

ISSN 2277 - 5730  
AN INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
QUARTERLY RESEARCH JOURNAL

# AJANTA

Volume - VIII

Issue - I

Part - I

January - March - 2019

Peer Reviewed Referred  
and UGC Listed Journal

Journal No. 40776



ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये

IMPACT FACTOR / INDEXING  
2018 - 5.5

[www.sjifactor.com](http://www.sjifactor.com)

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## 7. Empowering Women through Leadership Skills - Case of Organic India

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### Abstract

*Women form the backbone of the agricultural rural economy in the developing countries. They remain one of the most vulnerable groups of the society. More than 80 percent of the women in rural India are engaged in agriculture for their survival. Some factors such as lack of access to education and technology and other socio-economic issues have had an adverse impact on the lives of women farmers. The degradation of natural resources, fluctuating climatic conditions, and fragmentation of their land holdings have added to their problems, leading to a decline in their incomes from agriculture. Moreover, gender disparities in areas of access to inputs, resources, services, technology, and sharing of benefits have compounded the woes of women farmers. Against this backdrop, ORGANIC INDIA, a non-profitable NGO empower women community through employment opportunities, fair wages, and access to healthcare, job skills training, leadership development, and educational programming providing a sustainable rural livelihood to them while bridging the gender gap. Women Empowerment has become a movement for Organic India Foundation.*

*This paper tries to critically analyze the platform set by the NGO in India and bring out the benefits reaped by the women farmers in developing leadership qualities, creating a niche for themselves and influencing the women farmers to empower oneself and spread the awareness among the others for a better life ahead.*

**Key Terms:** - Rural Economy, Gender Disparity, Women Empowerment, Leadership Quality, Training, Niche.

### 1. Introduction

The need for empowerment of women arose due to varied types of violence and evil practices done by men all over the world where India is no exception. India has a complex social

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matrix having various types of customs, traditions and practices. Indian society consists of varied religious beliefs which teach us to treat women with respect and dignity. To eliminate these ill practices and discrimination against women various constitutional and legal rights are there but in reality there is lack of awareness among women. Several unprofitable organizations, self-help groups and NGOs are working in this direction. To change, the society's age-old deep-rooted problems the mindset of people needs to change through sensitization programmes especially in the rural areas.

The concept of women empowerment and leadership capacity not only focuses on giving women strength and skills to rise above their miserable situation but at the same time it also stresses on the need to educate men regarding women issues and inculcating a sense of respect and a rightful place in the society.



## 2. About the Organization and their Vision

The multinational company was founded in Lucknow in 1997. This was the initiative of Mr. Bharat Mitra and Bhavani Lev a husband – wife duo who started the organization to support livelihood of impoverished farmers in India. The organization also provided training and education enabling self-sufficiency especially among women workers in rural India. The company also helps in developing skills that could be passed on to the future generation. The mission of Organic India is to change the society of poor people with love, care and consciousness.

Organic India is totally committed to look after thousands of rural family to do organic farming for which the founder Bharat Mitra works on the model of sustainability to fulfill his dream. The MNC looks into empowering women, widows, elderly and illiterates.

The success story of the organization brings out a very vibrant scenario that not a single farmer whether male or female has left Organic India for other Institutions, In contrast has deepened their relationship of care and partnership.

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The company believes that empowering women means empowering the entire community. They believe in giving utmost importance to women's life based on her wellness to live a fulfilling and beautiful life ahead. The organization welcomes all rural folks to actively participate in their mission to create a healthy and regenerative global environment. Organic India helps in supporting women farmers for sustainable farming. It helps them to cultivate, collect, process, manufactures and markets the products at the right price.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

- The existing study reveal that women lack access to and control over resources as well as agricultural inputs and technology such as improved crop varieties, training, information and marketing services. Women do all the labor work but do not get to participate in decision making. This study tries to unveil this aspect and bring in changes.
- In India women's disempowerment and gender inequality is a widespread phenomenon. To ensure that development efforts are channeled in the right direction and in the right form for women agricultural workers, the working of Organic India which aims at handling such issues are highlighted.
- This paper aims to generate a better understanding of the gender equality by presenting evidence from the data collected all over India and exploring overall intra-regional variation in women's empowerment and equal status.

### 4. Methodology Used

The study is based on secondary data to analyze the real scenario of women agricultural workers in India. The annual reports of the organization, Organic India has been referred to bring out the work they are doing and how they are helping this segment of the society to gain confidence and add value to the Indian economy. Various interviews of successful women entrepreneurs in agricultural sector are referred to get an insight into the working of the organization for the women farmers. World Economic Forum Reports are also referred to cross check the conditions in other countries and find out reform measures from positive feedbacks.

### 5. Empowering Women through Opportunities

Organic India, the multinational company motivates rural women and tries to empower the entire community. They invest in women through employment opportunities, helps in getting fair wages, access to health facilities, skill training and leadership development. According to



McKinsey Global Institute Report 2015, India is one of the worst hit countries for gender disparity. The organization takes into account the opportunities to be provided which will empower women, strengthen their families, farming operations and overall quality of life.

