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Forms of Production
-- A Report

MADRAS INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
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WOMEN, TECHNOLOGY AND FORMS OF PRODUCTION

A REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP HELD ON OCTOBER 30TH AND 31ST, 1984. UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MADRAS INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AND ASSISTED BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND THE INDIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH, NEW DELHI.

The third workshop of Economists interested in women's issues group (EIWIG) focussed on the theme of the impact of technology and forms of production on women. The need to focus on this issue arose out of the discussions of the second workshop on 'women and poverty' where it was recognised that there was an inadequate appreciation of the gender and class implications of changes in technology and the organisation of production in different spheres of productive activity.

The three sessions devoted to discuss this issue covered a vast terrain including the experience of agricultural modernisation on women in the third world, detailed case studies in specific sectors and industries of the impact of technological changes and changes in the organisation of production, an evaluation of the government policy to facilitate skill enhancement for women, the impact of social legislation on women workers, theoretical issues on the role of patriarchyⁱⁿ/labour market analysis, conceptualization of skill and issues related to measurement of technological change.

The first session on agriculture and allied issues had a major paper on 'women and rural development in the third world' by Sarthi Acharya, and two papers on the fishing industry by Karuna Anbarasan and Suchitra Anant. Acharya's paper covered all countries in the third world under four country groups-namely Africa, the Arab world, Asia and Latin America. Skillfully bringing in material

from a wide variety of sources, he sought to highlight three issues. Firstly the position of women's participation in agriculture, secondly the impact of agricultural modernisation on women's participation, and thirdly public policy issues related to women's participation.

On the position of women's work in agriculture he noted that in much of Africa, women are the primemovers particularly in the food economy, and that there need not be any correlation between the nature of work done and the socio-economic status determined in terms of control over production and decision making. He also noted that given the wide regional variations in Africa, any step to alter the existing poorly endowed agriculture by strengthening the forces of production would have to take account ^{of} the locale and the people, and such attempted transformations of these economies that have taken place so far may not have been neutral to both sexes. In the Arab world the contribution of women in agriculture is grossly concealed behind the screen of customs and local practices. Also there was a marked link between women's work, their class background and the status. He noted that the extent of regional variations in women's role is specific to the agro-climatic and economic-demographic requirements of the region. In Asia inspite of the recognised male form of farming with the household as economic entity in subsistence agriculture, there are variations in women's role with respect to the crop, the labour market and local traditions. Also there seems to exist in Asia a positive correlation between the status and the quantum and nature of work done. There is a moderate to strong class-gender relationship vis-a-vis agricultural work. It was also pointed out that policy perspectives in Asia cannot be ignorant of the need for rapid economic diversification at the local levels so as to influence the labour market. In Latin America the position of rural women is shaped by the degrees of uneven capitalist development and penetration of international interests. Since the land rights there do not favour women, their

position at work and at home continues to be inferior.

On the impact of modernisation on women's participation he cited examples from Africa to show that modernisation and agrarian reform, whether it was land settlement or reform, introduction of new tools of cultivation, cooperation, HYV packages, switch to cash crops or training and extension, all per se could have been neutral; but in project formulation and implementation there was a lack of understanding of the local farming systems, as for instance, allocation of land rights based on the European pattern, differential and unequal access to training and an inaccurate appreciation of the intrahousehold distribution of duties and rights relating to economic activity; all contributing to a relative slideback in women's position. In Asia modernisation and technology infusion have by and large been introduced without regard for changing the rural structure. Thus land reforms, technology, extension and access to modern inputs/loans have been explicitly class and male biased, which has deepened the cleavages between male and female employment and household status with modernisation. Technological change in Asia has replaced a large number of women's jobs in harvesting and post-harvesting activities but these are also the jobs which imposed very hard burden of labour for very low returns. The fact that alternative vocations could not be created in rural areas in the modern sector where this labour could have been absorbed indicated the structural stagnation in these economies. The traditional syndrome of women working in invisibility would not vanish until a relative labour demand is created at higher than subsistence wage. But Asian economies have been sluggish in growth and slow in labour absorption in non-traditional jobs.

