
UNIT 6 INDIAN DEBATES-I

Nandita Mondal
(Data updates:
Nilima Srivastava)

Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Learning Outcomes
- 6.3 Background
- 6.4 Women Worker's in Unorganised Sector
 - 6.4.1 Institutionalised Unorganised Sector
 - 6.4.2 Non-Institutionalised Unorganised Sector
- 6.5 Problems of Women Workers in Unorganised Sector
- 6.6 Women Worker's in Organized Sector
- 6.7 Five Year Plans (FYP): Women Workers
- 6.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.9 Unit End Questions
- 6.10 References
- 6.11 Suggested Readings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

After reading about inter national debates regarding economic activity of women in this unit we will focus on Indian debates vis-a-vis women's participation in gainful employment and them contribution to national economy. The Unit will expose you to the situation course of event that led to government of India's attention to the cause of women workers and how their contribution stile remains invisible in Indian economy.

The Unit then discusses status of women workers in informal sector for both institutionalized and non-institutionalized sector. Next, there is a discussion on women in organised sector as in service manufacturing and administrative services. The Unit ends with a section situating women workers in the Five Year Plans.

Let us now look at the Learning Outcomes of reading this unit.

6.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After going through this Unit you will be able to:

- Explain women's contribution to Indian economy during the period of 1970 to 1985; and
- Critically examine the extent and importance of women's contribution to Indian economy.

6.3 BACKGROUND

"You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women".

-Jawaharlal Nehru

The above expression of the first prime minister of India is still relevant to the context of women's contribution to Indian economy.

In 1971, on the eve of international women's year, the Government of India had appointed the Committee on the status of Women in India under the chairmanship of Phularenu Guha. It was mandated to examine the rights and status of Indian Women and to suggest certain measures to enable women to play their proper role in building the nation in post colonial India. The **Report of the Committee of the status of Women in India** was considered as a 'historic benchmark' while it was first published in 1974. The report highlights declining work participation of women from 1911 to 1971 system. Women's work in the household and subsistence economy was not recorded by census of India.

Here for this Unit, work is conventionally defined as participation in any economically productive activity. Such participation may be physical or mental in nature. Critique of gender economist about definition of work in case of women in India needs serious examination. The National Sample Survey Organisation, which is entrusted with the responsibility to obtain the data from the field goes through different rounds and with each round there are more and more points to be deliberated upon to make the data authentic. The experts at the NSSO level worked harder to remove all the barriers to ensure the data collection process authentic. NSSO definition of women workers and non-worker need detailed examination. Let us review the status of women working in unorganised sector.

6.4 WOMEN WORKER'S IN UNORGANISED SECTOR

Women workers may be classified into two broad categories:

- those working in the organised or the formal sector;
- those working in the unorganised or the informal sector.

This classification is based on the degree of organisation and nature of problems in employment in the sector. The difference between these two is not functional as between agriculture, industry and services, because these functions may be found in both the sectors. According to the Committee on the Status of Women, 1974, the real difference between them lies in the organisation or production relations, the degree of penetration of public control and regulation by data collecting agencies and scientific investigators.

Women workers in the informal sector are an important segment of the labour force. According to an estimate of the **Shram Shakti Report, 1988**, 94 % of total female workforce operated in the unorganised sector. They are in the segment of arduous work such as piece-rate workers, casual labourers, wage earners. The coverage of labour laws are absolutely foreign to this segment and they are deprived of equal wages, humane working conditions, maternity benefits and social security, protection of labour legislations to name a few.

Box No. 1

The disparity in the earnings of a regular wage/salaries employees and casual wage labourers in the case of women are far more pronounced than their male counter parts in both the rural and urban areas.

Employment in the informal sector is characterized by a high degree of casual labour, low pay, long hours of work, low skills and low productivity. There is absolutely no job

security, nor social security. Sexual harassment at work place is a major occupation hazard in this sector. Owing to the very nature of occupation in this sector there are no trade unions to facilitate the mobilisation of women workers to fight for their rights. Inadequate legislation and ineffective enforcement of legal safeguards to protect these women workers are other features of employment in this area. By the nature of their activities, women workers can be classified into the following broad categories:

- a) home-based producers including artisans and piece rate workers
- b) petty vendors and hawkers
- c) contract labour and casual labour
- d) domestic helpers, holders. Scavengers, washer women etc.
- e) those doing manual work like construction labour and those working in agriculture and other primary sector
- f) women engaged in processing work in traditional and non-traditional areas

On the basis of the employment status the aforesaid groups can be classified under three broad categories:

- the self-employed
- wage earners working outside their homes (construction workers, agriculture workers etc.) and inside homes (home-based workers) and
- unpaid family workers

The unorganised sector presents two knotty problems of social justice to policy makers. First, an increasingly large segment of working population is being forced to live at the margin of economy. **Second**, given the availability of such cheap labour in the unorganised sector, employers are likely to divert more and more activities to such organisations. This would mean that the working class as a whole, will in future receive an ever declining share in the products of development. No Popular government can afford to ignore these possibilities for long (Nirmala Banerjee, 1985. pp7- 8).

