CHAPTER VIII

PARTICIPATION AND WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS
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Gender Analysis Framework recognizes differentiation on gender basis in relation to sharing of HH and outside work of resources and benefits, access to human rights and culture and religion. An analysis of the study findings provides an understanding of equitability or otherwise of division of work, resources, benefits that reach men and women, and to see how public policy along with socio-economic and cultural factors impinge upon the sharing of work, resources and benefits between women and men. In order to be able to gain insights into these issues gender analysis is necessary.

Gender needs are differentiated as practical and strategic needs. They are based on a distinction made between condition and position of women. While condition takes into account the material state of the woman, i.e., her work, her lifestyle etc., the position refers to their social and economic standing relative to men. Position can be measured relatively based on wage differentials between women and men, representation in the legislature etc.

Mayoux and Anand (1995) defines gender needs as “those, which women may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes”. What is important for us to note is the prevalence of culturally constructed inequality between men and women. Thus, an understanding of ‘practical gender needs’ is necessary since they help in estimating the existing subordinate positions of women. ‘Strategic gender needs’ are those that help in transforming the existing sub-ordinate relationships between men and women. To suggest anything that would go in improving
the status of women has to trace both types of needs and that is the ultimate objective.

The government's efforts to empower women are by resorting to improvement in their practical needs. Reservation of places for women in the cocoon market, credit facilities, drudgery reduction methods or devices, training and capacity building etc., are all efforts in the direction of empowering them in the long run by making their living conditions comfortable, by meeting the minimum needs. These are expected to lead to improvement in status by addressing women's strategic needs.

**Roles of Women and Space for Empowerment**

Taking Moser's (1989) framework of gender analysis, the triple roles of women in the study area are discussed here addressing specifically gender issues. Moser divides women's work into productive, reproductive and community work. At present, women are involved in all the 3 sectors of work.

But the crucial difference is that men monopolise decision-making, which is crucial to empowerment, and women are left to implement them. Thus, even the practical needs like water, fuel, food etc., are common as human beings, but they vary with women as gender. This speaks of empowerment as a strategy for women's development and liberation. Visibility and recognition of work brings women the much needed recognition and identity.

The indices for the existence of discrimination against women are by testing access and control over decisions, resources and benefits. Empowerment aims at bringing about an improvement in the ability of women to make decisions. What is required is a thorough grasp of contexts. Strategic gender needs vary, based upon social conditions, education and access to them. Behavioural and institutional changes are
needed to achieve any positive reflections in gendered division of labour. Then only the present unreasonable gender roles would make way for balanced, equal roles. In other words, the government's intervention through NSP and other projects is to proceed from less to more opportunities. These should occur both in the private (household) and the public (society) spheres.

The gender policy that has to emerge has to take into consideration the following indicators:

- Participation (activity profiles of women)
- Visibility
- Access and control profiles
- Equity
- Sustainability and
- Efficiency
- People-oriented analysis based on capacity and vulnerability analysis.

Traditionally, development planning rested upon patriarchal standards of power, its allocation, use, decision-making and implementation. Often, the failure of development planning or projects is attributed to the failure in taking cognizance of what women do.

This draws our attention towards what may be called the invisibility of women and the need for activity profile. In this study too, we have attempted to find out what women do and why.

Invisibility Vs. Visibility

Moser further makes a classification of policy approaches for gender as welfare, anti-poverty, efficiency, equity and empowerment. The Harvard analytic framework identifies activity profiles, access-control profiles, and
determinant factors for access and control and project cycle analysis, as the inter-related components. Time allocation is one method of understanding the roles of women, where the time given to various agricultural and sericulture activities by men and women is analyzed. Based on this activity profiles are generated.

Counting the time that men and women in our field area devoted to such work, often led to the confusion as to whether a day has more than 24 hours for women. This is especially true of women who perform more than one task at a time. For example, while rearing silkworms they collect leaf for feeding and also some vegetables for cooking the dinner. A child is nursed while cleaning grains etc. It is noticed that over a period of time, the activity profile for women has undergone a change and women have been doing varieties of work. Time allocation study has shown that engaging in different types of work is not true, but it varied across age, gender, and class and caste groups and between seed and non-seed areas. This reflects the comparative profiles of women in work and gender based division of labour.

The activities that women are engaged in are classified into the following types:

- Productive work including farming, trading etc
- Reproductive work or roles such as house repair and maintenance, food preparation, fuel collection, water collection, child bearing and child rearing, family health care and house cleaning.
- Community roles including participation in functions, ceremonies, SHGs and other groups, political roles etc.
Table 8.1 shows that gender roles of men and women in the study area are based strictly on social and cultural rules or norms underlying allocation or distribution of work. The roles include those offered as adult men and women of the HH as well as hired labour. The distribution of roles is also based on class distinction and caste of the members of these HHs. A further division of work is made into home based and farm related work. Here too, the distinction is that women's presence is found more in the former. Being a home based activity, silkworm rearing has absorbed higher percentage of women than farm based work of mulberry cultivation.

