

Site of Gender in Work Economy: Some Remarks of Statistics

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The problematic of gender in the schema of social development has all along been haunting the planners, policy makers, social scientists in regard to how far entrenched discrimination against women can be arrested/ curbed and in what way they can be represented by a considerable degree in the multiple space of development. Many socio-economic indicators may be thrown up over time and across space to assess the extent to which the women in general irrespective of their economic, religious, educational distinctions have fared well. If they have not fared well, what are the obvious and not so obvious resistances they are meeting with in the development process? For our understanding of the political situation of women, we somehow like to focus on the most predominant aspect of modern economic life. And this aspect no doubt is work – it is not just work in the non-articulate and amorphous and vague sense, when we single out the category of work that holds the key to, and summarizes, modern socio-economic existence. It is with a view to lay accent on the fact that the progressive monetization of work is synonymous with the accomplishment of dignity of existence in modern economic parlance. In saying this we anticipate the questions that may be raised that other equally important aspects of understanding gender issue have been neglected or sidelined. Nevertheless, one can imagine the conditions of a human being without or out of the world of ,work, in which case she/he loses the opportunity for a good life.

Apart from production of material goods and services in the narrow economic sense, there does exist the sphere to which women have the exclusive claim. And this sphere is none other than production and reproduction of human life. Unlike men, women have double sphericity of work in the sense that they engage both in production and reproduction of material and non material existence. Perhaps this is what distinguishes men from women. Even when women are not employed in the sense of contributing to national output, the considerable share of time is consumed by socially productive and reproductive labour. Since our focus in this brief paper relates to monetized work, we shall discuss problem of women workers fully aware that this problem can not be given a somewhat simplified formulation.

While women workers constitute a marginalized category among the class of workers in general there are layers of subordination manifest in conditions of their social status and in economic sector to which they belong. Add to this, there are differentiation within women in general and women workers in particular. If we consider the status of women in rural India as a proxy for economic background, it is quite clear that the position of women workers in rural India is considerably lower than that of the women in general. One indication is that the percentage of casual labour in total workforce as revealed by 61st round of Employment Unemployment Survey (EUS) of National Sample Survey

Organisation (NSSO) was 30 per cent for women as compared to 27.5 per cent for men. Rural females constitute 32.6 per cent of casual labour in total workforce. The Table 1 shows certain characteristic features of women workers in the country.

Table 1
Selected Characteristics of Women Workers 2004-05

Indicator	Male	Female	Rural Female
Total Workers (UPSS in million)	309.4	148.0	124.0
Labour Force Participation Rate	56.0	29.0	33.3
Work Force Participation Rate	54.7	28.3	32.7
Percentage of Regular Workers in Total Workforce	18.2	8.9	3.7
Percentage of Self-employed in Total Workforce	54.2	61.1	63.7
Percentage of Casual Labour in Total Workforce	27.5	30.0	32.6
Percentage of Unorganised Workers in Total Workforce	90.7	95.9	98.9
Percentage of Unorganised Sector Workers in Total Workforce	84.0	91.3	94.5
Percentage of Workers in Agriculture & Allied activities	48.9	72.8	83.34
Percentage of Out of School Children in Relevant Age Group (5-14 years)	15.5	20.7	23.5
Mean Years of Schooling (all workers)	5.4	2.5	1.9
Mean Years of Schooling (Unorganised Non-agr. Workers)	6.1	3.7	2.9
Mean Years of Schooling (Rural Unorganised Agr. Workers)	3.7	NA	1.6
Percentage of All Workers Up to Primary Education (including Illiterates)	55.6	80.7	85.0
Percentage of Unorganised Non-agr Workers Up to Primary Education (including Illiterates)	49.2	70.8	77.1
Percentage of Unorganised Agricultural Workers Up to Primary Education (including Illiterates)	68.8	87.8	88.0
Percentage of Homeworkers in Self-employed (Unorganised Non-agriculture) ¹	6.5	30.1	32.0
Percentage of Workers with only Subsidiary Work	1.9	24.9	26.1
Wage Rate of Rural Agricultural Labourers (Rs. Per manday)	47.9	NA	33.1
Wage Rate of Rural Non-Agricultural Labourers (Rs. Per manday)	67.5	NA	44.0
Percentage of Casual Labourers(Rural)not getting Notional Minimum Wage of Rs.66	78.0	NA	95.6
Percentage of Casual Labourers(Rural)not getting NCRL Minimum Wage of Rs.49	40.9	NA	80.9

Note:

1.Data pertain to 1999-2000, 2. UPSS: Usual Principal and Subsidiary Status.