Trends of employment

An analysis of the sectoral distribution of work forces show that women are mostly confined to low paid jobs. To give you an insight regarding the section, in 1981, 81.6% of women workers (as against 66.2% of men) were engaged in the primary sector (agriculture and allied activities). In the secondary (Industry) and tertiary (service) sectors, the population of women was hardly 8.9% and 9.5% respectively. In the case of men these ratios are higher i.e. 13.9% and 19.9% respectively.

Looking at the history, the decline of industries such as textiles and metal products and of crude services rendered by potters and blacksmiths affected not only women but also men in large numbers. Surprisingly, women's overall non-agricultural employment till 1961 never regained the absolute level it had reached in 1911, while for men, it only meant a temporary set- back. After 1921, non-agriculture male employment raised both in absolute numbers and in proportion to total male employment.

Of the non-agricultural jobs that women lost during the period 1911 to 1961, only eight percent could be accounted for by specific 'female tasks' becoming obsolete,

and in the remaining 92 percent case, women were simply replaced by men in their past occupations. (Nirmala Banerjee, 1985, p. 14).

A large share of employment in the rural unorganised sector is occupied by women. Employment of women in the rural milieu is basically in nine areas of agriculture, dairying, animal husbandry, fisheries, social and agroforestry, khadi and village industries, handlooms, handicrafts and sericulture. The first five sectors are broadly classified as agriculture and allied occupations, the last four are characterized as village and small industries sector.

The following sub-sections will apprise you with the situation of women workers in various aspects of employment in unorganised sector.

6.4.1 Institutionalised Unorganised Sector

Agriculture

This sector absorbs highest percentage of women workers and most accessible employment avenue for women.

According to the census of 1971, 80.1% of women workers were in agriculture constituting from 18.3 millions in 1951 to 9.2 millions in 1971. This was attributed to increasing poverty leading to loss of land, and inadequate growth of productive employment opportunities on family farms resulted in the withdrawal of women from active cultivation. The increase in number of women agricultural labourers from 12.6 million in 1951 to 15.7 millions in 1971, was an indicator of increasing poverty and decline in the level of employment opportunities.

The low rates of wage for the women agricultural labourers are owing to the unorganised nature of employment, the case with which hired labour can be substituted by family labour, the seasonal nature of demand for labour and the traditional classification of certain jobs like weeding, transplanting as the monopoly of women labour. For agricultural workers, minimum wages are fixed by the government and the rates are reviewed periodically but unfortunately that Act is not effectively enforced in all the states of India.

In addition to differential wages for the same jobs, discrimination against women is strengthened by having lower rates for the jobs traditionally done by women such as sowing, weeding, transplanting, winnowing, thrashing and harvesting as against ploughing normally done by men only. Another problem faced by women workers in agricultural sector is the practice of identifying a work day as equivalent of 7-9 hours. Also, women's participation in agriculture has been adversely affected by introduction of modern technology and its application in cultivation.

Dairying

Women's contribution to dairying ranges from collection of fodder to mulching animals, cleaning and washing and taking care of the animals. Even in the milk cooperatives, women are seldom allowed to be the members and rarely received chances to govern the cooperatives as management committee members. Being outside the ambit of the cooperatives they failed to receive fair price for the milk since proper marketing outlets are often in the clutches of the local money lenders.

Construction Work

Women as construction workers suffers from the temporary and shifting nature of this work, to hardships of great physical labour in all types weather and exploitation by middlemen and contractors. Frequent changes in their work sites and instability of their work deprive them and their children of primary facilities like health, education, ration cards etc. They are flocked as unskilled workers though they perform some specialized work also. More paying and so called skilled jobs are invariably meant for men.

The **Commission on Self-employed Women** pointed out in this connection, that the variability in labour absorption in construction work was much more pronounced for women than men. Whenever, there is any increase in the demand for labour in this sector, the usage of female employment is much greater than that of males. On the other hand, whenever there is any downfall in the overall business, the reflected fall in workforce is more drastic in the case of women workers than that of male workers. Although there are various acts like the Minimum Wages Act, the contract Labour Act, and the Inter-State Migrant Workers Act to protect these workers, in practice they are violated by the employers in this sector.

