

Role of Gujjar Women in Dairy Sector in Panchkula District in Haryana & Need of Social Work Intervention

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Abstract

This study aims to know about the level of involvement of Gujjar women in dairy sector informally in the district Panchkula of Haryana. The study is qualitative in nature and based on case studies and focussed group Discussions done randomly with women who are actively working in dairy sector informally. The study was carried out in the Villages of Naggal, Ramgarh which are adjoining the city of Panchkula and two other villages namely Sakhomajri and Nanakpur were taken which were considerably far from the town. The total sample was of 20 women taking 5 women from each village. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Interview Schedule and Observation were the tools used to collect the data. The findings of the present study reveals that majority of the respondents perform almost all the activities pertaining to dairy sector like providing fodder, drinking water, milking, cleaning of sheds, whereas selling milk, breeding practices were done by male members. But they did not handle the financial aspect involved as all these dealing is handled by their husbands. So we can say that Gujjar women along with home duties are also informally involved in the Dairy business and contribute in the economy with no recognition of the work they do and no financial gain from the work they do. This sector can play a major role in empowering women who are informally working but lack vision and direction.

Keywords: Gujjars women, Dairy farming, Informal Workforce.

Introduction

Gujjars were nomadic cow grazing community who lived in the foothills of Himalays. Dairy has been primary occupation of Gujjars which is till date a practised profession among Gujjars. With the changing times many Gujjars have started living a settled life but their culture of dairy farming continued even if they have acquired jobs or started doing agriculture. According to Vincent A Smith's 'The Early History of India,' Gujjars are "allied in blood" to the Huns who poured into the Indian subcontinent. In India, Gujjars are mainly concentrated in the north, across the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Overall, they form 10 per cent of India's population. Gujjars come across as a very strong cohesive community. Gujjar Women are very hardworking women, they take care of home and family and have an active involvement in dairy. Gujjar women are also informally involved in the main occupation of dairy but they are still economically and socially dependent on the family due to the existing illiteracy and backwardness.

Objective of the Study

To study the involvement of Gujjar women in economic activities and how it can help in their empowerment.

Gujjar Women in Dairy Sector in Haryana

A report of the National Commission on the Self-employed women and women in informal sector (1988) includes women doing manual work like agriculture, construction labour, home based production, and domestic help, hawkers and any other work in unprotected sector which are included in informal sector. It is a vast sector so to specify this sector is really very tedious. The difference lies in the ignorance and of the workers. Unorganized or informal sector constitutes a pivotal part of the Indian economy. More than 90 per cent of the workforce and about 50 per cent of the National product are accounted for by the informal economy. A high

proportion of socially and economically underprivileged sections of the society are concentrated in the informal economic activities. Gujjars are engaged into dairy farming in Haryana. Dairy sector is also beneficial to them with regard to economic gains. An article published in *Gujjar Today* (10 November 2013) Gujjar women actively pitch in with the other household chores in income generation activities by making dairy sector as a profound sector but they do not generate any money out of it as control over resources lies in the hands of the husband. It stressed the importance of education in main streaming women. This sector in rural areas is regarded as an informal sector and for Gujjar women it serves as a source of self-employment. An article published in *The Tribune* on November 21, 2013; states that dairy sector is playing a significant role in empowering women in rural Haryana. It shows how dairy sector has been successful in engaging 700 women cooperatives with 39,000 memberships. Government organizations are generating a good income through this sector by adopting innovative schemes and produce 6 lakhs litres of milk per day. To promote women engagement government introduced the milk collection units for active participation of women cooperatives. Gujjars women who are traditionally engaged in the dairy can also be empowered by properly channelizing their work in dairy sector. It is required to find out the awareness they have about this sector and the practices they follow in dairy farming. The department of Animal Husbandry, Haryana has a scheme to promote special employment through dairy development up setting up of mini dairy units to provide self-employment opportunities to educated or semi educated men and women specifically belonging to scheduled castes and backward classes. Gujjar women working in this sector can be benefitted from such schemes but it requires stepping out of their homes but the traditional Gujjar community still has blocks in their minds in regarding the women moving out. So it becomes extremely important to study and identify how intervention can be planned to empower Gujjar women. But the Gujjar culture limits and restricts movement of women which confines them to their homes. Here a complete mind-set shift is required where social work intervention can play a very important role.

