

Women's Entrepreneurship Position & Contribution towards Social & Economic Awakening for Rural Women cluster: an Analysis

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Abstract

Efforts have been made in this paper to critically review the women's empowerment endeavours in India. Empowerment is midway in the change processes that benefit women at individual, household, community and broader levels. At the most basic level, innovations can benefit women simply by improving their well-being in terms of health, nutrition, income, life span etc. There is a bidirectional relationship between economic development and women's empowerment defined as improving the ability of women to access the constituents of development in particular to health, education, earning opportunities, rights, and political participation. The rural women are having basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise. Women entrepreneur networks are major sources of knowledge about women's entrepreneurship and they are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for its development and promotion. Therefore, formation and strengthening of rural women entrepreneur network must be encouraged.

Keywords: Empowerment, equality, rural, women, India

Introduction

The emergence of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to the national economy is quite visible in India. The number of women entrepreneurs has grown over a period of time, especially in the 1990s. Women entrepreneurs need to be lauded for their increased utilization of modern technology, increased investments, finding a niche in the export market, creating a sizable employment for others and setting the trend for other women entrepreneurs in the organized sector. Women's entrepreneurship needs to be studied separately for two main reasons. The first reason is that women's entrepreneurship has been recognized during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth

Dairying has played a prominent role in strengthening India's rural economy. It has been recognized as an instrument to bring about socio-economic transformation. The vast potential of dairying in employment generation and poverty alleviation is well recognized. The rainfed areas, which account for 70 percent of the net cultivated areas of the country, have not benefited from modern developments in agriculture. Of this 70 percent, about 30 percent area is under dry land agriculture where annual rainfall is up to 400mm. Small and marginal farmers and landless labourers, who derive a substantial part of their livelihood from sale of milk, own about 70 percent of cattle in the rural areas.

The success of India's dairy industry is not only a story of the triumph of science and technology. There have been no miracles. The White Revolution was possible because structures were created that gave the farmers control over the resources they create. The merit of the cooperative ideology is the co-ordination and balancing of fundamental principles of equality, democratic control and equality in institutions, and practices to maximize social welfare.

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Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others and also by being different. They also provide the society with different solutions to management, organization and business problems as well as to the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. The second reason is that the topic of women in entrepreneurship has been largely neglected both in society in general and in the social sciences. Not only have women lower participation rates in entrepreneurship than men but they also generally choose to start and manage firms in different industries than men tend to do.

The micro finance is agenda for empowering poor women. Micro enterprises are an integral part of planned strategy for securing balanced development of the economy of the poor women. Rural women's participation in agro-based activities is much more than what statistics reveal. This is mainly due to the fact that most of the work done by the women at farm and home is disguised as daily chores. Mechanization and easy availability of labour provide more time to energetic women to engage themselves in self-employment or entrepreneur ventures. Rural women are having human and nonhuman resources to take up an enterprise need one an innovative mind and motivation.

Rural women play a vital role in farm and home system. She contributes substantially in the physical aspect of farming, livestock management, post-harvest and allied activities. Her direct and indirect contribution at the farm and home level along with livestock management operation has not only help to save their assets but also led to increase the family income. She performs various farm, livestock, post-harvest and allied activities and possesses skills and indigenous knowledge in these areas.³The women were empowering themselves technically to cope with the changing times and productively using their free time and existing skills for setting and sustaining enterprises. They were engaged in starting individual or collective income generation programme with the help of self-help group. This will not only generate income for them but also improve the decision-making capabilities that led to overall empowerment. In view of this efforts have been made in this paper to critically review the women's empowerment endeavours in India.

Women Dairy Development Scheme originated in 1994-95 and its main aim was to bring about rural women's economic and social development as well as ensure that they assume leadership positions. Presently, the scheme is operational in all the districts of the state and receives funding from the Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of India, as well as from the state government. The scheme envisages 100 per cent participation of women and ensures that the women's milk cooperative would be run and managed entirely by the women themselves.

Women accounted for 93% of total employment in dairy production. Depending upon the economic status, women perform the tasks of collecting fodder, collecting and processing dung. Women undertake dung composting and carrying to the fields. Women also prepare cooking fuel by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues. Though women play a significant role in livestock management and production, women's control over livestock and its products is negligible. For the Women's Dairy Development scheme, women are formed into groups at the village level by the Department, A milk collection centre is then opened at the village level and it is the responsibility of the women's group to ensure that the milk that is collected at the centre is then sent to the dairy plant. The department arranges for the technical training of the women's group that includes how to measure the fat content in the milk, how to measure the purity of the milk (with the use of Lactometer). Each group has a President and a Secretary and it is their responsibility, in addition to measuring the fat content and the milk purity, to maintain daily accounts and at the end of the month, to submit the accounts to the department. It is they who also make the payment to each member of the group. Since a cattle rearing is an occupation traditionally followed

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by the hill women, dairying is linked to their traditional occupation to make it economically attractive to women. Aside from dairying, rural women are also provided training in such related issues such as first aid for the cattle, grass cultivation, seed production, setting up kitchen garden, use of smokeless chullah (stove), production of organic manure, setting up Sulabh Shauchalaya (Community Sanitation), as well as health related issues that are relevant to the lives of women.