However, women's involvement in rearing activities is in addition to her role in domestic work. It is clear from the above table that men lend a helping hand like fetching water (only if the nearby bore well hand pump is out of order), firewood (this refers to cutting trees and making big logs

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Table 8.1. Activity Profile of Women in Sericulture Households (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>House work</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>99.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Food preparation</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Firewood collection</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Handicrafts</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Animal care</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Garden cultivation (own)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Rice cultivation</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Wage (agricultural) labour</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Wage (non-agricultural) labour</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and not the daily collection of small sticks, dried leaves etc.), collection of fodder (green grass), milking cows (if there are more number of livestock) and washing cattle. Activities where men do not at all share any work include cleaning jobs, cooking, taking care of children and washing.

However, class distinctions influence the participation of men and women in household and farm activities. It is in marginal landowning and low caste HHs where husbands and other men extend some assistance to women in HH work but this again is restricted to fetching water, firewood, fodder to animals etc. The reasons are not far to find. More than from the intention of any gender equality in work participation, such assistance is offered to women who are engaged in silkworm rearing. It is cost-effective for the men to render such small help to their wives and mothers, since that would save their (women's) time to involve more rigorously in rearing work. The men also consider this as a viable proposition than having to get rearing work done through hired labourers.

Moreover, when men help in these tasks, the daughters and sometimes sons help their fathers. In the case of girls they remain in the role of assistants as long as they are still very young and are unable to carry out this activity on their own. In HHs where even an 8-year-old girl is present, fetching water is her duty only. Similarly, sons assist fathers in cattle feed collection, milking and shopping. They start doing these and other masculine work on two conditions: one once they are slightly grown up (as old as the work demands them to be) and second, if they are not studying. It is observed that among all caste/class categories, the HH takes utmost care to see that its sons do not drop out of school, whenever there is need for labourers for sericulture or any other economic activity of the HH. The involvement of boys and young men is found only when they had failed in studies, or have never gone to school due to abject poverty conditions. Such cases are, however, few.
But the large and medium landowners are not making their women work so much in sericulture or any other economic activity. Withdrawing from such outside work (if they were already involved in) and even rigorous silkworm rearing at home, is common once the HH improves its socio-economic base for whatever reason – land grant, education of young and resultant employment in the government, etc. Keeping women at home and not sending them to work outside and minimal involvement in HH based economic activities like sericulture, animal husbandry and the like – are status symbols of upper class and caste HHs. It is men's pride and prestige if their women are at home and not working in the 'hot sun', as Thimmayya of Kabbigere remarked (Table 8.2).

Even men from medium and large landowning HHs get much of economic activities carried out through wage labour. There are also differences in this. While the very rich do so, others from such land categories resort to mutual exchange of labour. Thus, gender roles and ideology are interlinked and are influenced by class distinctions.

Table 8.2. HH Work and Participation by Men and Women across Land Categories (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land ownership</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decision-Making in HH Matters

Do women influence family decisions?. This is an important determinant of the status of women in sericulture HHs and in the community. To what extent are women involved in decision-making at the
community and HH levels? This also reflects gender equality and is linked to access and control profile.

Our findings in respect to decision-making in HH matters and domestic sphere have more or less reflected the access to women in sericulture areas to make their own choices. A look at our data shows that women are showing more and more interest in educating their children rather than any other asset formation. They tend to save their earnings for this purpose and send their sons in particular to reputed schools in the block headquarters. Others send them to schools located in the village itself.

The mothers, if the level is primary and middle school, take the decision about the school. Men come into the picture only when the child has to go for higher education. In the Hosahalli GP area, some families have given their daughters in marriage to villages in Andhra border. Some of the sons have gone to settle down in those border places for want of wage work in the paddy and other fields of those villages. But, with the desire to teach their grandchildren, the mother tongue of Kannada, many women have taken decision to bring them to Hosahalli and other villages for education in local schools. They consider education available at Andhra villages (wherever their sons and daughters have settled down) as poor in quality compared to what is imparted in their own village. Their desire is to get the grandchildren educated so that they would be qualified to get government service. Here some women do not distinguish between whether it is a grandson or grand daughter. They consider both equally important and desirable to avail good education. The money obtained from the sale of cocoons is spent partly on such investment in human resource development, and the women are solely in charge of such decisions and their execution. As Thimmamma, and her daughter-in-law Vishalakshi, belonging to the Vokkaliga caste, stated, 'men would not be so much
bothered about these matters. Even if they do, they would have little time to spare their wage and agricultural work to think and act on these matters. It is we who have decided to take initiative in this matter. There is a good school nearby where many children from our village go. Of course, they are the children of middle farmers. A majority of the children are also from upper castes. But we have taken courage to send our grandchildren to the same school. We are spending a substantial part of earnings from sericulture on their education and transport by auto rickshaw to the school (convent). But we are cutting down on other expenses. Like for example, everyday we eat only ragi balls, do not spend on cinemas, eating outside food or in buying clothes. Only when we make sacrifices like that, we would be in a position to improve our children's future.

