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ROLE OF WOMEN IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL - A GLIMPSE OF RURAL WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Abstract:

The proper development of our society is not possible without the collective participation of both male & female. The active participation of women in household is vital to make an efficient family as well as society. But their importance is never appreciated by the patriarchic society. As a result they are always deprived. Deprivation has become an integral part of their life; they are forced to live this life without any appreciation & expectation to our society. This picture is very common in rural India as well as the whole third world. The present paper has been prepared on extensive field survey at Banpur Mouza , Krishnaganj , Nadia, West Bengal, India.

KEY WORDS:

Eco-friendly work, Patriarchy, Paid & Non-paid service, Physical & Mental stress, Recyclable resource, Work politics.

INTRODUCTION

The status of women was very pathetic in the private & public sector throughout the history. Even their present condition is also not satisfactory by the practice of patriarchic nature. The role of women is limited to household to benefit the patriarchic society, where they are involved mainly in reproductive activities (child bearing, nourishing, feeding them etc.), serving of the male members in the family, Sharing the emotions of family. In this way they spend a major part of their life without nourishing their wishes, emotions & health. On the other hand, taking the physical weakness of women as advantage the patriarchic society has made the women as their slave & they bound up them forcefully in home. Technically & politically the patriarchic society has always undermined the women & their roles which are vital to our life & society, so the male carries on their dominance and control upon the woman to meet their physical & mental demands. Though the women are moving forward, getting education & working in public sphere but this is not the real story, because the present status of women in India in respect to different caste, class & religious group is too ugly. Though the actual development of society depends on equal and collective participation & contribution of both men and women but still the women are still far away from the main stream of society.

To quote Mahatma Gandhi "Women is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capabilities .She has the right to participate in the minutest details, in the activities of man & she has an equal right of freedom & liberty with them" (Gupta & Mashelkar, 2005).But the realities in India tells a different story.

STUDY AREA

For the present study, the Banpur Mouza (J .I. No-46) has been selected which is situated in the

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eastern boundary of the C.D. block of Krishnaganj of Nadia district. In terms of latitudinal & longitudinal extension the study area extends from 88 degree 45' 27" to 88 degree 45' 41" & 23 degree 27' 56" to 23 degree 25' 57" .The areal extension is about 418.4 hectare (4.18 sq.km.). Topographically the area is a part of mature deltaic plain of Gangetic plain, its average elevation above MSL is 35m. The Mathabangha River a distributary of the river Padma is the only river of this area which has enormous impact on the physical and cultural set-up of this area. The area bears the character of tropical humid types of climate.

Total population of this area is 5236. Out of which 2659 (50.78%) is male & 2577 (49.22%) is female population. The composition of population in respect to cast reveals that the total S.C. Population is 2844 (54.31%). Total number of ST population is only 8. The total number of general is 2384 (45.53%). The present sex ratio of the concerned area is 969 female / 1000 male. The work participation rate in between male & female is 96.66% & 3.34%. This tells us that the women of this concerned area are not economically independent. As per the census of India 2001, the study area has poor literacy. The rate of literacy is only 37% (1933 persons) out of which 1148 (59%) is male & 785 (41%) is female.

