

Role of Women Workers in Indian Economy

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the role of Indian women at home and work has taken a multifaceted dimension. India being one of the fastest growing economies, the contribution of women is growing at a steady pace. Most Indian women by and large undertake “productive work” only under the economic compulsion. Most of the women are found to be employed in agricultural activities and in the unorganized sector, the employment of women is high in certain works such as part time helpers in households, construction centres, tanneries, match box, beedi industries etc.

As per Census 2011, workers constituted 39.79 per cent of total population whereas the ratio of female workers was 25.51 per cent. At All-India level the percentage share of females as cultivators, Agricultural labourers, workers in the household industry and other workers stood at 24.92, 18.56, 2.95 & 47.20 respectively. The percentage of female main workers to total female population stood at 25.5 which shows an increase as compared to 14.68 reported in the 2001 Census.

Knowing their dual role in the economy, significant contribution in G.N.P. dedication towards the family on one way and gender discrimination, exploitation, health related problems, occupational related problems and working conditions on the other, provide an insight to comprehend the vastness and uniqueness of the issues related to women in India.

Women in India constitute almost half of the population. Women’s role in the present society has become more pertinent than ever because of the changing scenario of the society. Globalisation demands the string change about women’s involvement in all spheres of life.. Developed countries take their women’s role more seriously than developing nations

Out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women, Of those, roughly 106 million work in rural areas and the remaining 18 million work in urban areas. Ninety six percent of the women workers are in unorganized sector, overall the female work participation rates has increased from 19.67% in 1981 to 25.5% in 2011. It has increased from 23.06% to 30% in the rural areas and from 8.3 to 15.4% in urban areas. Although more women seek work, vast majority of them get only poorly paid jobs in the informal sector without any job security or social security.

TOTAL WORKERS IN INDIA - 2011 CENSUS

Population/ Workers	Persons		Male	Female
1	2		3	4
Population	Total	1,21,05,69,573	62,31,21,843	58,74,47,730
Workers		48,17,43,311	33,18,65,930	14,98,77,381
Percentage of Workers		39.79	53.26	25.51
Population	Rural	83,34,63,448	42,76,32,643	40,58,30,805
Workers		34,85,97,535	22,67,63,068	12,18,34,467
Percentage of Workers		41.83	53.03	30.02
Population	Urban	37,71,06,125	19,54,89,200	18,16,16,925
Workers		13,31,45,776	10,51,02,862	2,80,42,914
Percentage of Workers		35.31	53.76	15.44

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

Note: Workers include both main workers and marginal workers.

WORK PARTICIPATION RATE BY SEX IN INDIA (1971-2011)

Year	Total/ Rural/ Urban	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5
1971	Total	33.08	52.61	12.11
	Rural	34.03	53.62	13.42
	Urban	29.34	48.82	6.68
1981	Total	36.70	52.62	19.67
	Rural	38.79	53.77	23.06
	Urban	29.99	49.06	8.31
1991	Total	37.50	51.61	22.27
	Rural	40.09	52.58	26.79
	Urban	30.16	48.92	9.19
2001	Total	39.10	51.68	25.63
	Rural	41.75	52.11	30.79
	Urban	32.25	50.60	11.88
2011	Total	39.8	53.3	25.5
	Rural	41.8	53.0	30.0
	Urban	35.3	53.8	15.4

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

2. SECTORWISE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA

Employment statistics relate to the persons employed directly or by or through any agency, (including a contractor) with or without the knowledge of principal employer whether for remuneration or not in any manufacturing process, or in cleaning any part of the machinery or premises used for manufacturing process, or in any other kind of work incidental to, or connected with the manufacturing process, or the subject of the manufacturing process. Thus, the definition of “worker” covers not only manual workers but also those supervisory and clerical personnel who are connected with the manufacturing process.

The statistical profile of workers reveals the following information about the female workers in India:

Average Daily Employment of Women in Factories reveals that the percentage share of women to total employment is 15.65 in 2010 as compared to 8.41 in 2008.

