

CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN RURAL BALOCHISTAN: WORLD SYSTEM ANALYSIS AT MICRO LEVEL IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Anwaar Mohyuddin
Department of Anthropology,
Quaid-i-Azam University,
Islamabad, PAKISTAN.
unwaar@gmail.com

Hafeez-ur-Rehman Chaudhry
Department of Anthropology,
Quaid-i-Azam University,
Islamabad, PAKISTAN.
hafeez@qau.edu.pk

Mamonah Ambreen
Department of Education,
Allama Iqbal Open University,
Islamabad, PAKISTAN.
mamonahambreen@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with research findings regarding contribution of women in economic activities in the Village Zandra, District Ziarat in the province of Balochistan. It includes both direct and indirect contribution. Women in the village have been contributing in the economy since a long time. Initially they were participating in horticulture and agriculture activities. Their main contribution was coming through indirect sources. During the last 3 decades a change has been witnessed. Now the women are more inclined towards direct sources which include employment sector because more importance is given to the direct wage earning activities. This shift from horticulture to employment sector has brought some changes in their daily life. The impact of women employment on their social position and the family life has been discussed in this article. Finally the women's economic contribution has been analyzed in light of world system theory at micro level. The data presented in this paper has been collected by using qualitative anthropological research techniques.

Keywords: core countries, peripheral countries, semi-peripheral countries, world's capitalist economies, empowerment, inequality

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistani rural society, woman is mainly responsible for household tasks like daily routine work. She is supposed to remain within the boundaries of house and her work in productive economy and income generation has not been paid due attention by the society. In order to understand the woman's contribution in production and economy, it is more useful to begin with her position in the house. Term domestic work refers to the work done at home for household which has economic value. The only socially recognized part of work of a rural woman is housekeeping, which includes taking care of children, peeling and cutting of vegetables, cooking, washing clothes and utensils or supervising the work of elder children. This whole activity is not considered as part of economy, because it does not generate any income. As a matter of fact all domestic activities consume time and labour, implying that by performing domestic activities, women indirectly participate in the household economy.

In agrarian societies, both men and women started working side by side in the fields. In urban and suburban/semi-urban areas, the women have to work in different offices, hospitals, schools, colleges, etc. As the role of women took a new turn, it reflected on productivity having a direct impact on economic aspect of the society. This direct involvement of women in the economy has brought economic prosperity to the community as well as in the country, but on the other hand, it is causing some harmful effects on our social structures. The contribution of rural women of Zandra both in household as well as in wage-earning activities is the main concern of this discussion.

Locale of Study

The present research was conducted in Village Zandra, District Ziarat, in Baluchistan, Pakistan. Zandra Village is situated 108 km southeast of Quetta just 12 km short of Ziarat town. The village is 8,000 ft. above sea level and is surrounded by grey hills, apple orchards and Juniper forest, which is considered to be the 2nd largest in the world. Thus, the area is greener than other areas of the province. Area wise Baluchistan is the largest province of Pakistan. It shares its northern border with

Afghanistan with major cities of Chagai, Quetta and Zhob. The western border is shared with Iran via districts Makran and Khara. The eastern end is bounded by the Sind province, whereas the Arabian Sea lies on its south.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative anthropological research methods which include participant observation, key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect empirical data. Purposive sampling was used for selecting 50 households where the women were working. It was a longitudinal study. The first visit was conducted in 1987 which lasted for 4 months, then a couple of visits in 1990s and finally in 2007.

Theoretical Framework

This research has been embedded in the theoretical discourse of world system analysis based upon some significant works of Wallerstein (1974, 1980 and 1989). The other contributors of world system theory are Samir Amin (1970 and 1973), Cardoso & Falleto (1969), Santos (1970a and 1970b), Rodney (1974), Andre Gunder Frank (1969). Wallerstein has divided the capitalist system the world into different zones on the basis of their wealth and size which keeps on competing with one another for wealth and power. These zones are 'core', 'semi-peripheral' and 'peripheral' regions. The core region includes the most powerful and technologically advanced countries. The status of these countries keeps on changing with the passage of time. Initially at the start of international trade in Europe, Spain and Portugal were very powerful and advanced, then the center of core moved towards Holland and England, and most recently towards United States. Periphery includes poorer and technologically less advanced countries. Economies of these countries mostly based upon the raw material export. The semi-periphery includes the countries which are poorer to the core but have the potential to take core status if the conditions suit them. The producers in these countries get the advantage of low-wage rates and can generate economic growth.