Decision-making, like the above case, is found more in villages of the Hosahalli cluster rather than in Kabbigere. There are no strong reasons for this. However, it is true that such empowerment has come about only after much struggle. Secondly, it requires a set of socio-cultural environment where such need is strongly felt, as it has taken place more in the HHs belonging to the SCs and low castes rather than in the HHs of upper or dominant Castes. Of course, one would argue that there is no need for such empowerment in the latter type of HHs where children would any way be sent to good schools as a result of a family (i.e., male's) decision. Secondly, and more importantly, it is not desirable that women openly admit having taken such a decision in such HHs where it is considered to have affected the family prestige.

Here, among the upper caste and class HHs, women are encouraged and expected to decide about conducting (at HH level) festivals and other ceremonies. Decisions about conducting village level events, festivals and other community activities are taken up by men. Not only that women do
not participate in decision-making, here they also do not expect to be involved so. The distinction between public and private domain is followed strictly in laying down restrictions upon women's participation in decision-making and involvement in carrying out these activities. What is important to be noted and remembered here is that in these upper caste/class HHs, decision-making is considered a man's job and women respect it so. The status of the HH is believed to be lying in the seclusion of women from participating in such activities. More the women are within the HH domain more is the status of the HHs.

Somehow it is seen that this trend of excluding women from actively participating in decision-making processes (at least making decisions overtly) is spreading to lower castes too. There is the accepted practice of the upper caste/class women, however, privately influencing husbands to take a certain decision.

There were also HHs where both husband and wife took decisions about HH and outside matters. These may be relating to purchase of jewellery for a wedding in the family or repair of the house or higher education of children.

Decision-making in sericulture is by both men and women in many HHs except of the large landowners. This is because of the role that women have been playing in the rearing of silkworms. It is the chief source of livelihood for many HHs. But the decision as to how much seed to be bought and when is influenced by women's opinion in a large number of cases. In others, women take decisions. The difference between the two clusters is that in the case of the seed area, since sericulture is the primary activity of most HHs, the men along with women take decisions. While saying so, we are taking the risk of generalizing for all HHs. There were HHs where women are the sole decision-makers, not because of the absence of men in their HHs but because of an alcoholic husband or a
lazy husband who depends upon his wife for his pocket money besides food and drink. Positively speaking, there are men who are otherwise busy, like being engaged in political activities at GP or TP levels. Their wives or mothers manage sericulture and sometimes even agricultural activities with the consent of the males and sometimes with the old aged father playing the role of the 'man' for the women involved in such work. The labourers obey his orders. But often such fathers are obedient to their sons.

Intra-HH decision-making is again based upon seniority and status. The mother-in-law decides the feminine work including the menu for each day, in most HHs. But in nuclear HHs where she is absent, the wife independently takes decisions. In other words, women are controlled by members of their own sex, but higher in age and status. But sharing of HH duties is found in marginal farmer HHs where the husband assists the wife in outside work like fetching water, wood, fodder etc. Dropping children to school, and picking them up is taken care of by men. Going to the flourmill, shopping, health care of children are the other duties that the men from nuclear HHs are sharing with their wives, who engage in rigorous rearing work.

Thus, we find that women do have a free space to decide upon certain issues on their own, but are always bound by rules of hierarchy amongst women. The time and labour of women is decided by senior women and by men. It is the men who decide where women have to go for work, in the case of mutual exchange of labour. Decision-making about sericulture is better in Kabbigere, by virtue of it being a seed area and the familiarity of women about rearing practices.

Decision-making by women is relatively better pronounced in nuclear HHs. This is because here there are no other elders particularly elderly men in the HH. Secondly, the wife is also earning and contributing
to HH income on an equal basis, if it is a lower class HH, dependent upon wage work for livelihood. Third, such HHs would have emerged as a result of a separation from the main HH, usually after a quarrel over property or some such economic asset or the couple would have expected one such quarrel or injustice and would have preferred to live separately. There are also instances where they have set up separate home since the wives of brothers did not adjust with each other. The situation would be more favorable for a division, if the wife is from a relatively wealthy HH and has her parents and brother supporting her well-being. Well-being is seen here in living in nuclear HHs rather than living together with one's in-laws and co-sisters.

