

## WOMEN IN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DAIRY INDUSTRY IN RAJASTHAN

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### ABSTRACT

*Women contribution in the family as well as in the economic development and social transformation has remained low although they have been managing and supporting the survival system particularly poor households. They have been denied the active role and involvement in decision making of the family. Prevalence of 'Parda' dowry, and low level of literacy are all indicators to the existing social status of women. Even now with much awareness about education of girl child rural areas is reluctantly being sent to school. Because of this disadvantageous upbringing and position in society herself confidence remains subdued. In such circumstances, she hardly has any say in important household or community decisions and is viewed as an object of convenience. This social status of women who constitute half of the population made it imperative that there is a need to alleviate their pitiable condition and steps initiated for women's active participation in developmental activities.*

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**Keywords:** *Economic Development, Social Transformation, Decision Making, Parda, Dowry.*

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### Introduction

In Rajasthan, the rural population has one of the highest percentage of livestock ownership and they have already taken up activities such as rearing for supplementing their income apart from agriculture.

Traditionally the women folk have always been actively involved in animal raising activities in some way or the other but their potential has not been appreciated and exploited adequately considering the scanty rainfall, dairy as a supplementary source of income is logically and ideally suited for a state like Rajasthan. A decade back the dairy cooperative in the state experienced some sort of stagnation in their development process. Therefore, it was felt that the energy and potential of women could be more effectively exploited in the activities related to dairying and animal husbandry so that they could also gradually become self reliant and independent. Thus cooperative development programme by involving cooperative members, was initiated 1988. It produced encouraging results and exposed them to the new dimensions of understanding the crucial role which women can play in dairy cooperatives. The main aim is to empower women for dairy development and improve their socio-economic conditions. Although dairy cooperative societies (DCS) in principle have open membership, however the socio-cultural norms are such that she so called general or mixed DCS exist in practice.

The majority of the members being men, run the cooperatives not only at village level but at the district and state level as well wherever, women members exist in the DCS villages, their participation in active decision making is indeed limited. By forming exclusive women dairy cooperative societies (WDCS) as members of a group, would as individual within the family and within the village community.

In recent years, the participation of women in dairy development has emerged as one of the basic issues in the debate about the merits of women dairy societies and Anand Model of dairy development. It has now been recognized that traditionally, it is the women who bear most responsibilities associated with the care of cattle and the processing and sale of milk.

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Women are by and large responsible for cleaning the cattle sheds, watering the animals, fetching green fodder, stall feeding and milking. Women invest much of their under utilized labour in dairying and are rewarded with higher incomes and increased social status within their families.

Cattle rearing and dairying are vocations that have been traditionally centred around women with the better estimated to account for as much as 85% of India's animal husbandry. On an average woman, with a milch animal spend more than two and a half hours daily in its feeding, watering, cleaning, milking and grazing. Often the responsibility of children under their mother's keen supervision, consumes, additional time and energy. The country's cover 90,000 DCS's in over Rs. 3500 crores every year to its 10 million farmer members, but only 20% of these members comprise women.

The membership in most of India's 70,000 village level dairy cooperative societies (DCS) is heavily dominated by men. It is now gradually changing in the favour of women. Efforts are on to give them their due place in dairy development. Presently, 2476 women DCS are functioning in the country in selected states. Out of 9.2 million total membership in DCS, 1.63 million are women members (18 percent).

#### **Programmes to Motivate Women Participation**

The Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP) for women was launched in 1986 by Women and Child Development Department Ministry of Human Resource Development Govt., of India. The schemes support to training and employment for women was found to be of great importance in the dairy development activities. WDP in Rajasthan was initiated under STEP. Under this programme rural women have been able to acquire economic independence to a great deal and have been educated on social issues with specific focus on women's issue. Women's dairy project (WDP) as part of the STEP for women has made headway in imparting a pragmatic orientation to the idea that products and income from dairying can be controlled by women. Under the scheme financial assistance was provided to the implementing agencies (RCDF and Milk Unions) for undertaking the following activities:

- Foundation of women dairy cooperative societies (WDCS)
- Identify women beneficiaries.
- Initial financial support for recurring cost of WDCS.
- Supply of essential furniture and equipment for WDCS.
- Margin money for obtaining bank loans for purchase of milch animals.
- Subsidised fodder.
- Vaccination.
- Milk transportation.
- Milk marketing and selling.
- Supervision and monitoring of sanctioned project.

In addition to dairying, great emphasis is given to support services such as health and sanitation, education, gender sensitization etc. Through awareness programmes, the women are educated of the need for proper nutrition for women and girls, non discrimination in feeding practices and the use of cheaper nutritious foods locally available

#### **Role of Women in Dairy Farming**

Livestock plays a multi-faceted role in providing draught power for the farm, manure for crops, energy for cooking and food for household consumption as well as the market. In animal husbandry women have a multiple role. With regional differences, women take care of animal production. Their activities vary widely ranging from care of animals, grazing, fodder collection, cleaning of animal sheds to processing milk and livestock products. India is a leading country in milk production with an annual milk production of 91.5 million tons. The major share of the credit for India's position as highest milk producing country in the world and subsequent increase per capita available of milk has to go to largely illiterate rural women dairy farmers. Women contribute 71 percent of labour force in livestock farming. About 75 million women as against 15 million men are engaged in dairying in India. Having being highly employed in livestock rearing activities and rural women were found to devote 90 percent of their working time on cattle care in the study area.

