

Employment of Women in India

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At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution the first protective measures adopted concerned the protection of young persons and women workers. Now a days the scientific justification of special legislation for women workers is being challenged increasingly. The more the question is studied, the less it appears that women are particularly vulnerable. Thus the Conference, in 1971, opposed the adoption of special provisions for women exposed to benzene. The only exception admitted relates to maternity. Pregnant women run special risks when they are exposed to ionising radiations, toxic chemicals and arduous physical effort. Apart from these cases, however, there is nothing to prove that women are more sensitive than men to harmful substances and the onslaughts of the environment. Special safety and health legislation for women workers, though it may have had historical, cultural or social reasons, is difficult to justify on medical grounds.

The use of the general term 'labour' when we speak of a labour market can be justified on assumptions of perfect mobility of labour. But in developing countries like India social divisions like caste, religion, language and sex reduce the mobility of labour, geographical as well as occupational. This is specially the case in regard to the segmentation of labour market resulting from the traditional sex roles.

Women workers in India are isolated from the general labour market. The demand and supply curves for women workers do not become a part and parcel of the general demand and supply curves for labour. This is effected in many facts revealed by the census data, by the labour statistics and also by various regional and city surveys.

INDICATIONS OF SEGMENTATION ON THE DEMAND SIDE

It indicates that there is a greater demand for women workers in the unorganised sector of Indian economy. This is probably because of the fact that the unorganised sector is out of reach of most laws that seek to protect the security and the working conditions of Labour.

Even in the unorganised sector women workers are more in demand in the low pay low skill industries. In a survey of handicraft and rural industry in Mysore State, it was found that female labour was insignificant in the more skilled or artistic handicrafts like stone sculpture, metal sculpture, brass and copper-ware. On the other hand, it constituted 40 to 50 percent of the total number of workers in Bamboo and mat work, pottery and comb work. These were simpler, traditional, domestic industries in which the earnings also were at a lower level.

Even in the fields in which there is a concentration of women workers, the women workers are employed only in a few occupations. With the exception of Tea plantation, in all the industries, majority of the occupations are the monopoly of men workers, women being employed only in a few occupations along with men. In the occupational distribution of the economy as a whole, out of nearly 100 occupational categories, women occupy only 18 of them. They are all low skill, low payment occupations.

In the traditional fields of women's employment the percentage of women to total employment has been maintained or improved upon only in the four industries, namely, processes allied to agriculture, food, tobacco, wood and cork. These are not the major manufacturing industries. In other industries which are the best organised and high wage industries the percentage, of women has suffered.

Among the causes of this reduction introduction of modern technology which is more capital intensive seems important. A tripartite committee set up by the Government of West Bengal to enquire into the causes of reduction in the number of women employees in the jute industry reported that it is apparent that the rate of reduction of female workers is higher than that of men. The National Commission on Labour accepts this and says that modernisation and rationalisation in reeling and winding displaced women. Women are first displaced as there is less resistance to displacement from women than from men.

Another development causing reduction of the percentage of women in some traditional fields has been enactment of laws seeking to protect women workers. Certain benefits like maternity benefits and provision of cretches add something to employers cost in the industries which are not covered by the Employees State Insurance Act. On the other hand 'principal of equal pay for equal work' reduces the employers scope of paying a lower wage to women. Prohibition of night work and underground work leads to a reduction in the demand for women workers. Thus ironically enough, the very anxiety to ensure reasonable hours and better conditions of work for female employees had often the effect of restricting the scope of employment for women, employers being reluctant to accept the additional liabilities they had to incur by employing women. There was subsequently a move to get rid of women workers on the slightest pretext and to replace them by men. The percentage of women workers has remained almost stable in plantation as differential wage rates for women assumed to be based on their lower physical capacity have been effectively counteracted. Employers have accepted it generally that the prohibition of night work and restrictions on the hours of work have limited the scope of women's employment workers in factories working in shifts.

