

# CHAPTER NO. 1

## RURAL WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY

- A) Defination and need for appropriate technologies.
- B) Points for considerstion in the dissemination of appropriate technologies.
- C) Tasks of rural women and the inherent drudgery.

RURAL WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY SOME SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS.

The development of the technological skill among women as a crucial programme is accepted by all development experts. The underlying assumptions are two-the first is to mobilize and train women for certain technological skills through which they can reduce their drudgery and hazards in their routine. And secondly, they would get self employment. Self employment will add to women honour and status. The exploitation of women would be less, they can do their jobs at home and in their leisure hours. This will provide them a psychological security. But, the task is not easy as it seems.

Any attempt to assess the role and status of women in a society should be viewed in the context of the socio-economic structure and culture milieu, social structure, cultural norms and value system are important determinants of women's roles and their position in society. They influence social expectations regarding behaviour of the two sexes. Social traditions and customs strongly influence in shaping attitudes and behaviour pattern of humanbeing. Therefore, changing new trends of society can't be viewed in isolation.

Since, their childhood, girls are supposed by play and do only certain things. Social norms are biased in favour of male members of the society. According to that, things which are complicated and technical in nature are not meant for girls. It is man's prerogative. The female sex too have imbibed such value deeply and have never bothered to think over it.

Biologically, it is proved that the female sex is equally intelligent and capable. But, the message has not reached to these illiterate working women. Unless simultaneous efforts are made to overcome these handicaps, the introduction of new technological devices should be one sided.

Moreover, women's work has not been presented as a productive contribution for the larger society. It has mostly remained confined to the boundaries of their families. As soon as, their work enters in the market and women get some chance of contributing their labour for the benefit of the larger society, men take away that opportunity.

For example, take the work of cooking. Whenever, 'cooking' as an occupation, enters in the market, it turns into men's occupation. As a result women have never felt that, their work too has a market value and contributes to the production gains of larger society. Therefore, they have not given serious thought to the acquisition of necessary skill and techniques to make their work marketworthy.

Our education too is not free from the traditional norms and values. The very logic of educating women seems not to enable them to be self reliant and develop independent personality. On the contrary, education has added to the strengthening of the traditional norms and

values. The history of women's education indicates this. Indian reformers used the tool of education for women not to make them more efficient and active in the productive process but, only to make them more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles in society as wives and mothers. Thus, education for women was regarded as a means to improve their status within the family and not to equip them for any role in the wider social context. In addition, the absence of strong economic compulsion on the part of women of that time played a role in not realizing the job oriented, scientific technical education for women. This can be considered the main reason of slow progress of women's education in general and women's technical education in particular.

Consistent with this social attitude the schools and universities have adopted courses to fit into social norms and value system. Girls have been offered at schools sewing and cooking, while boys have to take the crafts and technical education. This type of differentiation is so much conservative that even if girls want to choose the other course, they do not have any option open to do so. They are supposed to learn which is meant for them. All these affect the development of any kind of technological skill among women negatively. Even our pre-primary and primary text books print the pictures as ideal showing girls helping her mother in the household and boys either studying

or doing some technical thing. Such education makes a strong and long lasting adverse impact on the minds of girls.

Introduction of "appropriate technology" does not necessarily lead to liberate condition of women. It calls for change in social values and norms. Technology should be developed and used in such a manner that women can use them with confidence and reduce their drudgery. This should enable them to stand independently and attain equal status with men.

A) DEFINATION AND NEED FOR APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGIES.

Technologies are tools invented, produced and used by people to benefit them. Many factors contribute to the right choice of the tool. The choice of the tool needs the answers of many questions like-what for is the tool ? Who wants it ? Who will use it ? can they afford it ? How do the people organise themselves or co-operate together and how will a new technology change the old style of working ?

A technology should serve the people well, if it works within and does not damage their social, cultural, economic and natural environment. Such a technology is known as appropriate technology.

Development means meeting the physical needs of individual and improving the society. Appropriate technology is an alternative course for development. Alternative course of development is based on a local, small scale rather than national large scale approach.

B) POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE DISSEMINATION OF APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGIES.

1) Mostly, rural people are poor and illiterate but, are highly rational. Given the options within the range of awareness of the people, the technological choices of the people will be rational. We must take into consideration the rural rationality if we want our technological suggestions to be accepted.