Making it more or less a female domain. Although women constitute 50 percent of India's population, perform two-third of the work and produce 50 percent of the food commodities consumed by the country while they earn only one-third of the remuneration and 10 percent of the property or wealth of the country.

Livestock are less influenced by rain failure as compared to crops and are invaluable in sustaining family income during drought. Livestock development is now considered as an important tool for rural development. In fact livestock occupies special place in the rural society, over and above their contribution as produce can easily be understood through linkage with religion and culture. Most of the cattle and buffaloes are commonly kept in every farm household primarily for socio-economic reasons and more importantly for gains in draught power and a secondary source of nutritional subsistence for the whole family. Common livestock rearing in rural household comprises of a mix of large and small, it is common to see a cow or buffalo along with goat and backyard poultry in a tribal family. In Dairying management, indoor jobs like milking, feeding, cleaning, etc. are performed by women in 90% of families while management of male animals and fodder production are effected by men. According to World Bank Report, 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. The women also prepare cooking fuel by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues. The vast majority of the dairy cooperative membership is assumed by men, leaving only 14% to women.

A report of the Government of India indicates that though 85% of the rural women are engaged in livestock activities and their share in income is not so high. In spite of the major involvement of the women the need for training and their direct participation in the developmental programmes have been overlooked as we failed to recognize the importance of these work in economic terms. Women generally have different types of responsibilities in livestock rearing such as ownership, control over decision-making, and provision of labour. In most systems, women provide labour for the various task related to livestock but may or may not control the process of decision making, particularly over the disposal of animals and animal products. Similarly, women may be involved in production, but may or may not own the means of production livestock land, water, etc. Despite their considerable involvement and contribution women's role in livestock production has often been underestimated or worse ignored. Gender blindness is partly the result of a paternalistic bias, but also of the attitudes of women themselves, who may have been conditioned by their culture and society to undervalue the worth of the work they do.

It is realised that women handle most of the critical jobs like feeding, milking, care of newborn and administration of medicine. In tribal community, low rainfall, semi-arid and arid area much of the work with regard to animal management has to be looked after by women due to migration of males for work. However, in many cases income from dairy animals does not remain in the hands of women and neither does the decision regarding sale and purchase. However, due to the move to develop women's dairy co-operatives in many states in India women have better control over sale of milk and use of income from it. Another positive development is recognition of women as members of dairy co-operative societies, so that the price of milk supplied to the society can be paid to the women directly. Till a few years ago women were not made registered members of the dairy co-operative society (the registration was in the name of the husband and thus he collected the money for milk produced and supplied by the women). Women do most of the cleaning and care of large animals and their housing, even when those animals are classified in the male livestock activities sector. Women take care of draught animals after a day work in the field. She will usually wash the animals, fed them the fodder, they have earlier gathered, and house them overnight. For these large animals, commonly perceived as the primary responsibility of male, female family members often contribute many more work hour to their raising and care without which the power they bring to agricultural would have to come from women and machines. Women are well aware of each animal behaviour and production characteristics. Women are aware of local feed resources and are able to identify beneficial grasses weeds and fodder trees for feeding of dairy animals. Women know the feeding behaviour of each animal and prepare feed mixtures accordingly. While the contribution of women to the animals management is recognised, the experiences of women regarding animal production and diseases and their perceptions are ignored. Now there is some realisation about the knowledge possessed by women and need to improve their knowledge, skills and awareness.

In Rajasthan not only these small ruminants are valuable for their socio-economic role, contributing meaningfully towards the well being and livelihood of the relatively lower levels of rural or suburban societies but they also constitute naturally renewable resources across all agro-ecological environments in various farming systems. Goat milk has been shown to possess at least two distinct advantages over the vastly preferred bovine milk for human infants, namely imparts greater resistance against diseases and less frequency/degree of immunological reaction of milk factors. Economic viability of animal farming with various species of farm animals goat keeping show best benefit, cost ratio is provided by goat to all the three classes of farmers (marginal, small and others) and that too at an investment level less than one-half of cattle.

The majority of poor, under privileged and landless families in rain-fed and under developed areas own goats and or backyard poultry. These area again good examples of low external input production systems and recycling of material viz kitchen waste, agricultural by-products. Recent studies indicate that goat keeping are inversely related to socio-economic status and are largely women's domains. Goat keeping is totally managed by women and children except for the pastoralists, who keep large flocks of goat. However, the sale and purchase of animals is carried out by men in most cases, except in tribal communities where marketing is also handled by women. With the substantial increase in meat prices in India goats have become a good source of income and employment generation, however, marketing of goats is not properly organised due to middlemen intervention.

