land	-	8.33	15.00	21.67	3.33	15.00	81.67	55.00
Time & type of seed sowing	5.00	11.67	56.67	51.67	3.33	6.67	65.00	30.66
Introduction of new varieties	5.00	10.67	15.00	16.67	3.33	25.00	78.00	48.33
Transplanting	10.00	55.00	50.00	16.67	15.00	28.33	25.00	-
Irrigation	10.00	25.00	50.00	38.33	15.00	28.33	25.00	-
Weeding	26.67	58.33	50.00	5.00	5.00	36.67	18.33	-
Application of fertilizer/manure	-	8.33	20.00	25.00	3.33	18.33	76.67	48.33
Plant protection	-	8.33	20.00	23.33	3.33	18.33	76.67	50.00
Harvesting	28.33	23.66	61.66	50.00	-	26.64	-	-
Storage of Produce	8.33	26.66	61.66	53.33	-	-	31.00	10.00
Post-harvest processing	76.67	80.00	-	-	23.33	16.67	-	3.33

Table 4. Distribution of tribal women according to decision making on management of farm produce (N=120)

Activities	Ind. decision making (%)		Joint decision making (%)				No decision making (%)	
	Miching	Shyam	With husband		With Other		Miching	Shyam
Management of farm produce			Miching	Shyam	Miching	Shyam	Miching	Shyam
Grading	3.33	13.33	24.00	51.00	16.67	13.33	56.33	22.34
Maintaining records of farm produce	6.67	15.00	20.00	48.33	23.33	11.67	40.00	28.33
Contacting extension personnel	6.67	23.33	16.67	46.67	30.00	23.33	46.67	38.33
Collecting farm tools and implements	10.00	13.33	52.33	56.67	20.00	3.33	18.00	26.67
Price fixation	6.67	17.34	36.67	51.66	30.00	18.33	46.67	13.33
Selecting place and amount of selling farm produce	10.00	3.33	55.00	65.00	15.00	11.67	20.00	20.00

Table 5. Distribution of tribal women according to decision making on kitchen garden related activities (N=120)

Activities	Ind. decision making (%)		Joint decision making (%)				No decision making (%)	
	Miching	Shyam	With husband		With Other		Miching	Shyam
Kitchen garden related			Miching	Shyam	Miching	Shyam	Miching	Shyam
Land selection	73.33	16.67	6.67	53.33	1.67	25.00	16.67	5.00
Land preparation	73.33	15.00	3.33	51.67	5.00	25.00	16.67	8.33
Seed selection	78.33	26.67	6.67	48.33	1.67	25.00	13.33	-
Seed sowing	78.33	61.67	8.33	31.67	1.67	6.67	11.67	-
Irrigation	75.00	66.67	11.67	6.67	1.67	25.00	11.67	1.67
Buying & application of fertilizer	6.67	26.67	78.33	40.00	-	23.00	15.00	8.33
Disease/pest management	6.67	21.67	80.00	51.67	1.67	25.00	6.67	3.33
Harvesting	80.00	65.00	6.67	13.34	1.67	21.67	6.67	-

(50.00%) were taken jointly with husband by more than half of the respondents of the Miching tribe. With regard to the Shyam tribe independent decision was noticed in activities mainly post harvest processing (80.00%), weeding (58.33%) and transplanting (55.00%). Decision those which were taken in joint with husband were mainly harvesting (50.00%), storage of produce (53.33%), time & type of seed sowing (51.67%) etc. However, no participation in decision making was also seen in areas like selection of land, introduction of new varieties, application of fertilizer/manure and plant protection measures. These may be due to prevailing social system or due to lack of knowledge about them. Similar findings were reported by *Singotiya et.al (2014)* where they found that tribal women were recessive in decisions regarding farm operations like plant protection measure etc.

Decision making of tribal women on management of farm produce : A total number of six sub-activities were included under farm management activities. The data with regard to the decision making of tribal women amongst both the tribe indicated that majority of decisions regarding farm management were not performed by them. The decisions which were mainly taken in joint with husband were selecting place and amount of selling farm produce (55.00%) and collecting farm tools and implements (52.33%). With regard to the Shyam tribe joint decisions with husband was seen in most of the areas like selecting place and amount of selling farm produce (65.00%), collecting farm tools and implements (56.67%), price fixation (51.66%) and grading (51.00%).