According to Wallerstein the capitalist world economy is a dynamic system which keeps on changing with the passage of time. However, some of the basic features remain constant. When we look into these changes the core countries are clearly the most benefited from this arrangement. They earn very high profits from international trade. They exchange manufactured products for raw materials mainly from peripheral countries and to some extent from the semi-peripheral countries. The core countries are becoming richer and richer at the cost of the peripheral economies. In general this theory says that the world's capitalist economies determine the route for development of the large part of the world's population in their own favour. The capitalist world economy has been growing since its birth. Its geographic expansion has changed political systems as well as the labour conditions wherever it could penetrate. Functions of the world economy have created big differences and inequalities among the economies of different countries. The relationship between the core, peripheral and semi-peripheral countries are also relative inconstant. Technological development brings positive changes all over the world. Some impulsive changes are brought in peripheral or semi-peripheral countries, but the core countries get the most advantage. Wallerstein, however, after the analysis of history of the capitalist world system firmly concluded that this development has created inequality and disparities in economic and social sectors of different countries rather than bringing prosperity all over the world.

Economic Contribution of Women

Ever since life began on earth, the roles man and women started taking shape in the daily routine. And as time passed, these roles became so defined that mankind evolved itself in the present status of our society today. This evolution is constantly emerging itself to the materialistic needs of our society in general. Gradually, "Economics" became the axis of survival in a society. It began to give meaning to the functions of daily life of both man and woman. Land, materialistic wealth, status, clan, tribe, race all began to contribute towards performance of duties and obligations of each and every individual of our society. Very soon, the term "Economic level" began to take shape and now after hundreds of years, this term has become an intricate part of our social setup. As time passed, specialized functions and duties of both the genders began to take form. It became woman's duty to worry about cooking, sweeping, washing of clothes and household utensils, knitting, embroidery and a host of other duties

and obligations related to the household. Thus, the term "housewife" came into existence. Men, on the other hand, took care of providing food and security. Hence, the terms "bread earner" and "head of the family" came into existence.

In the recent past as the Industrialization has completely dominated the world, the gender role started taking a new shape. Now the women have been doing the works which once were considered to be the man's job. In urban areas we can find women driving trucks and men buying groceries. This change in gender role is also visible in the Village Zandra. The women have started working in the employment sector other than their support in the field of horticulture. They have been contributing directly into the economy along with their indirect role. The total number of working women is very minimal but a change in trend is very visible. They are only 76 out of 1663 females in the village mostly working as teachers.

Direct Contribution

In Zandra the role of women is not confined to household keeping. The household economy is not male-monopolized, but the women from their young age start participating in economic activities by keeping livestock and poultry, besides doing a number of other Jobs. The men are supposed to be the earning hands of the family, but the women besides their domestic and child rearing activities, play a major role in the household economy. So the activities of men and women are different, but both supplement to each other.

Women belonging to horticultural/agricultural families contribute significantly in the fields, but in Zandra, majority of the women belonging to these families don't work in orchards. Only the women from lower class families which cannot afford the labour work in the fields. Women from middle class only contribute in those activities which could be performed at home like cleaning, storage etc. The ladies belonging to upper middle class don't even do this. They hire these services from Afghan women living in the surroundings of the village who also work in the fields on daily wages.

People of the village are mainly associated with horticulture. Most of them have their orchards. Agriculture is there but at a very small level where fewer activities are performed and less labour is required. The agricultural activities start with crop production cycle. In crop preparation activities, the Afghan women work on daily wages to help the men. The land leveling, ploughing and sowing of seeds are mostly done by the males. These women help them in fertilizer and cow dung spreading in the fields. They also cut fodder for the cattle. In the orchards, the women also help the males at different stages of fruit production. As far as the economic contribution is concerned, these activities are of significant importance.

A change has been witnessed in the women involvement in horticulture/agriculture activities. First the women belonging to the upper class left working in the fields, then the middle class and now the lower class is also avoiding doing this work. Today majority of the women belonging to poor families works in the fields.