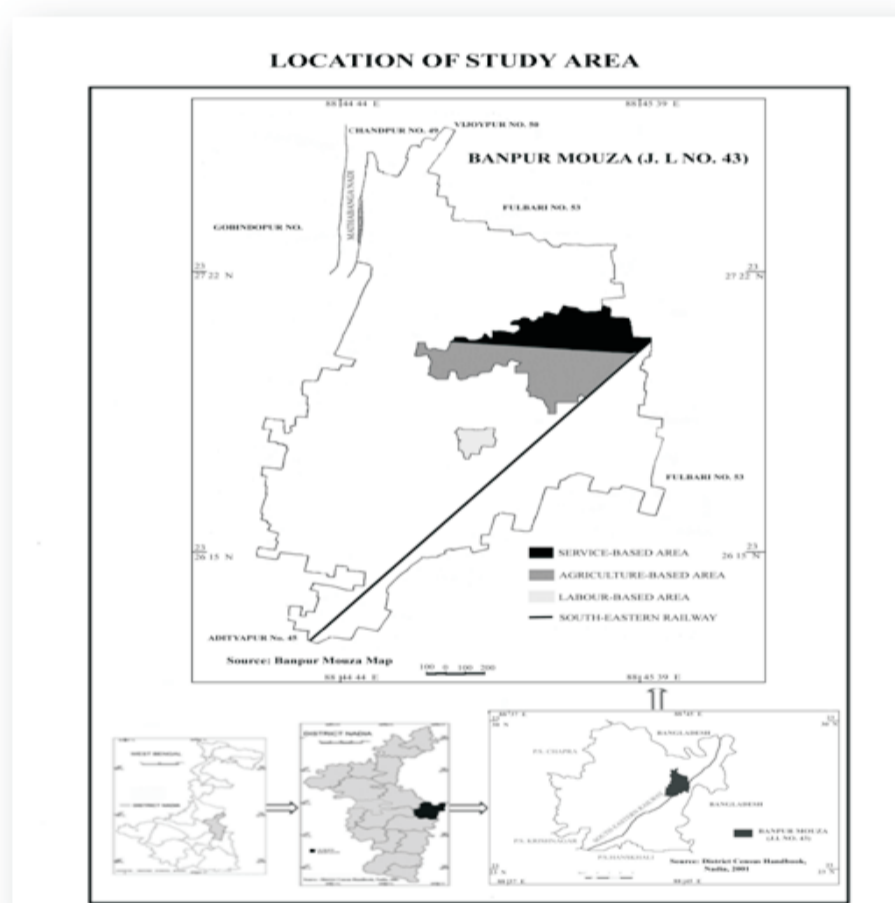


Fig. 1 Location of the Study Area

OBJECTIVES

- To find out the role of women in household resource management
- To find out male female work participation
- To find out gender based consumption of resources
- To know the social, economic & political status of women in household
- To know about the idea & perception of women about household resources
- To search for the remedial measures of resource development & management

DATA BASAE & METHODOLOGY

Secondary data has been collected from district census handbook from 1971 to 2010.

The primary data for caring out the research work have been collected from the field survey taking 10% sample household on stratified random basis from agricultural, laborer & service based economic household.

The paper has been prepared following a systematic methodology which can be subdivided into the following stages –

- Literature Survey: In this stage the authors has gone through an extensive literature survey regarding this topics.
- Collection of secondary material: In this stage secondary material has been collected from various sources.
- Collection of primary Data: Primary data regarding Gender based work participation in household & role of women to manage household resources have been collected from the field survey.
- Analysis of Data: The collected data have been analyzed with the help of different techniques like bar diagram, circle diagram, bi-variate correlation & tools like MS. Excel 2007 MS word 2007, Adobe Photoshop-7.

HOUSEHOLD WORK PRACTICE & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BY WOMEN IN DIFFERENT ECONOMIC HOUSEHOLDS

1) Women Involved in Paid & Non- Paid Services

Almost half of the working population of the study area is involved in informal sectors of economy. Information revealed by the sample survey states that out of 437 working population, 165 are male & only 55 are female involved in paid services. Out of the paid female workers, 26 are from agricultural sector, four are from laborer sector & the remaining 25 are from the service sector. The females are involved in paid services, all of them are not involved in formal sector. Only 11 females are involved in formal sector & 43 females are involved in informal sectors of economy. The total picture reveals the ugliness of women economic independency & women empowerment, which results in barrier like to make any decision about them and their family that directly or indirectly invites male dominance upon them.

Though the situation varies in different sectors of economic household of the study area but in case of agricultural household there maximum women are involved in paid services & the minimum number of women are involved in paid services is from the labor sector. But we can't conclude that the women from the agricultural sector are most empowered because involvement in paid services can't be the only measure of empowerment. There are several other factors like social, economic, ethnic, work type caste & religious factors; which must be considered. The researchers find that women of the laborer sectors are the most empowered in spite of being economically not so independent because, the other factors works positively in favor of them.