Thus, for all these reasons, the husband like Venkatappa of Hosahalli would be looking forward to obtaining some benefit from his wife's natal home too. Or he would always make a team with his wife and sometimes children also, to strive to live well and come up in life, having separated from his father or brother. Thus, the opinion of wife and mother or grown up daughter, as the case may be, becomes crucial. The man depends on their help and assistance in sericulture, agriculture, animal husbandry and other economic activities. As a marginal or small farmer, or landless in the case of some, he cannot afford hired workers. The decision of the females becomes crucial and binding, since they contribute considerably to his new found status quo and earnings.

This does not mean that nuclear households have severed all relations with the parent HH. There are cases where the wife has continued to have good and working relations with her kin relatives on the husband's side, despite the division of the HH. In fact this is expected of her, as part of her social reproduction function. She continues to attend religious and familial responsibilities, ceremonies, community gatherings as part of the kin group, festivals, marriages etc. Mutual exchange of
labour for agriculture (transplanting, weeding harvesting and post harvest work), sericulture (harvest of leaf, feeding the worms after III moult etc) and allied occupations also is a key role of women in this direction. Thus, unless they maintain cordial relations with the parent HH and others in the village, such processes of mutual exchange whether in work or HH matters (birth, puberty, marriage, death etc) will not go on smoothly. An important duty or responsibility of women in our field area is maintenance of social relations in the community and caste group. This is a social duty and has no economic value. It is an obligation irrespective of all classes and castes to which women belong. Indirectly, it contributes to the economic gain of the HH by reducing the cost of production.

However, the large and medium HHs appear to be not so much bothered about such roles by their women. The reasons could be that, first; most of them continued to be joint HHs. Thus, the presence of more women in HHs automatically enabled its economic activities to be managed internally. Of course, another raider is that such HHs has the capacity to hire labourers, men and women, due to their economic power. Men take decisions and at the most, may consult elderly women like the mother-in-law and rarely a daughter-in-law, despite the fact that she has undergone training in latest sericulture practices.

In both clusters, we have come across many such women in their twenties who were chosen to attend training and capacity building programmes under NSP, organized by the department or Zilla Panchayat/Taluk Panchayat at the village itself, or in the block HQ. They were chosen because they were literate and educated up to middle or even high school (in some cases). Secondly, it was considered appropriate to choose a woman from the HH which was still free from pregnancy or nursing infants, or one who had to take care of cooking (large scale as it is a joint family in a large farmers category), or one who was an expert in
rearing. Thus, more than the intention to learn from such training, the occasion was thought to be fit to enable a younger female member of the HH to visit the taluk HQ and get some entertainment and exposure to, on that pretext.

Thus, participation in work, training, decision-making and labour absorption – all depend upon the class and caste status of the HHs and their women. It is found to be varying across traditional and new areas also. The variation is also across wet and dry zones. The intensity of sericulture also determines labour absorption. But the common pattern seems to be women working as wage workers, and the men as contract and/or piece workers. Kabbigere as a traditional area has shown an inclination for family labour for the most part, since women are experts in rearing skills owing to the long duration of exposure of the area to sericulture. In Hosahalli also there are HHs where women carry out most of the tasks, but introduction of shoot harvest and sericulture slowly gaining the status of an important crop, has induced male participation in an increasing manner in recent years. Depletion of water resources has led to a change in cropping pattern from paddy and sugarcane to mulberry among the rich and marginal farmers alike. Thus, with not much of agriculture work, men are concentrating their time on silkworm rearing. This has stood as a stumbling block for women’s participation and empowerment here.

**Access and Control**

Gaining access to resources and assets is an important avenue for empowerment of men or women. Empowerment is defined, therefore, as an enabling process where women could gain entry to not only participation in productive work, but also to accessing and gaining of control over assets and resources. The latter process is crucial to any attempt to empower the disempowered.
Rural areas have many productive resources, but there is nothing more important than land ownership as the pride possession of the people. The socio-economic value system surrounds such ownership and attributes significant status to such owners. Since women are traditionally excluded from such ownership, the government’s effort towards empowering them has taken note of this lacuna. Both, as part of NSP and outside it, land grants in the names of women was one such programme meant to empower women and improve their asset position.

