

Valuation of the Potential and Role of women for Socio-Economic Development

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Abstract: The women's issue has moved center-stage in our thinking and women's participation is now an inseparable part of the rhetoric and theory of planning. Gender equality and gender justice are still distant dreams. Women constitute the most elegant resource of a society and are dynamic source of power. Women have the invisible work force which keeps the family and economy alive. In India, women represent half of the population and so their participation in the household and economic activities at par with men is necessary for the development of mankind. The development of economically independent among women is a definite step to draw them into the mainstream of national life and improve their social and economic status. The present paper would evaluate the role of women for development process.

Keywords: Rhetoric, Inseparable, Entrepreneurship, Dynamic

1. Introduction

Women constitute the most elegant resource in a society are dynamic source of power. They comprise the very backbone of a family with multiple role players of a mother, a wife, a pretty sister and a host to others. Historically, we live in past and to overcome this, major changes are required in our mindsets. It would not be out of place to quote legal educator N.R. Madhava Menon who says “ We operate in 21st century system with 20th century structure and 19th century mindset”. The status of a nation and the overall socioeconomic condition can very well be assessed by judging and appraising the status of its women. Women throughout the world have been considered as a weaker sex in economic, social and technological activities but in reality their contribution is not less than that of their counterparts. Women are expected to seek occupational roles, which stress the aspect of service and cooperation with men rather than competition.

New paradigm of economics has created new challenges and opportunities having varied impact on different sections of the society. On one hand this has created greater opportunity for

educated, professional women as well as men, but on the other hand the increasing market competition has intensified the pressure particularly on women. They not only have to perform their traditional roles of providing care to other members of the family, but they also have to look for paid employment as well, to supplement the income of the household.

In India, women constitute nearly half of the population so, we as a nation can not effort to keep half of the population away from their participation in economic development . The development of entrepreneurship among women is a definite step to draw them into the mainstream of national life and improve their social and economic status. Women are endowed with psychological qualities and managerial abilities that lead to successful entrepreneurship. They have some strong qualities that are desirable and relevant to entrepreneurship development, such as their ability to manage details, dedication to work they undertake, tolerance and kindness towards others. A significant section of women in India usually engaged in household duties participates nominally in the activities of the households enterprises, but they do undertake many activities which provide economic benefits to their households. A large majority of women are active in the informal sector involving activities like petty trading, food processing, handicraft, home based work and other underpaid services. However, their contribution in the informal sector does not get due credit.

Women participation in the labour force has been increasing in most of the countries since the last few decades. The increase in women's participation in Asia is, however, less marked than in the industrialized countries and Latin America. Within Asia, women's participation has clearly risen in South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. Despite progress over the past 30 years, unacceptably low level of income, education, health and nutrition persist in some developing countries, especially among women and girls. Indian case is similar to the development experiences of other countries involving a shift out of women workers from the unpaid family worker status to that of employer. An improvement of the working condition wages and salaries of women workers is also a high priority concern.

The employment pattern and job preferences of women have started changing in their occupational structure since the last few decades and it is expected that this process will continue in future also, particularly in both the non agriculture and agriculture sectors. The economic role of women in India reveals certain distinct trends. The traditional village community in India

consisted of the cultivators, the artisans and these performing menial services. In each of these, the women played distinctive role in the process of earning a livelihood for the family putting in sometimes more, sometimes less and often equal amount of labour in both production and marketing of agricultural product.

1.1. **Women's Role in Society**

The woman, whose status and role traditionally was well defined and almost fixed in the society, is now experiencing far-reaching changes. The woman in modern times is entering into certain new fields that were unknown to the woman's sphere of role-sets. They are actively participating in social, economic, and political activities. The women of the present generation have generally received higher education than the women of their preceding generation. There have been far reaching consequences in the economic status of their families. The modern women are inclined towards the social issues, and trying hard to improve the social status of women at large. Increased awareness and education has inspired women to come out of the four walls of the home. Many women actively supported and participated in the nationalist movement and secured eminent positions and offices in administration and public life in free India. Traditionally Indian women exist because of the family and for the family.

