
UNIT: 13 AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND SERVICES

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

India is a multifaceted society where customs vary from region to region within the country, but various forms of gender discrimination is one common thing to all the working women of every segment of Indian society. Although most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. There are estimates that over 90 percent of working women are involved in the informal sector and not included in official statistics (The World Bank, 1991). Thus, the actual labor force participation rate for women is likely to be higher than that which can be calculated from available data. Following data in table – 1 exhibits the Female Work Participation rate over the years:

Table No 13.1

Female Work Participation Rate

Year	WPR
1911	33.73
1961	27.96
1971	11.86
1981	14.44
1991	22.69
2001	23.00

Source: Census of India, 2001

Work participation of women was above 33% in 1911. After that as mechanization took place in agriculture the work participation rate started coming down and was reduced up to 11.86% in 1971. In 1981 it was only 14.44% but it increased to 22.69% in just one decade. The

following sections describe the plight of women in different sectors of Indian economy, i.e, agriculture, industry and service sector.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- find the historical view of women in agriculture, Industry and Services
- give suggestions for improvement of status of women in agriculture with the help of case studies and technological development
- describe the marginalization of women in industrial sector and recent trends
- examine the opportunities of women workers in ICT sector

13.3 WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

According to Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist, some historians believe that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fiber and fuel. Rural Indian women are extensively involved in agricultural activities. However, the nature and extent of their involvement differs with the landowning status of farm households. Their roles range from managers to landless labourers. In over all farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55% to 66% of the total labour with percentages, much higher in certain regions. In the Indian Himalayas a pair of bullocks works 1064 hours, a man 1212 hours and a woman 3485 hours in a year on a once hectare farm, a figure that illustrates women's significant contribution to agricultural production. (Shiva FAO, 1991)

Women are the backbone of agricultural workforce all over the world. She does the most tedious and back-breaking tasks in agriculture, animal husbandry and homes. In India, Most female and male main workers are employed in agriculture. Agricultural employment is divided into three categories in the census: cultivators, agricultural laborers, and other agricultural work. Most female workers are employed in lower-skilled, lower-paid positions, and are not the supervisors or owners of capital. Most female cultivators are members of a family that owns the land, rather than being the owners themselves (Kishwar and Vanita, 1985). Table - 2 gives percentage distribution of workers according to categories of workers by sex and by sector during 2001. The table reveals that as compared to men more women are engaged as agricultural labour and household industry workers in both rural and urban areas.

Table No: 13.2

Percentage distribution of workers (main + marginal) according categories of worker by sex and by sector during 2001 for India

Categories of workers	Rural			Urban		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Cultivators	36.46	42.19	40.14	4.26	2.99	3.21
Agricultural Labour	43.40	27.48	33.20	11.03	3.42	4.71
Household Industry Workers	5.44	2.83	3.7	12.93	3.50	5.10
Other Workers	14.70	27.49	22.90	71.7	90.09	86.98

All workers	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
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Source: Census of India, 2001

Despite the fact that women contribute more labour to Indian agriculture than men, land remains almost solely in male hands. Therefore, very few government schemes include landless women as beneficiaries. Thus women do not benefit from public agriculture development efforts. For example, although women constitute more than half of India's landless labour, neither the government's social forestry scheme nor their nursery scheme has a specific role for landless women.

Table No: 13.3

Statistics about Women in India

Sr.No.	Particulars	Number (Million)
1	Total Women Population (2001)	494.83
2	Total Women Workers (2001)	127.05
3	Total Women Main Workers (2001)	72.65
4	Total Women Marginal Workers (2001)	54.40
5	Total Women Owner Cultivators (2001)	41.30
6	Total Women Agriculture Wage Workers (2001)	50.09
7	Total Women Household Industry Workers (2001)	8.08
8	Total Women Other Workers (2001)	27.57
9	Total Women in Organized Sector (1999)	4.80
10	Total Women in Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation, Orchards and activities (1991)	1.32

Source: For serial numbers 1 to 8 Censuses 2001

For serial number 9th Tenth Five Year Plan

For serial number 10 census 1991

Table No 13.3 indicates that about 26% women are workers on record according to 2001 census. Out of these women workers more than 70% are engaged in agricultural sector and only 4.8 % are working in organized sector.

