

Understanding of Economics among women in India

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Abstract: The paper in detail throws light on “*Understanding of Economics among women in India*” across different periods of time – ancient days in India, the past – the millennium that moved into the oblivion two decades ago, and the current age, which is witnessing several women groups fighting for their due positions to sit next to men, claiming all their rights voicing about the injustice that they were to suffer from men and their world, who hitherto looked down at women as innocent, ignorant or not competent enough (as per them) to know economics as is relevant to family and also in the larger context. The paper also carries the narratives on the circumstances under which women had to live subservient in the male dominated world, apart from bringing to the fore that economics for a common man – nay for the ‘common woman’ is just what she presents as the possibility of a happy life for the members of the family with whatever *her-man* used to bring as earnings to the family. And then it is about what she saves – adding a little every day and month – the money needed to meet the future of the family, little even knowing whether all that is economics. She, in the process, sacrifices her needs even inviting the pains that they push her to. The paper would also clarify and give a definitive glimpse on the simple economics that every woman is used to and how that little knowledge blossoms as a flower, the fragrance of which radiates to the precincts of the whole family. The conclusion at the end is positioned to say to the credit of women in India that they have always been having the required understanding & knowledge of economics, which they have ably employed to see that the family is happy, specially safe and secure from the ill-effects of bad economics, if any - of the surrounding world. Indian women thus have always exhibited better understanding of family economics ever since they were given the responsibility.

Key Words: Family economics – women empowerment – women work force - economic contribution of women – household economics - Household chores - central force for the family - Woman must be the holiest

Introduction:

Looking back at even the ancient history one can easily comprehend about the deep involvement of women in the economy perhaps even before the subject got its name. The woman always lived and did all that supported the family requirements and all that she did and wanted to do was visible - loud and clear - as the family activities would have gone berserk if the woman as the main link, among members of the family and second to the head of the family (if we may say so) was not what she was. This is an undisputable reality in every family whether now,

yesterday or years and centuries before. Our age old scriptures too spoke much in detail about the great powers of women in the welfare of the family for which the subject of economics had been pivotal.

The Woman always has thought that she is second in command in a family of husband, wife and children, and in the nuclear family she does not enjoy that position considering other vertical hierarchical reasons. It is also felt that woman has for several hundred years lived second in command role and propagated the same to her girl children thereby resulting in perpetual tradition of woman being next to man – be it in the management of the family in general or in the economic sense. The working woman in the last few decades had departed from her stance and caught up, equating

with the man that she was married to. It would also be felt and seen as an indelible truth that a woman does not stand alone as a resource - fulfilling the need in economics of the family and society she lives in, but also her education, health and the physical contribution add in great volume with the pivotal role that she holds as a woman to the societal economics through the family as a smaller unit.

The role of woman in the economics as in the family matters was pushed to a dependent role several centuries back. The issues “whether the woman understands economics” or “the need for economic empowerment of women” all that arose only out of the critical historical record that the woman was not considered equal to man. Man led and the woman followed. The important areas of economics of women’s duties even in the dependent role have not been found to have relevance. It has become more out of sheer bad practice in the society for centuries. The correction is now happening but how that is going to move further up, has to be seen to be believed.

Inevitable Economics

It would be easier to visualize and understand that economics would have driven the man (in animals too we could see the practice) even if family system would not have existed and social groups did not form to live happily taking care of the needs of one another and the existence was solitary

and lone for the human being. When one looks for food and eats, it is for existence and sustenance. There is economics in the form of wants which are satiated from the resources either available readily or created. But if the food was stored for the next hunger-time again it's a part of economics. Economics would never be away from anybody and the least from the woman, who is the central force for the family.

Ever existent Economics

Economics always existed at least from the time the first life was born on earth (human being, animal or the plant) and it would have been only the identifying and naming of the activity that would have followed much later. Economics therefore cannot be dated as it was ever existent.