For example, there can be many arguments by villagers for the use of smokeless chullas or soak-pit-latrines etc., But, we have to understand their problems and convince them of the technology options and limitations.

2) Information must flow both ways-from the people to the technologists and from the technologists to the people. The technologists, before starting a dialogue with the people would study the lives of the people in a scientific way through socio-economic survey. A good engineering

survey to identify the existing technologies and the needed technologies has to be undertaken. When all of us including villagers know that thatched roofs need more maintenance, that they easily catch fire and white ants etc., the technologists have to plan for a comfortable and economical alternative roof.

3) Before a major is launched on the development of a new technology, it is necessary that different technology options are presented to the people and their preferences elicited, whether it is a low cost house or location of a borewell, or smokeless chullas, or low cost latrines etc. It may be a tiring experience. But, convincing the people is very essential.

4) Technology selection is an important step and most of the organisations lack technology options to be offered to the people. It is imperative that the final decision on the selection of the technology is made by the people and not by the technologists.

In the case of consumer products like washing machines, T.V. Sets, lot of market survey, consumer preference are made. All this is ignored in the case of the technology options for the villagers. Since, villagers are poor and illiterate, we must not ignore their likes, tastes, preference and needs.

5) Start with people and end with people. There can not be development without the involvement of people. We may identify or generate a technology. We may go and instal the technology. It may be an appropriate technology. But, if people are ignored in the process of enstallation, rural development may not take place. So, it is better for the engineers, to go on asking as to "where are the people ? " Technolgists must approach rural work with affection for the people.

6) Appropriate technologies have to be more effective than the traditional and more accessible than the modern.

7) Technolgies developed have to be region-specific, location specific and cultural specific.

C) TASKS OF RURAL WOMEN AND THE INHERENT DRUDGERY :

The role of women in rural life towards their input to labour in their own farm and occupation or employment outside their homes, changes according to social and economic status of the family. All women irrespective of their status, work in home, however, devote their energy in different householdchores.



On a typical day the time budget for rural women has been estimated as follows.

Fetching and transporting water	2 to 3 hours.
Cooking and food processing	3 to 4 hours.
Farm work in season	8 to 10 hours
Collecting fuel	2 to 3 hours.

It can thus be seen that all women irrespective of land status of the family, provide 14-18 hours of productive physical labour in different chores. Recreation among women is generally limited. It has however, been observed that the pattern of labour utilization has not been as productive as it should. These energy inputs in performing more tasks than physically feasible to serve and for a below subsistence level living, draws or attention to the plight and drudgery\* of rural women.

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**F.N.\*** :Drudgery in the context of this, is mental and physical strains, fatigue, monotony, hardships, helplessness, pains and such other stresses. Calamities and health hazards both natural and manmade occurring in life have also been included under 'drudgery'

2) PHYSICAL DRUDGERIES :

The women are subjected to physical and human drudgery especially in the following chores.

- 1) Walking a long distance to fetch water and drawing water from deep wells.
- 2) Collecting fuel for a major part of day (partly to sell and partly to use for own cooking.)
- 3) Cooking in smokeful environment (consumption of more fuel and loss of heat due to faulty stove 'chulah' traditional utensils and time consuming cooking process.)
- 4) In homes, it is the women who are responsible for maintaining the cattle, piggery, poultry, sheep and goat. Those whose livelihood is based on working on farm and in households have to take their infants with them.

3) AGRICULTURAL AND PARA AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES INVOLVING DRUDGERY.

The women are generally responsible for the following tasks.

- 1) Transplanting paddy seedlings by long hours of bending and standing in water in the field.

- 2) Women prepare and repair threshing floor with clay mixed with fresh cowdung.
- 3) Women also use stone chakki for dehusking and grinding. To reduce the fatigue during the husking process they often sing songs.
- 4) The women share with the men the responsibility for caring of cattle which includes fetching water, collecting fodder, feeding, milking and taking the cattle to grazing.
- 4) OCCUPATIONAL DRUDGERY :

Due to economic restriction, ignorance and negligence, proper safety measures are not practised in handling agricultural equipment. Similarly, properly designed machines, protective devices are also not used.

- 5) SOCIAL DRUDGERY :

The social preference for sons rather than daughters leads to a demand for more children. To the women, this means the burden of repeated child births which lowers their vitality and charm and further depresses their health.

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