Although women constitute two-thirds of the agriculture work force, they own less than one-tenth of the agricultural lands. Women must be allowed to own land. Through soil regeneration activities and wasteland development, women can build productive assets while obtaining supplementary employment. Landless women need to be organized into cooperatives to avail of existing government schemes for land development and the creation of fodder farms and pasture land. (Padmaja reddy, 2003)

13.3.1 Case Studies of SEWA

(This sub-section is based on the reference – Reema Nanavati, “Women Agriculture Workers”, *Seminar*, Nov, 2003)

Having identified the major issues like insecure profits, increasing cost of inputs, outdated practices, increased competition, environmental degradation, decreasing demand for labour, increasing labour supply etc., SEWA helped agriculture workers to form their own local organizations as cooperatives in a regional federation. These agriculture workers organizations aim to increase productivity, yield, bargaining power and income through educating small and marginal farmers on technical skills, methods of costing and pricing, and the implications and requirements of increasingly liberalized trade, building linkages with technical research and marketing organizations, collectively purchasing agriculture inputs at

lower rates, initiating alternative income generation activities such as agro-forestry, horticulture, vermi-culture and compost manufacturing. Following success stories indicate that collectively even asset less women can do wonders if they get some institutional support.

13.3.1.1 Vanlaxmi Women Tree Growers Cooperative

Due to rapid industrialization and the absence of necessary backward-forward linkages for inputs and marketing, the small and marginal farmers and agriculture workers in Mehsana district of Gujrat were slowly losing most of their land and assets. In particular, excessive irrigation from bore wells dramatically reduced the water table and rendered the remaining water high in fluoride content. With irrigation becoming expensive and without dependable rains, many small and marginal farmers were forced to either migrate or take to casual labour. Women agriculture workers were even harder hit. They could find no alternative work and often had to walk miles to collect the necessary fodder and fuel.

SEWA organized the women agriculture workers into a cooperative. They demanded and eventually received government revenue land. The struggle dragged on for two and a half years, until finally, with SEWA's continuous intervention, the revenue and cooperative departments came to a mutually agreeable alternative: the landless agriculture workers had to be registered as a tree growers' cooperative rather than as an agriculture workers' cooperative. They formed a cooperative for growing trees on government revenue wasteland and then only could the revenue wasteland be allotted.

Through the cooperative, women systematically planned to make optimum use of the available land employing a multi-faceted approach. With partnering the local research station of the Gujarat Agriculture University for technical assistance, they were able to maximize production and income by using scientific agriculture practices, including horticulture, agro-forestry, drip irrigation, compost pits and rainwater harvesting techniques. They utilized low-cost methods of boosting productivity such as designing cropping patterns to enrich the soil.

In all activities the cooperative encouraged participation of all village communities and women in their efforts.

Today, the Vanlaxmi cooperative stands as a model for the entire district demonstrating how the landless poor can successfully implement collective agriculture. Women who earned just Rs 15 as agricultural day labourers and were never engaged in matters of yield, sale, expenditure or market, are now recognized as farmers. They meticulously manage their land, tracking each and every cost. The cooperative has acquired improved equipment such as a power tiller, thresher and a drip irrigation system. The plan also ensures full employment for members and the land meets fodder and fuel needs of the village. As a licensed and authorized seed distributor by the Gujarat State Seed Corporation, the cooperative also provides timely and reasonably priced quality seeds not only to its own village but the entire area.

Since the land was allotted on a 15 year lease, the women will have to continue their battle to secure long term utilization that allows for long term planning and maximum benefit through entering the renewal process.

13.3.1.2 Sabarkantha Women Farmer's Association

Sabarkantha district of Gujrat is a semi-arid area heavily affected by soil erosion due to extremely sandy soil. This has resulted in ravine formation and overall land degradation, negatively affecting agriculture productivity and agriculture related employment.

SEWA organized the women agriculture workers/farmers into the Sabarkantha Women Farmer's Association. The association, with SEWA's support, has initiated watershed development techniques to check soil erosion. To supplement its activities, the cooperative also provides full employment for displaced agriculture workers by encouraging them to form tree-grower societies and start sapling nurseries.

