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CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Women with her inherent capabilities inevitably play a constructive role not in the family, but also for the society and for strengthening national economy. In today's globalized world, the women is viewed as a human resource. If given enough freedom and proper opportunities, the women's potential is fully realized, thereby enriching the surrounding around her.

We all are aware that women are one of the world's greatest untapped resources and investing in them is one of the most powerful forces for national and international development. Women are almost one half in the world's population having enormous potential but infact is underutilized or unutilized for the economic development of the nation. It is a fact that women are deprived of and discriminated with gender bias all over the world in general and in the country like India in particular. It is a simple fact that no country can go ahead if half of its citizens are left behind. A country can achieve development to the fullest extent only if all the human resources in it are being utilized to the optimum level. This implies that both men and women must participate equally in the achievement of this goal. If men try to ascend the economic ladder at the expense of women, progress will be partial. Rising of level of skill and directing aspirations of both men and women is necessary for a developing nation like ours. Women can be even greater instruments in the development of human resources. They become an asset in accelerating economic growth and earning social change in desired directions. With education and social awareness taking deeper roots women are coming out of traditional occupations and making a substantial contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. Economic contribution by women have been found to be related to their status in a society. Women have to be given due participation and recognition in the development activity of the home and country.

Keywords: Globalized world, human resource, economic development

“As long as women do not have the same rights in law as men, as long as the birth of a girl does not receive the same welcome as that of a boy, so long we should know that India is suffering from partial paralysis. Suppression of women is inconsistent with principles of Ahimsa (Non-Violence).” Mahatma Gandhi

INTRODUCTION:

Women with her inherent capabilities inevitably play a constructive role not in the family, but also for the society and for strengthening national economy. In today's globalized world, the women is viewed as a human resource. If given enough freedom and proper opportunities, the women's potential is fully realized, thereby enriching the surrounding around her. Women



are almost one half in the world's population having enormous potential but infact is underutilized or unutilized for the economic development of the nation. It is a fact that women are deprived of and discriminated with gender bias all over the world in general and in the country like India in particular. It is a simple fact that no country can go ahead if half of its citizens are left behind.

The Indian women's struggle for women's liberation started quite some time back. They realized that women have an important role to play in the social, political and economic development of the country. They realized that for the performance of the role, society should grant them an equal status with men.

OBJECTIVES :

The present paper is undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To know the role of women in ancient India.
2. To know the women's role in pre-independence period.
3. To study the women's contribution to National Development through various angles.

DIVISION OF THE PAPER:

The present is divided into four parts. First part introduces women's role in ancient India. Second parts gives information regarding women's role in Muslim rule and Colonial rule. Third part focuses on the women's contribution to national development through various angles. Conclusions are drawn in the fourth part.

METHODOLOGY:

The information for the present paper is obtained through secondary sources. The secondary data is collected from books related to women and development.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The present research paper is related to Indian women only.

I

INDIAN WOMEN – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

A thorough study of the Indian History from the ancient time reveals that women in our country have played a very significant role in various periods Centuries ago, women in India were highly placed in society. Their progress kept pace with that of men. In that action oriented society, no religious rite could be performed by men without the participation of his wife. The Vedic literature also indicates that women were not merely a silent partner in the rituals, but placed a crucial role in them. People believe in the idiom "where women are celebrated there resides the God." But with the change of time, this situation changed. Manu daughter, wife and mother by her father, husband and son respectively.

II

THE MUSLIM RULE:

Muslim rulers brought further deterioration in the status of women. In the second half of the 18th century, the deterioration in the position of women reached the maximum. The social institutions and customs not only opposed the free growth of women but also regarded

them unfit for participation in social, political and religious functions. They were even debarred from receiving education. Thus for about 2000 year (from 200 B.C. to 1800 A.D.) the position of women had continuously deteriorated.

THE COLONIAL RULE:

British rulers established the modern capitalist economic system and modern state based on the principles of liberty and equality and generated a new climate to bring changes in the old, traditional social structure and norms based on inequality.

A galaxy of social organizations like Ramakrishna Mission, *Brahmo Samaj* etc opposed “*Sati Pratha* and Child Marriage”. “Widow Remarriage Act” was introduced in 1856. Thus emancipation of women was viewed by the greater movement for social and political liberation.

INDEPENDENT INDIA:

After independence our constitution has given equal rights to women and as a result, the women of India were granted equality in all spheres of life along with men. The constitution of India declares, “The state shall not discriminate against any citizen on ground of sex, religion, race, caste or place of birth or any of these.”

III

WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

With rapid industrialization of our country, the role of Indian women in economic activity is fast becoming more active and she is not only more a mere “House-Wife.” In any developing society, the productivity of every constituent person has to increase, be it a man or a woman. The utilization of human hour for productive purposes can increase the Gross National Income and this only can help to achieve our aim of socio-economic development. Women contributing 50% of the total population cannot go on playing the passive and limited role of traditional wives, doing duties within four walls of their homes. Women are important economic actors. They help their family by increasing their earnings and thereby achieve a better living standard. If at all we have to compute with the developed nations in the 21st century, it is absolutely essential that we count on women’s participation in the development of a nation like ours. In today’s scientific and technological world, where the life cycle and the social structure is changing very fast, the Indian woman is taking more and more part in this phenomenon. In many fields the women have shown caliber. In fact, women do not lag behind men in any field. The only thing that is wanted is proper opportunity, may it be political, social or economic field. In all these fields women have created history. They are slowly but surely capturing every fields.

