



# WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPMENT AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

India is a diversified country, where customs and culture vary from region to region. But inequity and inequality based on gender are common in every segment of Indian society when women go out and work. Most of the Indian women work in different ways, but their work didn't get recognized by the government or even not by the family members too. According to the World Bank's report (1991), there are around 90% of women were engaged in informal sector work in India. The work participation of women was above 33% in 1911. After that, as mechanization took place in agriculture the work participation rate started coming down and was reduced up to 11.86% in 1971. In 1981 it was only 14.44% but it increased to 22.69% in just one decade. This data shows the plight of working women in different sections of the Indian economy i.e. agriculture, industry, and service sector. In this particular article we will try to see, how with the help of WID<sup>1</sup>, WAD<sup>2</sup>, and GAD<sup>3</sup> different working sectors can engage women. WID is for recognition that women also work. WAD is for focusing on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. And GAD is for challenging complex social relations between men and women.

## WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR

According to Swaminathan, one of the famous agricultural scientists and the pioneer of the green revolution, he argued with some reference to other historians that women were the first to introduce agriculture to civilized society as to domesticating crops and other agriculture-related works. He tried the situation with the example; like men in their society were busy hunting for gathering food, so women started collecting seeds from nearby flora and started cultivation with the view to get food, fodder, fuel, and fiber. Women in rural India were the most engaged in agriculture-related work. Work there for women differ from the nature of the landed household. They work as managers also and as landless labor also. According to the report of Shiva FAO 1991, the average contribution of women in agricultural production is around 55% to 66%. In the Indian Himalayas, a pair of bullocks works 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours and a woman 3485 hours in a year on a once hectare farm, a figure that illustrates women's significant contribution to agricultural production.

<sup>1</sup> Women in development.

<sup>2</sup> Women and Development.

<sup>3</sup> Gender and Development.

Women were considered as the main strength of agriculture, they do the toughest works, be it the animal husbandry or the housework. In India, most of the males and females were engaged agricultural work. And the work is divided into three categories i.e. cultivators, laborers, and other related works. Most of the time these women were indulged in non- skilled, low paid, and the low positioned jobs, but not as supervisor and owner of capital. Even though women constitute a large number of contributors in agricultural production but the land would remain in the hands of man only. Most of the women engage in work were landless. There were very few governmental schemes which take consideration of women as beneficiary. Therefore women did not get benefit from the governmental public agriculture development program.

They must be allowed to hold lands, Landless women need to be organized into cooperatives to avail of existing government schemes for land development and the creation of fodder farms and pasture land. (Padmaja Reddy, 2003).

### **CASE STUDY OF SEWA (SELF EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION)**

As we know about the major issues which create problems in women's life directly or indirectly like insecure profits, increasing cost of inputs, outdated practices, increased competition, environmental degradation, decreasing demand for labor, increasing labor supply, etc., for countering this SEWA has emerged as the helping hand to agricultural workers so that they can form their local organizations like cooperatives in a regional federation. These agriculture workers organizations aim to increase productivity, yield, bargaining power, and income through educating small and marginal farmers (mainly women) on technical skills, methods of costing and pricing, and the implications and requirements of increasingly liberalized trade, building linkages with technical research and marketing organizations, collectively purchasing agriculture inputs at lower rates, initiating alternative income generation activities such as agro-forestry, horticulture, vermiculture, and compost manufacturing.

Some stories indicate the implications of the idea discussed above and have gained profit and success. And which also implicate the idea that if institutions public or private, may help the marginal one than they can do something which is not ordinary.

#### **Vanlaxmi Women Tree Growers Cooperative**

Rapid industrialization and the absence of forwarding and backward linkages were slowly forcing more and more farmers of the Mehasana district of Gujrat to lose their land and the only source of revenue. Due to irrigation from bore wells the water table was dipping. The marginal farmers were the main victims as they could not afford the expensive irrigation therefore they were forced to work as casual laborers or had to migrate. Women agricultural workers were the hardest hit and they had to walk miles in search of fodder and fuel. In such times SEWA organized women agriculturists into a cooperative. They after much fight and struggle for two and a half years they got government revenue land. For this, they had to change to a tree grower's cooperative. The women using the land granted by the government were able to use scientific agricultural practices and maximizing employment opportunities used a multi-sectorial approach to solve the problems of women agricultural workers. They successfully got the technical help of Gujarat Agricultural University and were able to get a good income and profit using drip irrigation, horticulture, agroforestry, and rainwater harvesting. In all these, alongside mentioned activities, they encouraged and ensured the participation of villagers especially the women. We can see that the Vanlaxmi has stood as a model for not only the district but also the state in demonstrating that the poor landless can transform agriculture. In addition to these, the advantages of the Vanlaxmi were 1. Poor women laborers are now recognized as farmers. 2. Full employment for the members. 3. The land has been able to meet the fuel and fodder needs of the village 4. The society has even emerged as a distributor of quality seed of the Gujrat State seed cooperation.