In Gujjar society where the majority of men and women are illiterate, especially the older and middle aged women. Social fabric and cultural implication has led women to be lesser educated and limit themselves to home and practise ghoongat. Gujjar women have no decision making powers. They do not have any income and pocket money. They cannot move out from their homes without permission. They have to perform chores of the household from cooking to taking care of animals and helping their men at farming and cattle feeding. This is their lifestyle which passes from one generation to another. They get no exposure to understand their social and economic status. Government Schemes are launched by central as well as the state Government, for the betterment of rural as well as urban women like-

Balika SamridhiYojana; Indira Mahila Yojana etc. but these schemes have not been able to achieve transformation of Gujjar women.

Gujjar women are quite actively involved in family as were as dairy work which according to them is their duty towards their families and their love for animals especially cows and buffalos which is an important part of their culture. But they are not aware of their rights and have knowledge about how this informal work can be a source of income and empowerment. In spite of doing so much work they lack decision making powers in the family as well as in the community due to the cultural implications and patriarchal mind-set of the society. They perform a dual role, at home they do all the household chores and also work hard in the dairy as it is their main occupation. But lack of education and minimum exposure of the outside world does not let them recognise the importance of their work.

Reviewing the Literature

The Survey done by the Dairy Development Department in 2019 throws a light of the important role played women in the state of Kerala in the dairy sector and the problems they face. It suggested that there should be support for the women in dairy sector. This survey report recommended that significant steps are required to ensure women representation and leadership roles in the dairy cooperatives. (A report published in the *Hindu* in February 2020). It also stated that State's dairy and animal husbandry sectors offer ample opportunities for women empowerment. It recommended that 40% of seats in dairy cooperative governing committees may be reserved for women. "It is important that their representation is increased for raising their social status and in consideration of the fact that the income they generate go entirely to their families," the report noted. This kind of women representation is almost everywhere in the counter especially in the Dairy sector.

(Rangnekar, 1992; Shaijja, 1994; Rabbani et al., 2004 and Roger, 1995), it has been found that women play a key role in animal based tasks like feeding and cleaning animals, chaffing the fodder, milking of cattle, making cow dung cakes and selling of milk in the market. This makes it important to study the participation of Gujjar women in dairy management practices, as not much work has been done in this field. Sharma (2012) states that a major chunk of the population in India works in informal sector where people are employed without benefits and are paid less. Majority of the women in India work in informal sector, but it is important for them to have government support. The author presents this paper based on secondary data collected by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in the year 2004-05 and 2009-10 through surveys on employment-unemployment and research papers. Author argues that now is time that government gives priority to the development of informal sector, similarly policies related to income generation for women need to be interlinked with general government policies and there is a requirement of women specific policies in this regard. Cooperative membership of women will

may increase the economic opportunities and enhance their social networks (Jones et al., 2012; Handschuch and Wollni, 2016). Women actively perform dairy and livestock activities such as feeding of animals, care of livestock, cattle shed and excreta management, retention of produce for household consumption and processing of produce (Gupta, and Godawat, 2011). Involvement of women specifically coming from families whose primary occupation is dairy have maximum involvement in the business as a physical labour. Even if they do not have dairy and farming as primary occupation then also women take care of the animals and the milking of animals. (Kumar, and Prajapati, 2011). So it becomes necessary to channelize the work women do in a proper direction and empower them through this sector.

During the focussed group discussions women were sharing their routine and lifestyle which showed that they adapted to their lifestyle which includes many restrictions as a part of their culture. They have taken ghongat as a mark of respect for elders and one's safety. This limits their exposure as they are not permitted to sell milk or go outside and take lead in learning new skill and practices in dairy. Majority of the women said that they love their animals and they do their work as they do work for their children. Three- four hours in a day are spend on the work and milking of animals by the women. Selling of milk and breeding practices are handled by men. When asked about any monetary gain from the work they do, women said it is a part of their lifestyle and they do not recognise that how important is this sector for their empowerment socially and economically.