In support of its economic interventions, the cooperative also organizes the women into self help and savings and credit groups and provides the necessary training for skill and leadership development, awareness generation and capacity building. Such local organization capacity building efforts ensure the members' self-reliance. Finally, the cooperative has linked up with various government development and welfare schemes to accelerate asset building for its members.

13.3.1.3 Sukhi Mahila SEWA Mandal

In 1991, the Sukhi dam submerged the land and villages of agriculture workers in the tribal areas of Pavi Jetpur in Vadodara district of Gujarat. As compensation, they were given land near the village resettlement sites. Whenever dams are constructed, working families in different trades and occupations are displaced and need rehabilitation.

The challenges faced by women-headed agricultural households are particularly complex. Therefore, they require more support and time to once again secure their livelihoods. Traditionally, these women survive through a mix of collecting forest produce, agriculture, dairying and/or poultry activities. When displaced, at best they receive only land; resettlement schemes fail to take into account their multifaceted survival strategy. Even the land itself is often less fertile, rocky, unlevelled and far from the forests on which they depend. The land is not ready for immediate cultivation, yet women and their families have no other supplementary source of income.

SEWA organized the relocated workers into the Sukhi Mahila SEWA Mandal to initiate economic rehabilitation. Under the leadership of the women agriculture workers, they initiated land development and installed irrigation facilities. They also started alternative income generation programmes for the suddenly unemployed, including sapling nurseries, poultry units, animal husbandry, mushroom cultivation and social forestry initiatives.

13.3.1.4 SEWA Gram Mahila Haat

In 1999, SEWA Gram Mahila Haat, a state-level apex marketing organization was established with the help of Government of Gujarat's Commissioner of Rural Development to provide market, financial and technical assistance to small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. It attempts to eliminate dependence on middlemen and help members reach markets all over the country to sell their produce.

SEWA's experience in organizing agriculture workers to build their own associations underscores that different approaches and interventions must be adopted according to context specific needs and issues. Also, a holistic and integrated approach to agriculture development must incorporate technical training, introduction of appropriate technology, and natural resource development through watershed planning.

In all of its activities, SEWA has found that sustainable development depends on understanding the elements that fuel poverty and strategically working with women to address these aspects of their vulnerability through asset building, capacity building, organizing for collective strength and social protection. Action to strengthen the economic security of agriculture workers and their families can be best charted through this framework. The SEWA experience demonstrates that if technical training is provided to poor farmers, in particular women, they implement this knowledge in their own fields, harvest bigger yields, and reap higher incomes.

13.3.2 Strategies Used for Empowerment by NRCWA

The National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture (NRCWA) has been functioning at Bhubaneswar, Orissa, for developing women specific technologies under different production systems. At the initial stage of the project a package of instruction was provided regarding what rural women should do to endure health security, food security, economic security and livelihood security. The ergonomic management of drudgery undertaken by

Family Resource Management component aims at introducing women- friendly drudgery reducing technologies related to farm, home and allied activities. The pathways have highlighted on empowerment of knowledge, skill, decision making; economic and social empowerment. The data base on indigenous knowledge has strongly suggested for empowering women with knowledge on locally available plant sources for ensuring health security.

The components of AICRP on Home Science have moved towards empowerment of rural women through their respective thrust of research. Mobilization of self help groups (SHG) and creation of learning environment, the empowerment process through educational interventions, transfer of technologies, the feasibility trials and the out -reach programmes have contributed to significant gain in knowledge, adoption of women-friendly technologies for improving work efficiency, acceptance of technology for economic gain and improving various parameters of quality of life are the reflections of women's environment. Empirical evidences have revealed that women have moved from beneficiaries to active partners in shaping empowerment. The information strategies used by different components under AICRP on Home Science have encouraged women to play key role in micro - level planning, designing community infrastructure for information dissemination and mobilization of community resources - both human and material to gain benefits from the project.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1
Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions. ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

1. Name the case studies of SEWA which describe the empowerment of women.

13.4 WOMEN IN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

(This section is based on Based on - Samita Sen, Gender and Class: Women in Indian Industry, 1920-1990, Archives of Indian Labour, Integrated Labour History Research Programme, V.V.Giri National Labour Institute, Sector 24, NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh, India.)