Quarrying and mining

Quarrying and mining has been another important section engaging women in large numbers. Women and children should be made to work for mining in underground, but there is rampant child labour employment in underground mining. The major problems confronting women in this sector are high incidence of casual labour; low wages; hazardous and strenuous nature of work; lack of job security and non-enforcement of labour laws.

Home based Work

Both international and domestic capital are increasingly searching homeworkers to reduce the overhead costs and thereby to maximize the profit margin. In India, the women who do a fine art of embroidery on a wide ranges of products (such as Kurtas, Shirts, table linen, sarees, handkerchiefs etc.) also suffer from the same predicament. According to one estimate, in this sector, 97 % of the total workers are women and 3 % are men who are engaged in process incidental to embroidery such as cutting, printing, sewing etc. Out of total women workers, 95.8% are contract workers, the Committee on Status of Women, 1974, pointed out that the workers lived below poverty line and all the wage employees earned less than Rs. 40 per head per month.

Food Processing

The food processing is another area which is one of the earliest home-based industries where women perform the role in large numbers. The industry covered a wide range of items like processing of vegetables, fruits, pickles, chutneys, spices etc. It is recently emerging as an export oriented industry where 30% of its products are being exported. Usually the work is seasonal and about 40% to 50% of workforce in the industry do not get regular work. Sub-contracting is widespread and in traditional mode of production women workers are preferred as they can be paid very little and are less demanding.

6.4.2 Non-Institutionalised Unorganised Sector

Following are some of the prominent non-institutionalised occupations in unorganised sector.

Domestic Work

Domestic workers are at the lower rung of the ladder especially in the urban economy. The sexual division of work and its pattern of work allocation has rendered domestic service to become a predominantly female occupation. Domestic work involves a multitude of jobs like sweeping, swabbing, cooking, washing clothes and dishes, shopping, child care etc. In a nutshell, it covers all the household chores that are part of a woman's role in patriarchal society. In rural areas, it includes agrobased jobs within the household.

Workers in Small Scale Industries

This is one of the vulnerable groups of workers since there is absolutely no government regulation to protect lakhs of women who are involved in home-based work. The common feature of this type of industry is extremely low wage rate, long and erratic working hours and the absence of workers organisation. Another conspicuous point of such industry is that the work is done through the chain of subcontractors, middle men who exploit female labour force on a large scale. Bidi rolling, paper bags, garments, cotton-peg shelling, hand embroidery, grain cleaning, spice making, match stick making, incense making, paper rolling, sub-assembly electrical and electronic items, labeling the industrial goods, Zari work on garments, artificial jewelry making are some of such examples of home-based products.

Bidi-making

The Committee of Status of Women 1974, observed that the bidi-making is notorious among the most sweated industries in the country. Wages are always on the piece rate basis. Working hours and bonus payments are unregulated. Bidi workers suffer from respiratory tract infections, lung infection, tuberculosis and cancer.

Matches making

Organisation of this industry is exactly like the bidi industry. In factories at Sivakashi, Tamilnadu, women and children are largely employed at home, while men work at the factory. There are no trade unions and absolutely no presence of protection of these workers. They are exploited in terms of piece rate wages, excessive hours of work, lack of employment security and absence of welfare amenities.

Tailoring and embroidery

Women do generally the stitching at their homes in case of ready made garment industry. Here, women themselves collect clothes from the traders, stitch them at their homes, and return the finished products to the traders and collect the next batch of materials. It is women who have to bear the entire cost of space, transportation, maintenance of sewing machines and thread etc. that are oriented to this work. Wages are paid generally weekly or monthly and invariably on piece rate basis. Since these workers are scattered and unorganised they are paid very low with no possibility of organised protest. The existing labour laws can not be applied since they are not considered as workers by the established norms and regulations and even if applied the laws are being grossly violated. Further, women are more in this sector since it has highly home oriented job and therefore, they are vulnerable to be hired and fired at the will of their employers at any point of time. In absence of any formal contract, their working condition is often oppressive and the employer can always evade the responsibility. Women workers are deprived of social security benefits such as provident fund, gratuity, pension, medical

facilities and paid holidays. A unique feature of these workers is that each worker is isolated from the other and the problem of organizing them is almost insurmountable.