Source: NSS 61st Round and 55th Round 2004-05 and 1999-2000, Employment Unemployment Survey.

The Table 1 underlines the fact that a woman because of the double burden of production and reproduction activities engages as a subsidiary worker, in part time work clubbed with considerable domestic duties among the home-workers. It is found that women constitute 31.1 per cent of home workers in self-employed category as against 6.5 per cent for males. It is not unacknowledged that there are a number of unaccounted for hidden cost that affect the earnings and reduce the wages actually paid. The reproductive role of women is so much hidden away and foreclosed from the public space that it is not recognized. This hidden dimension of women's work has been given a theoretical cognition with a pilot study of time utilization by men and women. This study classified the activities based on the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) into three categories : i) those coming under economic activities already included in SNA , ii) those that are not currently included in the SNA but are characterized as extended SNA. These include household maintenance and care for the children, old and the sick in the household, iii) non SNA consisting of social cultural activities, leisure and personal care. The aforesaid pilot study marshaled the fact that a relatively major share of time is spent by women in domestic chores and care for the sick, old and children. The Table 2 below shows that women spent 17 per cent more time in SNA and extended SNA activities compared to men. This high intensity level of work with women is simultaneous with comparatively lower levels of health and well-being compared to men.

Table 2

Weekly Average Time (hours) Spent on SNA, Extended SNA and Non SNA Activities by Gender and Place of Work (Combined for Six States)

Activities	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
SNA	42.3	22.5	41.1	9.2	42.0	18.7
Extended-SNA	3.7	33.9	3.4	36.4	3.6	34.6
Non SNA	122.0	111.5	123.5	122.4	122.4	114.5
Total	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0	168.0
Total Persons	22285	21130	10305	9549	32590	30679

Note: Time Use Survey was conducted in 18,591 households spread over 6 selected states namely, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya.

Source: CSO 2000

The progressive domesticization of work is more pronounced among women than among men. If any indication of this trend is to be seen constantly meet with the situation that according to NSS 61st round, 2004-05(EUS) by Principal Status and in the age group 15-59 years, 53 per cent of women in rural areas and 65 per cent of women in urban areas are engaged in domestic duties in sharp contrast to which a meagre of 4 per cent of men were primarily engaged in

domestic work. This is illustrated in Table 3. The workforce participation rate among women has been axiomatically established as lower than that among men and this is rightly considered so based on what is considered as economic activity in the system of National Accounts. Do we conclude from this statistical artefact that men are more participative of workforce than women? And everything hinges on what determines work and what does not belong to category of work in terms of marketability of human labour. Nonetheless, a turn about in the established statistical artefact takes place if for example, care of the sick, old and children, fetching water, free collection of fire wood, tutoring children, sewing, tailoring were included into the category of work and then, workforce participation rate of women would steal a march over what is currently estimated.

Table 3

Additional Activities Undertaken by Women (Age 15-59 years) usually Engaged in Domestic Duties, Principal Status (Percentage) 2004-05

Additional Activities	Rural	Urban	Total
Per cent engaged in domestic duties	53.3	65.0	56.8
Kitchen Garden, Orchards, etc.	16.1	3.3	12.1
Household Poultry, Dairy, etc	34.0	4.1	24.8
Cow Dung Preparation For Household Fuel	47.4	5.9	34.6
Tutoring for Free	7.5	13.8	9.5
Bring Water from Outside Household Premises	45.4	20.5	37.7
For Household Use/Consumption			
Free Collection of Fish, Fruit, Veg, etc	16.4	1.2	11.7
Free Collection of Firewood etc.	40.4	6.0	29.7
Sewing, etc	30.2	27.3	29.3
Husking Paddy	14.6	3.2	11.1
Grinding Food grains	15.5	7.5	13.0
Preparation of Gur	3.9	1.7	3.2
Preservation of Meat, Fish	5.3	3.0	4.6
Making Baskets, Mats	7.0	2.6	5.7

Source: NSS 61st Round 2004-05, EUS

We are still confronted with inescapable condition of women in terms of non-monetization of this reproductive nature of their work. Table 3 corroborates the fact that women reporting themselves as principally engaged in domestic duties do not necessarily increase the income and hence their economic status. This is despite the fact that afore-mentioned activities are essentially economic in nature and contribute to the income though unaccounted for in one way or other. Of those engaged in additional activities a higher share reported preparation of cow dung cakes, fetching water and free collection of woods, as can be gleaned from Table 3. Women from the lower social strata are more compelled to engage in economic activities due to economic compulsions of their households.

