

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN BIHAR THROUGH DAIRY COOPERATIVES

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### ABSTRACT

*Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading, self-reliance to a greater participation, to greater decision making power and control and transforms action. Women empowerment tries to ensure participation of women in the key areas of development like economy, society, politics and culture and involvement in decision making process, which will enable them to control their lives. Women of rural Bihar is most illiterate with high levels of unemployment. Bringing better prospects in rural areas is possible only by women and dairy co-operative societies located at the grass root level. The policies, programmes and plans of governments and international organisations reflect that their major development agenda is women empowerment and development. Most of the rural women farmers depend on dairy co-operatives for their survival. Dairy cooperatives are defined as the group of milk producing farmers who deliver milk to the consumers or to the processors. The main aim of the co-operatives is to provide service and generate income collectively. The better performance of dairy co-operatives is required to expand and encourage the production and marketing of milk and milk products, on the one hand, the people attached with poor farm sector are in dire need of getting suitable remunerative occupation and, on the other hand, urban dwellers are presenting daily-demand for standard quality of milk for development of dairy sector in Bihar. COMFED was constituted by the Government of Bihar in 1983. COMFED<sup>s</sup> role has been organizing farmers to forms dairy cooperatives and making available remunerative market for their milk round the year. Its mission is to transform rural economy through dairy cooperatives in which the farmers are made instrumental for their own development. Thus, Dairy Cooperatives is directly helpful in social and economic empowerment of rural women farmers and workers of Bihar engaged in dairy-farming.*

**KEYWORDS:** Dairy Cooperatives, Women Empowerment, COMFED, Economic System.

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### Introduction

Women Empowerment refers to increasing the Spiritual, Political, Educational, and Social or Economic strength of women. It often involves empowering and developing the women's confidence in their capabilities. Empowerment of women is expected to help women in achieving equality with men and to reduce the gender gap. A large section of women is in difficult circumstances: in extreme poverty, destitute women, in conflict situations, affected by natural calamities, in less developed regions, the disabled widows, elderly women, single women, women heading households, those displaced from employment, migrants, women who are victims of marital violence, deserted women and prostitutes. In recognition of the diversity of women's situations and in acknowledgement of the needs of especially disadvantaged groups measures and programmes are undertaken to provide them special assistance.

Women's status in social field is much lower than those of men. They are always in fear of physical harm, economic deprivation or social oppression. Women face unequal power relations in virtually all their day-to-day interactions; not only in their family but in all local institutions. The political system in our country, unlike the social and economic system, is democratic. This means that the poor

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and social and backward people can gain access to power today. The political system is creating an empowerment of women. As the poor and the backward are gaining political power, they are losing economic power. The process of centralization is increasing with globalization where international forces have begun to control markets at local level. Today it is very necessary to build up economic empowerment. In India, about 80% of the female population live in rural areas and 86% of the rural women work in agriculture and allied activities. In this context, Dairy Co-operatives have the potential to social and economic empowerment among the rural women.

#### **Objectives of the Paper**

- To know the need of women empowerment.
- To highlight the importance of social and economic empowerment of rural women class.
- To study the Government Schemes for women empowerment.
- To study how Dairy Co-operatives help in social and economic empowerment of rural women.
- To study what type of programmes organised by Dairy Co-operatives for women empowerment.

#### **Research Methodology**

This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been taken to analyse the social and economic empowerment of rural poor women through Dairy Co-operatives in Bihar. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

#### **Review of Literature**

**H. Subrahmanyam (2011)** compares women education in India at present and past. Author highlighted that there has a good progress in overall enrolment of girl students in schools. The term empowers means to give lawful power or authority to act. It is the process of acquiring some activities of women.

**M. Bhavani Sankara Rao (2011)** has highlighted that health of women members of SHG have certainly taken a turn to better. It clearly shows that health of women members discuss among themselves about health related problems of other members and their children and make them aware of various Government provisions specially meant for them.

**Doepke M. Tertilt M. (2011)** Does Female Empowerment Promote Economic Development? This study is an empirical analysis suggesting that money in the hands of mothers benefits children. This study developed a series of non co-operative family bargaining models to understand what kind of frictions can give rise to the observed empirical relationship.

**Dulfo E. (2011)** Women's Empowerment and Economic Development, National Bureau of Economic Research Cambridge has studied the argues that the interrelationships of the Empowerment and Development are probably too weak to be self sustaining and that continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake may be needed to bring about equality between men and women.

#### **Need for Women Empowerment**

There is an urgent necessity to improve the status of women by well planned development programmes which would have active participation based on the women's needs in order to emancipate and empower them. The physical strength and alleged dominance of men has been an important instrument of controlling women's freedom of action. It is necessary to take into account defacto inequalities which exist in society, while taking affirmative action by way of giving preference and reservation in order to bring about real equality.

Such affirmative action is likely to produce equality on a broader basis by eliminating defacto inequalities and placing the women of society on a footing of equality with the strong and more powerful so that each member of the community, whatever his or her birth, occupation or social position may enjoy opportunity of using, to the full, his or her natural endowments, character or intelligence.

#### **Status of Women's in Bihar**

Bihar was once known for equal terms in man-woman relationships. In ancient times women not only enjoyed freedom in scholarly pursuits, but also could equally excel quite unhindered. What was once Vaideh of Maitrayi and Gargi is current north Bihar, where life is far too odd against women. As regards atrocities against women, Bihar has gained notoriety in comparison to any other state of its size. In the case of eve-teasing, and rapes, official figures are alarmingly high let aside old system of keeping concubines. Illiteracy, child, and adolescent marriages are still norms in villages. Rocketing dowries and

bride burning have been routine items. Some people argue the shackles of old system is breaking down, and women want freedom to stand on their own but society is not able to cope with. Some argue that women lag much behind in education and economic mobility and thus less prone to avail freedom given.