With the changing social ideas about the role of women, and with the expansion of education, women are gradually entering new fields of employments. This may to some extent offset the reduction in female employment in traditional industries. But unfortunately, even the new industries (like engineering, electronics and pharmaceuticals) which are increasingly employing educated women tend to limit the women workers to semi-skilled jobs.

INDICATIONS OF SEGMENTATION ON SUPPLY SIDE

While discussion the supply of women workers are should take into consideration both the qualitative and the quantitative aspect. The quality of women's work naturally depends upon the quality of their education. Higher education among women is still largely confined to urban areas and to the socially and economically better off classes in Society.

The Adult Civilian Training Scheme at present in force was started in 1950. The trades in which training is imparted include knitting, hand weaving of fancy fabrics, bleaching and dyeing of cloth, embroidery and needle work and all other

fields, which re traditionally deemed to be the proper fields of women/s employment.

The number of women undergoing training under the Craft men Training Scheme and the Apprentice Act 1961 is negligible.

As the quality of women workers is affected by the lack of general, technical and in-service training, the quality is affected by the wrong notions regarding women and work. According to an analysis made by the International Labour Organisation, the traditional distinction between men/s work and women's work, the tendency to regard women as a marginal elements in the labour fource, the social stigma attached to women working outside their homes along with stranger, the emphasis placed on the primary function of women as that of bearing and bringing up children, had all affected rather adversely, the psychology of society in general and even of women themselves. In Asian countries the religious and social conditions and the structure of Society are most disadvantageous to women and serve to keep them in a situation in all respects inferior to that of men.

Details available from the surveys in India point to farm employment of women being definitely a matter of social context. It is usually considered unbecoming of women to work in the field-specially in higher castes and in more well-to-do families. So the supply of female labour in any village depends upon its caste and community composition. Again, women work, only on the family farms-their labour supply is not available in the general agricultural labour market. This has persisted even after economic progress. In districts of the Punjab which are the most prosperous and the most progressive the proportion of women workers in cultivator families continues to be among the lowest in the country.

Due to the social attitude regarding women's role in the family, many women prefer jobs in or near their house. The divorce of work place from home acts as an important obstacle in the non-agricultural employment of women. This explains in part the employment of large number of women in the bidi, agrabatti, mataches etc. industries in which work can be taken home.

Again the nature of the domestic duties forces women to value types of jobs which can be easily integrated with their duties at home. Thus, while selecting a job outside the house they opt for a time of work which adjusts with their family responsibilities. This restricts their choice of work. This is equally true of white collar and professional women workers. Lack of child care arrangements imposes great restrictions on their

capacity to involve themselves fully in their work and often restricts their choice regardless of their education.

Some of the factors discussed above are responsible for the lack of mobility in case of women workers. Through many city surveys, published in recent years considerable materials has become available on migration. It shows that the initiative in immigration is usually taken by the adult male. In the Lucknow survey it is noted that of women immigrants all except 4 percent came with the head of family or on marriage. The women lack geographical mobility as well as occupational mobility. Their geographical mobility is limited due to the social attitude regarding women's role in the family. Their occupational mobility both horizontally and vertically is limited due to the social attitude regarding the proper sphere of women's employment. We have seen that women workers generally belonged to the less skilled occupations. Now while male workers may graduate from unskilled to semi-skilled and from the latter to the level of skilled jobs, sometimes, even to jobs at supervisory level the female workers by and large tend to remain at the level where they were recruited.

One more characteristics of women labour on the supply side is the higher rate of quitting. The traditional attitudes about child rearing lead to a break in the service of educated employed women. However, due to the counter-balancing force for economic necessity this break is not as universal in the case of Indian women as it is in the capitalist countries of west.

One more factor on the supply side of women labour is their bargaining strength. It is a well known fact that the bargaining strength of all labour depends upon the strength of labour union. But trade unionism among women workers is difficult as a large proportion of women looks upon work as a temporary expedient and so do not think of improving their working condition. Education among them is less widespread, they are less conscious and aware of their rights, they have to look after the homes and therefore little time for organisation work and lastly their payments are low.