The study of industrialisation and industrial labour has a long history in India. After Independence in 1947, 'working-class' histories were dominated by concerns of modernisation, national politics and working class consciousness. Little attention was paid to questions of gender. The common assumption was that the low proportion of women workers in the modern industrial sector rendered them irrelevant to stories of 'class'. The few women who did work in industry, mining or plantations were subsumed within the general definition of class. Question of women's work, their role in traditional or modern manufacturing has also had relatively little attention from practitioners of women's studies.

There has arisen, however, in the last two decades, a new interest in women's work leading to a corpus of information about contemporary developments. At this stage, legislation sought to regulate the condition of women actually engaged in factory work -- the hours of work, periods of rest, the prohibition of night work and/or the handling of machinery. These laws were for workers who were 'special' because they were women. And they were special in **three** ways: **first**, they also had to perform their reproductive roles as wives and

mothers; **second**, their physical weakness limited the kind of work suitable for them; and **third**, they were unable to uphold their own interests and thus needed the ‘protection’ of the state.

13.4.1 Marginalization of Women workers

In spite of these legislations and regulations, it was no longer accepted that the state should protect the ‘weaker’ sections of the workforce. Women workers, thus, were being marginalized on following multiple fronts: in actual exclusion from rapidly improving organized sector employment, from the political space that unionized labour aspired to and eventually occupied and even from more general public and ‘social’ concerns of the earlier decades.

i) The ‘organization’ of industry and labour is directly related to the decline in women’s employment. On the one hand, employers became less interested in women as the progress of welfare legislation reduced their cost advantage. On the other, the nature of the legislation helped to bring their reproductive roles into prominence and created a climate of public opinion against women’s employment in industry. Employers could then target women for retrenchment as a means of ‘rationalising’ the workforce.

ii) From the 1950s, the unions played an active role in eliminating existing women and hindering women’s recruitment. Such policies were only in part due to the prejudices of the middle class leadership, reflecting, much more importantly, the adult male workers’ status aspirations and desire for maintaining family authority.

iii) Men, who migrated to the city to supplement their household income, would not risk their status which influenced their foothold in the village by bringing their wives to the city. In Bengal, moralistic perceptions about working women were invoked by mill owners to postpone maternity benefit legislation for two decades. Chamber of Commerce, argued that the 'type of labour' did not need maternity benefit since 'normal family life was notoriously absent'.

It is significant to note that the proportions of women workers in the total factory population dropped at a fast rate immediately after the Bengal Maternity Benefit Act, 1939, was put on the Statute Book and again when the provision for maintenance of a creche by the employer was incorporated. Women labour were previously employed and are still employed mostly for the reason that they are cheaper than their male counterpart. Progressive labour legislation had made women labour costlier. Hence the general attitude of the factory management regarding employment of women is to 'do away with the women labour with a view to avoid in future expenses on special welfare benefits for women'.

The factories, mills and mines, which undertook the first large-scale retrenchment of women in the 1930s, were also to be the nucleus of the 'formal' sector covered by state regulation. These comprised the 'organized' sector not only because they were subjected to record and registration, but because, by the 1960s, their labour grew to be almost fully unionized with considerable bargaining strength vis-a-vis employers and the state. It was male workers who were successfully 'organized', unionized and brought within the purview of regulated wages and working conditions. Thus the process of *organization* went hand in hand with *masculinisation*. Indeed, it could be argued, women's marginalization was imbricated in the nature and development of organized working class politics.

It is not as though women were absent altogether from the formal sector. Indian factory workers were only *predominantly* male. In the early 1920s, women were about 15-20 per cent of the workforce in textile mills, nearly half and more than half of the workforces of mines and plantations. Their proportions began to decline from the 1930s. Over three decades, from the 1930s to the 1960s, women became increasingly marginal in working class politics.

The unions did not espouse their special grievances nor did they make any effort to include women within the ambit of union activity. Women's inability to find a space within the powerful trade unions reduced their ability to resist directed and gendered retrenchment policies of employers. Their share in formal sector employment was sharply reduced, increasing women's dependence on male income and reinforcing male authority within the household. This long-term trend became increasingly entrenched, even heightened, and values of female dependence were remarkably resilient in the face of pressures from the labour market.