At the policy level, Acharya recognises that women as a productive work force and food security are inseparable components of development. Firstly he noted that in most of

Asia, Africa and subsistence Latin America rural development has by and large been a neglected feature in national development, and in his opinion it is fulfile to talk of women's development in the absence of a concerted approach to rural development. Even in India where planning and administration are considerably sophisticated, the rural sector which engages 70% of the population was never allocated more than a fifth of the total allocation in any of the five year plans. Secondly he noted that women's legal status vis-a-vis land and other productive assets is not very favourable in many countries, and in those where some laws are favourable, the implementation has been weak. Attention needs to be focussed on this area. Thirdly the need for realistic planning approaches cannot be over emphasized. The investment criteria exercises done for sectoral planning should include socio-economic elements, with an explicit component for the employment and redistribution effects genderwise. Target group planning which is already in practice in some countries needs to be given a greater thrust, and needs to be more strongly integrated with the sectoral programmes. The emphasis in such target group planning should be the individual rather than the household. He also emphasised the need for a 'farming systems approach' to agricultural development to strengthen regional cooperation.

Discussing Acharya's paper Bina Agarwal pointed out that, while Acharya contends Ester Boserup's conclusion of 'female farming system' in Africa by pointing out the high degree of variation in female participation in agriculture in the different African countries, this analysis is inadequate. To counter Boserup's conclusion it is necessary to classify participation in agriculture into participation in food and non-food systems. She also noted that the impact of modernisation is measured solely in terms of

women's employment and access to land. In the context of this paper she pointed out that, it was not clear as to why access to land is at all important. The paper also does not consider the impact of modernisation on women's income, health and nutrition. Further she found that implicit in the paper is the view that agricultural modernisation has an anti-female bias and will not lead to increases in food production. While even in the African case where women are the prime-movers in the food economy, this line of thinking needs to be questioned, clearly in Asia and Latin America food production and welfare are not necessarily linked. In these cases technological change should be directed specifically to increase women's welfare. Also the distribution of the product of the land is crucial in determining the intra-household benefits of modernisation. Women's access to cash is found to be a determinant of the nutritional status of the children, though female children are primarily undernourished. An important methodological question she noted, related to the measurement of impact of agricultural modernisation. There are problems in distinguishing between different kinds of modernisation and also in separating the effects of technology per se from the other effects. In this context she noted that the relationship between technology and socio-economic structure is a complex one. Given the fact that different technologies in the same socio-economic milieu brings about different effects, the question of the choice of technique also assumes importance- while the use of combine harvesters reduces employment, HYV increases labour requirements. On policy issues she noted that, while the suggestion of the need for legal rights to land for women is important, it is not adequate to ensure women's control over land. The consequences of patriarchal relations in society needs to be kept in mind. She also noted that while all examples of success in achieving growing participation of women refer to the socialist countries,

Acharya's policy issues seem to ignore this fact of a basic structural change.

In the course of the general discussion on the paper it was noted that development cannot be seen as a unilinear process. Its effects depend on the form of development, and women's position should be related to the state and the background and direction of development. It was also noted that the division of labour in agricultural production needs greater scrutiny. In the Indian context the fact that as seen from the NSS data, women's participation rate and the male-female differences in wage rates move in the same direction was highlighted.

The two papers on the fishing sector concerned themselves with fishing, fish trading and fish processing. Karuna Anbarasan's paper based on case studies of three fishing villages in the Chingleput district of Tamil Nadu identified the factors that influence the role and status of fisherwomen in these villages. It was found that while the fisherwomen were income earners and shared with men the activities of fish distribution and marketing, fish processing, curing, preserving and other allied tasks, they had in general a low status and were eliminated from the decision making process, especially in matters concerning the whole village. She found that the prevailing economy and technology, asset ownership pattern, socio-cultural and traditional values of the fisherfolk, and political and social awareness contributed to the low status of the fisherwomen as a group. Increasing urbanisation and the growth of markets has affected women negatively on two counts. The introduction of nylon nets fabricated by machines and which facilitates a larger catch, has denied the fisherwomen the task of net-making which they had been involved in hitherto. Also the introduction of auction system of marketing has forced women to compete with large traders, causing them to lose

out of their traditional activity of fish marketing. She also noted that the socio-cultural values and norms all served to reinforce the view that women cannot claim control and manage production assets, and that women should discuss matters only related to their family, and not those related to the village. She concluded that income earning activities alone are not sufficient to alter the low status of the fisher-women, but a much broader social change.