This clearly indicates that the women workers are not represented well in the men's trade unions. Unfortunately there are no exclusive women's trade unions in India. Although there are, in India several women's organisations-the All India women's conference, the National Council of women in India, the National Federation of women and the like- which have been promoting the cause

of women in general, there is as yet not proper association of women workers as such.

One more factor needs consideration. Even when women enter the labour market they are traditionally bound to their household duties. For a man his duties at home are not as much conflicting with this work in the labour force as they are in the case of woman. Thus working women are overburdened by their double roles and this also effects the quality of their work.

THE EFFECTS OF SEGMENTATION

It is unfortunate that the idea that women's work is 'complementary' to that of men persists. As a result, the whole issue of employment for women takes on the character of a minority issue. On this count, women workers are residual categories in need of sympathy and help no doubt, but not part of the development strategy.

The division of the labour market into a male and a female sector very often tends to control the distribution of women workers within the economy and restricts opportunities for employment, training and promotion within the industry.

The worst effect of segmentation is, however, seen not in the lower percentage of employed women but in the discriminatory treatment which the employed women in India get. Wage differentials prevailed in India before the I.L.O. convention of 'equal pay for equal work.' But even after the ratification of convention in 1958, the situation has not changed significantly. It is true that different wage rates are no longer fixed for men and women doing the same jobs in the same departments. Similarly there is now no distinction as regards the piece-wage rates. But nevertheless, the need to ensure equality is often ignored by restricting women to certain types of unskilled work and declaring these works are less strenuous than work allotted to men. In the absence of any objective machinery for job evaluation there is the risk of women labour being exploited.

The wage differential is not only based on the wrong assumption of differences in efficiency. It was also justified, and is still being justified by many Industrial Tribunals on the wrong notion of that women have to support a smaller number of dependants. Unfortunately there are not many surveys regarding the actual average number of dependents a woman has to support. A survey of working women in Poona conducted by Smt. Venu Dabholkar, however, indicates that the average number of dependents that a women has to support is high. But apart from the facts, the notion itself is not justifiable from the point of view of labour

economics. Wages are tube related to the marginal productivity of labour. Then only they will lead to the best allocation of labour. Relating wages to the need of the defendants is not the right way of fixing wages. Nobody will accept it if people with a smaller family are paid lower wages on the basis of this notion. But many Industrial Tribunals have justified lower wages for women because according to them their minimum wage should not be counted by the need of a three consumption unit family.

Even then, we see different attitudes of different wage boards in recent time. Thus while the cement wages Board has accepted the same minimum wage for men and women, the Plantation wage Board and the Iron and Steel Wage Board Have accepted different minimum wage rates for men and women.

The Labour Bureau has also tabulated the wage rates fixed by the Central Governments for men and women workers covered by the Minumum Wages Act. The list mentions 72 employments in the various states in which lower wage rates have been fixed for women worker. According to the Labour Bureau there was no justification for the differences.

In mines and plantations the earnings of women are well below those of men. In the case of agricultural labour the wage rate themselves are different.

Besides these wage differentials in the work outside the home there is a large percentage of unpaid family work in the case of women. It is over 50 percent in 10-14 age group, 31 percent in 20 to 35 age group and 18 percent in the 40+age group.

This is equally true of women agricultural workers. The maximum number of working days for male farm labour attained is 186 in the garden zone and the lowest 112. For female the respective figures are much lower 129 and 85.

The district-wise pattern of factory employment of women shows wide fluctuations in the rate of employment. It has indicates the casual nature of women's employment.

As a result of the secondary character of women labour, the problems of this section never receive enough attention. That is why studies regarding women workers are inadequate in many respects.