Sex-Wise Distribution of Employment of Adult Workers in Factories by Specified Normal Weekly Hours of Work depicts that a majority of the female workers i.e. 482779 worked above 45 hours and up to 48 hours per week during 2010.

Share of Women Employment in Mines:

The statistical data shows that share of women employment in all mines and coal mines was reported as 4.41 per cent and 3.05 per cent respectively. Among non-coal mines, Magnesite mines employed the highest percentage of women workers i.e. 40.26 percent whereas no woman worker was employed in Gypsum mines during 2010.

State-wise and Sex –wise average daily employment of Adults, Adolescent and Children Employed in Plantations during the year 2000-2010 states that during 2010 in plantations sector, average daily employment of female workers was highest in Assam.

Employment of Women Workers in Public and Private Sectors:

Employment of women workers in public sector and private sector were reported to be 3170.64 thousand and 2783.47 thousand respectively during the year 2011

Due to the changing scenario of the nation, the picture of the economy is changing. Women workers have tremendously increased not only in the rural sector but also in the urban sector. As per the report of Directorate General of Employment and Training the percentage of Educated Women Job-seekers to total Women on Live Register was 85.3.

In spite of such a high contribution of female workers in Indian economy, women are not being paid according to their contribution. Women in India are struggling hard with many constraints in the employment. One of the prominent is gender discrimination.

AVERAGE DAILY WAGE RATES BY SEX – 2009-10

Population Groups	Average Daily Wage (in Rs)		
	Regular Workers	Casual in Public Works	Casual in Other Works
1	2	3	4
Male	330.08	98.80	106.31
Female	249.51	86.54	70.19
All	315.48	93.71	96.56

Source : Directorate General of Employment & Training

The above table clearly reveals the wage differences in all types of work. There is clearly gender based division which has extended from household work to labour work. Women play a dual role sharing full time household responsibilities along with the job. Women are generally engaged in low skilled, low paid jobs. It is also being observed overtime that men are occupied in mechanized operations whereas women are engaged in manual work. The plight of women workers in India is miserable as they work for extremely low wages with long working hours. Unsatisfactory working conditions with a total lack of job security and social security benefits. Wage discrimination has been seen through decades in women employment. There is prejudice that a woman is physically inferior to man in strength and capacity to work. In most of the cases in spite of equal work women are paid less because of her sex.

3. CONCLUSION

Rates of labour force participation in India women have increased post-1990 at a greater rate than men's, although women still represent less than half the labour force overall, have higher levels of unemployment, have experienced little change in their occupational structure, and are disproportionately represented in the informal economy

As Samuleson (1976) maintains, 'It has been quite impossible to differentiate between the co-operative roles of men and women in producing the G.N.P. In developing economies, the discrimination against women is seen more than in developed countries. In these countries, work force participation rates of women are significantly lower than that of men.

The Seventh plan draft(1985) maintains that, "A number of social enactment have been put on the statue books for removing various constraints which hinder women's progress. In spite of these measures they have lagged behind men in different spheres"

The unpaid economic activities of women and their contribution through work in the domestic activities remain unreported even today. An ILO study has estimated that the value of unpaid household work constitutes 25-39% of the total G.N.P. in developing countries (Renukarya C.K, 1991).

Women workers face serious problems and constraints related to work such as lack of continuity, insecurity, wage discrimination, unhealthy job relationship, absence of medical and accident care etc. The exploitation of female labourers in rural regions happens both horizontally and vertically. There is a severe need to recognize their work and give a safe environment to women workers. The most important determining factor to such in access and denial primarily evolves out of poor literacy and lack of awareness resulting in self-exclusion from the mainstream opportunities.

Increasing women's social and economic wellbeing is a means of enhancing the whole society. Most importantly, it is important to remember that a strong will on the part of the government and the society as a whole to give proper place, respect, and rights to its women. Women are the reflexion of society and its progress. If India need to be a developed nation, it has to take care of the rights and provide an environment to live life with dignity to its Women.

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