Just like their man counterpart, women are also fond of attending social functions and value her social life quite a lot. Previously, men-folk used to discourage women from leaving their households for attending social functions. Now the spread of education, especially that of women, and with that the changing social attitudes of educated women have changed the order. The modern woman has started caring for her health, figure, cultural needs and interests, academic pursuits, social intercourse, religious activities recreational needs, etc.

1.2. **Women's Involvement Process**

Women have to manage everything with limited time and resources. They have to take care from small care to high professionals. And at the same time they have to consider each and every person's ideas. Women have been managing home since time immemorial that is why they are even regarded as home makers. The patience and perseverance that we find in women is rare to find in men. Women have thus constantly proved that they are not only good at managing homes but also organizations. Not to forget Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the India's first woman Prime Minister, Mrs Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, the first President of the county in recent past, India-

born Indra Nooyi the current Chairman and Chief Executive officer of PepsiCo, Padmasree Warrior the ‘Queen of the Electric Car Biz’ the former Chief Technology and Strategy Officer (CTO) of Cisco System and the list goes on. Women are becoming more and more confident, capable to handle any situation, tasks and challenges.

Women constitute the invisible work forces, which keeps the family and economy alive. Women represent half of the world’s population and one third of the official labour force, but they received only one per cent of the world income. Women, especially those in the low-income strata, traditionally have contributed to productive activities such as agriculture (mostly small-scale), agro-processing crafts and home industries, trade and commerce, but there has been a tendency to underestimate their economic roles and to undercount their participation due to inadequate data, prevailing definitions of economic activity and current sampling and interviewing procedures employed in obtaining national statistics. More attention has been focused, especially in national plans and programs, on their reproductive and child-nurturing roles.

Women provide household services without the service provision being considered work and without the values of that work being recorded. Even in developed countries, women are consistently found to spend more time than men on household responsibilities and childcare even if women are employed fulltime in a paid job. Women’s economic and social status within the household determines her ability to effect decisions, which ensure the health and well being of the family. Caring capacity however goes beyond physical care. It also involves mental care that related to love, respect, psychological and social development.

In an attempt to understand the critical dimension of women’s involvement and ability the present paper measures the scale and nature of women’s contribution to the different categories of work.

2. **Objectives of the Study**

- To analyze the role of women in economic development.
- To study the ability of women as decision-makers.
- To suggest various measures for enhancing women's actual potential role in productive and social activities to the national development process.

3. **Methodology**

In the present paper district Una of Himachal Pradesh has been selected purposely because this district has got peculiar vagaries not only in terms of terrain but also in terms of socio-economic structure. The study is based upon the interview method of the data collection from a sample of randomly selected 150 females from different age group. In the survey, data were collected regarding the various types of economic activities, decision making command and income earned by female during the year 2015. Income earned on daily wages, monthly and yearly through primary production, secondary sector and tertiary sector activities were calculated. These activities are referred to as the system of National Account Activities (SNA). The nature of the system of SNA activities is quite clear because these activities form the exchange system in the market and these can also be purchased and sold. For the purposes of economic valuation, value is synonymous with the market value or value is simplified by assuming that an hour of market work and an hour of non market work have the same value. The tools of analysis are mainly ratio and percentage. The results have been accordingly interpreted and on the basis of analysis and findings, measures have been suggested.

4. **Results and Discussion**

4.1 *Involvement as producers, and income-generators.*

The study of women activities is important because these have direct bearing on the status of women and economic development of a country. In the present paper, the SNA activities comprise of three groups of activities namely Primary production, Secondary and Tertiary activities. The second group is the extended system of national account (ESNA) activities. This category of activities is mainly related to the household domestic work, which is unpaid, unrecognized and involve no market value in the form of payment of wages. These can also be performed by hired labour that is why these are referred to as ESNA activities.