Decision making of tribal women on kitchen garden related activities: Under kitchen garden related activities 8 sub-areas were included to study the decision making pattern, where independent decisions dominated in all areas barring few in the Miching tribe, the highest being harvesting (80.00%) followed by seed selection and sowing (78.33%) and an equal per cent (73.33%) of land selection and preparation. However in the Shyam tribe most of the decisions were taken jointly except for a few activities like irrigation (66.67%), seed sowing (61.67%), and harvesting (65.00). In case of activities related to kitchen gardening, the scenario was completely opposite as the respondents of the Miching tribe took most of the decisions independently barring a few. This may be because traditionally they get a plot

of land where they can cultivate vegetables of their own choice and also because kitchen gardening in the customary society of Miching tribe is considered to be a part of women's household chores. With regard to the Shyam tribe however mostly joint decisions dominated the scenario. As in the Shyam tribal society both the male and female counterpart participate in kitchen gardening.

Chi square test between selected independent variables with decision making prototype of tribal women in farm related activities : Results of the chi square test in the table 6 revealed that there was a significant relationship between respondents' education in both the tribes, which is associated with the decision making prototype of the respondents in farm related activities because the " \bar{n} " value of respondents' education is less than 0.05% at the 5% level of significance (i.e. 0.015* for Miching and 0.041* for Shyam). On the other hand the other variable age has no significant relationship with decision making of tribal women in farm related activities as the " \bar{n} " value of respondents' age was greater than 0.05% at the 5% level of significance. Thus, out of the two variables one showed significant variance for the decision making of tribal women in farm activities and the other variable remained insignificant. The results indicated that education contributed to independent decision making pattern of the tribal women from both the tribes.

Table 6. Chi square test result between selected independent variables with decision making prototype of tribal women in farm related activities

Variable	tribal women	χ^2 value	"p" value
Age	Miching	6.268 ^{NS}	1.181
	Shyam	5.234 ^{NS}	0.856
Educational Status	Miching	8.055*	0.015
	Shyam	3.254*	0.041

Significant at 0.05 level, NS = Non-significant

Summary of decision making related to farm activities : With regard to the farm related activities it is revealed from the findings that in both the tribes the involvement of the respondents in independent decision making related to farm was not note worthy. It is revealed from the data that respondents from both the tribe took decisions in conjoint with their husband in most of the activities. In case of the Miching tribe except for post harvest processing (76.67%), all other decisions related to crop production and farm management were

either taken in conjoint or they did not participated at all which shows that they have less say in farm activities. Similar findings were reported by and *Chauhan (2012)*, *Pal and Haldar (2016)* and *Pandey.et.al (2011)* where they found that the tribal women did not play dominant role in making important decisions of farm managements and in the agricultural field. These may be due to notion of the male members of the society who thought that the women were not competent enough to consider their decision in farm related activities. With regard to the Shyam tribe the scenario was a bit better as independent decision was noticed in relatively a little more activities which were mainly post harvest processing, weeding and transplanting. This shows that the status of the respondents related to decision making was slightly brighter than their Miching counterpart which may be due to their better educational perspective in comparison to the respondents of the Miching tribe.

CONCLUSION

Tribal women play an important and vital role in farm and allied areas including the main crop production, kitchen gardening, post-harvest operations, etc. They are involved almost in all activities of day-to-day life along with different activities related to farm, livestock etc. They contribute far more to the economy of the family than has generally been acknowledged. The findings of the present study help us to draw the

conclusion that, the Miching tribal women did not have a much say in decision making related to crop production and farm management. However in case of kitchen garden related activities their independent participation was found in almost all activities. Hence, it can be concluded that the decision making prototype of tribal women of Miching tribe was not so note worthy whereas the tribal women of Shyam tribe was comparatively empowered in this scenario.

Recommendation: Based on the findings of the present study it can be recommended that-

- i. As the educational level is limited up to middle school in the study so efforts should be made on the part of the government and non-government organizations among tribal women for increasing the level of education to increase their decision making capacity.
- ii. The extension workers should endeavour to foster better working relationship between themselves and the tribal women as these would grant them more freedom to express their plight.
- iii. There is a need of imparting practical knowledge through training about use of fertilizers, pesticides, and women friendly technologies related to farm and kitchen gardening also so that their work becomes easier and knowledge about these topics also increases

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