Access to credit, training and extension are the other important areas where such efforts have been made by the government to empower women. Land ownership either as a result of land grants or by inheritance due to the death of husband, is reported in about 12 cases from both clusters. But such ownership has been of not much help in empowering them. There are other problems associated with putting such assets to their proper use. Agriculture on inherited land is possible only with the association of male members, family or hired. Women have found it difficult to manage labourers on their own. Fixing wages, overseeing their work, finding mistakes, commanding quality work etc, is found to be difficult propositions for them. Moreover, social ethos do not expect women to be so outgoing and commanding work from men, especially when there are male members in their (women’s) HHs. Taking orders from a woman has its own social value and conditionality. Thus, decision about cropping pattern, area under each crop, labour and other inputs etc., is taken by men in spite of the land being in the name of women. Owing to prevailing social ethos, women also do not mind if the decisions are taken by men since that gives them better status and empowerment than going against the gender norms, just to exercise their right over an asset. By being sublime and submissive, women wish to win more than by being aggressively feminist in attitude and action.
Now coming to credit flow to sericulture and to women, it is seen that the two are viewed differently. First of all banks and other formal financial institutions are not prepared or have their own set of rules governing their credit disposal norms. Women are often weak applicants here since the bank demands to look into asset position of applicants, and women generally draw a blank, with their lack of asset ownership. Even in cases where women deserve to be considered for loans, like in the case of SCs and STs, the default status of the self or husband comes in their way of eligibility. Men would act as the collateral, since they ‘own’ the property like land, house etc.

Another problem is the ignorance of the HH about availability of such benefits for women. This may be difficult to be believed but it is true. Many a marginal and poor householders have admitted to having not applied in time for a loan or some other benefit since, they were not informed of the details by the extension personnel. They are accused of siding with the rich and large landowners/sericulturists. But the government service staff, upon asking by the researcher, denied this. The special persons could have easily availed of the loans i.e., belonging to SC, ST or widows etc. But such cases are few and wherever there are such beneficiaries, they have spent money and time over middlemen to get the work done (Inbanathan & Gopalappa 2002).

However, such cases are not universally true in our study area. In Hosahalli cluster, 3 chawkie-rearing centres were allotted to women to run them under a scheme of the DoS to privatize them (Acharya et al 1993). But their husbands manage all the three now. Moreover, the failure of women to take full control of these centres should not be taken as failure of women to do so. It is also the wrong decision of the government to expect a CRC to work well in an area where farmers are used to their own
chawkie rearing practices at home. This shows the practical problems a programme or scheme faces in its implementation at the grass roots level.

There are no reeling units in Kabbigere cluster either started by men or women. The fact that it is a seed area where no reeling of cocoons is permitted is the reason for their absence. But in Hosahalli area, there are about 5 units. The entire family manages them as such. Women are the reellers but assisted by men in the morning and evening when they have to attend to kitchen work and other HH work. The husbands, Anwar Pasha in one case and Ubedullah in another, have taken loan in their wives' names to improve their reeling machinery from charkha to cottage basin. This was taken through the Sericulture extension officer (reeling) from the Regional Rural Bank (RRB) at Madhugiri. The women are illiterate and have given their thumb impression. They are aware that they are beneficiaries of the NSP. The unit is currently under loss due to hike in cocoon prices but no matching increase in silk prices, to quote Jubaida, wife of Akram Pasha, son of Ubedullah.

It is interesting to note that irrespective of whether the women received any loan in their own name or not, even when it was granted to their husbands or sons, we could see in the study area that women strived hard to save from their daily earnings to repay it. This, of course, excluded the women from large and medium farmer HHs who were any way engaged only in domestic work and childcare. If at all they got involved, they were acting as supervisors of production processes, and left all financial matters to men, be it even young sons of widows. It was considered appropriate to do so. But women in nuclear HHs not only encouraged their husbands to avail of more and more benefits and subsidies and strived to earn to clear them; just as they strived to make their sons educated so that they could get into government service. For many women, the SEO himself was the role model for their sons.
Lastly, in farming HHs, loan is considered as something of a burden, if taken, irrespective of the type of activity. The repayment is also not always on a direct basis, where the earnings form a certain vocation will be spent on clearing any type of loan irrespective of the fact for which activity it was raised. Thus, it assumes a serious position in so far as the economic matter of a HH is concerned. Women definitely shy away from such responsibilities. At the most their participation is limited to lending their ‘names’ for availing of loans that are meant for only women under certain schemes of the Karnataka State Women Development Corporation (KSWDC). Beyond this, they have stated ignorance of how much was raised, how spent, how much repaid etc. The fact that their names are on application forms gives them great joy and satisfaction. But there are also some who realize that they are being taken for a ride by so doing, since they will have toil more to repay this loan. As Hanumakka of Hosahalli remarked, “we get beatings if we ask men about loan and its clearance. They will chide us by commenting that as women, it is not our business to know all that. Men are responsible to clear the loan. If the police come, villagers will show men to them, and we will not be harmed. If I do not sign he will beat me. If I sign also he will beat me if I ask about repayment. There is no ‘mukthi to hennu jeeva’ (salvation to a female life).