Women vendors and hawkers

Mobile vendors and hawkers, petty traders engaged in selling vegetables, flowers, fruits, clothes, pots, bangles and toys, cooked food etc. constitute another group of highly vulnerable women workers who are subjected to perpetual harassment by the authorities and the community. In this context the National Committee on Self-Employed Women points out that they are viewed as antisocial elements under the Indian Police Act, the Indian Railways Act and by the town planning authorities. Urban planners frequently consider them as impediments to planning and their activities are labeled as unauthorized, regardless of the fact that this system offers opportunities for employment, cheap and convenient distribution of commodities.

A women vendor operates on a small scale, most of them toiling for 10-12 hours a day to earn a meagre amount. In urban areas, they are largely concentrated in and around high density pockets like public markets, points of transportation, commercial centres and entertainment zones. The problem of these vendors are lack of capital, space for marketing and harassment by police and other authorities.

The Self-employed

Self-employment, by and large constitutes the dominant sector of employment in our country. According to the Thirty-Eighth Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation, out of a total 98.4 million women workers as many as 59 percent million (60.1%) were engaged as self-employed workers, the percentage being somewhat higher than for males (55.9%).

There are certain common problems faced by the self-employed women like lack of infrastructural facilities and inadequate knowledge of the market demands. They are further handicapped by lack of child-care facilities, unsafe transport, inadequate work place and lack of training. They are exploited by the middlemen in the absence of institutional credit facilities.

Before reading further take up the following exercise to assess your learning.

Check Your Progress:

1) Name the two broad sectors of employment

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) *Name the occupations that fall in institutionalised and non-institutionalised employments?*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

In the following section you will read about the problems that women workers face while working in unorganised sector.

6.5 PROBLEMS OF WOMEN WORKERS : UNORGANISED SECTOR

Women workers in unorganised sector face the following problems:

Low earnings: Low earnings of women workers in the unorganised sector are due to:

- a) Low productivity owing to lack of skills.
- b) Non-implementation of Equal Remuneration Act and the Minimum Wage legislation.
- c) Exploitation by middlemen /contractors.
- d) Lack of training opportunities to acquire new skills and handling technologies.
- e) High incidence of casual nature of employment.

Let us read about the reasons of low wages earned by women in unorganised sector in there detail.

Mechanisation: Women's participation in agriculture is much affected with the adoption of new farming technology on account of their limited education. Modern herbicides and rice mills and milling, mechanisation of fishing communities, powerlooms have put about 84,000 women handloom weavers out of work in five decades between 1961-2011.

Absence of training: The bulk of employees in the unorganised sector has not had professional training. A few personal services such as nursing and cooking as well as non- domestic skilled tasks like tailoring, electrical fittings or glass work regularized some initial training. But most workers get little formal training in any of the jobs they do. Most of them have picked up the skill at home from other family members.

This kind of training have two implications. First, the worker receive some instruction only for the immediate task in hand. There is no scope for learning a full professional or trade related skills. Thus, if she is to seek a promotion to better type of work she has to seek some more training at some recognized institution. This is clearly seen in the case of tailors who work on a sewing machine and usually learn neither cutting nor embroidery. Second, the workers ever understand the rudiments of the basic discipline to which the task is related.

No coverage under Labour Laws: Several Acts like the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 and special provisions for women workers under the Factories Act, 1948 have been enacted by the government to protect the interests of women workers. Temporary and casual women workers in the unorganised sector are not covered by the maternity protection and they continue to work even in the advance stage of pregnancy. Not only do the employers in the informal sector fail to provide any facility during sickness or pregnancy, but these are considered adequate grounds for retrenching a worker. Creche facilities, paid holidays and other social security benefits are totally denied to women worker force of the unorganised sector.

Lack of organisation: Lack of organisation and unionization prevents the organisational power of women workers in the unorganised sector. In the unorganised sector, women workers are exploited in terms of low wages, piecewage rate, long hours of work, non-implementation of labour laws relating to wages, conditions of work, insurance, provident fund, maternity leave, crèche facilities etc.

Lack of access to resources: Banks and other formal institutions are discriminating against women in case of lending credits by asking them to produce guarantee against loan in the nature of moveable or immovable assets. Women in our country almost do not have any access to such sort of assets.

Lack of supportive services: Lack of supportive services like the child care or day care centres for the children, problem in sending the children to school especially the girl children etc. are yet another problem for women workers in the unorganised sector.

Sexual harassment: Although women workers across the sectors face such problem, women in informal sectors are far more vulnerable to sexual harassment at workplace. In fish drying, construction, lime work etc. the principal contractors keep the subcontractors who often generally exploit women workers and ask for sexual favours.