13.4.2 Recent Trends in Women's Work

Increasing share of women in the workforce of the organized sector is reflected in data. The share of women in total employment in organized sector has gone up from 12.3 % in 1991 to 16.8 % in 2007. There is a great deal of concern regarding the impact of these developments on women. At a National Seminar on Policies and Strategies for Working Women in the Context of Industrial Restructuring (New Delhi, 1997), Gita Sen emphasised that the new economic regime of the 1990s created two simultaneous disadvantages for poor women in India. On the one hand, they faced increasing pressures to earn from petty self-

employment, in the informal sector and in production for larger industries. On the other hand, crumbling social security systems forced women to revert to being primary caregivers and responsible for the well-being of their communities.

While secure and privileged workers, women and men, in the more traditional manufacturing sector are under threat, in some new non-traditional export-oriented industries, women's employment opportunities have been expanding since the 1980s. These opportunities are being availed by new categories of women, who are for the first time entering, in some significant numbers, the manufacturing labour force. Parents are delaying marriage of daughters and accepting their employment even when it involves long daily commuting or long-distance migration. Though a highly restricted phenomenon, a beginning is being made in the creation of a labour pool of unmarried young women. It is believed that MNCs and export-oriented industries are committed to 'flexible' working and will automatically gravitate towards the least organised, most vulnerable and most flexible element in the labour market, the women.

This is the context in which the term 'feminisation' has gained currency. It can indicate the employment of larger numbers of women so that the gender profile of the labour force actually changes in favour of women. It can indicate, however, a very different process whereby the nature of jobs changes. From more secure and regular employment, the economy shifts to kinds of employment more associated with women, informalised, casualised, irregular, lower paid and insecure. In the latter case, both women and men workers are forced into this 'feminising' pattern.

The 1970s witnessed a clear case of the first phenomenon with the rise of the so-called New International Division of Labour. The rising transactional costs of labour in developed countries led the MNCs to relocate their operations and to shift the labour-intensive parts of production to 'Third world' countries. In the latter, women, especially young unmarried women, provided not only cheap labour, they also offered the crucial flexibility that mobile international capital required to serve their volatile markets. Thus, in the seventies and eighties many East and South East Asian countries experienced a 'feminisation' of factory work. Employers depended heavily on the 'cheap' and 'docile' labour of young unmarried women. This has also been the case in the Bangladesh garment industry, where women constitute some 60 per cent of the total workforce (while they are 7 per cent of the non-export-oriented industries' labour force).

There was also some increase in women's employment in other sectors. Nirmala Banerjee points out that while India's economy, under the leadership of a strong national bourgeoisie, remained inwardly oriented and low in export earnings, there was a growing emphasis on export of non-traditional items like garments, leather, food products, toys and jewellery. India's labour laws compared well with advanced industrialised countries and the political power of organised labour was strong. But the main workers in the new sectors were unorganised, often piece-rated female labour in sweat-shops or in home-based work. In addition, the 1970s and 80s also witnessed an increase in women's employment in non home-based manufacturing.

In a few select industries like gem and jewellery, women were employed in lower paid and unskilled tasks since technological developments allowed reduction of skilled male workers. In the electronics industry, which is highly mobile, there appears to be job rotation between

men and women. Generally speaking, the nineties saw a halting of the process of expansion of women's employment. This was partly an effect of a general slow-down but there were also some cases of substitution of women by men workers. In the plastics industry, trade unions in large and medium scale units signed an agreement with the management negotiating the fixation of tasks and designations. This has ensured that women are restricted to jobs in assembling and packing. As a result, they were removed from the machines they were operating. Sujata Ghotosker also indicates that the expansion of women's employment in pharmaceutical companies (like Glaxo) was reversed when they decided to 'put out' some of their production to smaller scale units. These latter preferred to employ men.