From the economic point of view the worst effect of segmentation of women labour is the resulting limitation of competition and the resulting less than optimum allocation of resources. We must recognise that this misallocation of resources reduces the productivity and hence the

national income of our nation. Efforts are therefore needed to integrate the women labour market with the general labour market.

WAYS TO INTEGRATE THE LABOUR MARKET

The segmentation of labour market is the result of all factors cultural, social, educational, economic. Hence efforts should be made in all directionsto integrate the labour market.

The foremost task in this connection is to remove the misconceptions regarding women's work. Some of the ways to remove the misconception are discussed here. Women's organisations can find out may other ways by specially organising conferences on this problem. The women's organisations should also come forward in implementing the measures suggested.

Thus the economic argument that women's employment creates unemployment formen should be rightly answered. It is not true that men work for maintaining families and women for maintaining themselves. But even if it were true, it is not relevant, as the productivity of a labour force is maximised by its distribution on the basis of capacity and not on the basis of its need for the work. Again, women's employment can create additional employment opportunities as the unpaid work that women do at home, needs paid servants after their employment.

There should be continuous propaganda to remove the misconceptions regarding the women's proper sphere of work and regarding the effects of a woman's work on their children. Reseach in this field should be encouraged to remove the misconception.

Constant propaganda should be there to make people realise the need of dividing house-wife's work among all the members of the family on a rational basis. To encourage rational division, prizes can be given to those families which practice a rational sharing of house-hold work. Group meetings should be encouraged where male and female members of families exchange their traditional role or share together the opposite sex's traditional role. School education should, every year, contain a lesson on sex quality and practical experience should be given to school children in carrying out activities traditionally belonging to the other sex.

When the misconceptions will be removed women will come forward for employment. But due to a long history of unfavorable socio-economic background they will not be able to complete with men on equal footing. To enable

them to compete effectively reservations are very much desirable.

It is often argued that reservations will lead, not to integration, but to more segregation. To answer the argument, we must compare the case of women labourers with the infant industry. As the establishment of real competition in international trade required protection to infant industry for a certain period, so also the establishment of real competition in the labour market in the labour market needs protection to the so far neglected sector of women workers. Hence, seats should be reserved for women in all fields-education, in-service training, apprentice-ships, employment-vacancies, labour unions, political parties, parliament etc. Then only women can enter the labour market with full competitive strength. Once the goal is reached, the reservations should be gradually withdrawn. Taking into consideration the child rearing activity of women, they should get age-limit extension in every field. The committee on the status of women has also rightly suggested some provision for re-entry. As the committee rightly suggests, some provision for special leave without pay subject to a maximum of 5 years will be desirable.

Women's organisations should come forward with these demands. They should also try to form a strong organisation of women at all India level. Then only the demand for reservation can bring about the real change.

The State Minister's Convention proposed that the lower wages wherever fixed for women workers under the Minimum Wage Act 1948 should be remedied on an urgent basis. The Govt. also contemplated to enact a law for equal wages for equal work. Women's organisations should see to it that these ideas are immediately and effectively implemented.

To integrate the labour market the root causes of segmentations should be abolished. Thus efforts should be made to encourage women's participation in education. They should get special facilities and scholarships at every level of education. Efforts should be made to reduce their drop-out ratio. Special scholarships should be given to women entering the non-traditional educational fields. At present, the National Training Scheme for women operated under SIDA-ILO collaboration and Women's polytechnic include technical subjects like 'tailoring' 'secretarial practice' etc., which are traditionally supposed to be women's fields. These institutions should start imparting training in other subjects and should encourage women to offer those subjects.

A short course in vocational guidance must be made compulsory for all students in the 10th standard. The girls will then be aware of all the employment opportunities before they opt for a particular course.

While calculating the taxable income of a husband, the economic benefit which he gets from wife not working outside the house, should be calculated in monetary terms and should be added to his income. This will minimise his resistance to his wife's employment outside the house.