2) Water Resource Use & Management

Women have always a close relationship with water & nowhere so as in the South Asian sub-continent (Joy. & Paranjape, 2005). Most of the people of Banpur mouza are dependent on tube- well for drinking water & other purposes where as some are dependent on deep tube-well. Among the households of the study area about 96 family collects drinking water from tube- well, only 14 family collects water from deep tube well & 33 family collects water from both the sources.

Drinking water & water for domestic use have always been, & been as women's responsibility. It is they who spend a large part of their lives in fetching & storing water (Joy, & Paranjape, 2005). They spend an even greater part of their lives it utilizing it for cooking, for washing clothes & cleaning floors etc.

In household major portions of necessary water are collected by the women from the tube- well in household & out from deep tube well. In this way they spend a major part of a day avoiding their physical & mental stresses. Most of the women of service & laborer based household are involved to collect drinking water from deep tube well through walking short & long path (fig-2.a). In the case of agricultural household women are little involve in water collection from deep tube well because, they are involved in other household work practice (fig-2.b.).

Almost all of the collected water is used & also managed by them directly or indirectly. On the other hand the male part of society is deeply dependent on the women for water & many other resources. In

this way women manages the physical & mental health of other member family and ensures the development of society.

To understand the nature & face of water resource management a class wise analysis has been done of different economic household over daily family water budget on an arbitrary basis which provides us a general view of class wise use & management of water resource.

As far the data is concerned the relation between the family size & water use is more or less positive. It is very natural, though the relation varies slightly in different groups which may be due to different life style and practicing of different economic activities, beliefs, customs etc. An interesting reality has been revealed through the survey that in case of service based households they are the most conscious about water resource management. On the other hand the laborer based households are the most unconscious about water resource management.

Crisis of fresh drinking water is common picture in western districts of West Bengal where the women are involved to collect water from miles away. But the situation of the concerned study area is different as water crisis is not a common picture. So they haven't clear view about water scarcity. But surprisingly most of the villagers are involved in rain water harvesting for several domestic purpose and more surprisingly it is the women who plays the major role in rain water harvesting.

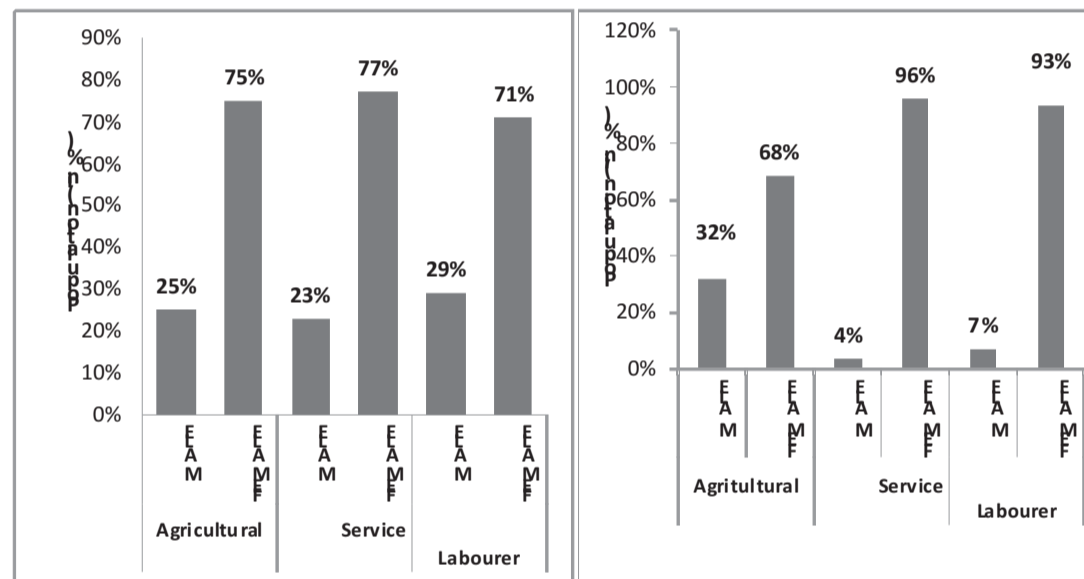


Fig. 2 (a) Water collection from shallow tube-well.