During the period of 1970 to 2013, India witnessed increase in the women workforce mainly in the unorganised work. The women’s movement has highlighted their problems and made efforts to mobilize, organize them. Women’s studies has generated public awareness about labour processes and labour relations that perpetuate sexual harassment. Prevention of Sexual harassment at Workplace Act 2013 covers working women in all sectors of the economy.

We would explain in detail in other units about the resistance and mobilisation done in favour of women workers to bring in change in policies at different levels.

Check Your Progress:

1) *What is the trend of employment of women in unorganised sector?*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) *What are the problems faced by women working in unorganised sector in India?*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Let us read about the situation of women workers in organised sector.

6.6 WOMEN WORKERS IN ORGANISED SECTOR

In the post independence period, India witnessed a period of rapid transition owing to industrialization and the subsequent changes in social structure. With greater opening for higher education and training women were better equipped to enter the organised sector. Gross economic necessity coupled with awareness that jobs provide economic betterment as well as higher social mobility and freedom, ushered more and more women to avail the opportunities to enter the arena of professions.

Women have been entering the paid labour force in increasing number during the past several decades after 1940. Middle class, urban, educated, upper caste women took up work outside home in a significant manner during that period. The participation of women in Freedom Movement and acceptance of the value of imparting education to women in pre- independence period provided the middle class women the opportunities of entering the wider world of paid work for longer economy.

Constitutional provision of non-discrimination, expansion of employment opportunities in the tertiary sectors, greater opportunities to obtain higher education, growing pressure on urban middle class families for enhancing the family income are the factors which led to the participation of middle class women in the labour market.

There were many motivating factors for women to enter paid jobs outside home. The important motives for opting for gainful employment in the case of married educated women are:

- i) Engagement during spare time
- ii) Economic independence
- iii) To live with dignity and self-respect
- iv) To achieve one's own status and position
- v) To make use of higher and professional education
- vi) Ambition for a career and self-act navigation
- vii) To serve community and society at large

Employment of women was accepted in 1970s particularly in times of economic crisis and those taking professional education and 'not working' began to be considered as wasting their education. The increased entry of middle class women into employment occurred because of the widening of public sector. The employment under the semi-government undertaking had also doubled.

The concentration of women in certain jobs and types of work and their employment at a level that is not commensurate their skills is a matter of concern. All the countries have become aware of the problem and its implications and had already begun to tackle the question rigorously. UNESCO, for its part attached considerable importance to the issue. It is convinced that all human beings men and women alike, have the right to equality of opportunities regarding education, training and employment in accordance with their skills. To highlight the issue UNESCO, with Japan and then Federal Republic of Germany and with the assistance of ILO organised four conferences at four different places.

Till 1980's the only three generally recognized professions of any considerable importance outside of teaching were law, medicine and the ministry. In those days women were debarred from the practice of these professions by legal barriers as well as by public sentiment. Teaching was recommended for women because it could be so arranged that they would interact with their own sex as this occupation did not create conflict with the traditional role of womanhood. The other attraction were the shorter working hours, vacation etc. which made it possible to not to bring in problem in traditional role of women again.

The organised sector in India which primarily consists of public sector and non-agricultural sector establishment absorbs less than one eighth of the actual workforce of the country. Of this, the share of women was 12.2 % in 1980-91. To give you an idea, Women's employment in the organised sector grew from 19.30 lakhs in 1971 to an estimated 33.41 lakhs in 1986. (www.Indiastatistics.com)

Within the organised sector, employment of women in the public sector increased steeply from 8.62 lakhs in 1971 to 19.30 lakhs during 1986. In the private sector, women's employment improved although at a slower rate, i.e. from 10.67 lakhs in 1971 to 13.07 lakhs in 1986.

Due to women taking jobs as teacher, nurses, clerks and secretaries in offices on large scale, there is a slight increase in women's employment in the public sector of only 1% (i.e. from 9.7% in 1980-81 to 10.8% in 1984- 85) to the total employment. Industry wise employment statistics of women in the organised sector indicates that a major proportion of women labour force is employed in the allied activities of agriculture followed by services and manufacturing industry for both periods of 1971 and 1981. Now the scenario has changed.

Manufacturing

This was one of the major sources of employment to women. To give you some insight, during 1971-81, the proportion of women engaged in this sector recorded an increase in both rural and urban areas. The women workers ration in rural areas increased from 270 per 1000 males in 1971 to 1980 and in urban areas from 260 per 100 males in 1971 to 330 in 1980. However, within this sector, the percentage share of women workers in traditional industries i.e. food, tobacco and textile had remained almost static and it accounts for over 86% of women workers engaged in manufacturing industries. In cashew and coffee industry, on account of mechanization and consequent

shift from household enterprises to other forms of organisation, women's employment had suffered a loss. The non-traditional group of industries like garments, plastics and rubber products had recorded a sizable increase in the share of female employment.