During the fruit plucking and harvesting season the wage labourer women have to spend more time in the fields. They go to the field early in the morning and work there till noon. They return to the field in the afternoon and work there till sunset. Storage of fruits and vegetables is very important task as proper storage of different varieties of these items, implies not only product improvement but also increased farm income. Women play an important role in this because storage of the fruit and crops is extensively women domain and specialization activities. The same was also observed by Boeson while he was working in *Pakhtoon* area. He wrote an article titled "Conflicts of solidarity in *Pakhtoon* women's life". He writes,

"The male control on the means of subsistence is based on their control of land and vital productive resources and on their monopoly of all jobs in connection with trade and services, since these are in the 'public sphere' from which women are excluded. The only type of work that is left for women is processing and preparing the mainly agricultural products from the joint resources of the household, and possibly (in families of tenants and small farmers) helping in cultivating its land. In this way she, too, is actively involved in the household economy of her husband (or father if she is unmarried)" (1983)

The same is true in Zandra as the women belonging to the horticultural and agricultural families do not work in the fields. They process and prepare the farm products while staying at home. Only the women belonging to the Afghan families help in cultivation in the fields. I would like to argue with the writer on his approach towards this fact. He has expressed his concern over women non-participation in farm activities in the extreme conditions. He could have appreciated their husbands for not forcing them to work in the fields in extremely hot and muddy conditions for which a woman is not made for. These feminists are determined not to give any space to the male. Whether he is doing good or bad for his woman, he is criticized and the woman is always supported. Let us assume what could have happened, if he had seen a woman working in the field under the sun, he must have uttered out, “*sar gai, sar gai, sar gai*” (burnt). Putting less responsibility on the women is also discrimination with them. Male does the hardship and keeps woman at peace in the house is treated as discrimination. After reading different material written by the feminists, the only thing which comes to my mind about their attitude towards male is, ‘don’t let him breath’.

Other than providing services in the field of horticulture and agriculture mostly by keeping themselves within the houses, women of the village are involved in different other income generating activities like making handicrafts and serving mainly in the field of education and health.

Handicrafts

Women in Zandra after completing their household chores do not sit idle. They start making different handicraft even while gossiping. These handicrafts are sold to the middleman who comes to the village after regular intervals and collects these handmade products. The women from middle and upper class are less involved in making the handicrafts, and if they make anything they rarely sell it. The working class too has low trend of handicraft making. Among the handicrafts embroidery is the most popular. Majority of the woman in the village knows the art of embroidery. They start learning this art from the early age. They do embroidery on shirts, veil, bed sheets, cushion covers, tablecloths, pillow covers and mantel covers for the household use and for their dowry.

After the embroidery, crochet work is the most popular handicraft among the women in the village. Few years back, crochet work was out of fashion, but now it is in. The women like to wear a veil with a crochet laces/border and shirts with crochet neck and sleeves. Besides doing crochet work on veil and shirts, women also make beautiful crochet table covers, bedcovers, dressing table covers and/sofa backs in beautiful designs. Two types of thread i.e. silken and woolen are used in it. The crochet work with silken thread is complicated and more time consuming, while with woolen thread it is easy to do in less time.

Knitting is also very popular among the women. They are so expert that they knit one full sleeve sweater in a week and a half sleeves sweater in three to four days. Now the trend of wearing handmade sweaters is decreasing day by day and the people have started using readymade sweaters.

The women from the lower and lower-middle class sell these handicrafts. They take orders from the village as well as from the middleman and produce the items according to their demand. Knitting is still the most profitable activity because such orders continue to pour in throughout the winter season. Stitching Quilts/mattresses is another source of income for the women particularly in the winter season as they are still in use. The women generally stitch one quilt and two bed mattress in a day.

Making and selling toys is another source of income for the women belonging to lower class. It is consuming as they have to go outside the village on foot to bring the mud, which they carry on their heads. After making the toys women hand them over to the men who put them in basket and sell them in Zandra and nearby villages. They go out for selling early in the morning and return before the sunset. The toys include utensils of daily use like bucket, stove and small animals including bull, dog, sparrow, horse etc.

Maids

There are some Afghan women who earn their living by working in others houses, providing various services including washing and pressing the clothes, washing utensils, cleaning house, kneading flour,

cleaning and storing wheat, bringing water from *karez* or the wells and working in the field during harvesting season. In return of their services, they are paid in cash or kind.