### **Sabarkantha Women Farmer's Association**

Sabarkantha district in Gujrat is a semi-arid area that is heavily affected by soil erosion. This has resulted in a decline in agricultural productivity as most of the sandy soil is getting washed away. Employment, as a result, has greatly reduced. SEWA has organized the women, agricultural workers/farmers, into Sabarkantha Women Farmers Association. The Association has started deploying technology to check the erosion of soil. In addition to it, the association also provides full-time employment to displaced agricultural workers. This is done by encouraging the workers to form tree growing societies. The cooperative organizes the women into self-help groups for saving and credit facilities. Eventually, the cooperative has used various government schemes to help members/ agricultural workers come out of poverty and unemployment.

### **Sukhi Mahila SEWA Mandal**

The Sukhi dam constructed in the tribal areas of Pari Jetpur village of Vadodara in the 1990s resulted in the submergence of the villages and forests. The villagers were given compensation in the form of land. The agricultural village families which were led by women had to face additional problems. These women were dependent on the adjoining lands including forests (for collecting firewood, fodder), farming, dairying. In resettlement they got the only land ignoring the multiple aspects of their survival mechanism. Even the land they got was mainly rocky and unfit for instant cultivation.

SEWA then organized the women agriculturists into Sukhi Mahila Sewa Mandal to enable them to get economic rehabilitation. Under the banner of the Mandal, the women agriculturists started land development and developed irrigation mechanisms. This was supplemented by income and employment generation using poultry, animal husbandry, social forestry, etc.

### **SEWA Gram Mahila Haat**

In 1999, SEWA Gram Mahila Haat was established with the help of the Government of Gujrat to provide market, financial and technical assistance to small marginal farmers and agricultural laborers. The main aim of the Haat was to eliminate the middleman and provide a sustainable income to the members through access to the markets all over the country. SEWA has adopted a sector-specific approach to solving the problems of farmers especially women. Instead of adopting a single solution, it has focused on the organization of agricultural workers to build their associations to meet their specific needs. In all these problems it was understood by SEWA that sustainable development can be achieved when the vulnerability to poverty esp. of the women can be ended. It has shown that when the poor women agriculturists were equipped with modern techniques and cheap credit they can bring prosperity to the family by getting better yields and large incomes.

### **WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR**

The study of industrialization and labor has been very detailed in India. But since independence the main focus, concern had been modernization; national politics or workers' consciousness very less importance was placed on the gender basis. It was assumed that the very low participation of women in work.

However, due to the intense contribution of women in the business and economy demand and study was being undertaken at various levels. The demand included regulation of hour work, a period of rest, night work, etc. for women working in the industrial sector. These laws were for "special workers" who were women since they had

1. To perform a reproductive role as wives and mothers;
2. They were thought to be physically weaker to men;
3. They did not fight for their self-interest hence it was thought that it was the duty of the state to protect them.

But the patriarchal nature of society forced it to not accept the reforms proposed by the government. Rather it was used as a tool to minimize the employment of women. For example

1. When legislation was introduced for wage equality for women. The owners of mills, mines became less interested in employing the women as they mostly employed women for they used to pay a fewer wage to them. Further, the maternity benefits granted by subsequent legislation made the employment of women negligible.
2. After independence, the growth of unions was very high. These unions began to hold high say as their membership began to reach a very high number. These unions were able to negotiate with the management as well as the government. These unions dominated by men played a negative role in the promotion of women in these sectors. It was said that it was only the male that was organized.
3. Further, the men who migrated to cities in search of better job opportunities did neither promote nor bring their wives with them due to the social fear and their own patriarchal bias.
4. The system of subcontracting which emerged after liberalization was very detrimental to the condition of the women. This resulted in resulting in fewer job opportunities to peace workers as well as of very less value.

The employment rate of women was 15-20% in the 1920s which in the next three decades became marginal due to the above-mentioned reasons.

As an exception, some of the export-oriented industries have witnessed a growth of women's employment since the 1980s. Even some of the parents are beginning to accept the employment of unmarried women in MNCs and the export industry.

But since most of the women are employed in the unorganized sector therefore the benefits of legislation have not been passed on to them.

The problem of women in the unorganized sector is consisting of many subproblems. The women are paid low in comparison to men. There is no job security, leave benefits as well as maternity benefits to these women even though it is provided by the constitution of India under Article 39. There is a gender division of labor. There is patriarchy entrenched in the employment sector which has resulted in feminization of poverty. There is a concept of the double day which clearly describes the condition of women workers in the unorganized sector, who after their employment-related work, have to work at homes. The Marxist feminists are against capitalism according to them it creates a gender division of labor. In such a scenario the role of NGOs becomes very important as we can see that the work done by SEWA is very appreciable. Under the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) loans were provided by the US and UK but under conditions that they would implement the LPG concept with emphasis on productivity, efficiency, and profits. Under this the women were considered fit for employment under MNCs as it was thought that the women have docile nature, are physically weaker, they can work at lower wages, they cannot form unions. Studies like towards equality report have shown that most of the women worked under the subcontract system so their work got unrecorded and so their role got unassessed, it resulted in the invisibility of their work.

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