#### **Animal Related Tasks Carried Out by Women**

Most of the jobs related to management and even grazing of animals are performed by women. Feeding, watering and cleaning of animals are done by women irrespective of social status. Amongst rich and high caste families women are confined to indoor jobs. Thus taking the animal for treatment and breeding and calling for a veterinarian is usually by men. The works performed by women can be categorized as :

- **Housing**

It is a very important segment of dairy animal production which by and large has indoor activities but many of these require monetary inputs. The decisions about wearing of calf keeping the animal in the open or in shed, time of milking and number of times the animal is to be milked were taken by women alone, whereas the shed is to be pucca or kutcha is most of the time decided jointly by the farm women.

The farm women perceived to perform the activities like preparing cow dung cakes, clearing the animals shed, cleaning the feed, clearing the nostrils of new born calf, taking calf to veterinary hospital for dehorning, bathing the animals at home milking the animals, purchase of the animals, returning after grazing, disposing off the dead animals and keeping the farm dairy records.

The farm women devoted maximum time to animals i.e. 19.52 per cent in bringing fodder and grass from the field followed by 17.76,16.44,13.36,8.76 and 7.34 per cent in chaff cutting, cleaning of cattle shed, miscellaneous work, feeding, milking and watering the animals respectively. (Plate 5.2). The overall women participation rate in dairy enterprises is as high as 65.49 per cent as against 31.00 and 3.51 per cent only for men and children respectively. This means that the dairy enterprises could generate gainful employment for the rural women and thereby increase the income of the families. Therefore the farm women should be educated and trained more and more so as to involve them at a higher rate in dairy enterprises to enhance their family income and living standard. The farm women role as a decision maker in the family as related to various activities of dairying viz. type of livestock to be purchased, selling time of livestock, care and wearing of calves and kids, feed and supplement of livestock, and control and treatment of livestock diseases.

Women perform all the activities related to management of animals like.

- Housing the animals,
- Cleanings of animals and their shed,
- Cleaning of udder,
- Cleaning milk vessels,
- Milking and milk processing, and
- Preparing cow dung cakes.

- **Feeding**

Feeding activities of dairy animals are generally performed by farm women except taking the animals for grazing and chaffing the fodder although they usually are involved in the performance of these activities also. Obviously, the individual who performs the activities most of the time should also be involved in the decision-making process in those matters. The farm women are involved in the decision-making process in most of the activities either independently or jointly with the spouse. It can be seen that in matters like whether concentrate are to be fed or not, what concentrate are to be fed, how much concentrates are to be fed, how much crop residues are to be fed, most of the farm women were reported to be taking decisions independently. In matter like whether concentrates are to be home made or purchased, whether or not the green fodder has to be fed and whether or not the green fodder is to be chaffed, in most cases the decision has been taken either by the housewife alone or jointly by the house wife and the spouse. It has been seen that in matters involving monetary input, most of the decisions are taken jointly.

The farm women have to perform most of the activities related to feeding of the dairy like give the feed and fodder, prepare concentrate mixture, give the concentrate mixture, mix green fodder with roughages and give drinking water to the animals the farm women also perform activities like taking the animals for grazing, chaffing the fodder and giving mineral mixture/salt to the animals.

Participation of women in indoor feeding activities is very high such as:

- Providing water to animals,
- Mixing ration and preparing feed,
- Feeding concentrates, roughages and green,
- Feeding vessels cleaning, and
- Bringing animals for feeding.

As far as the involvement in outdoors activities are concerned is low, such as:

- Cutting and transportation of fodder
- Bringing greens fodder from fields
- Storing feeds, and
- Taking animals for grazing.

- **Breeding**

The farm women are not much involved in the decision-making process with regard to breeding activities of dairy animals, probably the reason why the decision in breeding are mostly taken by farmers and not by women, is that most of the breeding activities are outdoor activities requiring the animals to be taken outside the home to the veterinary hospital which is generally located at a distance from the village. This is time consuming and the housewife with her other domestic and livestock related activities does not perceive herself to be able to spare that much of time to attend to these outdoor and time-consuming activities.

The farm women are not performing most of the activities in breeding segment of dairy animal production, except those which are related with the parturition of the animals. However, the women usually take the animals for pregnancy diagnosis jointly with the male members of the family. Their involvement are important in :

- Identifying animals, in heat
- Taking animals for A.I. or for natural conception, and
- Caring pregnant animals.

- **Health Care**

The farm women was involved in decisions regarding the health care of dairy cattle and buffaloes. Some activities like observing animal for any symptom of sickness, taking sick animals to veterinary hospital for treatment and isolating the sick animals. If necessary, administering medicine to sick animals, getting the animal vaccinated against contagious diseases, observing ectoparasite in animals at intervals, calling veterinary doctor in case of emergency and getting the animal dewormed regularly is done by women. The share of rural women is found more in all animal health care related activities performed at home. Activities are performed jointly by women members of the family like:

- Care of sick animals,
- Care of animals during pregnancy,
- Care of newly born calf, and
- Applying and giving medicine at home.

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