No one dominant trend emerges from the above discussion but the tendency seems to be more towards loss rather than gain in women's employment. According to Nirmala Banerjee, there was not only no overall increase in women's employment in the manufacturing sector, but a sharp fall in the period immediately following the initiation of new economic policies both in rural and urban areas. She argues that there has been no radical change in the behaviour of the Indian economy after SAP; the major parameters affecting women workers have remained steady between 1981 and 1996. Earlier trends have been aggravated, however, leading to further deterioration in women's economic position.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2
Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.
ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

1. What are the main fronts on which women workers were marginalized in the industrial sector?

13.5 WOMEN IN SERVICE SECTOR

The service sector, in its broadest sense, is defined as non-agricultural and non-manufacturing work. The academic literature is deeply divided on the question of whether the service sector provides a ladder to more gender equality, or whether it is likely to further ghettoize women into low-wage, low-productivity jobs. A key to understanding whether or not the service economy will advantage women, and whether or not skill-biased technological change will do the same, depend in large measure on the nature of the skills that are in growing demand, and the opportunities for women to compete effectively with men in the acquisition of such skills.

When we compare access to high-skilled and high-paid jobs, it is clear that women are at a disadvantage. This disadvantage, however, clearly depends on the skills involved. In terms of providing training and offering promotions, employers have an obvious incentive to discriminate against women due to the prospect of interrupted careers. Women are thus more likely than men to invest in general skills and/or in skills that are less prone to deteriorate by

not being used for some period of time. This implies a heavily gendered structure of educational choices that is probably reinforced through socialization.

As expected we find a strong positive relationship between men dominating occupations and highly specialized skills. It is also noted that since men on average participate more in the labor market than women, most occupations have an underrepresentation of women. However, women are overrepresented in jobs that require relatively low general skills (and tend to be low paid), reflecting the more pessimistic picture view of women's position in the service economy. Within the professions, however, it is the case that women tend to be in jobs and positions with lower pay and skills – teachers in primary and secondary education rather than in higher education; nurses rather than doctors, junior rather than senior associates, etc. – and they are notably underrepresented among senior officials and managers. The underrepresentation of women in high-powered careers is true even in countries, such as the U.S., where women match or exceed the educational attainment of men. Explanation for this may be found in a tendency for general skills to take on elements of specific skills at the upper end of the skills spectrum. Investment banking, law, medicine, etc., for example, have substantial elements of client contact that could be hurt with career interruption.

On the one hand women are well represented in the occupations that have expanded most rapidly over the past 30-40 years – something that has unambiguously improved the labor market opportunities of women. On the other hand, women are overrepresented in low-skill jobs where wages and working conditions are adversely affected by skill-biased technological change and where low productivity growth makes it hard to maintain wages in line with other occupations (Torben Iversen, Frances Rosenbluth, and David Soskice, 2004).

13.5.1 Women in Information Technology

With the advent of the information age, Information Technology has become a potent tool for the economic growth and empowerment of people. It provides promising career opportunities in every one's day to day life, especially WOMEN.

Information and Communication Technology is the leading industrial sector that is attributed to high literacy rate, ability to communicate and high level of skills too. These attributes are closely associated to Women professionals and thereby fitting appropriately into any Information Technology related work lives. It has tremendous impact on their working styles, working environment and also improved their quality in performance.

Everyday newer opportunities are created rapidly for the growing Women generations in the Information Technology related applications. The specialized applications of Information Technology and Careers, which are emerging to provide services using these applications, are called "IT ENABLED SERVICES INDUSTRY".

Today, one of the optimum users of Information Technology in any economy is Women. Their dependency on technology for the work force and efficiency is highly increasing. Technology has paved way for the growth and development in every woman's life. The career opportunities emerging in the Information Technology enabled service sector are broadly classified as follows:

RAILWAYS – The use of technology in ticket bookings, checking, cancellation processes are no more tedious but faster. The network of the railways are widened to an extent that women with electronic qualifications are well placed at their convenient regions throughout the economy.

AIRLINES – Similarly, the next largest service sector that uses information technology for its customers is the airline industry. They are widely spread everywhere in the globe. Many Women with good personality, communication skills

and computer qualifications are placed in this sector. They facilitate quick transmission of information about arrivals, delays and departure of the vehicles. Also provide their knowledge in bookings, cancellation and customer relations through computers in the daily routine.