The table-1 shows the work distribution of SNA and ESNA activities of females. In primary sector activities the participation of females was 30.66% in secondary sector activities female contribution was only 10.66% from the total sample females i.e. 150.

Table-1: Actual and imputed values of income of household worker from different activities
(Value in Rs.)

Category	SNA			Actual value of SNA in Rs.	E-SNA				Imputed value of E-SNA in Rs.
	Primary Sector	Secondary Sector	Trade Business Services		Home Management	Family Care	Animal Care	Community Services	
Female	46 (30.66)	16 (10.66)	67 (45.00)	7025.61 (16.29)	150 (100.00)	138 (92.00)	76 (50.06)	15 (10.00)	36088.50 (83.71)

Note 1: The figure in the parenthesis denote the percentage of females from total sample females

2. Because of the multiple views of the females, the percentage sum will not be equal to hundred and will be more than hundred.

This category includes manufacturing activities like making of tools, machinery, moulding, welding, assembling machines and equipment. In construction activities like bamboo work, roofing, repair of animal sheds, construction of public works, common infrastructure roads, building and bridges. These activities require much expertise, skill and craftsmanship. Only men can undertake such arduous skilled and hazardous jobs because of their physical superiority and acquired skills for years together. The third part of SNA activities are trade, business and services. The services consist of employment in government, semi government, and private organization, petty services like working as sweeper, hasher, barber, cobbler, guarding and professional services like medical, educational services. In this category out of the total sample females 46.66% were engaged in this sector. Hence, it can be concluded that 54.00% of the sample females were not working under this paid SNA activity. They are earning only 16.29% of their income from the SNA activities during the year. The findings presented above clearly indicate that females have less opportunity to participation in this paid labour activity.

Recognizing the true magnitude of unpaid household labour, calls for estimating the monetary value of such household work. Australia has been a pioneer in the valuation of household labour. The world over, women are responsible for the major part of domestic activities; this is why the Human Development Reports repeatedly put some emphasis on this aspect of women's activity. Women's unpaid work needs to be visible, quantified and well recognized. On the other side by contrast, the females earned imputed average income from these ESNA activities was much higher 83.71 per cent of their valued income. The majority of imputed income earned by them was found to have come from household domestic chores, followed by family and animal care activities. This result is also significant from the point of view of gender discrimination.

Contribution as Decision-makers.

In spite of high claims of the subscribers of empowerment theory, there remains an apprehension whether women are able to take their personal decisions independently. The women's decision making process is influenced by their work patterns, economic and social activities, family structure, traditions, environmental and technological conditions based on local availability of the resources.

Decision Making In Household Activities

Moreover decision taking by women within the household depends on her age and status. The adult married women have the power to decide what tasks are to be carried out and who is to share the responsibility. She usually supervises her daughters or any other younger women in the household. The Table-2 shows decision making regarding food related activities like purchase of food items, cooking and cleanliness, household maintenance, management and shopping for own household durables, care for children, the sick, elderly and disabled along with social, cultural and religious works. The table indicates that the household's decision making with regards to purchase of food items was 24.00 per cent because women were just consulted but did not act as major decision makers. The decision making in cooking and cleanliness activities was 91.33 per cent which shows the main concern of females

Table-2: Decision making on household activities

Household activities	No. of females
Purchase of food items	36 (24.00)
Cooking and cleanliness	137 (91.33)
Household maintenance, management and shopping of durables	61 (40.67)
Care of children, sick, elderly and disabled	82 (54.66)
Social, cultural and religious works	21 (14.00)

Note 1: The figure in the parenthesis denote the percentage of females from total sample females.

2. Because of the multiple views of the females, the percentage sum will not be equal to hundred and will be more than hundred.

In household maintenance, management and shopping of durables activities 40.67% of sample females took decision. The decision regarding care of children, sick, elderly and disabled

was 54.66% by females. Thus it is clear that the possibility of independent decisions by females were very rare in the household activities.

