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### **The Empirical Study on Strengthening Endeavors for Social and Political Empowerment of Women in Dairy Cooperatives**

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#### **ABSTRACT:**

Women play a vital role in the dairy sector of India. Dairy cooperatives provide sustainable livelihood to millions of household in rural India. Several initiatives for empowerment of women are undertaken by Government of India, State Governments and Non-Government Organizations. As a feature of patriarchal society, women's contributions are rendered 'invisible' and unacknowledged in general; it's no different in dairying, livestock management and agriculture. Even in dairy development programmes, the central focus is predominantly on milk, milk products and livestock rather than on women. The scenario is fast changing with the increasing recognition of the dynamic role played by women and the inherent advantages of women empowerment for 'smart' economics and superior society. Studies from a gender perspective on rural dairy women to analyze their progress, problems and prospects at the grassroots are considerably rare. This paper aims to contribute towards bridging research gaps by examining the growth of economic status of women in dairy cooperative societies of rural India. This empirical study involves 100 women from 10 women dairy cooperative societies of Alwar District .Comprehensive pre-tested questionnaire was used for the purpose of primary data collection along with interview guide and field observations. The study examines the changes in income, access to cash and credit, confidence in financial transactions and their aspiration for economic autonomy towards drawing inferences and suggestions for engendering and strengthening endeavors for economic empowerment of women in dairy cooperatives.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

Women empowerment, Women dairy cooperatives, Social-Political empowerment, Rural development, Empirical study.

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## **INTRODUCTION:-**

### ***Social Empowerment:-***

Social empowerment deals with issues of exclusion and inclusion. They become important in a religiously diverse, multicultural, and highly stratified society like India where rural poor face many forms of exclusion. While Operation Flood is not an all-purpose development program and cannot hope to sweep away economic and social inequalities that existed in rural India for centuries, it has nonetheless had a profound impact on the social landscape of the countryside<sup>1</sup>.

In its 1976 report on rural employment, the National Commission on Agriculture observed:

Next to crops, animal husbandry programmes have the largest employment potential. The most important features of these programmes are that they provide subsidiary occupation, offer gainful employment at the location itself, and make better utilization of female and child labour. Most of these programmes are particularly suitable for weaker sections of the rural community and have re-distributive effect on rural income in favour of them. Renowned Sociologist BS Baviskar explains that Operation Flood was considered a means of overcoming the barriers of caste, class, and power, something earlier rural development programs had been unable to do<sup>2</sup>.

As far as empowerment of women is concerned, this took place mainly through the women dairy cooperative societies (WDC). In the WDCs women find themselves empowered, as they are authorised to make their own decisions in meetings held outside the home. Income from WDCs enables the women to make most household expenditures without being dependent on their husbands. OF has also played an important role in generating employment for women<sup>3</sup>.

When our village people see a veterinarian cure an animal that would otherwise have died, they learn about the efficacy of modern medicine. They see that with feed and care better milk is produced and as their animals improve their income from milk increases and they become hopeful of better housing and future. And they learn that fate does not determine their future that they can take control of their own destinies<sup>4</sup>.

### **Political Empowerment**

The political empowerment aspect of the milk revolution deals with connecting poor people with the government. The OF programme was able to connect the grassroots-level dairy cooperatives not

only with the state and central governments, but also with international agencies. Cooperative enterprises provide the organizational means whereby a significant proportion of humanity is able to take into its own hands the tasks of creating productive employment, overcoming poverty and achieving social integration. They constitute a model for a people-centered and sustainable form of societal organization, based on equity, justice and solidarity. It is clear that governments, although they may create an enabling environment, cannot achieve or maintain sustainable development without an interactive social partnership, actively involving all of civil society in an empowered, democratic manner, the biggest obstacle that the dairy cooperatives face today is political and bureaucratic interference<sup>5</sup>.