Woman must be the holiest among all the lives that took birth – including the females in animals which too do the tasks for its family leaving a few, whose male member slogs giving its fellow female to manage its unit. The tasks that woman carried out were all that were aimed at covering the family's sustenance, welfare and propagation further.

Methods & Materials used

The content for this Research paper is based on personal experience of the author for years of work in the areas of education and the interactions he had with people – especially women across different fields and periods of time, discussions with women employed in education and education supporting activities. Material from online sources and others is also used for reference as is indicated in the References section in support of author's own observations and findings.

Results & Discussion

Woman's role in economics is much integrated than even the man, and it should not therefore, be seen as a part of contribution to the family and/or society, but should be seen as a main area of thrust, as woman's absence or her denial in the role, would have seriously wrecked the total economic fabric of the society. So if we look at the economics of a family or of the society, the woman has an equal role as the man holds. Even in those days of the past, man earned, the woman saved, conserved, ably decided where to spend, avoid, or minimize. She never made the family members feel that she was a hindrance in the economic system.

The ancient human being, the Neanderthal or even the one before that, was a savage and many thousand years it took for the transformation to happen slowly to become a civilized individual - moving from one who hunted for

food to the stage of looking at everything in the perspective of economics. All through the journey of evolution, the woman played the second fiddle tending to support the male and the young ones. But always she was seen in the sphere of economics, and many times, understood the subject better than the man, but still she played a low key role only to make the philosophy of economics to be seen to portray and prove that handling the economy was a holier act than the science of economics in numbers, volumes and time periods. There was always an affectionate human being – the woman seen in front of the hard realities.

Many a time it was thus evident that woman understood economics well. Though she did not take the lead in the decision making, she played her role ably in intellectual and advisory areas. The self inflicted dormancy by the woman over thousands of years led to the societal picture that man is an earner and the head of the family and the woman is dependent and pays back in services to the man. The observations of **Charlotte Perkins Gilman**, Writer, commercial artist, magazine editor, lecturer and social reformer of 20th century, clearly portray how the woman is seen in the portrait of economics. According to her the woman for several thousand years had been portrayed as second only to man. The age old tradition of women bringing up girl children in the same way - subdued and controlled, and hence the woman always had been seen subservient to the man projected always strong and leading.

The other interesting aspect has been that she has never craved for, nor usurped the role of decision maker, neither in the family nor out in the society, as she knew her place and from where she could execute her duty much better and more effectively. She therefore did not revolt but rather reserved her position second to man. This could be an assumption of 'man' and might need to be ignored, but for woman herself to come out open to declare her willing position may take quite a while – though we now start hearing the voices for change from women.

Women – the Major workforce

In fact the so called housewives are the major chunk of workforce globally and at least in India and other developing and underdeveloped countries, it is the most underpaid part of economic segment. If she is to be paid for her role in the daily duties, it could amount globally to several billion dollars. Since she is the user, influencer and decider of purchased goods – consumer goods produced by the local corporates and those of

international goods' manufacturers, it is the woman who dictates in the process.

Woman only matters big in Household

Another astounding fact is that India enjoyed the largest economic chunk of advantage through the culture and the values by achieving the rate of

Ref.No.1

savings of 33% of the GDP. The interesting thing is that 70% from the savings comes from the household segment, whereas only 20% comes from private sector and the rest 10% - the least from the Public sector. The 70% of the savings from household mattered most to economy, through which it is clearly evident that the woman as the central force in the household actually mattered – speaking about the role of woman in economics.

It is reported that 40% of agricultural labour-work force is women, yet only 9% of the land is controlled by them. Women as workforce are found to be out of the formally hailed financial

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system, which is a glaring disparity remains uncorrected. And the following facts pain much more as they act

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against the interests of women:

- Half of women in India do not have account in Bank of any sort
- 60% of women do not have assets credited to their names
- Only 17% of women's contribution to GDP as against 37% globally

Woman and her economic empowerment

From the circumstances that existed all through for centuries during which woman had held the central position in the family, economic empowerment of her was only the obvious thing to happen - the decision for which was inevitable, since it is seen

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in juxtaposition with the responsibilities held. She took that with all humility and always did her best to take the needed care. Many times she enjoyed the right to control but did not benefit from the resources, as she always looked at her as the last person to be the beneficiary. But such an empowerment was seen within the family but did not extend to the context of the society.