Decision Making in Farm Activities

Rural women are intensively involved in agricultural activities. The farm related work has been divided into seven important activities choice of subsistence crops to be grown, choice of cash crops to be grown, planting trees, livestock rearing, labour hiring, purchase of agrochemicals and quantity of food produce to be sold. It is clear from the data in Table -3 that in case of choice of subsistence crop to be grown only 21.34 per cent of sample females is participating. Their maximum participation is only in the livestock keeping activity i.e. 44.34 per cent. Hence, it is also found that men dominates in decision making regarding allocating of land for cultivation to grow different crops, money to be spent for purchase of agricultural implements, labour employment, application of fertilizer, insecticides, sale of farm produce and regarding loans.

Table-3: Decision making on Farm activities

Farm Activities	No of females & %
Choice of subsistence crops to be grown	32 (21.34)
Choice of cash crops to be grown	12 (08.00)
Planting trees	11 (07.34)
Livestock keeping	62 (44.34)
Labour hiring	29 (19.33)
Purchase of agro chemicals	02 (01.30)
Quantity of food produce to be sold	41 (27.33)

Note 1: *The figure in the parenthesis denote the percentage of females from total sample females.*

2. *Because of the multiple views of the females, the percentage sum may not be equal to hundred*

Decision on Miscellaneous Activities

Women's economic and social status within the household determines her ability to effect decisions, which ensure the health and well being of the family. The Table-4 indicates female participation in the decisions relating to children education, health care, employment, land ownership and financial matters. It was found among the sample females that only 16.00 per

cent females took decision regarding children education. The maximum participation of females was found in the other requirements relating to social ceremonies i.e. 54.66 per cent . Moreover, in the remaining miscellaneous activities their power of decision making was almost negligible. It may be noted that in the study area the strong patriarchal system of society is prevalent where normally decisions are made by male heads.

Table-4: Decision on Miscellaneous activities

Decision making	No of females
Children education	24 (16.00)
Health care	11 (07.33)
Employment decisions	04 (02.66)
Land ownership decision	Nil
Financial matters	02 (01.33)
Other requirements relating to social ceremonies	82 (54.66)

Note 1: The figure in the parenthesis denote the percentage of females from total sample females. 2. Because of the multiple views of the females, the percentage sum may not be equal to hundred

Despite being educated and economically independent, by and large, women are influenced and governed by male folks .It is to be explored whether the benefits of women empowerment have percolated into domain of women and thereby have truly enriched their lives.

5. Concluding Remarks

The women allocate their time to market production, home production and reproduction. In market production, they work and earn wages; in home production, they are the household managers but their jobs considered as non productive. Moreover reproduction is also considered as part of home production and remains unrewarded. Last but not the least, she has to be a caring mother, raise children and be a nurse for the whole family.

Moreover women are quite decisive about shouldering additional responsibility to augment the meagre household income of the family. A large section of women, even if they are not working outside their home as wage earners, do not consider themselves as unemployed, as

many among them were not even ready to come out of their house premises for work. But they are willing to accept certain types of work if it is made available at their house premises.

If women are to be effective agents of human capital development, particular attention should be paid to enhancing their contribution and taking into account their needs, multiple roles and changing economic and family situations. This means that more recognition must be given to their current and potential contribution as producers, as decision-makers and as income-generators.

As the information and statistical data available on the role of women in economic and social development is still limited. The need of the hour that the qualitative information on the participation of women, especially research on women's actual and potential participation in productive activities, decision-making ability and social activities has to enhance their contribution. Moreover educated women are just on the threshold of transition from tradition to modernity. The women themselves desire that their status and position in society should rise higher. Though a proper climate for such a change is still wanting, yet there have been many structural and statutory innovations for the improvement of their position. The traditional status and role sets of women are breaking up and new role-sets based on achievement, independence and equality are gradually coming up.

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