The population of women in Bihar has been dwindling over the census years which are evident from sex ratios. The reasons may be many: female infanticide to amniocentesis and overall psychology is unwillingness of parents to welcome a girl child. The tragedy of women in Bihar is twofold. Those who are better off are mostly restricted to confines of homes, while those who are poor have to share greater burden. In recent years bulk of the male labourers are migrating into north Indian states in search of employment. As a result, much of farm work is women's burden.

#### **Hindrances of Women Empowerment**

The main hindrances of women empowerment are:

- Lack of education
- Gender discrimination
- Financial constraints
- Family responsibility
- Low ability to bear risk
- Social status
- Dowry
- Marriage in same caste and child marriage
- Atrocities on women (Raped, Killed, Subdued almost daily)
- Low need for achievement

#### **Ways to Empower Women**

- Changes in women's mobility and social interaction
- Changes in women's labour patterns
- Changes in women's control over decision making
- Providing quality education
- Self employment and self help group
- Government schemes and training programme

#### **Women in Dairying**

Role of women in agriculture sector, especially as keepers of live stock, greatly improves world food security by enhancing health and livelihood of individual families. Women provide much of the unpaid family labour to agriculture including animal husbandry. Having been highly employed in dairy farming activities, rural women were found to devote 90% of their time on cattle care, making it more or less a female domain. Dairying is a sub-sector of agriculture, and it provides round the year rural employment. Therefore, marginal work force is comparatively lower in dairy sector and women play a prominent role here. Caring animals is considered as an extension of domestic activities in our social system; and most of the animal husbandry activities are performed by women.

#### **Efforts to Promote Women in Dairying**

Women's Dairy Co-operative Leadership Development Programme (WDCLP), Co-operative Development (CD), and Support to Training and Employment Programme for women (STEP) are some of the programmes aimed at providing support to women. National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) launched Women Dairy Co-operative Leadership Development Programme (WDCLP) with an objective to increase women membership in Dairy Co-operative societies (DCSs). The aim of the WDCLP was to : (a) taken women beyond confines of their homes, (b) organise women into self help groups, (c) provide a platform to learn, (d) develop their skills as a manager, and (e) increase their freedom by gently easing rigid social norms. CD programme focussed attention on women's education and on encouragement of women leaders. STEP was launched in 1986 as a measure to ensure well being of women in traditional informal sectors. It aims at increasing self reliance and autonomy of women by enhancing their productivity and enabling them to take up income generation activities (animal husbandry, dairying poultry, fisheries, etc.). Bihar is one of the states where STEP is being implemented for the last 28 years. The main aim of this project is to empowerment of women through participation in Dairy Co-operatives.

### **Economic Empowerment through Dairy Co-Operatives**

Economic Empowerment is considered as the major means empowerment of women enabling them to stand on their legs and to move out of their homes to an extended place. Without economic empowerment, the development of women is fruitless. For achieving economic empowerment of women, Dairy Co-operatives play a dynamic role. Women's work participation among landless households is as high as 73% in Bihar. Providing gainful employment has always a concern for policy makers. Experiences of Anand Pattern came handy and dairy movement involving women was identified as a major plank. Bihar women dairy project was launched in 1988 to provide gainful employment and to increase participation of women in the village economy: All milk unions of Bihar under COMFED organising Women Dairy Co-operative Societies (WDCs). The development of dairy depends mainly on two aspects; making optimum use of the available yield and improving the quality of the livestock to increase the yield. The Dairying is fast becoming a big business with the technological advancement in modern times. The dairy industry is trying to bridge the gap between the rural based producer and the urban based consumer by playing the role of middle-man. The development of Dairy Co-operatives in Bihar, thus, gains prominence in modern times as an additional source of income to the village poor women fighting the problem of under – nourishment.

### **Social Empowerment through Dairy Co-Operatives**

Social empowerment is understood as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change the social relationship and the institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty. Social participation of members is a distinguished characteristic of Dairy Co-operative societies. The reason behind, is the existence of a common bond and the sense of solidarity among the members in general. Dairy Co-operative societies promote social values such as non - discrimination, self help through mutual help, and member identity, higher social values and value of social responsibility members of co-operative societies have a higher perception of the social benefits and empowerment than non-members. Empowerment of women is considered through Dairy Co-operative societies (WDCs). In the WDCs women find themselves empowered, as they are authorised to make their own decisions in meetings held outside the home. Income from WDCs enables the women to make most household expenditures without being dependent on their husbands. Operation flood has also played an important role in generating employment for women.

### **Conclusion**

The Dairy Co-operatives in Bihar have been formed to improve the economic conditions of milk producers, especially of the weaker sections in rural areas, by providing them facilities for improved breeding and better feeding of cattle, introduction of quality milch animals, adequate health care and above all an efficient organisational structure for procurement, processing and marketing of their products. The development of dairy farming through Co-operatives results in enhancement in milk production and improvement in the economic conditions of milk producers. The rearing of cattle and dairying go hand in hand with agriculture and help improve the socio-economic conditions of the rural folk. It provides conditions and regular employment to women members of family of the farmer. Dairy Co-operatives do work as a middleman between the village producer and the urban consumer. Dairy Co-operatives in Bihar play a pivotal role in social transformation and socio-economic betterment of rural women.

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