



Women Empowerment through Dairy Co-operatives

8th March is celebrated as International Women's Day to felicitate the courage and determination exhibited by ordinary women who have performed extraordinary work across various sectors.

Women have always played a crucial role in the family household, on the farm, and in society in general. Their contributions, however, have not always been duly acknowledged. The turn of the nineteenth century saw women's position undergoing a transformation — from being a mere homemaker she gradually evolved into a dynamic multi-faceted personality contributing to the global socio-economic growth. This process of change was set in motion by the first "Women's Rights" convention held in New York in 1848 and was followed by the Women's Suffrage in 1913. Today, the fair sex is juxtaposed equally with her male counterpart, exercising her right to even become part of the elite armed forces, a hitherto male-dominated bastion.

India's own history regarding the movement for women's emancipation and empowerment has been long and arduous. Indian women's movement in the nineteenth century was a result of the antagonistic response to British rule. It was Mahatma Gandhi who first recognized the role women could play in the freedom movement. Later during the 'Telangana Andolan' (1946-52) women trained as guerilla warriors, while the year 1972 saw them undertake widespread anti-alcohol agitations in several parts of western India. Today, women form a vital part of the Indian economy with the Indian constitution granting them the right to equality, dignity and freedom. Unfortunately, however, even after 69 years of independence, she is denied her rightful status and is continually at odds with the ills of poverty, illiteracy, lack of equal opportunity and self-respect. The need to empower the women workforce is compelling, and there is no better place to start than from the grassroots.



Women constitute one third of the national labour force and 89.5% of total female labour is involved in the agricultural and allied industrial sectors. They shoulder extensive workload with dual responsibilities of managing their households as well as farms. Further, they play a crucial role in livestock production and forest resource uses. Their contribution to the household income through farm and non-farm activities and also through work as landless agricultural labourers is considerable.

Although they form the backbone of Indian agriculture and economy, women's contribution remains unrecognized for several reasons — illiteracy and lack of relevant skills being the foremost. Further, in rural areas, jobs involving cash transactions for women are rare and their contribution to the household budget remains minimal. Women's dependency on the male head affects their status — the girl child is initiated into household chores from an early age and later on into agriculture. This results in 'dropouts' from school even before they reach

high school. Further, the practice of early marriages for girls in rural areas is prevalent even today.

To bring women into the mainstream and give them economic, social and gender equality, it is necessary to empower them on all fronts. The dairy sector with dairy co-operatives provides the right impetus in this regard. Cattle and buffalo production have traditionally been a preserve of farm women, with the crucial activities of feeding, milking, care of newborn animals etc falling in their domain. Women accounted for 93 percent of total employment in dairy production (World Bank 1991). In fact, it has been observed that women perform 34 different kinds of activities throughout the day as against men who do just 22 different activities on the farm. This shows that in order to produce quality milk and farm products women put in more complex and strenuous efforts.

India has 6,40,930 villages and 1,65,835 dairy co-operatives. This translates to one dairy co-operative society after every 3-4 villages. According to NDDDB, the total number of women producers is 43.80 lakhs out of which 3.29 lakhs are management committee members and 354



are board members (2013). Women are no longer on the backend of dairying but have become the vanguard of dairy development. Further, the all-women registered DCS out of 1.60 lakh village dairy cooperative society stands at 26,700. The annual growth rate of these all-women DCS is about 10%.

The above figures definitely make a positive statement about women empowerment in dairy industry, but unfortunately women still do not have a high level of participation in these co-operatives. The reason behind this is that men do not recognize women as separate members of the dairy co-operative. They believe the enrolment of one person (i.e. the husband farmer) is enough representation at the co-operative society level. Although men continue to block women's entry in the



management of such organizations, the development of women's dairy co-operatives in several Indian states has enabled women to have better control over the sale and income from milk. Through Operation Flood Programme women empowerment in dairy co-operatives was facilitated by setting up Mahila Bachat Groups. In 1995, for instance, NDDDB initiated Women Leadership Development Programme in Kolhapur. The present status of the programme is as under:

Particulars	Number
Commencement 1995	--
Villages covered	1192
No. of villages level dairy co-operative societies	2054
No. of different training programmes implemented	10,812
Total no. of women trained	3,81,000
Establishment of women's savings groups	2,034
No. of women in self save group	32,674
Total savings in ` Million	50

The women empowerment programme aims at women realizing their self-worth and asserting themselves both at the family and social levels. This is being achieved with women increasingly registering themselves as members of dairy co-operative societies. Earlier such registrations were in the name of the husbands. Now, in dairies like *Gokul*, it is the women who collect the milk-bill directly from the co-operatives. They are thus in a position to utilize the same for household needs and also plough back funds into the business. This gives them confidence to participate in meetings and gatherings such as the Bachat Gut. Thus empowered, they speak in society about women's development issues, child marriages and the liquor menace. The women Bachat Gut encourages them to undertake corrective

measures by discussing problems with the Sarpanch, leading to better management of dairy co-operatives. One such example of courageous enterprising women in dairy co-operative is illustrated here:

In 1970 a dairy co-operative society was established in the village of Vadagoan (Hatkangale) Dist. Kolhapur. The dairy co-operative began pouring milk to a local vendor. However, this person did not give remunerative rates to the milk producers which resulted in the closure of the dairy. Certain active members from the village contacted officers of the Gokul Dairy. Due to their efforts the dairy co-operative in Vadagoan village started functioning once again. But there was still one hurdle. The milk producers continued their business with the local vendor, as they did not have faith in the management of the dairy co-operative. As a result, milk collection did not increase and merely 14 litres of milk was collected. The quality of milk also remained sub-standard. The Gokul team took a decisive step. In 1995, they conducted a women's awareness programme in the village. Gradually a change was witnessed. Women like Ms. Jayashree Chougule, Ms. Shalan Gorad, Ms. Sonabai Chougule, Ms. Sajakka Sawant and Ms. Sunita Sawant began pouring milk to the dairy society. They even began attending meetings thus gaining an insight into the dairy business. They realised that even village women could run dairy activities efficiently. They were fully supported by the management committee. The women now voluntarily began visiting each and every home in the village persuading other milk producers to pour their milk to the dairy society. Their efforts resulted in the other milk producers joining hands with the dairy co-operative. There was complete transparency and efficiency in managing the activities of this women's dairy cooperative. They even set up a



self-help group for a small savings. Today the dairy collects 1400 liters. of milk per day. Of the total 600 milk producers, 147 are women members. The dairy is being run as per the principles of a co-operative. It is a model co-operative today in Kolhapur district having bagged several awards for good management.

The Indian Dairy sector is worth ₹ 5,26,403.6 crores (2015) having a bigger turnover than rice and sugar put together. It is also considered as the biggest employment generating activity catering largely to the unorganized sector. Approximately 1.5 crore people are employed in the dairy business. Dairy co-operatives now cover 45% of the dairy business, whereas unorganized sectors account for only 28%. Evidently, the chunk of the business lies with private dairy entrepreneurs. Therefore, to bring women into the mainstream of dairying, the responsibility of private enterprises is equally significant. Their active participation and contribution through funds available under the corporate social responsibility (CSR) would go a long way in empowering rural women. The Village Women Dairy Development Programme (VWDDP) run by Nestle Company for several years is a fine example of how dairy business has improved the lives of rural

women. Ms. Kulwant Kaur, 45 years, from village Varroke Moga District, Punjab States:-

“I live in my village Varroke with my husband, two sons and a daughter. When I got married my family possessed only two cattle. But with the support Nestle Agri services offered us, we began expanding our dairy business. Today, we own 8 cattle and 5 acres of land, where I grow fodder for my animals. My husband earns by collecting milk for Nestle,” she states proudly. “I feel empowered with the knowledge gained through VWDDP. I have learnt about utility feeding practices for cattle, importance of regular checkups for animals and good practices. I earn

In a welcome move the National Dairy Plan-I (NDP-1) focuses on greater participation of women as producer members. In all the approved projects a minimum of 30% of women producer members is targeted. Women institutions are also supported under NDP-I through various capacity building programs which help them in running the milk procurement institutions themselves.