Taking into consideration the fact that many women do not seek employment due to social pressure, the women's wings in employment exchanges should take the initiative and should inform the educated women about the job opportunities even when they have not registered their names.

To increase mobility of women workers, proper housing facility should be provided to them. For vertical mobility, employers should be compelled to reserve a particular proportion of the higher grade jobs to women. Women's organisations should come forward to encourage and help women workers who are trying to increase their mobility. They should also provide short time courses to women to increase their mobility.

Government should give stipend to working women to spend on household servants and appliances so that their role conflict may diminish.

Employment exchanges should run separate wings for house-hold servants so that working women can find proper house-hole help.

Some change in the labour legislation is also desirable. Certain protections like prevention of night-work for women have harmful effect on women's employment. Besides, they do not seem justifiable. These protections should be removed.

The other protections cost the employer something and encourage him to discriminate against women. All such costs, should, therefore, be borne by the state. From this point of view extension of Employees State Insurance Scheme to all fields of employment is very much desirable.

Wage differentials should be totally abolished. Women workers in every field should be paid their salary in claque so that they can have more autonomy with regard to expenditure and consequently more incentive to work.

Women who have distinguished themselves in the labour market should get wide publicity so that the others feel like following their examples, The difficulties that they faced and the ways in which they tried to solve those difficulties should be made known to others.

Research institutions should be encouraged to collect and analyses information regarding women workers. It should be realised that segmentation of women labour is not a thing peculiar to India. It prevails in all capitalist countries, though, to a smaller extent. Studies are therefore needed to analyse the efforts for integration made in other nations. Only in socialist countries the women labour force is integrated with the general labour force. A comparative study of these economics from this angle, is therefore, desirable.

The World Bank defines empowerment as “ the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets”.

Empowerment of Indian women is intrinsically linked to their status in society. Though over the years there has been a slight increase in the total female population (495.7million in 2001 from 407. 1 million in 1991), life expectancy at birth (65.3 years in 1996-2001 from 59.7 years in 1989-93) and sex ratio (933 in 2001 from 927 in 1991), yet demographic imbalances between women and men continue to exist till date. There is a strong preference for the male child in India, as sons are perceived to be future bread earners and also the old age security for parents. It is a well-known fact that the girl child in India faces discrimination from birth till death. The extent of discrimination is much higher if a girl child is born to poor parents. Women’s empowerment is future complicated by intervening factors like gender discrimination, low level of education and work participation, poor nutritional status, violence against women, poor health and lack of access to health care. Another major hurdle in empowering Indian women is poverty in the society. There exists a vicious circle of poverty in India that has a much greater impact on women. Women comprise nearly 70 percent of the total population living below the poverty line, and are very often in situation of object poverty. The ongoing poverty alleviation programmes are expected to address specifically the needs and problems of such women as poverty effects women more than men. Though 40 percent of the benefits under SGSY are earmarked for women, but in practice benefits are not reaching women in the same proportion .Hence, it is the right time to make sincere efforts to break this vicious circle. Poverty

in India can be eliminated to a large extent and the general status of women in the society will be enhanced if this vicious circle is broken.

Social empowerment of women is a long and difficult process, as it requires a change in the mind set of the people. Indian women, get less priority in education and are deprived of proper food and lack access to healthcare.

Moreover, women in the economically active age-group 15-59 years constitute 58.4 percent of total women population. For empowering women, this group needs to be targeted because if a woman is economically empowered it becomes much easier for her to become socially empowered. These women need to take part actively in education/training, empowerment, income generation and developmental process, decision-making etc.