Fig. 2 (b) Water collection from deep tube-well.

Source: field survey (2012)

3) Fuel Resource Use & Management

Fuel is one of the most important resources used in household. Normally it is used to make food & other activities. But the whole process of collecting, shaping, using & making them as recyclable resource is conducted by the women.

In the study area it has been seen that 75% women form laborer class are involved in collecting fuel (dry leaps & branches of trees) from the nearer or remote forests. But the picture is opposite to the service sector, where least numbers of women are involved in collection of fuel. This is true to some extent to the agricultural sector, where only 35% women are involved in fuel collection process (fig-3.a.).

It has been seen that women not only deals the collection process but they plays a vital role to convert the fuel into usable form. In 81% cases women are involved in shaping the fuel resources (fig-3.b.). Not only collection & shaping of fuel but they also have an unparallel caliber in proper & optimum using of fuel resources to meet the daily family needs. It has been seen that the women of laborer sector are the most optimum user of fuel resources because the responsibility of fuel collection imposes upon them. The women's attitude about forest is f3 (f=food, f=fodder, f=fuel) that is the women are more serious about environment & makes themselves close to the nature. Whereas the men's attitude about the forest is 'T' (t=timber) i.e. commercial In this way the women directly or indirectly deals with the 'Materialistic approach'

of resource use.

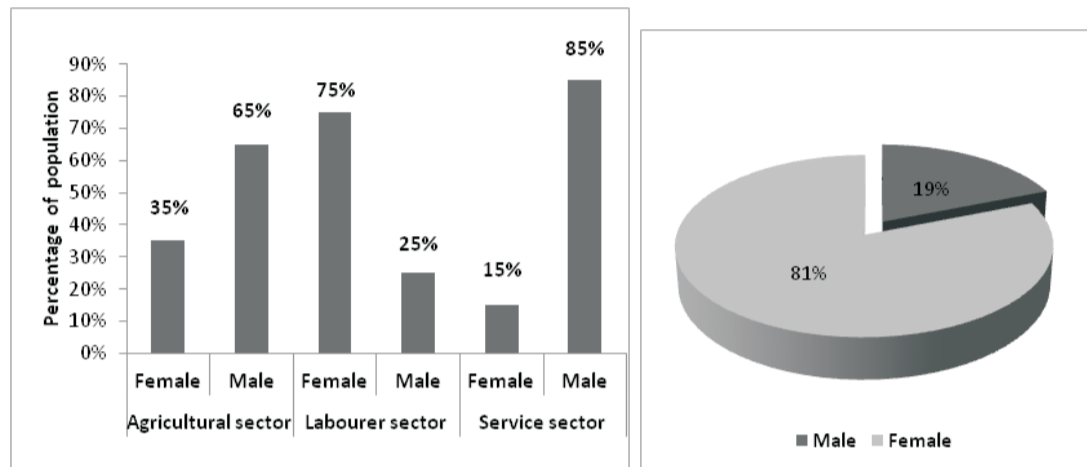


Fig. 3(a) Male-Female involvement in Fuel collection

Fig. 3(b) Male-Female share in shaping the Fuel

Source: Field survey (2012)

The woman plays an essential role in recycling of fuel resources. It is seen that in 90% cases the women are involved in making the recyclable resource but in case of using of those resources the picture is abruptly differs, where as in 90% cases the males are using the recyclable resources like as organic manure (fig-4.a & 4.b.). This states the importance of women in public sector. But in reality the Patriarchic society never brings it in focus.