Sericulture Extension and Women

The preceding discussion about women’s participation in sericulture and other economic activities has brought to focus two important issues: one that although women are knowledgeable about sericulture practices, the presence of gender ideology has curtailed their participation in gainful economic activities. They are made to be invisible, not because of the traditional notions of discriminating against women and excluding them, but due to changing employment scenario in the study area where declining opportunities in agriculture and allied occupations have forced
men to remain indoors and manage sericulture all by themselves. There is need for gainful activity for men to enable women to access economic opportunities meant for them. Otherwise, it forces the HH men to take on roles that women could easily manage by themselves and with ease.

Secondly, women are seeking wage labour that has become inevitably the only sustained economic activity for poor HHs. As far as the upper classes are concerned, they are shirking from actively engaging in sericulture and agriculture, as the HH status comes in the way of their attending to outside work like marketing of cocoons. Even intra-HH economic activities are entrusted to labourers since the sons who are now educated and urban employed or at least urban exposed, do not wish that their mothers take on roles that are not economically viable and work like labourers.

This speaks of only a section of women and men in the study area. But, for a majority of others, especially in the new and non-seed areas, i.e., Hosahalli cluster, women have not yet developed self-confidence about managing silkworm rearing on their own. They are involved in this activity since the past 10-15 years in most cases, and for some it is much more longer. In spite of this, they are not yet prepared to manage the entire operation on their own. But why? What are the reasons for this?

Before we set out to answer anything on this set of questions, it is necessary to categorize the reasons based on certain types of women in sericulture in the study area, as follows:

- Those who are in reality ignorant of correct practices in sericulture
- Those women who are well versed in rearing practices but are inhibited by patriarchal norms
- Those women who are well versed but are unable to practice due to other engagements like going on wage work etc.
Those who are in need of extension advice and training to improve their existing skills and knowledge since they are the main sericulturists at home (women headed HHs)

*a) Women who are well versed but are unable to practice due to other engagements like going on wage work etc.*

A gender ideology and gender relation, which decide HH allocation of work and access to resources, explains much of this. The point that is important to note is that women are able to manage work by themselves but are not allowed to do so. Women work under the control and overall supervision of men who decide their time in work and its rewards. The tasks are heavily gendered and men have control over them. Secondly, women have too many jobs on hand, like HH work, childcare, livestock rearing, collection of feed, fodder and firewood, besides water for drinking and washing. They are also engaged in agricultural work both for the HH and as wageworkers or mutual exchange workers. Sericulture is an additional work for them.

Thus, they are left with little time to gain expertise in a more rewarding and home-based production process like sericulture. Moreover, they have no access to economic assets like land, and no control over their own labour. Decision-making is by men and by senior women in the HH, and youngsters who are identified for training purposes cannot or fail to make their newfound knowledge applicable to their work in sericulture. There are social values that curtail their participation and autonomy in decision-making.

Men have also been curtailing women’s participation in sericulture for another reason. It is as follows: Sericulture is not a viable occupation these days as productivity on land is declining and also there is no stability in prices. The study area faces problems in this regard differently,
that is, in two ways: In the seed area, farmers are not happy and content with the price they obtain for the cocoons. There is fluctuation in seed cocoon price as against the cost of production. Thus, the rearers are looking for various options to survive in the midst of the impact of privatization, new economic policy, lack of opportunities for alternative employment etc. Wage work is inevitably one major way for them to manage the cost of living. Women are increasingly sent for wage work, while men manage rearing at home. They think that wage work is at least a guaranteed way of earning one's livelihood. And women are the automatic choice for such work, which is locally available and as men think women's labour is appropriate for such work. A man's labour will be too much for the job requirement like weeding or harvesting of leaf or of vegetables and flowers. They normally go out on roadwork, if very poor, or remain in rearing as a respectable job. Many women themselves keep the men like this, and come out to work as wage earners, because they think that a man's honour is much more valuable under such circumstances than that of a woman's.

b) Women who are well versed in rearing practices but are inhibited by patriarchal norms and/or poverty

This issue appeared many times in this analysis. Suffice it to say that the entrepreneurial abilities of women are not encouraged due to patriarchal control in two chief areas, viz., access to and control over resources. Ownership of land or house or other assets is always by the man. While this has discouraged women from participating in rearing activity as per their own wisdom, it is playing as a constraint in using such ownership to obtain further benefits. For example, loan or credit in sericulture is given to beneficiaries who have an economic base and show guarantee of repayment. Ownership of assets comes in handy on such occasions. But due to lack of access to land, or other forms of assets,
women are not able to avail of the loan facility. Those who are benefiting (like the women from vulnerable castes like the SCs despite that they are poor and do not have assets in their names like other women) are not able to make use of the loan for the said purpose (improving rearing equipment) due to abject poverty at home. A much more major problem for them has been that their husbands are taking away that loan amount to be spent on other items of their choice. These include using it for clearing some other loan, or buying clothes, paying house rent, repair of old house by combining this loan with a housing subsidy or loan like the one given under Ambedkar or Ashraya housing scheme. In other words, women get loans here, but have no freedom to spend it the way they would like it to be spent on.