ECONOMIC ROLE

Indian women are generally viewed as economic burdens and the contributions they make to their families are overlooked. Therefore, families are overlooked. Therefore, female work participation rate is considered as the only suitable measures of economic role of women in the society. In India though there has been a slight increase in the female work participation rate from 19.7 percent in 1981 to 25.7 percent in 2011, this is still much lower than the male work participation rate in both urban and rural areas (Table-1)

TABLE -1
Work Participation Rates (In per cent)

Census TIRU		Female	Male	Persons
1981	Total	19.7	52.6	36.7
	Rural	23.1	53.8	38.8
	Urban	8.3	49.1	30.0
1991	Total	22.3	51.6	37.5
	Rural	26.8	52.6	40.1
	Urban	9.2	48.9	30.2
2001	Total	25.7	51.9	39.3
	Rural	31.0	52.4	42.0
	Urban	11.6	50.9	32.2
2011	Total	25.5	53.2	39.7
	Rural	30.0	53.0	41.8
	Urban	15.4	53.7	35.3
(Current Status) Total		27.057	53.3	
2018				

By World Bank

Source : Census of India, Govt. of India.

Moreover, the occupational distribution of women indicates the gender segregation of task and

the underlying reality of high illiteracy among female workers, which consigns them to low-paid, unskilled jobs compared to males. The employment of women is the highest i.e., 36 percent of total employment in agriculture & allied activities (Table-2). This is followed by the service sector where women constitute 19.07 percent of total employment. In the industry sector, which consists of mining & quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas & water and construction women comprise only 12.42 percent of the total employed.

In the informal or unorganized sector, women constitute 90 percent of the total workers, (80 percent are engaged in agriculture and allied activities and 10 percent in other activities). Moreover, unskilled workers constitute 90 percent of rural and 70 percent of urban women workers. All poor women, especially those below the poverty line, have to perform domestic duties and also supplement the family income. Since they are unskilled, they are subjected to economic exploitation with low and discriminatory wages (Mishra, 1996).

EMPOWERMENT

In India females head only 10 percent of the total households and the ownership of land and other properties are mainly in the name of the male members of the family. Hence, women have hardly any ownership of resources and autonomy to take decision.

The participation of women in income-generating activities for the family has been increasing over time. Female work participation not only increases their family income but also brings economic independence among women in the household. This helps them to participate more effectively in intra-household decision-making and have better access to information. Moreover, where women are economically active, female children are perceived as potential wage earners and they receive a higher share of household resources than where women are economically unproductive. But female work participation alone cannot ensure true economic empowerment as the ownership of resources may still lie in the hands of the male members. Thus, female work participation rate is a necessary condition but is not a sufficient condition for economic empowerment of women. Economic empowerment of women is possible only when women have fully autonomy to spend their income and also control resources.

Entrepreneurship development among women can be considered a possible approach to economic empowerment of women. A woman as entrepreneur is economically more powerful than

as a mere worker because ownership not only confers control over assets (and liabilities) but also gives her the freedom to take decisions. This will also uplift-her social status significantly. Through entrepreneurship development a woman will not only generate income for herself but also will generate employment for other women in the locality. This will have a multiplier effect in the generation of income and poverty alleviation.

Entrepreneurship is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Since economic reforms there has been lots of restructuring in the Indian labour markets in terms of employees qualifications, nature of work contents and work contracts. These changes have raised the profile and importance of entrepreneurship in the Indian economy. Despite growth of women in professional and managerial jobs, the gender gap in entrepreneurship remain significant.

In India, women entrepreneurship can be considered as “necessity entrepreneurship” rather than “opportunity entrepreneurship”.

Women usually have smaller networks and less geographical mobility than men, more so in the case of young, married women who need to take care of their families. These women can use their skills and available local resources to start their own enterprise. However, the location of the enterprise and the strength of relationship with contacts is very important as it determines the entrepreneur’s ability to acquire and employ the resources available in the community.

Finally, the population growth along with intense competition in the job market is likely to push more and more women into entrepreneurship. Self-employment could be used as a way to circumvent institutional and cultural constraints with respect to female employment.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR

In India, very few women entrepreneurs are in the big enterprises. They are mainly concentrated in the Small Scale Sectors (SSIs).

In the SSI sector the participation of women can be classified into three types.

- * Women as the owners of enterprises.
- * Women as managers of enterprises, and
- * Women as employees.