BANKING – Today Banking is made easy through technology at anytime and anywhere. The recent facilities like credit cards, debit cards, ATM, Western money transfer, teller system and e-banking are made possible only through the great number of Woman with computer applications. They make the services simplified and speedup the transactions to the customers using technologies.

INSURANCE – Information Technology has completely transformed the way insurance is handled now. Through technology, the Woman employed in both Public and Private companies are providing quick and valuable services to their clients. The defaults are minimized and with effective communication the customers are well-treated.

HOTEL INDUSTRY – With business going global and travel increasing manifold, the demand for Women in this service sector is growing. In this digital era, communications, arrangements and the best facilities are provided to the satisfaction of the customers. Women are absorbed in this industry for their attributes of elegance, interpersonal skills and environmental knowledge. No wonder they make the hotel industry a great success with the help of information technology.

EDUCATION – Education has been revolutionized as a result of Information Technology. The right content and right delivery of message in this area are made, updated, indexed, retrieved and disseminated through Women with technological background. The students are instructed in an interesting and consistent way through very many Women facilitators only. They make it reachable to any part of the globe

using technologies. Most of the education in this digital era is possible through electronic and communication media and it is processed by the women.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS - For several decades, the telephone operators and receptionists were tend to be only Women. Even now, with the discovery of pagers, mobile phones, internets, fax etc., demand for women in such kind of services are enormously growing. They have the ability to communicate excellently, appropriately and also timely. Telephone exchanges have been made digital to serve the increasing population in every nook and corner resulting in efficiency and cost reduction in this sector. The value added services like Call waiting, Caller identification, automatic response, Call divert and SMS have facilitated Women to work with technology.

CALL CENTERS – Another area with large employment potential is the operation of call centers. Women are recruited to answer customers' queries, listen to their complaints and provide solutions. Their knowledge, skill and quick response helps to make their career in this sector. Appropriate training with basic Information Technology knowledge is required for a Woman to acquire such jobs.

MEDICAL TRANSCRIPTION – An Information Technology enabled service called medical transcription service has emerged in the last few years. They mainly require Women only to read the prescriptions and case histories of Doctors, to understand the medical terms and key them to make a readable copy. It requires women with knowledge, training, skills and good language for such technology based services.

PRINTING & PUBLISHING – The new career of E- books, E-Journals, E-publishing and Web-designing are popular in the present scenario. It appears to be convenient, paper-less, quick in service and also research oriented in its function.

This process is led by women with computer knowledge and skill towards the laborious work relating to printing and publishing. World - wide web pages are created through technologies used by women in various parts of the globe. They make attractive, interesting and informative too.

HEALTH CARE CENTERS – Many hospitals are modernized and provide all kind of special services under one roof using the latest technologies in medical field. Apart from doctors and surgeons, there large numbers of technical assistants working at Laboratories, scan centers, radiologists, pharmacy and researchers using electronic instruments along with their medical knowledge and acquired skills. They seem to be successful even as dieticians and psychologists using electronic media for interacting with their customers for remedial measures.

TRAVEL & TOURISM – Tourism is one of the popular industries that are gaining significance all over the world. Women have fixed careers in this industry also to serve the customers through information Technology in promoting, distributing and even interacting to their best. They use the skills of communication and technology together in order to survive with their responsibilities.

ENTERTAINMENT - Women are also found in the entertainment sector like Media, Ad agencies, Theme parks, Movie, photo studios, fashion designers, models, animations, artists and other talent oriented areas. The take the maximum advantage of the information technology in their work force and try to improve their performance through creativity in technology.

CONSULTANCY – Presently, Women are slowly emerging into consultancy in the areas of recruitment, selection, family oriented, legal, technical and sales & advertising. With minimum knowledge and higher skill with usage of information technology women are able to perform well in consultancy projects. They are

making-up their career on their own through effective means of technological innovations.

OTHERS – The other types of careers meant for professionally qualified women are Systems analysts, Programmers, Embedded System Designers, VLSI designers, DSP programmers, Network professionals, Quality Assurance Professionals, Customer support professionals in installing hardware and software and Trainers of all levels providing knowledge and create awareness with the help of information and communication technology.