Examining the conditions of employment of Kerala women in the fish-processing units of Gujarat, Suchitra Anant of the ISST research team, found that these women were under the mercy of the labour contractors who initially recruited them, lived and worked in insanitary conditions, and did not benefit from the labour laws such as the minimum wages act, the inter-state migrant workers act and the payment of bonus act. It was also found that despite the Kerala women being more skilled particularly in grading owing to the fact that they had a much longer history in the fishing industry, they were paid wages lower than the Gujarat women doing comparable tasks. This was because the Kerala women came from families of abject poverty, were relatively young and unmarried, and were not unionised. While highlighting the fact that migrant workers are in general less favourably treated on the labour market than the non-migrants, this poignant study brought to light the vulnerability of women migrant workers.

Commenting on these two papers Kanchan Chopra observed that both the papers examined the effects of technology, urbanisation and the growth of market on women. In particular the transformation from a subsistence to a market economy appeared to be dis-advantageous to women. Technology was decidedly not gender-neutral. Therefore in choosing technology, its non-neutral impact must be kept in mind.

The issue of who was involved in an activity before technological change takes place must be noted. In her view development takes place within a system of social beliefs and patterns of interaction, and in designing policies the framework of social beliefs and practices must be taken into account. She also noted that Karuna Anbarasan's paper does not adequately analyse how differences in village types, which was the basis for her choice of villages, affected the role and status of fisher-women differently. On the study dealing with Kerala women working in the fish processing units in Gujarat, Kanchan Chopra noted that this was a case of market segmentation based on the workforce status of migrant and non-migrant workers. She felt that the solution towards ending the wage disparity would depend upon the ability to decrease the costs of migration and the dissemination of information about working conditions prior to the migration. She doubted whether the solution suggested in the paper, that Kerala women be provided adequate employment opportunities in Kerala's itself was the appropriate answer.

In the ensuing general discussions on these two papers it was noted that both studies pointed to the change in the market and the organisation of production, rather than technology as such. The underlying change has been from a local to a national and international market. In that context only big capital can operate. The crucial question it was noted, was not whether the status of women was better under subsistence production or not, but how capital uses lack of knowledge of the bigger and more profitable market as a weapon against the working women. The point is, women continue to be engaged in their traditional occupations in a changed market context but are unaware of it. Numerous issues pertaining to the asset structure of the migrant and non-migrant workers, the wage difference

between men and women migrant workers, the role of the government, the availability of alternate employments and the vulnerability of women to sexual harassment were raised. It was also noted, that the difference between 'technique' and 'technology' should be considered for while the former is neutral, the latter is not.

Certain general issues were sought to be raised through the papers in the second session. U.Kalpagam examined the role of women in the Industrial Reserve Army in the context of a labour surplus multi-structural system. Examining Classical Political economy, she found that the works of Marx and Engels have a more perceptive view on the class and gender implications of machinery. She noted that Marx's analysis of the role of the industrial reserve army has both a cyclical and secular implication, though only the former has gained attention. The latter refers to the nature of labour absorption with the development of capitalism. She noted that both in Marx and Engels as well as in subsequent literature, there is a very clear acknowledgement that women constitute a 'low wage' category, though it is not clear as to why it is so. In her opinion, an explanation of why women constitute a 'low wage category' cannot be obtained without introducing 'patriarchy' in the analysis. Reviewing the Macro and Micro studies, she found that in the Indian Context, which she described as a labour surplus multi-structural one, there was evidence of all three forms of labour reserve-the latent, the stagnant and the floating existing, and there was overwhelming evidence to show that with the development of capitalism in India there has been displacement of women in activities in which they were engaged in prior to it, though there has also been new avenues opened to them. It was also noted that the interaction between patriarchy and capitalism needs greater scrutiny.

In the general discussion on this paper, the author's contention that Marx anticipated women to replace men came under controversy. It was noted that Marx made this observation in a specific historical context. That context, it was further observed, had no enormous rural labour force as the Indian setting. This invalidated juxtaposing Marx's insights with the Indian scenario. The conceptualisation of skill that was mentioned in the paper drew the attention of some, who felt the necessity for a proper definition of it. The most serious debate pertaining to this paper centred on the issue of patriarchy. The debate ranged from definitional limitations as used by the author to attempts at a theoretical explanation of it. The concept was objected by some as being a merely ideological and a trans-historical category, while others insisted that while patriarchy characterises an ideology of gender relations, its concrete manifestations in different social formations with its associated implications on control over productive assets, control over sexuality and control over labour differed, and hence cannot be termed a trans-historical category. It was generally recognised that there was as yet an incomplete understanding of the concept and role of patriarchy and much more work needs to be done in an attempt to include it in a Marxist framework. Such an exercise was important even in terms of reconsidering the forms of struggle.