It could however be read and seen globally that the nations and communities which implemented programs and policies enabling women empowerment could witness significant development, and it has been also considered as a pre-requisite for development attained through enhancement of quality and quantity of human resources. In the empowerment of woman, there

however existed the need for such a natural choice. In fact Economic empowerment should happen naturally to woman owing to her ability to engage in economic decisions which are often backed by intelligence and emotion as well.

The information below speaks about the impressive growth of income of the larger section of poor people enabling them move out of poverty in India – a laudable achievement. The rise in number however is not visible in the corresponding increase in good number of Indian women. Rural jobs, reports say, have decreased but the transition did not make it to Urban occupation. 20 million women dropped out of jobs but the urbanization did not witness the same numbers adding to it. At the given level of GDP, economic contribution of women in India compares highly unfavorably with China and less than half of global average. This clearly indicates how Indian women are less economically empowered compared to China and even the global average. Empowerment of women in economy in India is the biggest missing link.

- 133 million (13.3 crore) Indians came out of poverty from 1994 to 2012 – a laudable achievement
- 27 % Indian women had a job, in comparison with 79 percent of men.
- 20 million women in India opted out of work / labour from 2005 to 2012.
- India stood at no. 120 out of 131 countries - participation of females in labor / work force

It is also clear from the above that the women's non-participation in employment is due to lack of empowerment and not due to lack of understanding of economics, since it is relevant to every individual, family and a large group – be it state or a country.

Worker Population Ratio Table No.1

Country	Rural		Urban	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
India	24.8	54.3	14.7	54.6

Source: National Sample Survey - July 2011 - June 2012.

If not earning money and livelihood working for others tantamount to “not knowing economics” then all Homemakers are to be considered as not knowing economics and that understanding of economics has not dawned on them. But contrarily most of the homemakers know to handle money earned by their spouses much better than the very spouses who earn. The woman in earlier days

would not have stepped out of her house but was quite competent to ably handle money – assess the requirements of the house, make budget, see how to allocate the money she has on hand and also cut down judiciously expenses those not important or those that could be delayed and deferred.

It may also seem that understanding of economics is to know everything in general about it and the capacity to know more that is not known at the higher level of economics - at the macro level. But as a matter of fact, for a set up of household, economics means mainly the total earnings and the total expenses and how the unspent / disposable money is to be handled. It is just that and nothing more. It may sometimes extend to that of understanding what to buy and what not to buy – and when to buy too. If that is what is the level of economics that the woman needs to be acquainted with, then there is no woman or, at least we can say that unexceptionally all women who could count the money to spend or save are aware of the basics of economics, since for a person in charge of the family, beyond money, economics does not extend. “A day without a Woman” the theme for the International Women’s day in the year 2017 led to the thought as what would happen if a day goes with women staying out of their work. That day would definitely result in a serious setback to the economy since:

- Schools would work with less than 20% efficiency – if not more
- Household chores would be majorly fractured leading to serious productive loss
- The unorganized sector which has the most of the women workforce would come to a grinding halt.

Conclusion:

From all that has been seen in the perspective of economics, women not only understood economics well in the context of family which is a smaller version in terms of size of the society, but her very presence and all that she did, being a homemaker and one who also supported the family with her little earnings has a major contributing role in the economics beyond the family – to the state and the country as well. (All this not taking into account the emerging national economic scenario witnessing women becoming active economists and some even leading from the helm). The huge impact to the economy with her staying out of work for a day speaks volumes about the role of her as an anchor in the economics at the micro and macro level. All that the man and the so called society could do is to respect her services and formalize

them to give her the due position as a major contributor to the economy covering all levels.

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