

**I. S. A. Baud.** *Forms of Production and Women's Labour: Gender Aspects of Industrialisation in India and Mexico.* New Delhi: Sage Publications. 1992. 321 pp. Hardbound. Price: Indian Rs 295.00.

The literature on female labour in Third World countries has become quite extensive. India, being comparatively more advanced industrially, and in view of its size and population, presents a picture of multiplicity of problems which face the female labour market. However, the author has also included Mexico in this analytical study. It is interesting to see the characteristics of developing industrialisation in two different societies: the Indian society, which is conservative, and the Mexican society, which is progressive.

In the first chapter of the book, the author explains that he is not concerned with the process of industrialisation and female labour employed at different levels of work, but that he is interested in forms of production and women's employment in large-scale production, petty commodity production, marginal small production, and self-employment in the informal sector. It is only by analysis of these forms that the picture of females having a lower status is understood in its social and political setting.

The author then goes on to explain his research approach and the methodology which he has adopted to study various aspects of female employment. Women's access to employment is limited by the family structure. Women are employed through a contractor. A woman's relation with other family-members, her education, the number of children she has, and the degree of mobility all affect her wages and chances of employment. The level of technology also affects her employment as she is excluded from directly productive forms of employment. Consequently, she is employed in the informal sector and this process marginalises her functions. Women, being tied to their households, have poor bargaining power. The case-studies are done in view of the above functions and status of women.

Industrial policy in India is based on a mixed economy. In view of the large population, labour-intensive policies have been favoured. Large-scale industry co-existed with small-scale and cottage industry for a long period of time. When this structure changed, monopoly houses were born. In 1983, out of forty industrial products, seven were produced by one firm. Industrial houses are like conglomerates which are linked with one another. So the author shows how 85 percent of all sales are by industrial houses. The interesting fact is that about 40 percent of the total industrial investment is in the state-owned sector. The author has studied in depth how large populations have supported small-scale industry through sub-contracts which happened to be more economical for the large-scale producer.

Indian industry legislation and policies have created a pattern of female employment as well. A majority of women are still employed in agriculture,

followed by services and industrial employment. Though the number of female employees has increased manifold, the pattern seems to remain the same. Unpaid or small earnings characterise females in the household and agricultural labour. Within the manufacturing sector, women are concentrated in food manufacturing, textiles, and tobacco – all labour intensive industries. The author refers to various studies done in India about the female labour force. The major findings reveal that women have less opportunity than men for becoming producers in their own right.

Mexico is one-third of India in size, and one-tenth in population. In terms of income, Mexico has a larger population in the lower middle class; while in India, the labour force, particularly the female labour force, is marginally above the poverty line. However, the author states that the policy trends are similar in both the countries. Large-scale industrial management makes use of sub-contracting, licencing, differential tariffs, and price control. The share of the public sector is also comparable. Both have shifted from export trends to internal market and foreign investments, though foreign loans in Mexico are larger than in India.

Mexican industry is smaller in size and females are employed in the food, beverages, and garments industries. A small labour concentration is seen in the petrochemical industry. While horizontal sub-contracting is predominant in India, vertical sub-contracting (supplying raw material to the secondary producer) is prevalent in Mexico. Thus, sub-contractors have a greater control of the industrial structure as well as labour laws. But the female labour force is better paid and better organised in Mexico.

After discussing general trends, structure, and the distribution of women in various forms of production, the author has used some 150 pages in describing and analysing details of a few specific industries in India and Mexico, e.g., the textile and shrimp industries of India and the shoe industry of Mexico. The trend is towards increased female employment, but for different reasons. Indian females were thought to be more dexterous in spinning, weaving as well as in shrimp processing. Perhaps their household training proved to be an asset. However, in Mexico, casualisation and deskilling made jobs in the shoe factories unattractive for men. They found more lucrative jobs in areas, such as Guadalajara where new industries demanding more skilled workers were available. This led to greater employment for women and women learning better skills. Consequently, unlike India, there is no marginalisation of women workers in Mexico.

It is an interesting study as it takes into account not only the forms of production but also the gender aspects of industrialisation and employment. The author has presented a precise and detailed picture of women's employment in various industries. He has, however, excluded upper class female employment in the professional and social fields. He has confined himself to production problems in two of the industrially growing countries of the Third World. Various relationships

have been analysed in depth and supported by sufficient data. It is apparent that domestic relationships have affected Indian female wage-earners adversely. They are low-paid and have no fringe benefits, whereas womenfolk in Mexico are better off. The difference is shown to be due to the social structure of the society, though in the process of industrialisation there are many similarities of government policy and the capitalistic patterns of economic development. One aspect which has been ignored is the character of the market for the two countries.

However, it is a useful study and can prove to be a great help in analysing the possibilities of female employment in other Third World countries with conservative societies.

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