Rajasthan is the largest State of the country with geographical area of 3.42 lac sq.km. About two thirds of the total area of the State is arid and semi-arid. The topography is dominated by Aravali range and the Great That Desert. The State has 10.4% of the country's land area but only 1% of the total surface water resources of the country. Livestock in Rajasthan is the backbone of Rajasthan's economy. Animal husbandry as an engine of social and economic growth for rural areas is of over whelming importance.

The growth of the dairy sector in terms of production, product processing, marketing, and quality and services is of vital importance so that income and employment opportunities from dairying are enhanced with resultant food and nutritional security of the large masses. It is also necessary to conserve and improve the indigenous germ plasma of livestock in order to protect bio- diversity of the State and make their Cattle holding sustainable. Dairy Development in Rajasthan is based upon the famous "An and Pattern", comprising of village level 10,351 Primary Dairy Co-operative Societies affiliated to the existing 19 District Milk Producers Co-operative Unions spread all over the State and a State level apex body Rajasthan Co-operative Dairy Federation Ltd. Jaipur. At present all the Milk Unions are managed by elected Board of Directors except Kota, Nagaur, Barmer and Jhalawar. The Dairy Co-Operative Societies have 6,48,124 producers as members,

For their empowerment and economic well-being, women's access to training in modern dairying and cooperative management is essential. The employment of women is an index of their economic and social status in society. In India, women constitute 90 per cent of marginal workers, Dairying at the household level is largely the domain of women. There have been a number of studies of who does what in Indian agriculture and animal husbandry. Women Empowerment should result in women participation in decision making. It is being realized that formation of women dairy cooperatives would be a step towards women empowerment The women dairy farmers can by becoming actively involved in the cooperative movement become aware of their own capabilities and of the strength that can be achieved by working jointly with other women, and of the importance of ensuring that their daughters enjoy the same access to education and health as their sons.

Milk has enjoyed a pride of place among all foods in India, being regarded as "nectar" since the dawn of Indian civilization some 5,000 years back. There is something very special about milk. Any brand of milk or milk product is not a simple sale item. It carries a symbol of trust. Milk is not a status symbol; rather it is the symbol of nutrition. Milk is an essential ingredient of food and by its very indispensable nature; it has one of the biggest markets, both nationally and globally.

The growth of the dairy sector in terms of production, product processing, marketing, quality and services is of vital importance so that income and employment opportunities from dairying are enhanced with resultant food and nutritional security of the large masses. It is also necessary to conserve and improve the indigenous germ plasma of livestock in order to protect bio- diversity of the State and make their Cattle holding sustainable. Modernization of the sector through technological, institutional and policy interventions with due consideration to the social, cultural and traditional ethos is essential for raising rural welfare. This would lead to empowerment of families, especially women, by improving their

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household income through improved animal husbandry. Dairy development was initiated by the State government in the early seventies under the auspices of Rajasthan State Dairy Development Corporation (RSDDC) registered in 1975. Two years later RCDF assumed responsibility for many of the functions of RSDDC. It became the nodal agency for implementation of "Operation Flood" in the State.

CONCLUSION

Women's entrepreneurship is both about women's position in society and about the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. Women entrepreneurs faced many obstacles specifically in market their product (including family responsibilities) that have to be overcome in order to give them access to the same opportunities as men. Increased participation of women in the labour force is a prerequisite for improving the position of women in society and self-employed women. Particularly the entry of rural women in micro enterprises will be encouraged and aggravated. Rural women can do wonders by their effectual and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities. The rural women are having basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise. More over formation and strengthening of rural women Entrepreneurs network must be encouraged. Improvement in dairy management systems for increasing productivity and efficiency and organizing dairying on modern and commercial lines for increasing rural welfare Women entrepreneur networks are major sources of knowledge about women's entrepreneurship and they are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for its development and promotion. This network helps to give lectures, printed material imparting first hand technical knowledge in production, processing, procurement, management and marketing among the other women. This will motivate other rural women to engage in micro entrepreneurship with the right assistance and they can strengthen their capacities besides adding to the family income and national productivity. There should be a free excess to education and training particularly some training modules for women impacting, grading and value addition activities. There is need to change the cultural taboos which discriminate women. If education and infrastructure facilities are improved in their area then it more women will work in the industry and ultimately economic independence could be achieved. Women participate at different levels in almost all the activities of dairy farming, right from collecting fodder, grazing the animals, preparation of feed, providing feed and water for animal, cleaning the sheds, taking care of artificial and natural breeding and washing the animals. But some activities like the purchase of animals and the purchase of concentrated feed are mostly done by men, while most of the dairy – related activities are performed by women. Their crucial role in women empowerment cannot be under estimated.

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