c) Women who are in reality ignorant of correct practices in sericulture

Both Kabbigere and Hosahalli clusters present a picture where women are unaware of the correct practises in silkworm rearing as they are being advocated by the department and its extension wing. There have been a number of new inventions and interventions in both sectors of mulberry leaf and cocoon production processes. These relate to farming practices, varieties of mulberry and silkworm seed, rearing methods including disease control devices and strategies, chawkie and late age silkworm rearing methods, moult setting and disease identification.

As a result, even the seasoned rearers like Puttathayamma of Kabbigere is reluctant to take ‘risk’ by volunteering to take on the entire responsibility of rearing all by her. There are many patterns of rearing here. In some HHs where men find it to be totally at loss to continue in sericulture, they have even gone to the extent of uprooting mulberry and planting something else there. Thus, women’s knowledge is not useful here, since the crop is like a mirage. Women from traditional sericulture
HHs are pushed out of HH premises to the lands to take up wage labour on other’s lands. Few others have migrated also to other villages like Maramma and her son who now stay with their relatives in Hunsanahalli near C.N. Halli, and work as wage earners in paddy and arecanut fields. Some others have taken up wage work within the village.

Some sericulturists, especially poor and marginal ones, find it difficult to undertake sericulture because of the compulsion of the department to follow correct practices to avail subsidies etc. The correct practices go contrary to what the sericulturists have been practising for many decades. Some of them are declared to be impracticable by the rearers. As Thammanna remarked, ‘we cannot rebuild our house to suit the type of ceiling where the department wants to fix a machine to catch the Uzi fly’. Thus, what is the correct practice in rearing itself is disputed and it is observed that the farmers are accepting some of the new measures just to appease the department staff and to avail of the benefits like free supply of disinfectants, trays etc. Women are considered to be very naïve in such dealings and they are treated as only workers after taking orders from family men.

In Hosahalli, where rearers are not compelled to grow only seed cocoons, but are compelled to produce only non-seed ones, the role of women is more or less the same as in Kunigal. But here, fluctuations in the price of cocoons and the choices of farmers to take up some other crop are applicable. Particularly, in recent years, it is becoming difficult to sustain farmers in mulberry cultivation. There are contradictory views by the department staff that place the blame for crop failures upon the farmers. Nonetheless, it is arguable that farmers have their own set of strategies for remaining in or outside of sericulture. That is not the concern here in our work. What matters is women’s role in these new jobs, 

vis-à-vis sericulture.
It is observed that in a majority of HHs, women are not yet confident of managing sericulture on their own. Here, we should hasten to add two factors, viz., that women’s ignorance, is one thing. Women avoiding taking on responsibilities fearing something is another. We have evidence for both here. Those who are well versed in rearing are trying to somehow manage the show despite the inadequate income that the work fetches to the HH. This is a general matter concerning the problems the silk industry is encountering in the last decade or so. Just as there are new plantations, there are also uprooting. Sustainability of the industry is the question. This has implications for women’s participation and to all the empowerment programmes relating to this.

HHs from where women are selected for undergoing capacity-building or training in modern ways of silkworm rearing have taken the whole process to mean only that it is another occasion for women of HHs to get some stipend and exposure or occasion to go out. The HHs are enthusiastically pushing their adolescent daughters to take up such training. The local taboo on married women going out to work or on any other reason, is giving way for young girls who are at the most matriculates or are drop outs in between, being encouraged to enroll for such training programmes. Thus, one who is a really rearing woman does not get a chance to train herself due to local level power relations operative at village level.

Those who are selected to get trained normally do not come back to practice the new lessons, but at best tell their female relatives about the content of training. Some of them are easy to adopt and does not cost the HH any extra money, time, labour and change in practice or compromise in them. But many others do so. The girls would have no freedom (being in natal HHs where the father and/or brother is used to old methods) to utilize or put newfound knowledge to test. In upper caste and class HHs,
normally a girl is sent for training for status quo but is generally withheld from putting it to practice. Here, the extension personnel expect that a large farmer would act as a model farmer for the sericulture department by agreeing to carryout experimental farming and rearing of silkworms adopting new methods recommended by the extension staff.