Henceforth, Information Technology offers significant opportunities for women and exists as an important tool in meeting Women's needs. It also provides them access to use resources and prove their skills in the competitive digital society. However, their ability to use the advantage of these opportunities is contingent upon the factors enumerated below:

- **EDUCATION** relating to technology to develop knowledge and skill for using the newer versions of information technology
- **INFRASTRUCTURE** to increase the facilities and extending the access to the communication and information technology area
- **POLICY** concerned with the issues affecting women to adopt technology in their mode of work
- **AFFORDABILITY** to every woman in the digital society for reaping the benefits from Information technology and also to overcome the constraints identified among women.

Therefore, it is imperative to take necessary steps to ensure that each and every woman in today's digital era avail the growing opportunities in Information and Communication Technology industry. More number of Women should be allowed to be exposed to the changing current trends in this sector. Women can boost their ability to process the

information with speed and accuracy as per the requirements in this digital revolution. Information Technology is an integral part of any human life and why not WOMEN revolutionize the way of their lives and work through the application of information technology?

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: i. Use the space given below to answer the questions.
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ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this Unit.

- | |
|--|
| 1. What are the main areas of information technology enabled services sector in which opportunities of employment for women are available? |
| |
| |
| |

13.6 SUMMING UP

Due to globalization, work participation of women and girls has increased drastically in the industrial and service sectors during this period. Recruitment of women in industries like electronics, garment, gems and jewellery, dairy, food processing, etc. have multiplied. But, the rise of work participation rate is not a sign of empowerment but a sign of sheer helplessness and economic distress. Subcontracting, home-based production, family labour system and payment of wages on a piece-rate basis are the jobs earmarked for women. According to the 1991 Census, 19% of the total female workforce constitutes unpaid family

labour. Even in a state like Kerala, only 17% of the women are gainfully employed (Patel, 2007). Data from the National Sample Surveys reveal that the proportion of casual casual workers in the total female workforce rose from 41% in 1991-91 to 45.3% in 1993-94 and the proportion of regular workers fell from 4.5% to 3.4% over the same period. Not only that, researchers have estimated that female agricultural laborers were usually paid 40 to 60 percent of the male wage (Kishwar and Vanita, 1985). Even when women occupy similar positions and have similar educational levels, they earn just 80 percent of what men do, though this is better than in most developing countries. There is evidence that suggests that technological progress sometimes has a negative impact on women's employment opportunities. When a new technology is introduced to automate specific manual labour, women may lose their jobs because they are often responsible for the manual duties. Women may not benefit from jobs created by the introduction of new technology. The facts mentioned above are common to all the sectors, but the form of discrimination and exploitation differs from sector to sector.

13.7 GLOSSARY

Information and Communications Technology: Information and Communications Technology usually called ICT, is often used as a synonym for information technology (IT) but is usually a more general term that stresses the role of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals) in modern information technology. ICT consists of all technical means used to handle information and aid communication, including computer and network hardware as well as necessary software. In other words, ICT consists of IT as well as telephony, broadcast media, and all types of audio and video processing and transmission.

Medical Transcription: Medical transcription, also known as MT, is an allied health profession, which deals in the process of transcription, or converting voice-recorded reports as dictated by physicians and/or other healthcare professionals, into text format.

13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Vanlaxmi Women Tree Growers Cooperative, Sabarkantha Women Farmer's Association, Sukhi Mahila SEWA Mandal and SEWA Gram Mahila Haat.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Women workers were being marginalised on following multiple fronts: in actual exclusion from rapidly improving organised sector employment, from the political space that unionised labour aspired to and eventually occupied and from more general public and 'social' concerns of the earlier decades.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. These areas are: railways, airlines, banking, insurance, hotel industry, education, telecommunications, call centers, medical transcription, printing & publishing, health care centers, travel & tourism, entertainment, consultancy etc.

13.9 REFERENCES

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13.10 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. What has been the status of women in agricultural sector? What are the ways of improving the same?
2. Explain the process of marginalization of women workers in industrial sector in India. Has there been any change in their condition in the recent past?
3. Explain the opportunities available to the women in service sector. Do you think that the service sector provides a ladder to more gender equality?