After finishing their own work at home these Afghan women go to work to others' houses. Most of them work in more than two houses. These maids used to bring water from *karez* or the wells for other people also, and get some money against each cane of water. Since 2002, this practice of bringing water from *karez* or the wells has almost finished because the government has provided water connections to every household. Now these Afghan women bring water for their personal use because they do not have water connections in their tents. They also work at the orchards on wages during the fruit plucking season. These women provide services in the fields on daily wage basis. They also provide their services for cleaning and grinding the wheat grains at homes for domestic use. In the past they used to be paid in kind, but now they all are paid in cash.

These maids are an earning hand of their families. In many cases, they contribute more than that of their male partner because their husbands are daily wage labourers.

Female Teachers

Teaching is the most popular occupation among the women of the village. It is considered respectable profession to earn regular income every month. The role of female teachers as contributors to the household economy is debatable, which we would discuss in detail later.

Trends have changed in Zandra. The number of educated females is increasing day by day, who prefer to teach in schools. Many women of Zandra go to schools in neighboring villages. Some are teaching in Quetta. They work seven to eight hours in schools six days a week. Majority of the lady teachers in the village don't do their domestic work. Those who are living in nuclear families hire maids for the purpose. They spend major portion of their salary in hiring domestic servants.

Working in Schools as Aaya (Maid)

The lower class women also get jobs in schools as *aaya*, (maid, female caretaker for the children) which helps them develop the household economy by making little financial contribution. These *aaya* render minor services in school like cleaning and dusting the classrooms and furniture, preparing tea for teachers, washing utensils, bringing minor things for the school from the nearby shop and ringing bell after every forty five minutes.

Dai (Midwife)

There are 4 qualified midwives in Zandra, two of them are experienced. They can conduct normal delivery cases. They also give medicines to the patients. They are unable to handle serious case and send them to hospitals in Quetta. One of them is very competent having thirty years' experience.

Indirect Contribution

In today's developed world women are participating in formal as well as informal activities on equal grounds, including religion, politics, economics, kinship and household activities. In third world countries, however, the situation is different. Most of the women are confined to houses with the responsibility of housekeeping, which consumes a lot of time and energy but it is always unpaid and least rewarded.

In Zandra, like everywhere, women play different roles as wife, mother, sister and daughter. As a wife, she plays the role of a housekeeper, a friend of her spouse, follower in various household activities etc. Basically, being a wife, woman is also a mother and in that capacity she has the most creative role to play. She bears and rears the children. As a daughter she brings joy and comfort to her family and specially provides relief to her mother by sharing her responsibilities of household work. In this way, woman has different roles by which she is contributing to her household economy she may contribute directly to the household economy by earning money and also indirectly by saving money and by doing all the house work by herself otherwise she may have to hire maids or servants. Thus, woman's work is as important as man's. She performs full time daily duties without any payment, besides her necessary domestic activities. Hence, household work becomes an indirect economic activity, through which the women contribute in their household economy.

Women directly or indirectly contribute to the household which proves greatly helpful in improving economic contribution of the family members. As mentioned earlier direct contribution means when the women are earning money through different activities and indirect means their contribution in the household chores which are unpaid but contributing a lot in the economy. Undoubtedly a family is an economic unit and everybody either male or a female is contributing into it. Direct contribution is very clear that you earn money and contribute. The indirect contribution does not make sense to many people. They always consider it as a burden over the women but they never realize the importance of this work. Many people speak in favour of direct economic contribution and discourage women to do their household works.

Household chores of women play an important part in household as well as overall economy of the society. Let's assume if the women refuse to work at home, men would be left with two options - either to work themselves or hire services. If they themselves start doing all the works, their capability and potential at work would suffer because when people are worried about their home they can't utilize their maximum potential. They always stay in two minds. Working at office with worries of home decreases their efficiency. The deteriorating efficiency is harmful for the personal career as well as the overall productivity. This is the reason why the big multinationals always provide all facilities at home to their employees whenever they hire them, so that the efficiency should be maximized. As for hiring of services is concerned let's assume a person who is working for Rs.10000 per month. When his wife stops doing household chores, he has to hire servants for the purpose and pay a heavy amount to them. In this situation he would not work for the same salary and may demand Rs.20000 per month. When this is the case with everybody, the employer would have no other option but to pay the demanded amount. In this way profit margin will decrease and the prices will go up. This would affect the overall economy of the country.

