MWG-011: Women in the Economy
Guess Paper-I

Q. Discuss the concept, meaning and implications of work done by women in both public and private spheres with suitable examples. Suggest measures for increasing recognition for women's work in both the spheres.

Ans. 'Work' is defined as participation, which can be physical or mental in nature, in any economically productive activity, with or without receiving any kind of compensation/ wage in cash or kind. Any person engaged in 'work' as stated above is categorized as a 'worker' but mainly undertaken by women, can comprise of any of activity like unpaid work on farm, family enterprise, cultivation, milk production even for domestic consumption or some kind of part time work, all fall under the purview of work. Work also includes effective supervision and providing direction of work.

Work, means carrying out of tasks, which involves the expenditure of mental and physical effort, and its objective is the production of goods and services that cater to human needs. An occupation, or job, is work that is done in exchange for a regular wage or salary.

In all cultures, work is the basis of the economy or economic system. The economic system for any given culture is made up of the institutions that provide for the production and distribution of goods and services. These institutions may vary from culture to culture, particularly in traditional societies versus modern societies.

In traditional cultures, food gathering and food production is the type of work occupied by the majority of the population. In larger traditional societies, carpentry, stonemasonry, and shipbuilding are also prominent. In modern societies where industrial development exists, people work in a much wider variety of occupations.

Work Done by Women: Women have always contributed to a nation's social-economic development, both in direct manner by taking up work outside of home and indirectly by facilitating supply of labor and its maintenance. But, both in developed and developing nations, women are laden with cumulative inequalities that result from discriminatory cultural and socio-economic practices that regulate the status of women in society. The chores and activities that women generally carry out do not fetch any income to the family. These tasks, perceived as their natural roles, are related to their reproductive and community resource management roles which are not economically productive, thus, not recognized and valued. In many societies women also carry out productive work but are not paid for it remain confined to family activities. Therefore, women's contributions to national economies do not qualify for accounting, making it invisible.

Work performed by women can be placed under the following categories;

- Productive/unproductive work
- Visible/invisible work
- Paid/unpaid work
- Economically/socially productive work Unpaid work can be defined as work that does not receive any direct remuneration. It can be of two categories:
- Unpaid work falling within the production boundary of UN System of National Accounting (SNA). That is to say, unpaid work that is covered under the purview of national income accounts. It is also referred to as unpaid SNA work' which includes subsistence production, work performed by unpaid family workers employed in family enterprise and work such as collection of fuel and fodder.
- Unpaid work lying outside the production boundary but falling within the general production boundary is referred to as unpaid non-SNA work that includes household management, care related activities and unpaid community services.

Productive Work of Women: The tendency to highlight the unpaid economic work has a long-standing history within the debates on gender and development, going back to the Women in Development (WID) tradition and the work of the Danish economist. The importance of Boserup's book (Women's Role in Economic Development in 1970) was that, it challenged the assumptions of the 'welfare approach' and highlighted women's importance to the agricultural economy. n. In general, a great effort was made to distinguish WID from women's programmes that were carried out under the rubric of health or social welfare. Instead of characterizing women as needy beneficiaries, WID arguments represented women as productive members of society.

- Radical policy would involve elimination of the hierarchical structure of production, perhaps by some form of workers' control and equalization of wages. To the extent that this would eliminate or reduce differences among workers, it would tend to eliminate or reduce differences by sex.

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- A less radical policy would involve equal opportunity and affirmative action plans that take the structure of production and the labor hierarchy as given, but would make each job equally accessible to men and women.

Both of these policies have a major flaw. They focus only on the structure of production and do not take into consideration women's role in the area of reproduction.

The role played by the state as care provider will determine the load of care assigned to family, volunteer labor, and/or the market. If no public policies are in place to regulate the care economy and its distribution, the family is disproportionately burdened (particularly in the case of women who must pull double or triple work shifts) and the possibilities of social advancement for low-income women are limited. The test was simply whether a given activity could be performed by a person other than the person receiving the benefit. Thus, cooking was a productive activity, eating was not.

If an activity can be performed by someone else, then it is theoretically possible to pay them for it. That is, there is a potential market for that good or service. For instance, it makes little sense to pay someone to watch TV for you because you will not receive the benefit. However, it is possible to pay someone to prepare food for you, or more controversially, to have sex with you.

In 1947 Simon Kuznets, who had helped design and implement national accounts in the United States, argued the need for the international system to incorporate subsistence non-market production. Attempts were made to include subsistence production in the national accounts of some countries in the 1950s and 1960s, but it was the push by the women's movement in the 1970s which really focused on the importance of non-market production.

