

## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION THROUGH THEIR UNPAID HOUSEHOLD SERVICES

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**Abstract:** India is a vast country, rich in culture and traditions. The Indian constitution grants women equal rights with men, but a strong patriarchal system persists which shapes the lives of women with traditions that are millennia old. Women are supposed to be care taker of home and manage household duties. The objective of this paper is to study and evaluate the attitudes of married women and men towards the unpaid work of women in community. The methodology of the study is qualitative in nature and it involves the description of women's condition and suggesting the ways how they can be improved. I have taken interviews of the participants through questionnaire and used primary and secondary data in this study

**Introduction:** In most Indian families, daughters are viewed as liabilities and girls are conditioned to believe that they are inferior and subordinate to men. Sons, meanwhile, are idolized and celebrated. The origin of what is considered appropriate behavior for an Indian female can be traced to the rules laid by Manu in 200 B.C.: in childhood, a female is subjected to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her "lord" is dead then to her sons. Given this strong patriarchal tradition, addressing gender disparities is no easy task. Traditionalists argue that India has survived for millennia with this patriarchal system, so what is the need for changes which run counter to Indian culture?

Others would point to the problems of sex-selective abortions, millions of missing girls, dowry death, low educational status and high illiteracy in girls and women, and gender disparities in employment opportunities and wages to suggest that India cannot enter the modern age without learning to respect the rights of women and girls and addressing the detrimental aspects of traditional culture. One may also observe that those defending traditional patriarchal culture have no trouble embracing other non-traditional, vast, and sweeping cultural changes such as the adoption of use of cars, mobile phones and computers.

The Census of India (2001) contains a chapter titled "Non workers", comprising the following categories:

- \* Students of all kinds and levels
- \* Household workers — all those attending to household chores like cooking, cleaning of utensils, looking after children, fetching water, and collecting firewood
- \* Dependents, disabled, children not going to school, the elderly
- \* Pensioners, widows not receiving pension
- \* Beggars, prostitutes, and others not engaged in economically productive work
- \* Others, including convicts in jail and inmates of mental or charitable institutions

As a result, over 367 million women in India – or 32% of the entire population and 65% of all females – have

been classified by the Census of India as non-workers, placed in the same category as beggars, prostitutes, and prisoners. Of the total of those listed as non-workers in India, 74.3% are women. Such a categorization of the majority of women cannot fail to have consequences in policies and programs aimed at women.

**The brief review of the literature has been given below:** Geneva,(2013) discussed some major issues regarding women employment in globalization.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)(2014) represents one of the world's most diverse and dynamic regional communities empowerment. The IORA Economic Declaration formalizes this commitment by IORA nations and is explicit that "the prosperity of the region will only be realized fully by investing in the empowerment of women."

B.s Panchal and Mange Ram (1985) conducted a study to examine the nature and extent of employment pattern of women labor on farms in different agro climatic /ones of Haryana state. His study has revealed that as the size of the farm increased, the participation of women labor also increased.

### Objectives:

1. To evaluate attitudes of married women and men towards the unpaid work of women in community.
2. To assign an approximate economic value to an unpaid work performed by women throughout India.
3. To bring status of women in limelight

**Research Methodology:** The research methodology of the study is used Primary and secondary data. For this, I am using questionnaire, survey and interviews.

**Target Population:** The target population of this study comprised married men and married women from 40 households living urban areas, having or not having income, of different age groups and with different education levels.

**Study site:** Agra City in the state of Uttar Pradesh was chosen for the study . While acknowledging that only one site was insufficient for a representative sample in a country as vast and diverse as India, that

very vastness and diversity made a representative study a near impossibility.

**Sampling Strategy:** Since the population did not

consist of a homogenous group, the study adopted questionnaire techniques.

**Sample Size: Table 1 Marital status (urban)**

| Sex          | Single | Married | widowed | Divorce | Total |
|--------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Male         | 0      | 20      | 0       | 0       | 20    |
| Female       | 0      | 20      | 0       | 0       | 20    |
| <b>Total</b> | 0      | 40      | 0       | 0       | 40    |

**Data Collection:** Data collection was carried out in the month of March 22 to 24 in 2016. Women respondents were contacted during the daytime, while men were reached only during early morning hours or at late evenings due to their working hours.

**Table 1: Educational level of the respondents by sex(urban)**

| Sex           | illiterate | Upper primary | lower primary | Secondary | Senior secondary | total |
|---------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|-------|
| <b>Male</b>   | 1.0        | 17.0          | 15.0          | 20.0      | 18.0             | 71.0  |
| <b>Female</b> | 12         | 6.0           | 7.0           | 2.0       | 2.0              | 29.0  |
| <b>Total</b>  | 13.0       | 23.0          | 22.0          | 22.0      | 20.0             | 100.0 |

Table 1 shows the educational level of the respondents by sex. Overall, the respondents have low levels of education. In urban areas, both men and women have access to higher education. The reason could be the wider exposure and opportunities of the city, difference in mindsets in urban, and the greater array of job opportunities available for women in urban areas. The study confirmed the typical mindset of many families in India wherein it is not considered beneficial to continue girls' education beyond a basic level as girls would be unlikely to find a decent job (and high educational status of women is unlikely to benefit the girl's natal family, as she will live with her husband's family after marriage). A similar explanation, combined with fewer job opportunities for women, would explain why most women in urban areas get little education beyond the basic level.

