

# UNVEILING THE ROLE OF RURAL & URBAN WOMEN IN THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

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## Abstract

Gender has been an important issue subjected to numerous discussions in the development paradigm over several decades and has now been transformed into a subject of multifarious sociological interests. This book critically examines the transformation of this dialogue over the time and its implications in the improvement of the lives of rural men and women. The theoretical arguments for the necessity of introducing gender development strategies in order to improve the specific needs of rural women who are marginalized due to the magnitude of patriarchal dominations in the development administration has been field-tested. The recent decline in India's rural female labour force participation is generally attributed to higher household incomes. Together with the growing share of the urban population, where female participation rates are lower, this alleged income effect does not bode well for the empowerment of women as the country develops. This paper argues that such a narrow supply-side interpretation is wrong, because it ignores the transformation in the structure of employment at local levels. A salient trait of this period is the collapse in the number of farming jobs without a parallel emergence of non-farm regular jobs and other employment opportunities considered suitable for women. The paper develops a novel approach to capture the structure of employment at the village or town level, along seven ranks in the rural-urban gradation. It also takes into account the possible misclassification of urban areas as rural, as a result of survey instruments lagging behind India's rapid urbanization process. When using an empirical specification that includes both supply- and demand-side factors, the alleged income effect vanishes. For a similar employment structure, shifting to bigger villages and towns does not affect female labour force participation either. The results are robust to changes in the definition of employment and to the introduction of a range of additional control variables. Simulations suggest that for India to revert the decline in female labour force participation rates it needs to boost job creation, and especially the creation of non-farm regular employment. Enconced within the urbanized environs of the Delhi metropolis and its umbrella towns, there exists several semi-urban semi-rural pockets which are inhabited by communities with agrarian backgrounds who had sold off their lands to merge with the fast-developing city spaces. Still holding on to their traditional socio-cultural ethos, these communities have taken to sundry businesses and fringe jobs to ful fill the requirements of surrounding urban settlements. The womenfolk living in these areas are at an interface between the traditional and the progressing worlds. Despite voluminous research on different sections of city-based women, very little attention has been paid to this category. This paper analyses the scope and potential of women empowerment in such areas. We conducted a survey based on a questionnaire targeting representative womenfolk of four such pockets in and around Delhi. Our findings indicate that there is a latent potential among these women which, with due support is waiting to be tapped for the progress of the human populace.

## INTRODUCTION:

In and around the mega-city of Delhi and its umbrella towns, there exist several pockets which represent an interface between the urban areas and the rural hinterlands. These settlements have a dynamic history, undergoing a gradual transition from rural to semi-urban. They are inhabited predominantly by families that had sold off their farmlands for the city's expansion and subsequently, merged with the fast developing city spaces. These communities possess a strongly traditional socio-cultural ethos. However, their agro-based economic activities have been replaced by small scale businesses and unorganized service oriented jobs that cater to the growing needs of their surrounding urban establishments such as shops for electrical appliances, ration shops, vegetable vendors, household helps etc. The issue discussed in this paper is the perceptions, awareness and aspirations of the women population inhabiting such interface zones or "rural-urban" pockets in Delhi and Haryana, towards Women Empowerment (WE). We developed a questionnaire seeking views from the womenfolk living in the distinctive urban-rural areas, about their notions on different aspects of WE. This paper is a reflection of views taken from 52 such women from the target areas in Delhi and Haryana. We covered four urbanized villages to conduct our study namely, Singalpur Posungipur and Nanglijalib situated in different parts of New Delhi and Jagdishpur in Haryana. Through this survey, we seek to analyze the scope and

power of women of these areas for making transformations in the Indian society at large and the Indian rural in particular. Our study focuses on the outlook of the respondents, the perceptible benefits and pitfalls of urbanization for these women and their potential as agents for change. Our findings indicate that the youth among these women are at a keel of self-determination and possess the right mindset for achieving higher socio-economic goals. Their latent potential can be harnessed for societal growth if enough efforts are made towards developing an array of enabling facilities.