It is the concept of 'Third person' criteria represented an important challenge to Western notions of development, and it was a feminist challenge in as much as Boser up showed that it was women who did most of the subsistence work. Yet, her case for counting many of these women's activities was that they were part of subsistence production, not that women's household labor was productive. However, this latter argument was taken up by the feminist movement. Ann Oakley's foundational work in the early 1970s was followed by a series of studies which clearly saw housework as work, as productive and as done mainly by women. Nearly forty years later, the figures still show that women do about twice as much unpaid household work as men. The feminist critique of national accounts has been carried in various international fora, most notably with the recommendation from the UN Conference on Women in 1985. It was reaffirmed at Beijing in 1995, to measure and value unpaid work. But it was Marilyn Waring who popularised the feminist critique of the SNA with her landmark book, Counting for Nothing. Waring ridiculed the system which classified women as 'economically inactive' women, who worked long hours providing the basic necessities of life, while valuing as (welfare enhancing) 'growth' the 'work' of the men in the missile silos with their fingers on the nuclear button.

Measures for increasing recognition of women's work: Valuation of unpaid work can be done either by valuing the labor input that has gone in to the work or by valuing the output generated by the work. The former is known as the input method or a wage based valuation and the latter is known as the output method or product based valuation.

Input method: Under the input method, the value of unpaid work at the individual level is computed by multiplying the time spent by the person on unpaid work with an appropriate wage rate. The selection of the wage rate is a very critical issue here. Two types of wage rates may be used:

- Replacement wage rate i.e. the wage paid to a person who produces a similar service in the market,
- The opportunity cost, i.e. the wage rate forgone by the person who is performing the unpaid work.

The market replacement wage rate can either be a generalist rate (for example, wage rate of a housekeeper) or can be specialist rates. The generalist wage rate could be the wage of a domestic paid worker, as prevailing in the local market. The specialist wage rates of different specialized activities comparable with the relevant domestic activities.

Output Method: Under the output method, value of unpaid work is calculated by multiplying the units of output with the wage rate per unit of output. The direct valuation of unpaid work by the output approach would need data on the output of the unpaid work, such as the number of meals prepared, number of clothes washed and ironed, area of house cleaned, children taught etc. as well as the data on the wage rate per unit of output, such as the labor charge of each meal prepared, charge per item of clothing washed and ironed, labor charge per child cared etc.

From the perspective of accounting for unpaid work, input-related accounting is superior to output-related accounting. For example, if women have to walk longer to fetch water, input-related accounting will show an increase in the time input, though there is no increase in output. Thus intensified effort of women is valued in input related accounting.

Now let's talk about the reasons which leads to blind the work done by women in our world, here are some point which covers this reason and also uncovers the measure for increasing the recognition of women's work in both of the spheres:

- **Secondary role:** Whatever a woman does in the labor market is viewed as her secondary role. She is not looked upon as capable of providing household finance and her income is only viewed as marginal income or secondary income. However, at times, income of all the member is needed for the family's survival.
- **Patriarchal nature of the society:** We have a patriarchal society. Patriarchal attitude carried on for generations make it difficult for the employers to realize the reality and accept women as equal partners.
- **Women's commitment towards work:** There is a misconceived notion about women's sincerity towards work. Employers assume that women would be irregular for work. More of absenteeism and less of sincerity is anticipated from women. It is because of this attitude of men that the demand for women workers is confined to only low skill and low paid jobs.
- **Effect of modernization:** Along with this traditional attitude, the effect of modernization and mechanization has also worked against women. When new machines are employed for doing work earlier done by women, men are employed to run the machines. This leads to the replacement of women workers by men workforce. But, as women were not properly organized in the trade unions, there is not enough resistance. This gives us a picture of change in demand for women workers in the wake of modernization.
- **Effect of legislation:** Other factor causing reduction in demand for women workers, is the laws enacted to protect them. Certain benefits like maternity benefits and provision of crèches add expenditure to the employers existing cost. Principle of equal pay for equal work also reduce the employer's inclination of paying a lower wage to women workers as cost of added benefits/provisions is over and above the wages. This also led to teed reduction in the demand for women workers.
- **To Overcome Patriarchal Attitude:** As we have seen the root cause of segmentation of labor market, both on the demand and supply side, lies in the patriarchal attitude regarding women's role - as a housewife, mother and also as workers. Special efforts should be made to change this attitude. Women's organization should also make exceptional efforts to uproot the internalization of patriarchal attitude by women themselves.
- **Awareness about adverse effects of segmentation of Labor Market:** Men should be made aware of the adverse effect labor market segmentation has not only on women but also on employers. Women also must be made aware of the ill effects of labor market segmentation who accept it as their destiny.
- **Role of civil society:** All organizations dealing with labor should be made receptive to the fact and there should be special measures taken to orient the employers in both the private and the public sector to encourage gainful employment for both men and women.
- **Gender Inclusive Policies:** Policies that are gender sensitive and promote gender equality should be promoted. Special incentives should be instituted to encourage members of both the sexes for achieving excellence in educational activities to performance at workplace.
- **Advocacy by Government:** There should be continuous effort, by governmental as well as the non-government organizations dealing with women, to remove misconceptions which regard 'home' as the only sphere of work for women. Imaginary adverse effects women's work will have on their children and other familial responsibilities should be discouraged. Research should be encouraged in this field to remove such misconceptions.
- **Encouragement Formal Education:** Special efforts should be made to see that girl children enroll for primary education in equal number and special attention should be paid to reduce the drop-out ratio. They should be encouraged to go in for higher studies by giving special scholarships. If women venture into untrodden areas of study previously not opted by women, they should be given special incentives.
- **Childcare Facilities:** Special facilities like maternity leave, crèche to take care of the children of working women etc., must be made available so that women can enter the organized sector of the labor market. Since individual employers will be unwilling to bear the cost, the State should shoulder the responsibility. This will minimize the resistance of employers to women employees.
- **Equal Remuneration:** Women should get equal remuneration as men in the same occupation. This has not been possible in spite of the fact that India has ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention. So, there is a need to modify the law and also effectively implement the same if women are to be integrated within the labor market.

