

CHAPTER XVI

GENDER JUSTICE

It is estimated that the textile industry provides direct employment to above 35 million people and, if estimates are to include those working in the allied industries and in marginal capacities, 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 handloom, 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 per centage of women workers is extremely low. If they are visible in significant numbers it is mainly in clerical positions in the offices attached to the industry or the government departments regulating the industry.

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

To give women workers the confidence to work without fear of discrimination or harassment in a male dominated work

sphere, and in accordance with the guidelines of the National Commissioner for women, Committees have been set up in each office to deal with complaints relating to sexual harassment in the office. The presence of senior women in these committees as chairperson or members has been mandated, and detailed guidelines on handling such work with firmness and tact have been issued. Emphasis is being laid on sensitizing department staff on gender dimensions.

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 being taken to up-grade skills through the provision of training facilities.

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

The handloom sector has taken up a massive programme for training of 1 lakh weavers under which 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 the experience with the Self- Help groups and projects such as the 'Mahila Samakhya' the endeavour has been made to organize women so that they can improve their capacity through solidarity and through mutual help 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 decision making process, SHG concepts, thrift, micro credit etc. NGOs are also being involved in this effort to organize women groups. In the Handicrafts sector, marketing services and extension centres encourage group action for women in areas dealing with marketing, design development skill, etc.

Under the Centrally sponsored scheme namely Catalytic Development programme, Central Silk Board(CSB) is implementing a number of programmes in collaboration with the State Government under which financial and technical assistance is provided for onfarm activities and post- farm activities like reeling, dyeing, twisting, printing, finishing etc. benefits of which 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 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 the states to implement Cluster Development Projects by the integration of CDP schemes wherein support is provided to Women Self Help Groups.

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

The Central Wool Development Board, Jodhpur administers various schemes/ programmes for the development of wool and woollens in the country. As most of these schemes helps the handlooms sector which provides employment to a large number of women weavers/workers. Hence, the schemes of the board are beneficial to the women.