With regard to ownership, an SSI managed by one or more women entrepreneurs in propriety concerns or in which she/they individually or jointly have a share capital of not less than 51% as partners/shareholders/Directors of private Limited Company/Member of cooperative Society is called a “women enterprise”.

The share of the units managed by women in terms of employment was 7.14. The employment generated per Rs. one lakh investments the units managed by women was 2.49.

Women in India are still less likely to start a new business than men, although the gap seems to be declining. The share of female entrepreneurs (10 percent) is still significantly low when compared to their work participation rate (25.7 percent). Hence, it is very important to know the impediment to growth of women entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurs in India face numerous problems in establishing as well as the successful running of their business. During the start-up phase women are reported to encounter more problems than their male counterparts, both within their family and as part of the larger system, which discriminates against women. For instance, problems cited pertain mostly to obtaining finance, delays in the process, and providing collateral security, often as a consequence of insensitivity to the particular situation of women, or due to gender biases. Most women, however, find marketing to be their main problem. Some of the problems generally encountered by women entrepreneurs in India.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- * Change in the role
- * Time management
- * Lack of education and required skill
- * Lack of exposure to the business environment
- * Less mobility of women
- * Low risk taking capability
- * Lack of access to credit
- * Lack of information to credit availability schemes
- * Lack of marketing knowledge
- * Lack of collateral Security
- * Low accounting knowledge

In all Five Years Plans, continues with major strategy of "Empowering Women" as an agent of social change and development. For this purpose a sector specific three fold strategy has been adopted.

1. Social Empowerment : To create an enabling environment through various affirmative developmental policies and programmes for development of women besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services so as to enable them to realize their full potentials.
2. Economic Empowerment : to ensure provision of training, employment and income generation activities with both forward and backward linkages with the ultimate objective

of making all potential women economically independent and self reliant; and

3. Gender Justice : To eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and thus, allow women to enjoy not only the de jure but also de facto rights and fundamental freedom at par in all the sphere, Viz. political, economic social, civil, cultural etc.

The government is taking the following measures for empowering women.

1. To adopt a special strategy of "Women's Component Plan" to ensure that less than 30 percent of funds/benefits flow to women from other development sectors.
2. To organize women into Self-Help Group and equip them with services of awareness generation and income generation through training, employment, credit and marketing linkages to small entrepreneurs etc., programmes like Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) now recast as Integrated Women's Empowerment Project (IWEP), and Rural Women's Empowerment and Development (RWDEP) have been launched. Of the total Ninth Plan target of 50000 more than 37000 groups were set up benefiting about 8 lakhs women.
3. To equip women with necessary skills in the modern upcoming trade which could keep them gainfully engaged besides making them economically independent and self reliant and
4. To increase access to credit through setting up of a development "Bank for women Entrepreneurs" in small and tiny sectors. The corpus of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh is being enhanced for this purpose.

Income Generation :

- * The Support of Training and Employment Programme (STEP) provides a comprehensive package of upgradation of skills through training, extension inputs, market linkages etc. in the traditional sectors like agriculture, handicrafts etc.
- * Setting up of an Employment and Income Generation Training cum Production Centre for women (NORAD) extends training for the poor and needy women in the age group of 18-45 years in the upcoming non-traditional trades.
- * The Socio-Economic Programmes (SEP) provides work and wages to the needy women and
- * The condensed Courses of Education and Vocational Training (CCEVT) provide new

bistas of employment through continuing education and vocational training for school dropouts.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In India, a large number of training and promotional activities are being skills among women. Some of these programmes are exclusively for the women, while others take women along with the male participants. The institutions undertaking such activities can be divided into three broad categories viz. (i) specialized institutions, which are responsible for training and entrepreneurship development-mainly among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (ii) banks/financial institutions and (iii) government departments/agencies. The first category includes institutions like the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati, National Institute of Small Industry Extension Training (NISIET), Hyderabad and the National Institute of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), New Delhi. Almost all public sector banks and the leading financial institutions e.g. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), NABARD etc. conduct a number of training courses for women entrepreneurs, Besides, various Ministries/Departments in the Union and State Governments also organize from time to time various training programmes for skill upgradation and income generation of the women.