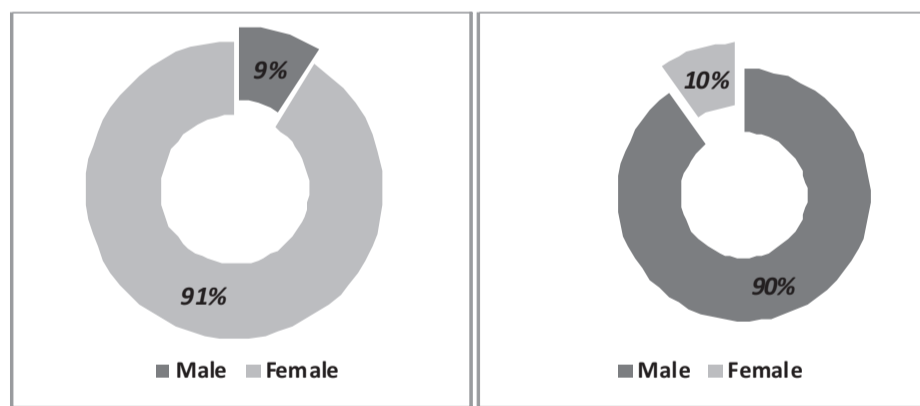


Fig 4 (a) Varying role played by Male & Female in

Fig. 4(b) Varying use of Recyclable resources

Making Recyclable resource

by male & female

Source: Field survey (2012)

4) HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The geometric growth of all other resources could not be possible without the development of human resource. Human resource includes human labor, power, knowledge, intellectuality, working

efficiency etc. which greatly depends upon his or her education, health, culture, & stages of technological development. Home is the miniature of these properties of human resources, where the women play a vital role to develop human resource in terms of quality & quantity. Health condition, child education, creativity, working efficiency of other members of family totally depends upon the women.

Though management & development of human resource is a matter of concern to both male & female members of family but in reality there is different picture of involvement of male & female in theoretical consciousness & practice in reality to manage & develop human resources (fig -5.a.). It has been seen that the women are more active & participative to develop human resources than the male parts of family (fig. 5.b.). Though in both aspects of resource development the women are much ahead than the men (fig-5.b.). It must be stated that the men are less active than the theoretical consciousness, which reveals not only their lazy attitude but also the habit of imposing the responsibilities of family management upon the women. This may be termed as one type of work politics.