The pieces of the literature revealed how the employment status of women makes them empower, but limited research has been conducted on the comparison of women empowerment in the rural-urban area in different dimensions. However, from the last couple of PLFS surveys it has been found that the urban women's unemployment rate is higher as compared to its rural counterpart. In other words, employment among rural women is high and the gap of employment rate between rural-urban women is high. From this perspective, in the study, an attempt has been made to compare the magnitude of women's work participation in urban India with its rural counterpart based on their literacy status, education level and marital status. Besides, a section has been added on women's work participation in different job profiles to understand better the quality of work they are engaged with. Apart from this, to analyse the economic empowerment of women in both rural and urban areas five major components have been taken into consideration i.e., women work participation, women work participation based on literacy status, educational level-wise women work share, married women work participation and working women and their profile of the job.

Thus, the study has been divided into seven sections and in each section, a comparative analysis of rural and urban women workforce at the national level as well as state-level has been portrayed. In the first part, the women work participation rate has been analysed. The second part deals with the women work share based on literacy, which means the proportion of literate women engaged in economic activity out of total literate women. The third part is devoted to analysing educational level-wise women work participation. In the fourth section, the impact of marital status has been assessed by measuring the share of married women workers out of total married women in rural and urban India. The fifth part attempts to figure out the work shared by women engaged in the different profiles of jobs. In the sixth part, the overall economic empowerment of rural and urban women has been explained. The current scenario of rural and urban women workshare has been analysed in the seventh section. The last section concludes with an overview of the study.

#### **Educational level wise proportion of women engaged in work force:**

Country	Literate but below matric/secondary		Matric secondary / but below graduate		Technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree		Graduate and above other than technical degree		Technical degree or diploma equal to degree or post-graduate degree	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
India	24.12	11.64	26.64	13.08	39.16	39.5	33.92	28.52	42.16	45.19

#### **Vibha Parthasarathi Chairperson National Commission for Women report :**

Gender sensitisation aims at shaping attitudes and changing mind-sets. This process involves a deep understanding of all aspects and manifestations of gender bias- subtle and direct-that have been, since centuries, strongly embedded into the psyche of our people. Women in India are a population at grave risk. Emotional stress, humiliation, oppression, fatigue, ill-health, assault, murder - women have always been the victims of our patriarchal society. Today's consumerist milieu is adding to her woes by commodifying her existence. The law enforcing agencies being a product of the social climate of which they are a part, display the same biases and prejudices against women. Be it the police, the judiciary or the administration women are compelled to remain voiceless and powerless. Changing mindsets can be a daunting task. Working along with and sensitising the law enforcing agencies is of utmost importance and an urgent requisite for a balanced and equitable society. The much-needed reformative process in this direction has been long delayed. It was in 1992 that the National Commission for Women was born after overcoming innumerable hurdles. The Commission was vested with a statutory mandate to safeguard the Constitutional entitlements and legal rights and other interests of women in the country. The Commission has in the first decade of its existence taken up several initiatives towards a change in the status of women. Since gender justice is a subject that was felt to be of paramount importance, the Commission embarked upon the process of improving the awareness of gender issues of the agencies that matter most. The workshop on "Gender Justice : Forging Partnership with Law Enforcing Agencies" was organized to build partnerships of understanding with the Governmental machinery including the police, the prosecutors, the judiciary, lawyers, media, activists and professionals, by bringing

them all on a common platform. The workshop mainly discussed the proposals of necessary course curricula on Gender Sensitization of the police, judiciary, administrative personnel, media and the NGOs. The Workshop Report will provide an insight into the role and functions of these agencies and the coordination required among them. Networking with trust and understanding is a sine qua non for effective functioning. The Commission has set the ball rolling. What we are now looking forward to is implementation and positive achievement.

In 2022–23, the Rural Development Vertical participated in various meetings of the Ministry of Rural Development on National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP), Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) Phase III.