In this era of post-economic reforms empowerment of women is vital for eliminating poverty and overall development of the economy. Since social empowerment is a long term phenomenon, emphasis needs to be given for economic empowerment of women. Once women are economically independent they will be able to overcome their dependency on the household as well as the society. Entrepreneurship development of income generating business activities is a feasible solution for empowering women. Keeping the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in view the following points are suggested for women entrepreneurship development.

- * Women entrepreneurs need to “start small but think big.” Once the initial hurdles are crossed they will be more confident to face challenges and take risk. Later it is possible to expand the horizon of their business.
- * Should have some prior knowledge or skill before starting the enterprise.
- * Undertake feasibility study and risk assessment before starting.
- * Better to have some start up capital.

- * Use easily available resources (both physical and human).
- * Initially it is always better to work as a franchise/supplier to a reputed company.
- * Marketing of the products can be given to specialized agencies. Collaboration with an already existing company is always better for a start up.
- * Women can also form, self-help-groups (SHGs) or cooperatives if starting an individual enterprise is not viable.

WOMEN WORKERS IN A LIBERALISING ECONOMY

It can be seen that the discussion on the subject often goes along two opposing lines. There are some who vehemently support globalisation and cite evidence to support the claim that it has ‘unleashed’ the productive forces in the country. On the other hand, many analysts and activists believe that globalisation has affected people negatively. They point to increasing inequalities. The point to increasing inequalities, to large-scale unemployment, to deteriorating conditions of work, to a shrinkage of the formal sector, and to evidence and statistics that show that poverty has increased.

It can well be argued that these contradictory views reflect the different ways in which globalisation has affected different classes of people. For some sectors of the Indian middle class, and perhaps for some entrepreneurs, we find a positive story. The picture changes when we look at the evidence in the lives of poor classes. The figures analysed for different income groups, show that on the one hand, absolute poverty has decreased but on the other, inequality has shown an increasing trend.

While liberalisation has led to job losses in the organised sector, particularly in the public Sector, the emergence of new types of work in new markets, local and global, have led to new opportunities for some. At the lower end of the spectrum, some people who had no work, or whose work was extremely marginal in terms of security or income, have gained new employment opportunities, primarily in the unorganised sector. These newly created employment opportunities do not have upward mobility, and usually involve low skills. On the other hand, for some categories of the educated middle class such as those in information technology, liberalisation has brought substantial opportunities requiring higher skills and providing higher incomes.

This variation in opportunities is more visible in the case of female workers. Women with degrees from good universities in metropolitan

areas, from families that are well acquainted with English, have a large variety of possible job openings. Today, they have begun to work in a large number of non-traditional areas, from television to Information Technology. Women from rural areas and poor families have fewer opportunities. Even where opportunities exist, they are less appealing. For example, the new export markets in the fish processing industry have opened new job opportunities for young women. But the conditions at many places of work are appalling. Since these industries prefer young, unmarried women, the span for years of employment remains restricted.

Our study Group on Women workers and child Labour commissioned studies of some sectors where there is concentration of women workers, and where there is some preliminary evidence of the effects of globalisation. Within the primary sector, the studies were on livestock, agriculture and forestry. In the secondary sector, women's employment and income were examined in food processing, textiles and garments, beedi rolling, crafts, and home-based industrial subcontracting. Vendors, health workers and construction workers were examined under the tertiary sector.

The impact of globalisation in all these sectors, is visible in a variety of ways- through technological change, 'flexibilisation' of the workforce, opening of new markets, changing social norms, growing pressures on resources and so on. The paragraphs that follow give a brief sector-wise review as revealed by these studies.

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