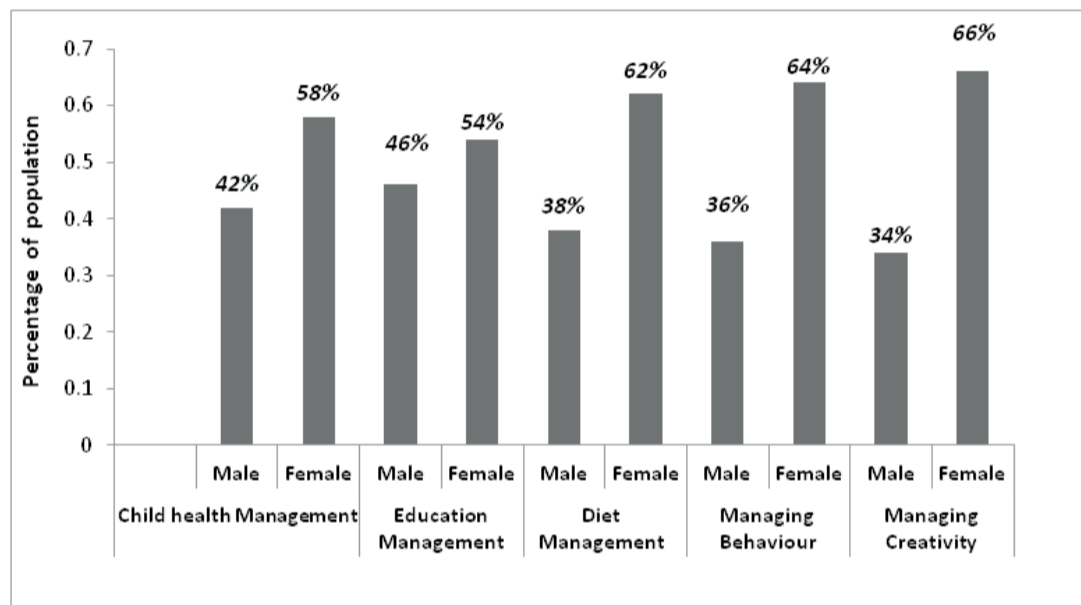


Fig. 5a Consciousness among male & female to develop Human resource

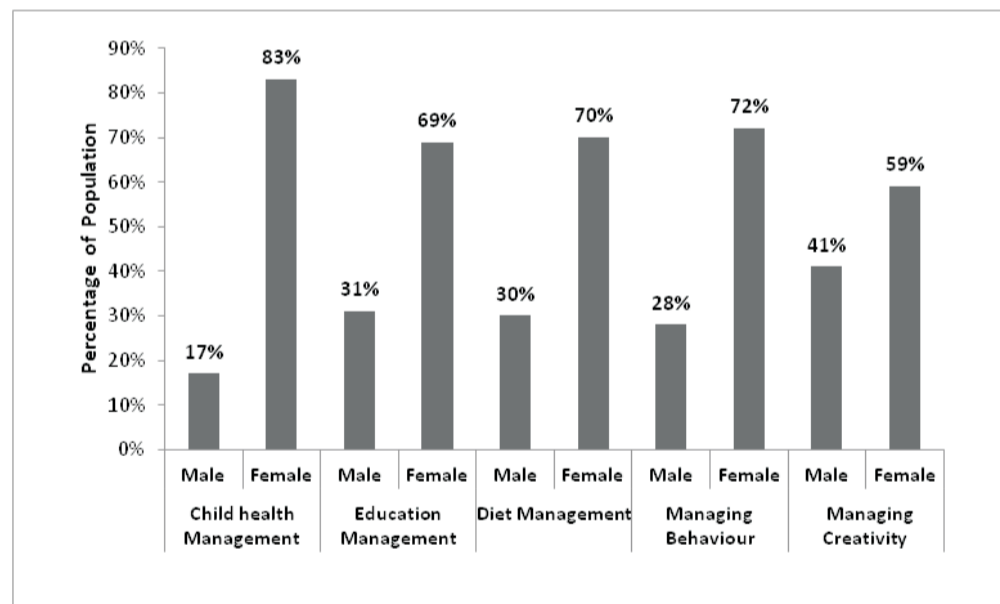


Fig. 5 (b) Practising male & female to develop Human Resources

Source: Field survey (2012).

There is a positive relation between human resource development & decision making capability of woman. But it is not true always, as per the survey is concerned in labor based family where 85% women are empowered but rate of human resource development is slow, because in labor class most of the people are illiterate & economically backward. But in case of agricultural sector & service sector the picture of women empowerment is not so good but they are in better position to make decision in family. Though it is too common that the women are not the decision maker but conductor of male's decision. Dr. Amartya Sen has put emphasis on the health & educational condition of every common man to develop human resource, especially the women & child because women health & education is the basis of human resource management (Das, 2005).

5) Participation in Household Economic Activity & Management

From very ancient period the women are playing an important role in managing non economic resources in family. Yet they have parallel role in mail dominated economic activities. It has been seen that in Banpur Mouza 90% women in agricultural sector, 87% in laborer sector, & 30% women in service sector cooperates their male parts though in agricultural household the work pressure varies seasonally with the harvesting season.

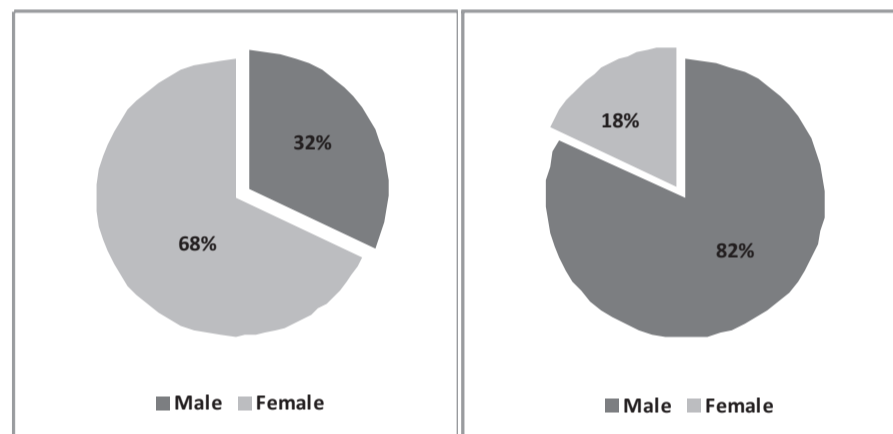


Fig. 6(a) Varying role played by male & female in creation & 6(b) using of Recyclable Resources