The scope of Raka Sharan's paper related to social legislation for women workers in the industries of Kanpur. Beginning with the question as to why inspite of several protective social legislations the position of employed women is not improving, she noted that the nature of the legislation itself could produce this adverse effect. Women workers in manufacturing industries in Kanpur dropped from 2 per cent in 1951 to 0.4 per cent in 1981, though this is more likely to be due to misreporting as the women

who are employed through contractors are not observable in this method of data collection. Basing on a field study of fourteen manufacturing units in which three hundred women workers were employed, she observed that legislations such as restriction on night work, maternity benefit act and the law requiring provision of creches have discouraged employers from employing women. She suggested that all acts that have an adverse effect on women's employment should be scrapped and the contract system of employment should also be abolished.

Raka Sharan's request for repeal of restriction on night work for women, prompted a representative from the Central Labour Ministry to highlight the fact that of late there has been requests from certain industries, such as the recently started hotels in Delhi for relaxation of that restriction. Given such requests she asked the members to examine seriously the different aspects of such relaxation. The suggestion for the abolition of the contract system through legislation prompted some misgivings on the ability of the state to achieve it given their past record of failures on such issues.

A study on the utilisation and wastage of training programme of National and Regional Vocational Training Institutes for women done by ISST and presented by Himanshu Misra showed that in the six years since the inception of these training courses in Dress making, secretarial practices, embroidery, electronics and hair and skin care half of those who received such training were unemployed. Those who were employed however did work in the same areas in which they were trained and contributed substantially to family income. The reasons for their unemployment was the lack of demand for their skills such as dress making and embroidery, and constraints caused by the families' orthodox outlook on women's work outside their homes. The primary limiting

factors for self-employment of these women were both their own socio-economic background as well as lack of financial support and guidance in entrepreneurship. The study suggested, among other things, a programme of grass-root level surveys of industrial growth in different regions to identify skill requirements.

Apart from the doubts raised on the statistical validity of this survey exercise, given the wide scale of non-coverage as well as the casual responses from those who did respond, the consultancy syndrome that was evident in the paper also came in as a point of criticism. It was however generally acknowledged that the paper highlighted the fallacies of state training programmes. The basic weaknesses of the programme it was noted, were its orientation towards individuals rather than having a group approach, of it being a top-down development programme, and of its male bias in the choice of occupations for vocational training.

Commenting on the three papers as also the other papers submitted, Sardamoni noted at the outset the need for a proper theoretical framework and warned that technology should not be equated with machinery. Also in the three papers presented, the forms of production has not been properly analysed. She also felt that instead of merely mentioning the role of patriarchy, Kalpagam should have gone further by examining the extent to which it existed and influenced women's position in the labour force. She felt that Raka Sharan's paper had the distinction of being the only one which suggested that it was not modern technology that had an adverse effect on women but social legislations. She expressed her surprise that having identified the factor, Raka Sharan does not demand an improvement of working conditions and security against sexual exploitation, but in fact wants these legislations to be repealed. While

commenting on the evaluation of ^{the} training programme as a rather routine survey, she pointed out that the major weakness of the training programme was that it was not linked with the National plan. Work and training programme rather than merely training would be better she noted. In her general comments she noted that the role of multinationalals and a proper evaluation of modern technology needs to be done. She also felt that our stand on political economy issues should not merely be an academic position but should be reflected in our own actions, if we desire a certain kind of social change.

She also highlighted the salient features of the papers that were submitted but not presented. Both Vibhuti Patel and B.B. Patel conclude in their papers that the introduction of modern technology has had by and large an adverse effect on women's employment. Quoting mainly from other studies, Vibhuti noted that between 1961 and 1981 3.3 million women lost their jobs in the country owing to modernisation of traditional occupations, and those women who were not displaced were forced into low skill, low productivity, and low wage manual jobs. Citing the case of Gujarat, and in particular Ahmedabad, B.B. Patel also drew the same conclusion. In this context Saradamoni noted that while it is not possible to reject technological advancement at the turn of the twenty-first century, certain questions have nevertheless to be asked. Are all technological changes that are adopted necessary? Who brings them or how do they come about? Who makes decisions and whose interests are served by these? Are such technological changes accompanied by changes in the ownership of the means of production, division of labour, generation of surplus, its accumulation and absorption? And in the context of women she noted that the question is more complicated and is not merely a question of employment. Pointing to the example of television

she remarked that while that industry trained and employed a large number of women in the manufacture and assembling of it, the messages conveyed through its programmes are against women to say the least. She also warned that technological changes should not be viewed in isolation but ^{has} to be linked with economic changes taking place on the whole.