₹ 50,000/- by selling 75 litres of milk per day. Out of this I am able to save ₹ 25,000/- for household activities. Women are hard working and proper guidance has unleashed their potential. I am happy with my economic independence as it has helped me support my family. My children have a brighter future with higher education from universities abroad. Education is the key to the empowerment of women. With the skill and confidence gained. I would like to further expand my dairy business.”

The Government has introduced several schemes supporting women’s development. Some of them are:- Reservation for women in the management of dairy co-operatives, Gram Panchayat, Zilla Parishad and Municipal Corporation, etc. Girl students are given 30% reservation in schools during admission and their education up to college level is free. The Government further provides mother and child tracking system so that their health is ensured during and after pregnancy. The Matrutva Sahayog Yojana run by the Government provides money to ensure good health and nutrition for women and children. Adolescent girls are empowered to become self reliant through education and vocational training. The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh encourages women to



undertake small businesses. Women can assert themselves through the Mahila Bachat Gut, become a part of dairy co-operative managements and thus express their identity as income earners.

Women Empowerment Schemes are as follows :

- ✦ Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
- ✦ One Stop Centre Scheme
- ✦ Women Helpline Scheme
- ✦ UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation

✦ Working Women Hostel

✦ Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme For the Children of Working Mothers

✦ Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects

✦ SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)

✦ Revision under IGMSY in Accordance with National Food Security Act, 2013 in XIIth Plan

✦ Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

✦ NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR

✦ Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar

✦ Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman

✦ Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) – A Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme

✦ Mahila police Volunteers

✦ Mahila E-Haat

Child Protection & Welfare Schemes:

✦ Kishori Shakti Yojana

✦ Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)

✦ Rashtriya Bal Kosh (National Children Fund)

✦ Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)

Child Development Schemes :

✦ General Grant-in-Aid Scheme in the field of Women and Child Development

✦ General Grant-in-aid (GIA) Scheme for Assistance to Voluntary Organizations in the field of Women and Child Development

✦ Integrated Child Development Services(ICDS)

Others :

✦ Family Counseling Centre Scheme

✦ Dhanalakshmi

IDA recognizes and values the contributions made by rural women milk producers who through their efforts have proved to be role-models in their societies. **The Dairy Woman of the Year Award** is given to four such enterprising women from the various zones of IDA. This year, at the recently concluded 45th DIC, Smt. Mamta Choudhary, Smt. Veda Seetaram Hegde, Smt. Ramilaben Govindbhai Patel, and Smt. Suman Kumari were felicitated in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the growth and development of the Indian dairy sector.

✦ Grant-in-Aid for Research, Publication and Monitoring

✦ Nutrition Education and Training through Community Food & Nutrition Extension Units(CFNEUS)

✦ Gender Budgeting Scheme

✦ General Grant-in-Aid Scheme for innovative project

All the above schemes are milestones in the drive for women's empowerment. Although awareness is strong, the benefit of such schemes has still not percolated to women in remote areas. Special efforts and funds should be channelized through dairy co-operatives, NGO's and producer companies so that the government schemes become viable and the goal of women empowerment is fulfilled.

Recently, on the eve of presentation of Budget 2017, President Shri Pranab Mukherjee in his address to the Parliament said that the government was committed

to making Nari Shakti an integral part of our development journey. He reiterated that the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme was yielding encouraging results. Under the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, launched with an objective of ensuring a secure future to the girl child, over one crore accounts have been opened and an amount of over ` 11000 crore has been deposited.

The dream of Late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri and Dr. V. Kurien to transform the economic status of our milk producers can only be achieved through the empowerment of rural women and their increasing participation in the dairy sector.



Arun Narke

Inviting Articles on Outstanding Success Stories/Case Studies

Indian Dairyman is a magazine that prides itself on the dissemination and sharing of knowledge and information related to the dairy world. Often this has proved a source of inspiration to many. We call upon our readers to contribute whole-heartedly to this magazine and welcome accounts of outstanding success stories in the world of dairying. Case studies from various parts of the country are also welcome. Such stories serve to educate and inform the entire dairy community and will be much appreciated.

Further, well researched articles and features which are of interest to the layman and the general reader by providing him/her knowledge related to dairying are also welcome.

You may send your contributions to:



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