In industries like fertilizers and pesticides, manufacturing paints, chemical products, printing, dyeing and bleaching of cotton textiles, manufacturing of machineries, electric equipment, developments in terms of women's employment. There were some shifts towards the non-traditional industry. Women's entry into the modern sector was confined to less skilled jobs. For instance in rubber, plastic and petroleum, women's gains were more in the rural areas using less modern techniques and producing less valuable products.

To give you the latest data, Post-1991, increasing number of women are found in the service sector and other professions like, IT and teaching. Periodic Labour Force Survey Report 2022-23 shows that Female Labour Force Participation Rate in the company has improved by 4.2% points making it to 37.0% in 2023. (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation). Of the 8 million workers employed in India's formal manufacturing industries in 2019-20, 1.6 million (19.7%) were women (Annual Survey of Industries). For the past two decades this representation has remained unchanged.

Trade and Commerce

In trade and commerce the share of women workers has enhanced both rural and urban areas. The number of women workers in this sector is still very insignificant like one percent of the total workers. During last 20 years, lot of discussions have taken place on women entrepreneurship.

Women in Services and Professions

The number of women employees in the categories of professional, technical and related workers including teachers, has been increasing since 1960 in public sector. The number of women workers in transport storage and communication has increased steadily. In Private Sector, the segment where the proportion of women workers has shown a steady increase are clerical and related fields, primary and middle school teachers. Women are employed at the management level only in some of the new industries like advertising, market research, operation research, hotel management IT and cottage industries.

Industrialisation and increased bureaucratization has resulted in the emergence of white collar jobs on a large scale basis, wherein there was concentration of women workers in certain types of activities. The concentration of women in teaching reflect the fact of both opportunity and preferences. In Indian society the teaching job is regarded as the most preferable job for women since it has the least conflict with the traditional role of womanhood. However, looking at the composition of women workers in the organised sector, it appeared that close to three quarters of these women are in jobs requiring a good amount of secondary and higher education. Conspicuously, the Secondary and higher education of women being a purely urban phenomena has also led the conclusion that rural women are largely excluded from public sector jobs as they predominantly belonged to educationally deprived category. Women constitute only miniscule percentage of the membership of registered trade unions submitting returns and even less representative of the office bearers and executive members.

Women in Teaching

The girls' schools, training schools, colleges and universities established in the early 20th century enabled women to acquire the required qualifications for the teaching

profession. The number of women teachers in India has increased in post independence era. Although women entered the professions in increasing manner, scaling the summit was always difficult. The scenario has changed in last 20 years. In the public as well as private sector educational institutions, there is feminisation of different positions. Now, women managers in school and university education are found in greater numbers.

Women in Engineering

Generally, engineering was considered a man's occupation due to the nature of hardwork performed outdoors. Since 1990's this sector has experienced massive change. Women are joining IT and bio-technology in good numbers.

Women in Administrative and Central Services

Before independence, there was hostility against women taking Civil Services Examinations. Only unmarried women or widows without children could join the services, and the government had reserved the right not to select a woman even if she has been qualified through the examination process. In 1954, the Government relaxed its restrictions on women to a provision that married women could be asked to resign if their marriage interfered with the efficiency of the services. The rule was rarely used though. It was finally deleted in 1972 after women MPs denounced it in the parliament. The first woman officer in the cadre of IAS joined in 1951 and she reported that the selection committee tried to persuade her to join the Foreign Service as it was doubted that whether a woman could shoulder the law and order responsibilities in the district as IAS officer.

The Indian Police Service refused to accept women for many years. The argument was that the policing and women were incompatible. However, the first woman IPS officer (Kiran Bedi) joined in 1972. According to 1971 census, there were 1000 women in administrative and executive positions while some 400 worked as managers and executives in financial institutions across India. Current scenario is quite encouraging.

In last 40 years, increasing number of women have been joining IAS, IPS, IES, IFS. Of 11,569 IAS officers who entered the civil services between 1951-2020, only 1,527 about (13.0%) were women, shows on India spend Analysis of the IAS data set compiled by Ashoka University. In 2023, 21% of serving IAS officers were women.

Jobs like clerks, stenographers, typists, receptionists absorb more and more educated women. In Central and State Government services, the largest concentration of women was at the level of class III i.e. clerical accounts and related workers.