Commenting on a paper by Bahnisikha Ghosh and Sudhin Mukhopadhyaya where the authors have tries to measure the contribution of female and male workers separately in the generation of income by using a standard Cobb-Douglas production function, she doubted the validity of conventional tools offered by traditional economic theory in providing an understanding of the complex women's issues. Without pleading for a "Towards ^{an} Economics of women" she concluded in the same vein as Rayna Reiter ^{in her} /introduction to the "Towards an Anthropology of women" that "we need new studies which would focuss on women, it cannot be otherwise because of the double bias (in our case many biases including the colonial/neocolonial-emphasis by Saradmoni) which have trivialized and misinterpreted female roles for so long. Yet the final outcome of such an approach will be a reorientation of anthropology so that it studies humankind. Focussing just on women, we must redefine the important questions, reexamine all the previous theories, and be critical in an acceptance of what constitutes factual material, armed with such a consciousness, we can proceed to new investigations of gender in our own and other cultures."

In the last session, five papers dealing with the textile and clothing industry were presented. Isa Baud's paper "Women's labour in the South Indian Textile Industry: the influence of production and mobilization on the gender

division of labour" examined the effect of different types of organization on the gender division of labour in the Indian textile industry. The data for the study covers the Coimbatore taluk in the state of Tamilnadu. The starting point of the discussion is that productive work offers women a means of gaining a degree of independence. However, whether and to what extent such a change occurs depends to a large extent on the way in which production is organized. In the Indian textile industry, three types of production forms co-exist; handloom sector which consists of cloth production (weaving) by family units; large scale factory production by mills and composite mills; powerloom sector where cloth weaving is carried out in small workshops using the same looms as the mills. However the powerlooms are not classified as factories; neither are any labour legislations applicable in their case.

Total employment in the mill sector has hardly grown in the last twenty years. When ^{the} total figure is split into men and women workers it becomes clear that the absolute number of women workers being recruited is decreasing, at the same time the absolute number of male workers is increasing. In addition the percentage of women workers in the total labour force is decreasing. Increasingly, workers are being employed in three shifts instead of two; the average number of workers employed in the third shift has increased enormously. This correlates to a certain extent with the decrease in the numbers of women workers as women are not allowed to work in the second and third shifts. In the powerloom sector, the use of women's wage labour is strongly correlated to the number of looms a unit has, the larger the number of looms the more frequent the use of women's wage labour. The handloom sector is predominantly a family labour market, based on production in household units. The majority of women working in the handloom sector are 'family workers'.

Recruitment procedures have changed drastically in the mills. Some mills do not accept new women workers but only young men, which phenomenon has a negative effect on the possibilities of recruiting women. Further, in the mill sector, the segregation between men and women by function has been complete in most departments; in eight out of ten departments only men work. In one department, only women work (reeling). Woman reelers are among the lowest paid operatives, fourth on a scale of fifteen; and over the period 1970 to 1981, the percentage increase in basic wages for winders has been slightly above average and less than average for reelers. In the powerloom sector, women have access to high-paying as well as low-paying jobs but the number of women in the former is smaller than in the latter. In the handloom sector, while sons weaving with their father are given a small portion of the income they have earned as personal income, women are never paid anything for the work they do.

The only sector in which there is a large degree of mobilization is the mill sector. However women workers are members on paper only, as they do not actually participate in union activities. From the side of the union few demands have been made for women workers.

Overall the author finds that the rationalization of production (based on technological innovations increasing labour and machine productivity) particularly affects women workers in labour intensive parts of the production process. Women tend to be increasingly relegated to such parts of production which are subsequently automated. This occurs within the context of increasing labour mobilization. The trade union efforts lead to higher wages and better working conditions; but unequal labour legislation for men and women has led to a less favourable position for women in the labour market in the consolidation phase of an industry.