A further reason is the common practice of early marriage of girl children. The educational status of men also reflects the community perception of the low value of education.

At the same time, however, the opportunity cost of girls attending school is seen to be lower than for boys, as boys can engage in paid labor even from a young age; as a result, school attendance at all levels is higher for girls than it is for boys. As girls become older and play a more important role in housework, their school attendance may be seen as more of a

detriment to the family.

The higher literacy rate for men in urban areas may be due to a perception that if a boy acquires higher education he will be able to find a good job and income, so that the early investment in school pays off in the higher salary later on.

The educational level of the respondents is not reflected in their involvement in paid work, particularly for urban women. Women's generally low employment rates are part of a larger cycle in which families fail to send girls beyond a certain age to school as few job opportunities are available, while men and women's low educational attainments make it difficult for them to qualify for whatever jobs do exist.

Even for girls with higher levels of education, it is very difficult to find a decent job. Many of the respondents told that they were forced to be full-time housewives as it was difficult to find any other job. Meanwhile, many other female respondents work as domestic servants due to the lack of other job opportunities.

It is of course important to distinguish between educational achievement and skill levels. International experience has clearly demonstrated that education is critical for girls, for their own sakes and for that of their families, as educated women are more likely to get their children vaccinated, practice

contraception, and engage in a range of other behaviors leading to familial health and well-being. However, to say that women are uneducated is not to say that they are unskilled or untrained. From a very young age, they are closely tutored by their mothers and other female relations in all the diverse tasks that are considered the responsibility of women, including food preparation, cleaning, child care, and even management of household accounts

**Table 2: Respondents' participation in domestic work**

| Task                                   |              | Sex  |        |
|--|--------------|------|--------|
|  |              | Male | Female |
| 1. cleaning the house                  | Yes/daily    | 10   | 90     |
|  | No           | 80   | 10     |
|  | Occasionally | 10   | 0      |
| 2. clearing around the home            | Yes/daily    | 30   | 91     |
|  | No           | 0    | 8      |
|  | Occasionally | 70   | 1      |
| 3. tending mud floor to keep dust out' | Yes/daily    | 6    | 56     |
|  | No           | 0    | 41     |
|  | Occasionally | 94   | 3      |
| 4. washing dishes                      | Yes/daily    | 5    | 87     |
|  | No           | 85   | 12     |
|  | Occasionally | 10   | 2      |
| 5. washing and drying clothes.         | Yes/daily    | 10   | 19     |
|  | No           | 82   | 11     |
|  | Occasionally | 8    | 70     |
| 6. ironing.                            | Yes/daily    | 10   | 50     |
|  | No           | 80   | 40     |
|  | occasionally | 10   | 10     |
| 7. preparing food items.               | Yes/daily    | 10   | 97     |
|  | No           | 70   | 2      |
|  | occasionally | 20   | 1      |
| 8. cooking                             | Yes/daily    | 15   | 95     |
|  | No           | 80   | 3      |
|  | Occasionally | 5    | 2      |
| 9. lighting lamps                      | Yes/daily    | 20   | 49     |
|  | No           | 80   | 49     |
|  | occasionally | 0    | 2      |

Table 2 shows the stated involvement of men and women in various domestic tasks. As the table makes clear, women were far more involved in a range of domestic activities than men. However, men did contribute towards domestic work despite prevalent attitudes suggesting that such work is the responsibility of women. Such participation, however,

was far less common than for women. For instance, 10% of men participate in housecleaning on a daily basis in comparison to 90% of women. Only 5% of men ever wash the dishes, 15% cook and 10% ironing. While it is encouraging to see that men do play some role in domestic tasks, it is clear that such tasks continue to be considered as mainly the domain of women, with men "helping" their wives, rather than husbands and wives sharing the responsibility—even in cases where women, like men, work a considerable number of hours per day for pay.

**Recommendations:** Study found that a typical woman's day starts at about 5 a.m. and ends after 10 p.m. in addition to their paid activities. This double burden left such women with little time for themselves.

Based on the results of this research study, the following recommendations have been made:

- Education is an essential tool for change. Educated women are better able to care for their families and family finances, experience more opportunities in decision-making, and make better home managers. Government should continue to increase their efforts to educate the girl child.
- Restructure the educational curriculum in order to emphasize gender equality rather than reinforcing gender stereotypes.
- Give adequate recognition to the unpaid contributions of women to increase their self-esteem and to improve their image in the family and society at large.
- Ensure full participation of women in the policy-making process.
- Set the minimum wage at a level sufficient to allow workers to escape from the poverty trap; force companies to pay into nationalized systems of education, health care and pensions, so that they return some portion of what they have gained to the workforce and those who enable others to work outside the home.
- Ensure affordable and adequate childcare and family-friendly employment policies which allow parents to reconcile caring and work.
- Establish a benefits system which recognizes women's diverse roles in society and offers adequate support for families and children.
- Address the gender-related problems of unemployment (allocation of financial resources, entrepreneurship, legality of various types of informal work, etc.) in order to free women of their financial dependence on men, particularly for widows, women in abusive relationships, etc.

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