Women in Law

During 19th century, British law prohibited women from entering the bar in England and in India. However, **Cornelia Sorabji**, a Parsi Christian Lady from Bombay went to Oxford to do Bachelor in Law in 1892 and became the first Indian woman to earn a law degree. She was appointed as legal advisor upon her return to the women's court of wards in Calcutta by the Governor of Bengal.

Due to the agitation, the Government of India passed the legal practitioners (women) Act in 1923 removing the ban on women practicing Law. Since then a number of women advocates increased steadily and there is more representation of women in judiciary also as a consequence.

Women in Medicine

Throughout the civilization, women were in forefront in case of health care. The first Indian women doctors studied abroad in the United States, England and Scotland returned to India by 1880s and 1890s to work in hospitals in India. Qualified women doctors also came as missionaries from United States to work in hospitals in India. **Ida Scudder**, witnessed the plight of women in India during child birth owing to lack of proper medical care, returned to the US to enter medical school there and was back in India to open a nursing and medical care home for women in Vellore which was named Christian Medical College.

Lady Duffrin Fund was created in 1885 and a number of Duffrin Hospitals were opened and women physicians were trained on scholarships from Duffrin fund. In 1883 women were first admitted to Bombay University for medical degree and in 1885 Calcutta Medical College ushered the women to earn the medical degree. In northern part of India the first medical school for women was opened followed by the Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi in 1916. The graduates from these colleges joined the hospitals for women financed from the Duffrin fund.

The number of medical colleges mushroomed since independence. In 1946, there were only fifteen medical colleges with an annual enrollment of 1200 students. Today, the situation has improved and there are hundreds of medical colleges in each state of India.

Women in Science

Before 19th Century, the scientific community was exclusively dominated by men. Science was considered a field suitable only for men. Women were considered emotionally, and intellectually unfit for the rigours of scientific work. Hence, although over the years a notable increase took place in number of women entering scientific field, women still lag behind men both in numbers and proportions in different stream of science.

The first decades of 20th century witnessed positive changes. Even then, women who succeeded in the scientific profession had extra ordinary motivation, thick skin and exceptional ability and courage. It was necessary for women to overcome the triple penalty of choosing to work in a traditionally male domain. The triple penalty has been described as: a) Science was culturally defined as an inappropriate career for women; b) there was a belief that women were less competent in science than men; c) Women encountered significant discrimination within the scientific community.

While medicine was a preferred and respected field in science, the other streams which attracted women were chemistry, biophysics, statistics, botany, microbiology, and other general biological sciences.

Women in Media

Since independence, journalism as a career for women began to open up. In the media, there were very few women who could be classified as journalists and most held only subordinate positions.

There were some most prominent women journalists, who were the editors of women's and young people's magazines. Among them are Gulshan Ewing of Eve's Weekly, Vimla Patil of Femina and Rachel Thomas of Manorama, Annes Jung of Youth Times and Mrs. K.M. Mathew of Vanitha.

Conspicuously, the first newspaper syndicate in India was started by Mrs. Kusum Nair and her husband. A feminist magazine ‘Manushi’ was published in English and Hindi by a women’s collective in 1979. Now we witness women holding responsible and challenging positions in print and electronic media.

There were many women who were prominent in literary world in India, remarkable contribution was recorded by women in Radio, Television and Film Industry too. Multimedia channels have opened major avenues for careers anchors, correspondents and reporters but almost all media moghuls barons are men.

Check Your Progress:

Write a line or two about women working in the following professions:

1) *Medicine*

.....
.....
.....

2) *Science*

.....
.....
.....

3) *Teaching*

.....
.....
.....
.....

4) *Law*

.....
.....
.....

5) *Media*

.....
.....
.....

6) *Trade and Commerce*

.....
.....
.....
.....

Let us now read about women's component in various five year plans.

6.7 FIVE YEAR PLANS (FYP): WOMEN WORKERS

Here, we will discuss allocation for women in various FYPs.

Women up to 5th FYP were considered as subjects of welfare and clubbed together under the category of disadvantaged groups.

The **Second Five Year Plan** (1956 – 1961) was linked with the overall approach of intensive agricultural development. For the first time it recognized the need for the organisation of women as workers. It also perceived the social prejudices and disabilities they suffered. The plan stated that women should be protected against injurious work, should receive maternity benefits and crèches facility for children. It also suggested speedy implementation of the principles of equal pay for equal work and provision for training to enable women to compete for higher jobs.

The **Third Five Year Plan** (1961-1966) detected women's education as a major welfare strategy. The health programme concentrated mainly upon the provision of services of maternal and child welfare, health education, nutrition and family planning.