The chief discussant for this session Nirmala Banerjee pointed out, that the author's argument that in the powerloom sector division of labour is not as sex-segregated as it is in the handloom mill sector is not supported by her own evidence. Again, a part of the reason why handloom sector treats women badly (women are unpaid family labour here) is the generally low level of income generated in this sector.

A participant pointed out that the author is concerned not just with technology but also the organization of production. In the organizational context in which women work, the powerloom sector emerges as being more preferable than the handloom sector as far as the employment of women is concerned.

From a study of three traditional industries, woollen cottage industry, handlooms and hand block printing, L.C. Jain drew attention to not only the phenomenon and magnitude but also the process of displacement. Thoughtless mechanization in the garb of technological progress has played and is playing havoc with the employment of lakhs of workers especially women, from the poverty households. Though protection was offered it was not enforced sincerely, the mechanized sector multiplied drawing in substantial investment resources, while some of the largest cottage industries such as handlooms and hand block printing (which employ considerable numbers of women) were squeezed and shrunk causing distress to large numbers.

The inclusion of powerlooms in the decentralized sector, the periodic regularization of unauthorized powerlooms, the bogey that mechanized printing capacity had to be built in the interest of "exports" (when in fact 94 percent of the mill printed textiles are unloaded in the domestic market squeezing the hand printers out of existence), the delicensing of the woollen industry which automatically

enabled the machines to take over the entire activity from the poor - all this makes one wonder whether this is technological progress or mindless albeit motivated mechanization.

Nirmala Banerjee, pointed out that while the author is concerned about powerlooms replacing handlooms, equally concerning is the replacement of mills by powerlooms. The argument that mill printing can be profitable for export earnings must be taken with a large pinch of salt. One must look at the net loss on account of hand printing as opposed to mill printing. Further, alternative export earnings should be explored.

The paper "women in Handloom Industry - A case study of Handloom Centres in UP" by M.E. Khan, Ratanjit Singh and Nigar Fatima Abidi attempted to highlight a case study wherein with the assistance of an international agency a number of handloom centres were constructed with the aim of rehabilitating flood affected weaver families, particularly women and children. 14 handloom centres were opened in 8 flood affected districts of UP- these districts covered regions with different levels of economic development and communities with varying socio cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The sample of four handloom centres chosen for the study showed that the prime objective of providing employment to women and children could not be met. Among the many reasons forwarded for this low achievement include the fact that a majority of the weaver families were forced to work more or less as bonded labourers with the private agents. These weaver families had already taken loans from the private agents and thus were totally in their clutches. The handloom centres did not have any facility or mechanism to free these families from the clutches of the agents by granting them advance money. Improper functioning of the creches at the handloom centres, the prevalence of the

'Purdah System' among high caste Hindus and Muslims were other factors that made women withdraw from work. The author concluded by stating that only those women's welfare programmes can succeed which do not contradict drastically the socio-cultural values of the native population and/or disrupt the normal family life.

Nirmala Banerjee noted that this paper shows how appalling are our ideas of helping women. The objectives of the project, its very design and its conclusion based on findings, is to say the least, shocking. A participant felt that while the failure of production-oriented technology is well brought out, the solution did not lie in the advocacy of consumption-oriented technology as suggested by the author in the form of improved 'Chulhas' etc. Another participant however felt that consumption-oriented technology would release female labour time and in that context would be relevant. A participant took the author to task for exaggerating the role of "socio-cultural" values as barriers and cited instances where so called socio-cultural values have broken down in the face of determined action by women. Further, the suggestion that jobs should be such that women can perform them at home without disrupting normal family life is 'reactionary', it was pointed out. Another participant however cautioned the tendency to dismiss the importance and hold of socio-cultural values; while the phenomenon of women coming out to work is to be welcomed, a related question that needs to be asked and studied is the role of men in the family. A participant found the whole project scandalous and opined that the paper stands out as an example of "trading in tragedy". The fact that the project did not benefit women will not seem so surprising if it is realized that it was not designed for women in the first place. The factors enumerated for the non-achievement of the objectives of the project make this very clear.

