

The Story of Women Farmers of Banswara, India and Their Journey Towards Self-Reliance

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In Amarthoon village of Banswara district, Rajasthan, a transformation is underway that is not only changing the face of the fields but also bringing a new wave of prosperity into the lives of women farmers. This is the story of those courageous women who stepped out of the confines of traditional farming, ventured into vegetable cultivation, and are now reaping the sweet fruits of their hard work.

Brinjal and cluster beans – these two seemingly ordinary vegetables have today become a symbol of economic freedom for the women farmers of Amarthoon. Where earlier a mere ₹10,000 could be earned from 2 bighas of land, these same women are now earning up to ₹1,50,000 from the same piece of land. This is not just a matter of numbers; it is a true story of transformation.

Banswara: A Land of Challenges

Banswara is a tribal district in Rajasthan where 80 percent of the population belongs to the tribal community. Agriculture is the primary livelihood here, but this farming is surrounded by numerous challenges. Around 85 percent of farmers in the region have less than one hectare of land, placing them in the category of small and marginal farmers.

The biggest problem is the lack of irrigation facilities. Most farmers depend on rain-fed agriculture, which is risky due to the uncertainty of monsoons. Amarthoon village, located in Ghatol block, has long faced these challenges. Farmers here traditionally grew crops like maize and soybean during the Kharif season, earning only ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 annually.

Migration: The Painful Reality

Due to financial hardship and limited means of livelihood, farming families of Amarthoon had to migrate every year. After the farming season, these families would go to Gujarat to work as labourers. This migration not only tore families apart, but also affected children's education, the social fabric, and ties to cultural roots.

Pari Magan Charpota, a woman farmer from Amarthoon, shares her experience:

“There was no permanent source of income in our village. We were unemployed and had to go to Ahmedabad in Gujarat for construction work. The conditions there were tough and it was difficult to be away from family.”

Vaagdhara's Initiative: A New Beginning (2022)

In 2022, Vaagdhara organisation initiated a new effort in Amarthoon village. This organisation aimed to improve farmers' livelihoods through agricultural diversification. They identified that vegetables could be a high-value crop capable of yielding good profits even on small pieces of land.

Vaagdhara's strategy was multi-pronged. First, Women Empowerment Groups were formed in the village. This step was crucial because women are not only active participants in farming but also play an important role in family nutrition and economic decision-making. Through these groups, women were organised and made aware of their collective strength.

Training, Seeds, and Modern Techniques

Each participating woman farmer was provided with improved vegetable seeds. Brinjal and cluster beans were chosen because they have good market demand, grow well in the local climate, and yield good profits. Providing seeds was just the beginning. The real transformation came when farmers were given comprehensive training.

Vaagdhara organised Farmer Field Schools (Kisan Khet Pathshala), where farmers were taught advanced vegetable cultivation techniques in a practical way. These schools covered every stage from seed sowing to harvesting — how to select crops according to the season, how to prepare the soil, at what spacing to sow seeds, and how to manage pests and diseases. This balanced combination of theory and practice gave farmers confidence.

Organic Farming: Dual Benefits

A unique aspect of Vaagdhara's initiative was the promotion of organic farming. Women farmers were trained to prepare organic inputs such as Jeevamrit, Dashparni Ark, and vermicompost. This brought dual benefits.

First, the cost of these organic inputs was much lower compared to chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Farmers could prepare them using locally available materials, reducing overall farming costs. Second, the reduction in use of chemical pesticides improved the quality of produce and made it safer for health.

And the results were astounding. Where once a mere ₹10,000 could be earned by growing maize and wheat from 2 bighas of land, these same women are now earning up to ₹1,50,000 from brinjal and cluster beans.

Impact on Life: Beyond Numbers

The increased income had a direct impact on the standard of living of the farmers. Some farmers developed their fields, and several families replaced their old mud houses with pucca (permanent) homes. Spending on children's education increased and some families enrolled their children in better schools. Access to healthcare also improved.

The most important change was a reduction in migration. Now farming families can stay in their village throughout the year and earn a sufficient income. This keeps families together, children can continue their education, and the social fabric is strengthened.

From One Village to a Movement: 13,952 Farmers

What began with women farmers in 2022 has today transformed into a larger movement. More than 13,952 farmers in Banswara district are now connected with this initiative. This number itself validates the success of this model.

These thousands of farmers have not only increased their income but have also improved various aspects of their lives. Migration has decreased, living standards have improved, and nutritional levels have also improved with increased vegetable consumption. This is an example of holistic development where progress has been made across economic, social, and health dimensions.

Key Lessons from Amarthoon

The story of Amarthoon teaches several important lessons. Agricultural diversification can be a game-changer for small and marginal farmers — moving away from traditional crops towards high-value crops can be economically rewarding.

Empowering women is not merely a matter of social justice; it is also the key to economic development. When women receive resources, training, and opportunities, they can deliver extraordinary results.

Training and capacity building are as important as providing physical resources. Just giving seeds is not enough — it is equally necessary to teach farmers how to use them most effectively.

Organic farming is not only good for the environment, but it can also be economically beneficial. The combination of lower costs and better quality brings dual benefits for farmers.

Conclusion: The Promise of Rural India

The work of Pari Magan Charpota and the other women farmers of Amarthoon demonstrates that with the right guidance, resources, and support, even small and marginal farmers can achieve prosperity. And change is possible. More than 13,952 farmers of Banswara are witness to how agricultural diversification and women's empowerment can together work wonders. This number continues to grow, and every new farmer adds a new chapter to this success story.

The journey of Amarthoon gives us the confidence that there are immense possibilities for development in rural India. What is needed is simply to work in the right direction, to believe in farmers, and to provide them with the necessary support. Ordinary vegetables like brinjal and cluster beans can bring extraordinary change — Amarthoon has proven this.

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