Among marginal and small landholders, the women/girls fulfill the obligation of training but would be too inhibited from using it in practice. There are many varieties of practices and notions here. There are some who are not confident about managing sericulture on their own. Some others (23%) have considered some aspects of rearing like chawkie rearing, as critical and challenging, and as not their cup of tea. The third group is those frustrated women who discover that they are unable to implement the new recommendations of research labs regarding best practices in silkworm rearing. The father or brother or both are unwilling to go by their (girls') recommendations (she is still a child), and go ahead with their own method. Yes, they would be interested if any loan is going to be sanctioned in the girl's name.

Thus, the girls/women have turned their faces against any benefits and are aware of some of their own limitations to empowerment training being an insignificant factor here.

There are those who have neither received any training, nor have been consulted at home for their knowledge in the occupation. All activities take place strictly under the supervision of men. This includes both on farm job like applying manure and off farm jobs like disease control and Disinfection.

Even in the seed area, women are not particular about maintaining rearing practices that the department has been advocating to them. The belief in cow dung solution is still strong as against other recommended
ones. The women tend to apply their knowledge and beliefs about general cleanliness of the house to the rearing practices also. Added to this is the firm belief that they are used to sericulture since many decades and that they are quite knowledgeable on the practices. A third factor here is that women are destined to the conclusion that irrespective of the best of practices, the yield levels have remained the same. Myths and traditions in many HHs add to the patriarchal impositions on women's participation in decision-making and other empowerment indices. One such is the concept of pollution during puberty, menstruation and childbirth and death observing of pollution that is supposed to affect silkworm rearing if such women participate.

**d) Women who are in need of extension advice and training to improve their existing skills and knowledge since they are the main sericulturists at home (women headed HHs)**

This category has a few women from both clusters who are heading their HHs and sericulture. Excepting 3 HHs where own land was used to grow mulberry, in the other 11 HHs, mulberry was bought from neighbouring farmers. However, in 4 of them, the sellers were none other than the brothers-in-law/uncle/elder brother of the woman concerned. The women just carried out rearing at home with the help of daughters and daughters-in-law. In 2 cases, the women had given their own land on lease to a relative, and brought leaves from him under a sharecropping arrangement. In yet another 6 cases, the women had been buying mulberry from own labourers (3 cases) who cultivate their land and from their fathers (3 cases) who had taken their land on lease and sold mulberry to them. There was a case where the concerned woman sericulturist's brother had married her husband's sister and it was a case of mutual exchange of brides and grooms from two households. Thus, even after the widowhood of the former, the parent's HH did not consider
her as alien particularly since her sister-in-law was her brother’s wife and the daughter-in-law in father’s house. Thus and also because this woman was senior in age and had a son, to whom the brother wanted to give his daughter in marriage (he has four daughters then a son), there was good relation between the HHs.

The point that is being made is that it is still difficult for women in rural areas to manage their HHs as their heads once there is a calamity and their husband is not with them. Women have considered widowhood as bliss under such circumstances where a woman has been left to manage the HH. This is because, the people do not cast aspersions at such women, since becoming a widow is considered as far different and less sinful than being left by one’s husband. Separated women find it hard to continue to live obtaining the co-operation of people. Except wage work any entrepreneurial work like sericulture is not a viable proposition for such women.

Thus, women-headed HHs were not all that comfortable in so far as they seek to survive keeping sericulture as the survival strategy. Dependence on men is imminent due to the land-based activity like mulberry cultivation. Only those HHs and their women ‘heads’ who have a consistent source of leaf supply are opting for sericulture. Here, the owner, a man, manages the entire gamut of operations in leaf production and supply. Thus, women have no role here. Extension messages are given to men and women are often neglected.

In the rearing sector, again, the men of the HH receive most of the messages. This is due to the prevailing gender ideology rather than any bias of the extension staff. In fact the government had even introduced extension services by women for the benefit of women rearers, known as Women Para-Extension Staff, to extend messages of best rearing practices to the women in the field. However, since the women rearers even in
women headed HHs did not have the autonomy to manage rearing (if not mulberry production as a on-farm activity) on their wish, such extension had very little impact in leading them to an empowered status. They had to seek support from labourers in rearing too, mostly men. Or they had to resort to small-scale production that was not viable for many of the extension messages to be followed.

First of all, extension staff is reported to be irregular in their visits. In seed area, although the department stresses upon improvement in quality of seed, extension staff’s visit is not frequent and importantly, it is not provided when the rearers want their help. P2 and P3 farmers being few in numbers than P1 farmers, the former received better extension service than the latter. But, in Hosahalli area, extension service is considered quite good and useful to rearers. But women are generally not approached during their visits since the prevailing gender ideology restricts their interaction with women. Technology transfer is considered to be primarily oriented towards men and women are expected to simply follow it up. Thus, decision making, in spite of women being aware of new innovations in rearing practices, is poor in nuclear HHs and non-existent in extended HHs.

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