Indira Hirway^{in her paper} examined whether the strategy of decentralized planning of village industries is capable of raising the economic status of women. Two industries of the khadi village industries board(KVIB) namely khadi work (which included roving, spinning and weaving) and leather work(which covers flaying, tanning, processing and footwear manufacturing) were studied. The study reveals that KVIB's contribution to women's employment is only marginal in nature and the real issues of women are hardly touched. The sexual division of labour in KVIB activities is not favourable to women. Men take the larger share of work and also divide the operations in such a way that the semi-skilled and unskilled work goes to women. Consequently women's work essentially remains subordinate in nature. Women workers also get a major share of casual work which is uncertain in nature and which is poorly paid.

The discussant commented that the sexual segregation and concentration of women in low wage occupation found by Indira confirm what is by now well established. The paper, however, has not gone beyond stating this usual hypothesis. Further, the tables provided in the text need clarification since there seems to be very large variations in the participation rates between regions; apart from stating the need for women to work, the author has no made no attempt to explore the socio-economic considerations that compel women to work.

A participant questioned the use of the term "appropriate technology" for women used in the paper, since nowhere has the term been adequately defined nor was it clarified what made the KVIB industries "appropriate" for women.

The major part of the study "New opportunities on old terms" by Maitreyi Krishna Raj is based on the findings of a study of the garment industry in Bombay but parallels and

contrasts have been drawn with the studies conducted in Madras and Delhi to bring out the regional differences. According to Maitreyi women in garment industry do not represent a clear case of occupational segregation but within the workforce in this industry they have only a temporary status, enjoy less rewards for experience and have little or no chance of managerial or supervisory positions. Women are concentrated in the more centralized, bigger units ostensibly to avoid union struggles. The women workers' inability to claim better terms is not entirely because of a special feminine docility alone but because of several situational pressures, which include frequent closures which make unionization difficult, managements preference for temporary labour and for sub-contracting out of tasks. The nature of the market, organization of production and technology together create strong pressures that generate a special set of vulnerabilities for women because women are not yet regarded as equal participants in the labour market.

Nirmala Banerjee, while agreeing with the basic conclusions of the author, differed with her on other details. While the sample need not necessarily present a clear case of sexual segregation, the fact nevertheless is that there is some sexual segregation in the garment industry. 'Docility', 'Willingness' to take up part-time jobs - these characteristics may be sex-related but not necessarily. In the small units of the sample men-tailors may be more docile than the women who come from multi-earner households. In the larger factories women were found in larger numbers on the assumption of docility. The paper while not making an explicit statement, implicitly brings out that organized sector and organized labour force, are not the same thing.

A participant felt that while the South-Asian model may not apply to India in general (in the sense of the industry being female dominated as in other countries), it

did apply to India's free trade zones. Women in the garment industry in the Kandla free trade zone, for example, constitute 60 to 80 percent of the workforce. Another participant talking about the Madras garment industry pointed out that there is overtime work for women in the garment industry; in fact, compulsory overtime is heartlessly imposed on them. Marriage did not per se restrict the employment or continuation of women or their unionization, but what did act as a barrier was the non-availability of creches and support facilities. One device used by management to break unions and discourage unionization was the employment of deaf and dumb women.

During the course of the discussion a number of observations raised were not specifically related to the papers presented, but on and around the theme in general. The need for more analytical inquiries which would also include "men" was stressed. This would, it was pointed out, not only facilitate comparisons but also make studies more meaningful. It was pointed out that a new look at decentralized production processes is required. "Decentralization" does not ipso facto imply 'democratic' and 'autonomy-yielding'. Also, the process by which decentralization takes place needs to be studied. While the case studies presented point out that women tend to get concentrated in the 'low' skilled jobs, the question "why do we find women in low-skilled low-paid jobs" remains to be studied and analysed. The issue of how the labour market treats women cannot be separated from the issue of how the family treats women. Regardless of the forms of production, discrimination against women persists. Hence the role of men within the family needs also to be brought into the picture. It was noted that only in the Sixth five-year plan has the 'woman' been recognized in the form of a separate chapter being devoted to women. But here again, women have been

treated as targets of social welfare. The Planning Commission does not see women as economically productive force. Pressure groups need to be setup outside the government to make the latter shift its perception regarding women.

The discussions in general pointed to the need for more numerous and in-depth studies on this theme, which some participants felt was only inadequately dealt with in the papers, as also more studies with an explanatory analysis rather than descriptive ones on the conditions of work and lives of women. The concept, the role and forms of patriarchy with its associated implications on control over productive assets, work and sexuality needs greater probing. It was hoped that the next workshop would carry forward some of these issues.

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