Women also indirectly contribute through socialization of their children. The mothers belonging to the middle class teach their daughters how to live in the given economic condition. They learn how to adjust and accommodate in meager financial resources. This socialization helps them throughout their life. Even after their marriages, they don't demand anything from their husbands which they can't afford. Thus the activities performed by women in the household are as important as any other economic activity.

Position of Economically Empowered Women

It is generally assumed that the women's status in the society is not equal to that of men. Women have less control on their lives. Respectability and social acceptability of women depend on strict adherence to the standard of feminine modesty and sexual seclusion. Traditionally, Pakistani society is patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal. Male is the only source of providing security and status to female. Women are expected to do only household chores. They have no political and economic rights.

However a close and deep study about the condition of women in the village reveals that women in various fields share equal rights and prestige with men. These days the economically empowered women of Zandra belonging to middle and upper classes do not have to face any hardships in their lives. They are living comfortable lives because they have money to spend and can hire services. They are working less than the women involved in household chores.

The life of rural women relates to a complete range of socio-economic activity. They are responsible for the household duties like daily routine work, child care and maintenance of the house, besides representing productive potential. The daily household activities of women have no visible economic value, but in fact, they carry great economic importance because their household work facilitates men to earn more money by remaining busy in the job. In Zandra women make indirect economic contribution but their position remain less than the economically empowered women. It is just the importance of work. Normally, more importance is given to women's direct economic activities because the flow of money is visible, while in indirect activities, it is invisible. The indirect ones may bring more economical benefits, but may be, at some other time. Proper socialization and training of children could be more important than earning money. That would also prove economically more beneficial for the future.

Wage earning women have higher status than that of non-wage earning women. The women belonging to poor households earn money by selling milk, milk products, poultry, eggs, or by tailoring. These women spend the earnings on their own wishes. In very few cases they spend their money on domestic requirement like if women are either self-supporter of the household or their husbands have little earning.

World System Analysis of Women's Employment

Certain important points have been further analyzed by linking to conceptual and theoretical discussions, which are as under.

The discussion so far clearly shows that the women are more empowered then in the past. There is a visible change in their daily routine. Initially the women were involved in the form as well as the livestock activities, but now they do not give much time for these activities. Their involvement in employment sector is increasing day by day. With the introduction of electrical home appliances the ladies have a lots of leisure time. Male migration also has changed their daily routine and decision making. The women have to perform duties which were actually associated with males. They have to visit the schools of their children, take their children to BHU for treatment when they are sick and sometimes have to go to the bazaar for shopping which really was a rare phenomenon because of parda.

The rural women of Zandra are contributing both in housekeeping as well as in wage-earning activities. Housekeeping includes taking care of children, peeling and cutting of vegetables, cooking, washing clothes and utensils or supervising the work of elder children. This whole activity is an indirectly participate in the household economy. Other than housekeeping women play a major role in the household economy by keeping livestock and poultry. They also contribute significantly in the horticultural/agricultural economy. Outdoor work in the fields is done by the lower class women. Middle and upper class women help in storage of the fruit and crops as an indoor activity.

In recent past the core countries have provided huge financial assistance to the NGOs in Pakistan to create awareness among women and their families so that the women should be part of economic activity. This type of investment also supports their cause. It benefits the core countries in different ways. It develops a market for their products and provides a cheap labour force for them. Poor implementation of labour laws gives a chance to the industrialists to enjoy long working hours without providing safeties and securities to the workers. Raw materials, lenient tax laws and absence of environmental issues are some other opportunities for the multinationals. The points raised by Wallerstein in this regard seem valid.

Phenomenon of women economic empowerment can also be seen in light of the above discussion. The core countries want to have a big and cheap labour force in underdeveloped countries. They want to bring the labour rates even lower by bringing women in employment sector as the work force increases the wage rate decreases. Thus by propagating the idea of economic empowerment of women they are serving their own vested interests as they are investing in the peripheral regions to occupy their big markets. By developing industry in the peripheral countries, they develop market for their own products. As industry comes and development starts, the subsistence economy changes into market economy, which creates a market for finished products marketed by the capitalist industry. By bringing the people of poor countries to the market economy they actually create a cheap labour force for them. They pay 10 times less than that what they have to pay in their own countries. The implementation of labour laws in peripheral countries is normally very poor. The industrialists force the labour to work for longer hours. They don't provide safeties and securities to the workers and there are also no environmental issues. So they are saving money through this cheap labour, and secondly, they evade taxes. The tax laws in peripheral regions are often very lenient and the tax payment ratio is also very low. The multinationals from the core countries set up their units in the underdeveloped countries with different names and show to their governments as if they are buying these products from there and save taxes.