Source: Field survey (2012)

In the case of cottage industry 37% women in agricultural based household, 36% women in labor based household & 12% in service household are involved. Women of agricultural based household are mainly involved in making of paper packets & bidi binding, which is under their control. Where as in labor based household women are involved in bamboo weaving, which is predominantly male dominated.

They participate actively in recycling solid waste & making them as recyclable resources. In this area 68% of females are involved in this recycling process (fig-6.a.). They make the pastoral solid waste into organic manure, which is used in agricultural field by the male parts. In this respect we can see a dual role of male & female where, the women creates recyclable resources & 82% male uses this as organic manures in their agricultural field (fig- 6.b).

6) Eco-friendly Work Practice in Household

The term 'eco-friendly' – means the activities of man which are symbiotic in nature, which makes way to holistic development of society in true without damaging the nature. According to the advocates of essentialists that, women comes close to nature & loves the nature by the common instinct of them, because they fertile baby and take care of them. On the other hand the advocates of materialistic approach believe in that as the women are engaged with the nature by their activities so naturally they take care of the nature. It doesn't matter what's the reason of eco-friendly nature of women. Its matters that the women are much closer to nature which can be traced by their eco-friendly work practice in household like as gardening, taking care of various domestic animals & bird. In the concerned mouza it has been seen that in agricultural based household eco-friendly work practice is done by 83% female & 79% male, in labor based household

91% female & 82% males are involved where in case of serviced based household 55% females & 42% males are engaged in eco-friendly work practice which indicates poor eco-friendly work practice (Table 1). But in labor based household eco-friendly work practice is strong.

Table: 1. Practicing & non practising Male- Female population in Household eco-friendly activity

Agricultural household				Labour based household				Service based household			
Practice		Non-practice		Practice		Non-practice		Practice		Non-practice	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
79%	83%	21%	17%	82%	91%	18%	9%	42%	55%	58%	45%

Source: Field survey (2012)

MAJOR FINDINGS

In labourer sector, most of the women are involved in non paid services whereas the situation is different in service & agricultural sector. Which is very unlike in normal. Most of the people are unaware about water quality & crisis. The women from service based household are involve largely in water collection from out of household, where as the women from the agricultural sector are least involved in water collection from outside due to heavy work pressure. The women from the laborer sector manages the fuel resources most well because, it is collected by them.

Women takes the major responsibility to make recyclable resources where as the males are mainly the user of this resource. Though in case of agricultural & service sector males are involved in fuel collection but females gives the final shape to the fuel as usable. Women are not only more conscious than the male parts of family to use & manage energy resource, but they also tries to build consciousness among the family members directly or indirectly. In recycling process males are involved to make agricultural wastes to recyclable resources. But in case of pastoral solid waste recycling the women plays the vital role. In the question of consciousness to develop human resource both male & females are more or less same but in practice the women plays vital role. Though the women from the service sector are physically relaxed & consumes more resources but, they are not empowered enough than the women of other sector because, they has to limit themselves under the control of male in spite of having sufficient potentiality.

CONCLUSION

In the patriarchic society, women are deprived & victim of work politics in different fields in & out of household. Women play various responsibilities timely & dutifully as their moral duties. Though most of the responsibilities are imposed upon them by the patriarchic society but they also manage resources soundfully which enhances resource values and widens the development of family & society. Though it is credible & ironic but on the other hand it is pathetic because, they are deprived in the question of equality to the right of resource consumption & be a part of the emerging society. In this situation new paradigm should arise in our society. Where the role of men & women would not be distinguished from each other and there should be a situation of collective involvement of both male & female taking their positive attributes, which will accelerate the real development of family & society.

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