Sawaran said that Dairy is a very important part of their life and they do it as a duty and love for animals and do not want money as their husbands are there to take care of their needs. Dairy is part of our tradition as we feel happy working for animals. Indu, a post graduate said that "apchahepadelikheho hum pashuokakaamkarte hi hai." But when asked about the income they generate out of selling milk most of the women said that they do not keep any track of the income as it is supposed to be done by their husbands. All of the women who were interviewed were actively involved in dairy activities which included feeding, bathing, providing fodder, milking animals. Husbands were involved in selling milk to dairies or door to door deliveries, managing finances. Women along with income generation activity feels that it is absolutely necessary for them to keep and take care of animals as keeping animals is considered as auspicious as it brings good luck to their family. But lack of awareness due to illiteracy and no exposure makes them ignorant as how dairy sector can empower them. They need proper channelization of information so that they can be more aware and make progress in the social and economic parameters.

They major challenges as observed by the researcher are:

1. Lack of scientific knowledge about breeding and latest dairy technology.

2. Cultural barriers to step out and explore self-help groups and other opportunities vis government schemes and programmes.
3. Lack of education leads to ignorance about their basic rights which hampers their social and economic status.
4. Basic patriarchal set up and coming from backward community makes them even more vulnerable.

Social Work Intervention

"Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels."

The intervention is needed at individual and community level. Here we have to motivate women to mainstream the work they do and handle financial and market aspects too. We have to channelize the community to have women explore their potential, which will also benefit their home and family. For this purpose, individual and group counselling's and discussions will be helpful. Sensitizing via documentaries and success stories can also be very helpful.

Women should be equipped with appropriate knowledge about the latest dairy practices and modern technologies so that they can strengthen their work. Women should be exposed to working of banks and the handling of financial aspects like taking loans etc.

The need of the hour is to enhance the decision making capability of women. This will happen if women are made socially and economically independent. When women will start making decisions about themselves they will be empowered in the real sense. This confidence will come from education and financial stability. And to attain this the Government can tie-up with the NGO's to implement various programmes depending on the needs of women of a particular area.

It is extremely important to make the environment conducive for women to work. As observed by the researcher their culture holds them back at many points. So social empowerment is a must where women do not have to sacrifice their choices for the sake of family name and honour. Gujjar women should be given opportunity to develop their skill and establish themselves in a formal manner. Women should be sensitized to form SHG's to empower themselves and channelize their hard work in a right direction so that they can earn via a proper channel and become financially and socially self-dependent.

Empowering women from backward communities based on their needs is an integrated process where many agencies governmental and non-governmental with community and individual level

effort is required to mainstream women in the informal sector like dairy and make them economically independent.

Conclusion & Suggestions

This study was done to access the socio-economic status of Gujjar women in Panchkula and Yamunanagar districts of Haryana. It explores the current social and economic status of Gujjar women as these women despite of being the active workers in the dairy are not recognized in their communities for their work and why they are not active decision makers in the family and financial matters. It can be concluded that Gujjar women in Panchkula district contribute significantly to their households and serve as a major workforce in the dairy sector. But they really value their culture and tradition which somehow hampers their lives and keeps them confined to their homes. They need attention so that their socio-economic condition can be improved by empowering them via dairy farming. Various developmental agencies should concentrate their efforts on the dairy development for Gujjars

1. Gujjar women can be technically equipped with modern dairy practices if they can form SHG's and use milk sector as a mode of income and empowerment. The government and non-government agencies should take effective steps to provide technical training to Gujjar women.
2. It is important to make Gujjar women aware about various educational facilities, health, loans, credit facilities and other welfare opportunities.
3. Conservative Gujjars need to be educated via group discussions, mass media and the importance of formal and scientific education which will help them in scientifically improving their dairy practices and also give them confidence and power to teach their children and make decisions regarding themselves. This will empower them socially and economically.

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