The role of women become vital and the Indian women became the key in the process of national development. Though the actual and inevitable progress of the women could not happen yet, the development of women as well as the development by women become the inter-related issues for the national development of India. Women’s participation in education, social life, industrialization, science and technology, employment as well as in politics began to increase day by day. The women occupied the key role in different sectors of the society. Women’s contribution to national development is significant from several points of view. They can be cited as :

1) **Role in Work Participation Rates:**

With increased participation of women in income earning activities not only will increase family's income but also will reduce gender inequality. The educated women of today have no doubt changed their thoughts of lives. They have occupied not only esteemed social and economic positions but have also encouraged and promoted economic development of the country with their increased work participation rates. If all activities including maintenance of kitchen gardens and poultry, grinding food grains, collecting water etc. are taken into account then 88% of rural housewives and 66% of urban housewives can be considered as economically productive. (Javia Sharda)

2) **Role in Education :**

Education is the root of the development process. It is the most important instrument for human resource development. The educational system is the only institution which can counteract the deep foundations of the inequality of the sexes that are built in the minds of men and women through the socialization process. By education women can improve their economic position and level of awareness. After independence, Indian women have succeed in the field of education. The educated women are the greatest asset in today's society. Increase in women's education is associated with an increase in decision making power.

Education enables women to acquire basic skills and abilities, and fosters a value system which is conducive to raising their status in society.

3) **Role in Employment :**

Employment has made women to some extent free from being economically dependent on men. Employment of women has important implication in the process of development. Women's labour force participation outside the household is very much related to the family's budget requirement. The contribution of women to the income of the family is also substantial at low level of income. When income from male members falls below the subsistence family income, then income earned by female members of the family make up the deficiency. Women's entry into employment market has certainly raised the family income and enabled them to maintain a higher standard of living and create savings which could be channelized from investing into production process. This contribution of women in raising the level of income, output and employment and initiating a process of economic development. Thus, employment of women and their position in society are a sure index of the advancement of society.

4) **Increase in the welfare of the family :**

Money in the hands of man is spent quite differently from money in the hands of women. An I.L.O. study finds that men tend to spend 60% of their income in their home and 40% on themselves, whereas a woman spends 90% of her income on her home and only 10% on herself. Women are a reliable investors because the money they borrow is not only likely to be repaid, women also have a multiplier effect because their resources are used to benefit their families and communities. When a women controls a household income the family benefits.

5) **Control on Population :**

Women can contribute to economic development through a change in their reproductive capacity that leads to a diminution in their fertility rates. Economic development

manifested through a rise in per capital income. By limiting the size of the family, women can play a vital role in controlling population growth which is a great obstacle to national development.

6) Reduction in Poverty :

Women tend to spend a higher portion of the income that they control on health care, food and the education of family members especially children, while men tend to give priority to the items of personal consumption. This implies that asset and income redistribution in favour of women can have the effect of reducing human poverty.

7) Help in Building Human Capital :

Women are the builders of next generation. Women's increasing access to labour market and to credit and property improves their earnings and financial security and more access to modern education and better health services would not only enhance their status but also health status of themselves and their children. Healthy and educated women fulfill their primary roles of mother and household manages more efficiently than rural illiterate women and thereby help in building better human capital in children. Compared to men, women spent as higher portion of their income on goods such as education and health care which enhance the well being and capabilities of their children.

8) Role in Agriculture :

Women has always played pivotal role in agriculture. Participation of women in agriculture has been silently appreciated but without much recognition and according to their contributions. The rural women, besides being a homemaker is also a partner in food production efforts.

9) Role in Politics :

Political development is possible through women. Women take their rightful place and bring their talents and experiences to bear in the political arena. Women after education are expected to participate in Indian Political field of action and create healthy environment by eradicating all social and political corruptions and misdeeds. At the country level higher rates of women participation in government are associated with lower level of corruption. They are possibly supposed to bring out congenial political environment in India.

10) Role in Environmental Protection :

Women are largely the custodians of natural and household resources. Women posses a wealth of knowledge and experience on environmental issues. Even in reforestation programs only rural women exhibit genuine interest as they have to spend hours for collection of fuel wood. The field of renewable energy technology gives large scope for an increased role of women as producers and managers of energy and ecosystem. Women are the target of the awareness creation programmes as well as agents for creating awareness in conservation of water and maintenance of water sources. Women and environment are vitally interconnected, making it now imperative to incorporate women's concerns into policies designed to combat environmental degradation.

11) Role in Globalized World :

Globalization and economic liberalization have opened up tremendous opportunities for development and growth of women. Women's increased participation in the labour force



has helped to reduce gender-based wage gaps and therefore have the potential to enhance their autonomy and negotiating power.

CONCLUSION :

Economic development is the main goal of a society. A country can achieve development to the fullest extent only if all the human resources in it are being utilized to the optimum level. This implies that both men and women must participate equally in the achievement of this goal. Women are regarded as the nucleus of nation. Women are the co-ordinate not the subordinate, half of humanity. If men try to ascend the economic ladder at the expense of women, progress will be partial. Raising of level of skill and directing aspirations of both men and women is necessary for a developing like ours. Women can be even greater instruments in the development of human resources. They become an asset in accelerating economic growth and earning social change in desired directions. They are the harbinger of human culture and active partners of economic development. Even this notion is gaining ground that “development without women” cannot take place. With education and social awareness taking deeper roots women are coming out of traditional occupations and making a substantial contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. Economic Empowerment is a necessary for enabling women to seek justice and equality. Without economic strength women cannot be able to exercise their guaranteed rights. It is therefore, necessary to seek participation of women as equal partners with men in all fields of work, equal access to all positions of employment, equal opportunities for work related training and full protection of women at workplace. Economic contribution by women have been found to be related to their status in a society. High position of women in some societies is due to their economic contributions. Women have to be given due participation and recognition in the development activity of the home and country. When opportunities have been given to them, they have shown themselves capable of great intellectual attainments.

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