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“SOME ASPECTS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT”

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Abstract:

Status of women is affected by certain macro forces as economic development. Political participation, ideological overtones. It is also shaped by the norms and values, society lays down with regard to women's behaviour.

The contribution of women in economy is loaded with many problem areas. Such as women have been working and contributing to the family survival. Since time immemorial, in subsistence economy, family being the unit of production and major production centre being the home, women's participation has been accepted. Even in the traditional village economy women played an important and distinctive role both in production and marketing, which they continue till today. Women weaving the baskets or processing the food grains, selling vegetables, helping the potter husband in preparing the clay and so on.

INTRODUCTION

In the initial phase of industrial development in textiles, jute industries as well as in mines and plantations, women's participation was recognized. Problems about women's employment are a good deal of women's work remains invisible. Eg. Contribution of rural women working in agricultural sector, looking after the cattle goes unrecorded; they are called as 'Family workers' with hardly any control over their earning. The census report says that 75% of women are working in agricultural sector, while 38% of the women are working as helpers in non-agricultural sector. But when the census enumerators go to these women and ask about work they are doing, they bring to light the numerous productive tasks that women are doing and the extent of their day to day involvement in them.

About 70% of women are working in the 'unorganized sector' which implies that women workers are insecure, unprotected by any legislation, long hours of work and little reward. In the urban middle class there is an increase of white collared women workers, the rising cost of living access to education and social change, in urban areas have led to the withdrawal of the taboos that earlier affected women of higher classes now has enabled some of them to enter new professions or occupations in the tertiary sector, which were closed to them earlier. The increase of administrative jobs both in public and private sector created a demand for educated personnel. Development activities and welfare work also made openings for scientific, technical, medical and para-medical persons for a long time teaching was an acceptable job; if it is in a women's college it is considered far better as the job means little physical mobility not too much mixing with men at work. Vacation and it was ideal extension of women's traditional child care functions.

It is true that relatively a large number of women are entering into the employment sector. An increase in female literacy level on the one hand and extension of employment opportunities for women in the non-agricultural sector on the other for example. In 1971 the total work force of the country women's share was

around 13.0% and it increased to 28.57% in 1990. In spite of this increase, majority of women who are ready to work are not finding suitable work to do. Majority of employed women are illiterate of every 100 women employed. 52-59% of them are illiterate and 28.56% have studied up to elementary level, illiteracy is true of especially women working in rural areas in unorganized sector who are totally exploited by their employers. Women working in factories, mining, building constructions in dams, bridges, road repair under labour contractors etc. who are not only paid less but also made to work unhealthy surroundings.

Technological development seems to have a negative effect on employment opportunities of women studies conducted between 1975-1985 have revealed this fact. Application of new technology is agrarian sector, textiles, jute, pharmaceuticals, cashew, fisheries, tobacco, animal husbandry, fruits and vegetable processing etc. rendered many women jobless, and computerization has also adversely affected the job prospects of women as clerk, typist and accountants.

Before we discuss the implication of women working in unorganized sector, one important observation about the middle class educated working women needs mention. Though married and working these women live within the patriarchal male dominated family structure. Hence outside job, howsoever prestigious or lucrative it is, does not absolve women from their familial role.

Example: Women's work is never taken seriously and they say that they have no control over it and they are always tied to their husband's career, if husbands are posted away, women either leave their jobs or live with the family away from the husband. If they are interested in their work. Many such mechanisms are adopted because society still considers women's role as primary home makers.

Recently considerable attention has been drawn to the development of the informal or unorganized sector like in the manufacturing establishment like garments, beedi making, food processing, working in electronic assembling jobs, packing, preparing bags, in construction sites etc. Example: In Nipani women working in tobacco industries are similar industries.

These industries prefer women because they are cheaper, they can be easily cheated and will not unionize. These industries being in the small sector, the employees are able to avoid giving any protection in terms of maternity leave, minimum wages. This situation gets aggravated in the areas declared as free trade and export promotion zones.

Example: In Kandla Free Trade Zone where readymade garments, knitting units, electronic units etc. are operating, the bulk of labours are women workers, who are below 20 years. The work day of these women starts 4:00 AM and ends at 10:00 PM because they have to do the household work also.

It is true to mention that irrespective of the class to which a woman belongs housework is considered as her primary responsibility. The sexual division of work in the family is very sharp and pronounced. The preparation of the resultant double burden makes the life of working women full of strains and tensions. In short the way in which the economy has been developing, through the door of outside employment for women has been opened, but working women's life is very hard and at times not fully recognized and rewarded.

The conclusion one can draw is that women have to find a job or vocation patterns rather than choose a vacation which itself defines their life graph as in the case of men. A man's life and achievements or success is defined by what position, money, fame he achieves in his profession alone. A woman's success is judged by a different yardstick altogether, has she performed her various roles well? Is she a good daughter? An efficient wife and loving mother? Does she manage her house and look after her family well? Is she always available when her family needs her? Over and above these has she the right attitude to earning self-reliance? Does she hand over earnings to the family purse, without caring for personal security? Has she carrying all this baggage achieved success in her career? Then alone is her success truly valued by society. A broken family, unhappy marriage or motherhood devalue, a woman's performance whereas a man's professional excellence remains undiluted by any of these.

The above statements make clear that it constitutes a glass ceiling in every working woman's life. She has to tailor her vacation and success to the life which culture and tradition bestow upon her.

The Dual personality she inherits by birth as a female. In her parental home, at least in urban educated home she is encouraged to achieve excellence in anything she does and the same parents entreat her to put her husband and in-laws first from day one after her marriage. She has to change her personality and goals drastically to adjust and fit in to her new family. In many families, her husband or in-laws decide the scope of her work and success.

Motherhood is the second event, which changes her life especially when nuclear families are the order of the day. Where extended and joint families are vanishing in cities, women have no infrastructure and support system to depend upon like the dearth of reliable domestic workers. Even when women choose to have only child, the tussle between motherhood and career ambition creates a ceiling in a woman's life.

In modern days most high level corporate jobs, media assignments. It carries need endless time for hard, concrete works. Example, those who are brilliant and personable and willing to give abundant time

to profession have a better chance of making it to the top, accepting transfer linked with promotions have more opportunities of reaching the top rung of success. Obviously, women cannot run fast in this race, because they must give equal attention to family. Also India does not offer a safe and secure environment for single women to live alone in cities. Thus lack of mobility and inability to devote the maximum time to career causes a ceiling where women can see their goals but cannot reach them.

Lastly there is also gender inequality at work, like several harassment and different treatment at work also keep women out of main stream top jobs. As women have to be more cautious than men in guarding their reputations. Women can beat all these circumstances at right time at the right door of opportunity with right support structure.

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