The working lady who spends more than half of the day in office or at any other work place needs rest in remaining part of the day to get herself ready for another days work. In this situation she cannot do

her household chores. She has to hire services by paying quite a descent amount. She also has to keep herself fit for the job requiring new clothes, new shoes and cosmetics. Transportation too has to be arranged. There are many other things which need to be taken care of. The ladies mostly run short of money, and their husbands have to help them in fulfilling their requirements, which the nonworking class does not demand. The demand and consumption pattern of working ladies are often different from others because they have more exposure to the open market. They often spend more on the shopping as compared to nonworking class. Due to their social contacts number of guests and the expenditure on hospitality also increases. The husbands feel happy that their wives are earning which, but in real sense they are rather spending on their wives.

There are also some indirect costs of making women economically empowered, which we usually do not calculate. The working ladies cannot pay full attention towards their children leaving a bad impact on their education, health and personality development. She cannot do the household chores, which finally ends up in lack of efficiency at work for her husband. Owing to the third person's involvement, in form of maids and servants, their privacy suffers and they become more vulnerable to thefts and robberies. A cordial household environment cannot develop because of their nonparticipation in the household chores. So this economic empowerment of the women leads to family dismemberment and joint families spilt-up into nuclear families.

Mundy & Lynn (2001) have mentioned that the international agencies from core countries have started providing financial and technical assistance in the field of education to the peripheral countries through NGOs to set the goals and syllabus of their choice in the schools. It is not in the field of education only they are providing financial assistance for promoting handicrafts in the village also. The second option used by these agencies for promotion of handicrafts is through middleman who often visits the villages and gives certain initiatives to the people especially the women to make and sell handicrafts. Some notable NGOs such as NCHD, Taraki Foundation, Pipelines, and Jall are working in the irrigation, education and health sectors. NCHD and Taraki Foundation along with their educational projects are working for the promotion of handicrafts in the village. A middleman also comes to the village after regular intervals and collects the handmade products.

The handicraft production supports the industry in different ways. It supplements domestic economy which keeps the wage rates low. The middlemen are paying less to the craftsperson and enjoying big profit margins in the open market. Women keep themselves busy in making handicrafts and give less time to the household chores which increases their reliance on the consumer products. Population of the village starts increasing as it increases the workforce. More family members will make more handicrafts. Bigger population is a bigger market for the industry. It also support their pharmaceutical industry in a way that women start losing their health because of overworked and pregnancies after regular intervals to increase the workforce. Deteriorating health in peripheral countries always give boost to pharmaceutical industry in core countries.

Women in the village in various fields share equal rights and prestige with men. Economically empowered women belonging to middle and upper classes do not have to face any hardships in their lives. Wage earning women have higher status than that of non-wage earning women. Most of the wage-earning women do not contribute in household economy as it is considered as man's responsibility to provide money for household expenditures. On the other hand husbands contribute a lot for their wives to continue working.

The above discussion supports the world system approach. The argument developed by Wallerstein (1974, 1980 and 1989), Samir Amin (1970 and 1973), Cardoso & Falleto (1969), Santos (1970a) (1970b), Rodney (1974), Andre Gunder Frank (1969) seems valid.

CONCLUSION

Industrial Revolution in 18th century brought some significant change in man's life. The concept of development changed from enhancement of the richness of human life to the richness of the economy in which a man lives. Since then development was treated as an economic phenomenon only with industrialization as its pre-requisite. During last couple of decades the pace of the development has really been increased which forced the women to work in the employment sector. Core countries have

provided huge financial assistance through NGOs for that purpose because it provides them cheap labour on one hand and develops a market for their products on the other. Awareness programmes sponsored by the core countries always talk in favour of women employment but nobody has ever discussed anything about its hidden cost and the damaging effects on their social structures. Women employment has brought some major structural changes during recent past.

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