Women's work has a certain characterization of place of work. The dominant idea of work place is the office, factory or an institution. Besides these

visible work places there is work place dispersed in nature among homes or households, ill-located sites where 54.1 per cent of women worked in their own dwellings during 2004-05 as can be seen from Table 4, only 18 per cent of women workers in the unorganized sector had a designated place of work.

Table 4

**Percentage of Unorganised Sector Non-agricultural Workers by Location of Work
2004-05**

	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No fixed Workpace	13.1	3.9	11.1	6.2	1.6	5.3	9.6	2.8	8.2
Own Dwelling	18.6	61.2	28.1	12.9	45.9	19.3	15.7	54.1	23.7
Own Enterprise	20.6	9.2	18.1	29.6	9.6	25.7	25.2	9.4	21.9
Employer's Dwelling	3.4	7.3	4.2	3.7	20.7	7.0	3.5	13.5	5.6
Employer's Enterprise	15.8	6.0	13.6	24.8	11.7	22.3	20.4	8.7	17.9
Street Fixed Location	3.9	1.9	3.4	4.5	2.4	4.1	4.2	2.2	3.7
Street Without Fixed Location	5.6	2.6	4.9	7.1	3.2	6.3	6.3	2.9	5.6
Construction	15.5	5.8	13.3	8.3	3.4	7.3	11.8	4.7	10.3
Others	3.5	2.1	3.2	2.9	1.5	2.6	3.2	1.8	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NSS 61st Round 2004-05, EUS

Whatever the level of participation of women, a sizeable part of women's work is of subsidiary status, nearly a quarter of women workers are engaged in subsidiary work and this shows the magnitude of covert gender discrimination. It appears in very subtle forms in the nature of work performed. There are many studies which point out that in India sub-contracting supply-chains in garments etc. shifted the work to home-based work in which women are predominantly engaged. This subsidiary status of women workers comprise 26 per cent of the women participating in the work force in rural areas and 19 per cent of them in urban areas. The interesting feature is that it is the mainly self-employed women who engage in work in subsidiary capacity and to some extent, women casual workers who perhaps tend to have fewer employment opportunities. In the case of the casual workers it is the compulsion and pressures of survival that make them work in their principal capacity. In sharp contrast, a negligible portion of men work as subsidiary workers. This is evident in table5.

Table 5
**Share of All Workers (all ages) with only Subsidiary Work by Sector and Gender
(Percentage) 2004-05**

Employment Status	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Casual Labour	1.0	12.0	5.0	1.6	15.4	4.8	1.1	12.3	5.0
Regular Workers	0.8	5.0	1.6	0.9	3.6	1.4	0.9	4.1	1.5
Self Employed	3.0	34.6	15.1	1.8	31.3	8.3	2.7	34.2	13.7
Total Workers	2.1	26.1	10.8	1.4	18.8	5.1	1.9	24.9	9.4

Source: NSS 61st Round 2004-05, EUS

The lop-sided structural transformation of agriculture in which declining share of income is not accompanied by an equivalent decline of employment is resultant of jobless growth in manufacturing and over all declining employment elasticity. This is seen in the overwhelming majority of workers still constituting 56.6 per cent of the total workers in 2004-05 in this sector, down from 68.6 per cent in 1983. The 61st round of NSS brings out that the agricultural workers still constituted 72.6 per cent of the total workers in 2004-05 in rural areas down from 81.6 per cent in 1983. Therefore, it is worthwhile to turn focus on this sector to have a glimpse of the situation of work among women in view of the spectacular shift out of agriculture among male workers compared to female workers. This phenomenon has resulted in what is termed feminization of the agricultural of workforce. According to NSSO data the share of female agricultural workers among total agricultural workers remained almost stable between 1983, 1993-94, before it declined to 38.8 per cent in 1999-2000. However, in 2004-05 the share of women in agricultural workforce increased to 41.6 per cent with the ongoing commercialization of agriculture, crop diversification, introduction of new technologies. In such a situation, educational attainments are a force to reckon with in the sense that they form a vital input in overall development and modernization of agriculture and in the betterment of people dependent on it. Notwithstanding the low level of education level of agricultural workers (that is, farmers and agricultural labourers) the situation of women is no less abominable and distressing. The women farmers have high level of illiteracy or education only up to primary level. Above 85 per cent of women belong to this group. This is given in Table 6. The low level of education among female agricultural workers accentuates their poverty.