Business decisions are often guided by other than business considerations. The cooperative laws are unable to provide the protection the dairy cooperatives require to function as independent business entities. To end this dismal state of affairs, the most important intervention needed to professionalise the functioning of the dairy cooperatives is to liberate them from the clutches of the archaic cooperative laws enacted to establish State control over the affairs of the cooperatives<sup>6</sup>.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

1. To organize exclusive Women Dairy Cooperatives and to take up employment cum income generation activities.
2. To provide need based and extensive training for skill up gradation.
3. Mobilizing women in formation of Self Help Groups as a tool for income generating activity and for easy access to credit.
4. Provide support services, backward and forward linkages and improving employment conditions of women.
5. Creating awareness through designed programme.
6. Confidence building among women and to generate leadership qualities.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used the survey methods to extract primary data from the respondents who included dairy farmers both within and outside the cooperatives and key government agents. It also reviewed literature about cooperatives from journals and articles from major organisations in various Tehsils of

Alwar District, dairy cooperatives were used as case studies. According to the findings, women farmers join cooperatives because of various reasons. Among the prominent reasons are; the need to access markets and the need to work with others. The study established that some farmers have not yet joined because; they could not afford membership fees and because of the poor performance of the cooperatives and lack of awareness out the cooperatives. Other key findings present benefits of the dairy cooperatives and the challenges they face. For example members are able to access markets and agro-vet services and they access training opportunities. Major challenges include; irregular market, low milk prices and severe weather conditions, and lack of water shortage and lack of access to feeds, and low participation of members in some cooperative activities.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK:-**

### **Definition of Cooperative**

1. The International Cooperative Alliance defines cooperatives as autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise”.
2. Knapp also defined cooperatives as organizations set up by a group of persons or firms to perform services for members with an objective of securing better services, in terms of quality and cost.
3. Birchall writes that cooperatives are essentially self-help groups of people who get together to meet member needs. Both definitions stress the fact that cooperatives are established to address member needs.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is an empirical study aimed at pointing out the factors that determine or motivate or discourages women to join or not to join cooperatives. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the questions.

Since the study of dairy cooperatives is confined to Alwar District and its Tehsils. Ten tehsils of Alwar district and women dairy cooperative of each tehsil was randomly chosen and dairy women were selected by simple random sampling technique<sup>8</sup>. Totally we selected 20 women in each region. The study is mainly empirical and therefore depends to a large extent on primary sources of data like; Govt. order related to correctional institutions, notices, reports, government documents, gazettes,

relevant documents, harbingers, pamphlets and written material of the dairy cooperatives some of the office bearers of the dairy cooperatives of Each tehsil is interviewed. The study depends to the large extent on sample surveys for its data collection<sup>9</sup>. However the secondary sources used in this research are encyclopedia text book related articles in journals periodic.

### ***Data Sources***

The Study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from members and non-members and cooperative leaders. Primary data was also collected from government agents of (AZDUSS) Alwar Zila Dugdh Utpadak Sahkari Sangh., and Sector officials). Apart from the primary data, the study made use of the secondary data which was collected by reviewing literature about cooperatives mostly from journals, articles and other studies or reports carried out by Cooperative or Development Agencies internet and other sources.

### ***Data Collection Techniques***

Two types of data collection techniques were employed, using different sets of questionnaires. Firstly the study used the survey method: with survey method, the researcher developed a set of questions guided by the research objectives and questions. The first set of questionnaire targeted the dairy women both in and outside the cooperative. A pre-test survey was carried out and later administered on the targeted dairy farmers both within and outside the cooperatives. The questionnaire captured farmers' demographic and social characteristic as well as reasons for joining or not joining cooperatives, motivations, requirements, and benefits the gain by joining or not joining. Secondly, interviewing of officials and leaders of various cooperatives was employed to capture some institutional information. This employed the set of the questionnaire (semi-structured) was developed for the cooperative and union leaders as well as leaders of the various tehsil's farmers union, the umbrella body supervising activities of local cooperatives. The focus here was to understand issues related to service offered to members of cooperatives, the challenges, conditions for becoming a member of a cooperative, opportunities for joining, and information about supports from development partners.

### ***Characteristics of Respondents***

The study captured both men and women farmers. Of the total of 23 farmers in my sample, 65.2% are men and the rest (34.8%) are women. Generally education is low among the farmers, with about 83% of

them having education not above the primary school level. The analysis of the data also indicates that 82.0% of sampled farmers are married and 13.0% are widowed. The number of household members ranges 6 to 16 people per household with a mean number per household calculated at 11. In total, 56.5% of interviewed farmers are registered members of cooperative, while the remaining 43.5% are not yet members of any cooperative.

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