The **Fourth Five Year Plan** (1969-1974) continued its emphasis on education. The basic policy was to promote women's welfare within the family as the base of operation.

The **Fifth Five Year Plan** (1974-1979) emphasized the need to train women in need of income and protection. Hence, for the first time the economic role of women was being given importance. This plan coincided with the International Women's Decade and the submission of the Report of the Status of Women in India (CSWI). The report stressed that the dynamics of social change and development had affected a large number of women and ushered in a new set of imbalances and disparities in reality such as i) the declining sex ration ii) low expectancy of life iii) higher infant and maternal mortality iv) declining work participation v) illiteracy and vi) raising migration.

For the first time in the history of India's Planning, the **Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)** introduced a separate chapter on Women and Development. The Government appointed a working group on employment of women as an exercise for the Sixth Plan period. This plan document stated that one of the most important improvements in the status of women, would be to secure for them a fair share of employment opportunities, to earmark a certain percentage of allocation for women and to fix for them 30% of allocation in all the poverty alleviation programme across India. Development was defined in terms of improvement in education, employment and health of women.

The **Seventh Five Year Plan** (1985-1990) operation analysed the concern for equality and empowerment articulated by the International Decade for Women. It engineered the emphasis on qualitative, focusing on inculcating confidence among women, generating awareness about their rights and privileges and training them for economic activity and employment. In this plan period, the 2.4% of the total outlay was dedicated to women's development. During this plan period it was suggested to restructuring of the educational programmes and modification of school curricula to eliminate the gender bias and more important was at elementary stage, education has been made free for girls. The setting up of the National Commission of Self-Employed Women was very significant during this plan period towards achieving the status of women in Indian society.

The Eighth Plan (1992-1997) projected paradigm shift, from development to empowerment and promised to ensure flow of benefits to women in the core sectors of education, health and employment. Outlay for women rose from 4 crores in the 1st Plan to Rs. 2000 crores in the 8th Plan.

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) stated that **Empowerment of women was its strategic objective**. It accepted the concept of Women's Component Plan to assure at least 30% of funds/benefits from all development sectors flow to women. It suggested four times of schemes and programmes that impacted women directly. The Category of Schemes proposed can be categorized as:

- 1) Women specific schemes where 100% of the allocation is required to be spent on women.
- 2) Pro-women schemes where at least 30% of allocation and benefits flow to women.
- 3) Gender-neutral schemes meant for the benefit of community as a whole where both men and women avail these benefits.
- 4) The residual state specific programmes having profound effect on women's position/condition. (Economics for Gender and Development).

Tenth Five year Plan (2002-2007) focused on social empowerment economic empowerment and gender justice for the women of the country. During the **Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)** the focus was gender equality priority areas with regards to the women were health, relief and rehabilitation of women in distress.

The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) focused on inclusive growth of women during the plan period to bring about overall change in their status thereby improving quality of life for them. You will again read about women's component in each Five Year Plan in unit 20, Block 5 of this course.

Read the summing up of the Unit before attempting unit end questions.

6.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you read about status, position and representation of women in different sectors of both informal and formal economy. The Unit also discusses problems of women workers in unorganised sector. Under the section of women in organised sector. You read about reasons why educated women in India are opting for gainful employment outside home. The section further dwells upon women's representation in different professions and occupations. The Unit ends with a discussion on problems faced by working women working in organised sector.

6.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Elaborate upon the status of women in organised and unorganised sectors.
- 2) Critically examine the contribution of women in Indian Economy.
- 3) Discuss the Five Year Plans and welfare strategies that government had taken during the period of 1951 -2014.
- 4) Explain sectoral distribution of women works in the Indian Economy.

6.10 REFERENCES

Banerjee, Nirmala (1985). *Women Workers in the unorganised sector*, Hyderabad: Sangam Books.

Devi, Rajula A (1983). *Women In the Informal Sector*, Kurukshetra:

Government of India, (1974). *Towards Equality, Report of the Commission on the Status of Women in India*, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare.

Government of India, (1988). *Shramashakti, Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in Informal Sector*.

Government of India (1988). *Report of the Core Group, National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 A.D.*

Singh, Anita, Andrea Menece and Kelles (1987). *Invisible Hands: Women in Home based Production*, New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Patel, Vibhuti (2009). *Discourse on Women Empowerment*, Delhi: The Women Press.

6.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

GOI (1974). *Towards Equality, Report of Ministry of Education and Social Welfare*.

Government of India, (1988). *Shramashakti, Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in Informal Sector*.