Table 6
Percentage of Educational attainment of rural agricultural workers, 2004-05

Educational Level	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	Agricultural Labourers			Farmers		
Illiterate & Below Primary	65.9	85.5	74.1	45.7	74.0	57.5
Primary	15.7	7.5	12.3	16.2	10.8	14.0
Middle	13.3	5.3	10.0	18.9	9.5	15.0
Secondary	3.7	1.2	2.6	10.3	3.9	7.6
HS & Above	1.5	0.4	1.0	8.9	1.9	6.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: Agricultural Labourers and usual status (principal and subsidiary) casual workers in agriculture

Source: NSS 61st Round 2004-05, EUS

Without any social security cover and with high levels of illiteracy in the case of women agricultural workers there is seen the disparities of agricultural wages of male and female. The ratio of female wage rate to male wage rate has

Table 7
Disparities in Agricultural Wages

	Years	Ratio of Female Wage Rate to Male Wage Rate	Ratio of Agricultural Wages to Non Agricultural Wages
	Wages	1993-94	0.70
1999-00		0.71	0.62
2004-05		0.69	0.65
		Days Unemployed	Days not in Labour Force
Male	1993-94	33	24
	1999-00	44	26
	2004-05	53	23
Female	1993-94	26	101
	1999-00	31	95
	2004-05	47	94
Total	1993-94	30	56
	1999-00	39	54
	2004-05	51	53

Source: NSS 50th, 55th and 61st Rounds, 1993-94, 1999-00, 2004-05, EUS

gone down from 0.70 in 1993-94 to 0.69 in 2004-05. Besides, seasonality in agricultural operation remains major reason why the agricultural workers have to migrate to other regions to look for alternative avenues of employment during lean periods. Women agricultural labourers are thrown in structural disadvantage in rural areas and remain out of the labour force in more days in a year, almost twice as much as that for men as shown in Table 7. While being out of paid work, they engage in number of activities that help them save income such as free collection of fodder and fuels.

Postscript:

The way agricultural work discriminates against women is seen in the fact that women workers had fewer days of work throughout the year and that average daily wage earnings were lower for women than for men. The share of women workers in agriculture registered an increase in 2004-05. Apart from general conditions of workers in the Indian labour market the social existence of women is disquieting since there is widespread discrimination across sectors and occupations. The labour market discrimination is very often expressed in job stereo-typing and lower remuneration. And discrimination outside the labour market takes the form of lower work participation rate. The circumstance in which women in general and women workers in particular is situated tends to become more disabling when gender remains a constant disadvantage and is superimposed on other disadvantages of low social status, low education, long entrenched patriarchal attitude. With regard to educational attendance it is better not said that women receive fewer years of schooling than men in all segments of the workforce. Gender remains a strong differencing factor in the labour market, in addition to women workers having to bear the double burden of work. It remains unacknowledged that women's time-use in the monetized economic activities are restricted by many structural and not so structural factors like old habits of attitude to gender. Despite this limiting aspect of participation in market oriented activities that define modern economy, women still continue to contribute to the economic output through their work of reproduction in the domestic sphere. It is needless to mention that if one takes the extended domain of work including the work not paid for, women gift away more time on an average than men. Notwithstanding the fact that in rural areas the workforce participation rates for both males and females is approximately at the same level, it does not mean that women in rural areas have a better level of well-being than their counterparts in urban areas. Rather this shows the economic compulsion which drives women to engage in whatever works that come by in order to make a living. Only when higher work participation rates are accompanied by higher educational capabilities and/or asset and income, higher work participation rate become meaningful. About 71 per cent of women workers are either illiterate or have education up to primary level compared to 49 per cent of men. This is a grim expression of the fact that the situation of women in general and women workers in particular is dismal and it calls for not only radical change in attitude towards gender in civil society and but also policy interventions in the political realm.