Women have been paying very important and significant role in both urban and rural areas. We see that both in the organized and unorganized sectors of economy, be it agriculture, industry or services, women have been contributing substantially and yet very often their contribution goes unnoticed by both the family and society. Their work remain mostly invisible

## OBJECTIVE

In modern days, women entrepreneurs are playing a very important role in business, trade or industry. Their entry into business is of recent origin. Women have already shown their vital role in other spheres like politics, administration, medical and engineering, technical and technological, social and educational services. This is true in advanced countries and now in recent years, they have been entering into these fields in our country. Their entry into business is a recent phenomenon in India. It is an extension of kitchen activities. In certain businesses, women entrepreneurs are doing exceedingly well and even they have exceeded their male counterparts. Women are successful not only in law, science, medical, aeronautics and space exploration and even in police and military services, but now they are showing their might even in business and industry. They have proved that they are no less than men in the efficiency, hardwork, or intelligence, provided they are given proper scope. This scheme has been in operation since April, 1999. The main objective of this scheme is to provide proper self-employment opportunities to rural women who are living below poverty line. The idea behind this is to improve the social and economic standard of rural women. Under this programme, forming a group of 10-15 women was adopted and encouraged them to take up an economic activity according to their skills and locally available resources.

Rural women in our country suffers from being both economically and socially visible. Economic visibility stems from the perception that women are not relevant to the wage and market economy. Social invisibility is a result of the general status of second class citizens usually accorded to women. It is not surprising that development programmes which do not take into account the aspirations and participation of women are not effective in achieving their objectives. The growing realization that rural women are not inarticulate, illiterate and ignorant objects of welfare, but are in fact, productive, hard working adults, who have coped with battle for survival from a very young age, makes their participation in the development process increasingly necessary and imperative.

The broader objectives of this programme is to inculcate group culture, collective approach amongst the women and encouraging them to form self-help groups with thrift and credit for lateral entry into a more organized co-operative society. Regular inputs like entrepreneurship development programmes, tailor-made product cum process development programmes will be provided to enhance the inherent entrepreneurship capabilities and motivating the women to take up income generation activities. Sensitisation programmes for advocating the cause of women empowerment and sensitizing the development partners accordingly, will be organized. A women co-operative society will be formed to provide a broad organizational structure and legal entity which in turn enhances the bargaining power of the women in the society.

## TECHNOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT:

Construction of training cum production centre. Identifying appropriate technologies, plant & machinery and process. Setting up group enterprises Women Development Page 20 c) Financial interventions Credit linkage with either Rasthriya Mahila Kosh/NABARD or local commercial bank under micro-credit schemes or under Mahila Udhayam Nidhi scheme with SIDBI. d) Marketing interventions Sales promotion Tie-ups with Govt. and institutional buyers like social welfare hostels, milk, chilling centres, railways RTC and others. Participation in DWACRA Melas and sponsored exhibitions. e) Welfare interventions Health package and group insurance Objectives : to provide security coverage to the women entrepreneurs/enterprises by insuring their assets. Dwelling units and its contents Equipment Raw materials and work-in-process Personal life Accidents and loss of organs Permanent disablement Hospitalisation & Maternity.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION:

In the modern era of globalization and liberalization, a revolutionized method has been invited in our country with which the women population is being given more importance. Due to constant increase in the cost of living, it has become essential for women to engage themselves in economic activities to stand as a support to their families. They have proved themselves in not only various job areas but have also taken a bold step of invading the forbidden land of entrepreneurship. Women have been acting as true entrepreneurs, taking risks, managing resources and accepting challenges to gain economic independence and establish their strong position in the society. It can be said that today we are in a better position wherein women participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at a considerable rate. Women sector occupies nearly 45% of the Indian population. At this juncture, effective steps are needed to provide entrepreneurial awareness, orientation and skill development programs to women. The role of Women entrepreneur in economic development is also being recognized and steps are being taken to promote women entrepreneurship. From these suggestions it is quite visible that for development and promotion of women entrepreneurship, in the region, there is a need for multi dimensional approach from different sector, namely from the government side, financial institutions, individual women entrepreneurs and many more, for a flexible integrated and coordinated specific approach.

The principal factor in developing entrepreneurship among women is not in terms of infrastructure or financial assistance or identifying an enterprise but it is a question of clearing the ground for their movement into entrepreneurship. For ages together they have been confined to a secondary role and confined to the homes and you have to bring out so that they become self-reliant, self-respecting enterprising people. Though there are several factors contributing to the emergence of women as entrepreneurs, the sustained and coordinated effort from all dimensions would pave the way for the women moving into entrepreneurial activity thus contributing to the social and economic development of the members of the family and thereby gaining equality and equal importance for themselves.

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