

CHAPTER XVI

GENDER JUSTICE



The Women Board Members of Central Silk Board, Bangalore deliberating on issues to promote women participation in Sericulture.

It is estimated that the textiles industry provides direct employment to above 35 million people. If we include those working in the allied industries and in marginal capacities, then the figure rises to 93 million people. While gender-wise statistics are not available, except through the odd sample survey or census, it is seen that livelihood for women workers is provided mainly by the decentralized Handlooms, Handicrafts, and Sericulture industries, where their numbers are estimated to be over 50%. Within these segments, there are more women in the household industry than in the registered, small scale or cottage units, working for themselves rather than for wages. Within the registered units, there are more women in the unskilled and lower paid jobs than in the skilled or trained category.

In the organized sector, the percentage of

women workers is extremely low. If they are visible in significant numbers it is mainly in clerical positions in offices attached to the industry.

Based on this distribution of women, the strategy attempts to provide gender justice and empowerment in the following manner:

In accordance with the guidelines of the National Commission for Women, Committees have been set up in this Ministry and offices/organizations of this Ministry to deal with complaints relating to the sexual harassment of women in the workplace. The presence of senior women in these committees as chairperson or as members has been mandated, and detailed guidelines on handling such work with firmness and tact have been issued. Emphasis is being laid on sensitizing departmental staff on gender issues.



In the unorganized sector, where women are more at threat of exploitation and feel powerless to deal with the environment, the strategy comprises emphasizing the productive role of women and their greater amenability to discipline and hard work. Action is also being taken to up-grade skills through the provision of training facilities.

The project for the establishment of a Seri-technology Complex for Women commenced in February 2004 for a period of 5 years. Under the programme, women sericulturists are imparted training for skill development in the areas of integrated nutrient and disease management of the host plant, silkworm rearing, quality silkworm seed production, etc.

The Handlooms sector has taken up a massive programme to train 1 lakh weavers. Many of them will be women. The aim is to upgrade weaving and design skills and impart information that will enhance their skills in accessing raw material and markets.

Stimulating the formation of women groups and learning from experience with Self-Help groups, and projects such as the 'Mahila Samakhya', an endeavor has been made to organize women to improve their capacities through solidarity and through mutual help, and to access facilities that would be denied to them as individuals. In the sericulture sector Self-Help Groups, and Sericulture Quality Clubs are being created that impart training on group dynamics, empowerment, enlargement of the decision making process, SHG concepts, thrift, micro credit, etc. NGOs are also being involved in this effort to organize women's groups. In the Handicrafts sector, marketing services and extension centers encourage group action for women.

Under the Centrally sponsored Catalytic Development Programme, the Central Silk

Board (CSB) implements a number of programmes in collaboration with State Governments. Financial and technical assistance is provided for on-farm and post-farm activities like reeling, dyeing, twisting, printing, finishing, etc. Benefits accrue, inter-alia, to SC/ ST, and women workers. Under the Catalytic Development Programme, the following programmes are being implemented by CSB in collaboration with the State Sericulture Departments for the benefit of women workers:

- Promotion of women friendly technology packages, developed by the research institutes of CSB;
- Supply of improved reeling cum twisting devices, and spinning wheels to the NGOs, women groups, individual women reelers/spinners at 50% subsidy;
- Training programmes are being organized to impart training to women reelers/spinners on the operation of improved devices; and
- CSB is helping States to implement Cluster Development Projects by the integration of CDP schemes, wherein support is provided to Women Self Help Groups.

In the Handlooms sector, the Deen Dayal Hathkargha Protsahan Yojana encourages replacement of looms and pit looms with improved looms that are more productive. Similarly, in the Handicrafts sector, the emphasis on improved tools in carpet making, bamboo, and cane craft, etc., has led to the induction of technology that empowers women with increased incomes from better quality products.

About 11% of the employees working in Cotton Corporation of India, are women. A Committee to prevent Sexual Harassment of Women in the Work Place has been constituted at Head Office,

based on the directives of Hon'ble Supreme Court. This Committee is headed by a Senior Lady Officer of the level of General Manager, and one Lady Officer from the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes group is also a member of the Committee. The Committee has received no complaints so far regarding sexual harassment. Detailed instructions have already been sent to all the offices under the administrative control of the CCI to protect working women from sexual harassment, and to ensure gender equality. Leave, including maternity leave, is allowed to women employees as per Central Government Rules.

The Central Wool Development Board, Jodhpur administers various schemes/ programmes for the development of wool and woollens in the country. Most of these schemes help the handlooms sector and provide employment to a large number of

women weavers/workers.

The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Institute of Textiles Management at Coimbatore has set up a Gender Justice Committee. Presently, the Institute has 4 women employees and 50 girl students. The Gender Justice Committee deals with complaints relating to sexual harassment in the Institute. The Committee also examines grievances relating to the women employees/students in the Institute.

In compliance with the guidelines and norms given by Supreme Court to prevent and deal with cases of sexual harassment of women in the work place, this Ministry has also constituted a Complaints Committee. The Committee was reconstituted on January 10, 2007. It consists of 6 members including the Chairperson. No case has been brought to the notice of the Committee.