The efforts taken by this non- profitable organization are as follows:

- A) **Fair Pay:** - The organization pays female farmers market wages equal to male farmers. This initiative enables the women farmers to financially support themselves and their families. The uniqueness of this organization is that if crops fail the organization still pays the women farmers and covers their losses. Women farmers are the pillars of ORGANIC INDIA. They take pride in training many of them from marginalized groups, including women, widows, the elderly and the illiterate-and providing educational opportunities enabling self-sufficiency and developing skills to pass on to future generations. The relationships are built on mutual respect, dignity and inter-connectedness. The organization is committed to help enhance the lives of the farmers through fair-market wages, access to healthcare, empowerment and gender equality programmes, as well as improvements in infrastructure. When farmers succeed, their villages also prosper, leading to a collective enhancement of the quality of life.
- B) **Skill Training Programmes:** - Organic India empowers women through education for practicing regeneration agriculture. They train the women for subsidiary activities during slack period like stitching, basket making or helping in packaging of their products etc. Though women are involved in almost all agricultural operations, yet, they have inadequate technical competency due to their limited exposure to outside world. This has compelled them to follow the age old agricultural practices which in turn result in poor work efficiency .Training is an important component for the women farmers. For building technical competency among farm women, specialized need based and skill\_ oriented training should be organized preferably at village level. Some of the priority areas in which women needs training.
- C) **Leadership on Farms:-** The organization has trained the women farmers to take up the initiative to independently lead operations on farm land which was once totally a man's domain. This will break the stereotype social norms and bring about a change in gender disparity for good. The women will also get a fair chance to participate in decision making along with the males. Women farmers in many villages are no longer

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just low-wage laborers or confined to their homes. They are farmers and producers, leading the revival and adoption of locally sustainable agricultural practices. They make their own decisions and their opinions are heard. They create employment for other women in their communities.

**D) Employing Widows:-** Widows in India lead a pathetic life. They are treated as 'untouchables' and are rejected by their families. They are also refused employment and are ostracized from the society leading a cursed life. Organic India has taken the initiative of employing them and releasing their stress and pain. ORGANIC INDIA employs many widows, particularly on their Sweet Rose Farm in Brindavan. Here, find women and widows laugh and sing, handpicking rose petals in the fields. It is truly a beautiful sight, which has a "magical" change in their dull and gruesome life.

## 6. Conclusion

In an interview with women farmers in Uttar Pradesh, they have projected contentment to work with Organic India. The women farmers come to the fields at 8.00 a.m. in the morning and stay till 6.30 p.m. in the evening. They have been working for number of years with the organization where more and more women are joining the team. The women farmers all work together, laughing, singing and sharing experiences. They do many things together enjoying each other's company. The organization does lot of things for the women to earn money, educate their children and make their life secure. The women farmers feel fulfilling to be associated with Organic India which takes up the mission to empower hundreds of women workers throughout India. Thus an inclusive approach, all the way from policy to implementation, is essential to bring women working in agriculture into the mainstream and to empower them with direct access to knowledge of improved agricultural practices. Some suggestion and recommendations in policy making are as follows where the organizations can get government support to bring some positive changes into the life of women farmers to empower them and develop leadership qualities to gain gender equality at grass root level.

## Recommendations

1. Agriculture should be treated as a priority sector for small and marginal women farmers recognized as a special group.
2. Direct income support should be given to women farmers all over India.

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3. Efforts should be taken by government and private organizations for value enhancement of agro products.
4. The government should emphasize upon agriculture oriented research and education which non profitable organizations can help.
5. Misuse and diversion of land for non-agriculture activities must be stopped.
6. Current water policy should be reviewed and be made farmer friendly.
7. Non-farm rural employment should be increased for women farmers.
8. Organic farming proves to be more profitable than the age-old traditional farming methods. It has been found that organic farming reduces the production cost by about 25-30%, as it does not involve the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, which thus makes organic farming cost-effective.
9. Development of rural godowns & cold storages to be provided In order to ensure optimum utilization of agricultural crops as also fruits and vegetables and reduce waste to the minimum to ensure enhancement of income of the farmers
10. The Kisan Credit Card is hassle free and useful credit scheme, yet the end use of the sanctioned limit should be closely monitored to avert misutilization
11. The government should provide back home support for adoption of new technologies to women farmers too.
12. The actual cultivator –women and small and marginal farmers must be included in expansion activities message in print form before every crop season.
13. Women's role in maintaining biodiversity and preserving traditional knowledge should be recognized and encouraged.
14. Access, control and ownership of land to/for women must be ensured.
15. Differential incentives should be given to women farmers.

The voices of women farmers and marginalized section need to be heard at both the policy and implementation levels for progressive India. Women farmers in India perform most of the big farming jobs, from sowing to harvesting, yet their access to resources is less than their male counterparts. Closing this gender gap is essential in order to accelerate the pace of growth in the agriculture sector. To win over the situation Organic India is way ahead to fulfill their mission. In order to make India progressive it is essential to make rural India - where agriculture forms the backbone - progressive. We need to incorporate inclusion at every level if we are to

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progress towards sustainable change. It is imperative that we focus on our country's women farmers.

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