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Q. What is understood by work? Why women's work under is enumerated? Discuss the importance of visibility of women's work with the help of relevant examples.

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The congress party had constituted a National Planning Committee in 1939-40 and as part of this a sub-committee was set up which was supposed to advise on women. This sub-committee was chaired by Laxmibai Rajwade and had Mridula Sarabhai as member secretary. The report that was submitted by this sub-committee documents that a woman worker should have full control of her earnings; a ban should not be imposed on night work for women since it only excludes them, rather the hazardous nature of those occupations should be lessened; the family should not be seen as the economic unit since that assigns a secondary role to the women earners.

Enumeration of women's work: It has been seen that while sexual division of labor was a basic feature within the home, it also extend outside into the market as well. When women move into the market for employment, the rate of economically active women is highest in Europe and the developed world, where there are 82 women working for every 100 men. Northern Africa and the Middle East present some of the lowest rates with 35 and 39 economically active women for every 100 men, respectively, they face discrimination on three accounts:

- income differentials for the same work done as men;
- overcrowding into certain jobs that are seen as suited to women; and
- innate biases of employers against hiring women as employees

In India, housework came into focus as a problem first with studies that drew attention to the 'double burden' that women face in housework and market-related work. The care of the aged, the disabled and the sick is also the responsibility of women within households. In economies which are governed by the market, social security being minimal or even nonexistent, women's contribution in the care economy becomes critical.

In a pioneering work, in 1976-77, Devaki Jain and Malini Chand discussed the implications of domestic work for the enumeration of workers in data collection processes. Micro time-use studies were conducted to ascertain women's domestic work.

You have read in the earlier section that at the national level, the two major sources of data for employment figures are the Census surveys carried out every ten years, the employment rate of women has been found to be highly sensitive to the definition and method of data collection.

The major cause for under-enumeration has been located in the ideology of the 'man' as the breadwinner and 'head of the household' with the implication that women's work is secondary and supplementary. In particular, attention has been drawn to the role of women in the informal sector of the economy.

Data on the economic activity of the people collected up to the Census in 1951 was based on 'income' and 'dependency' concepts. From the 1961 Census onwards, the concept of work measured in terms of time or the labor force concept has been followed. This is in accordance with the recommendations of International Labor Office (ILO) and is generally followed in most of the countries. The classification of population as 'workers' and 'non-workers' based on the concept of work was introduced in the 1961 Census.

Thus, in the 1971 Census, every person was asked what their 'main activity' was i.e. how he or she engaged himself/herself mostly. On the basis of this question, the population was divided into two broad streams of main activity as 'workers' and 'non-workers'. The reference period adopted was one week prior to the date of enumeration in the case of regular work in trade. A person was a main

worker if he/she had participated in any such regular work, on any one of the days during this reference period and this had been treated as his/her main activity.
In the case of seasonal workers, a person's main activity was ascertained with reference to such work in the last one year, even if the person was not economically active in the week prior to the enumeration. In the 1981 Census, the economic questions were formulated so as to first divide the population into;

- Workers - those who had worked at any time during the year preceding the Census; and
- Non-Workers - those who had not worked at all during the year.

Having classified the population into these broad groups, an attempt was made to sub-divide those who had worked anytime into two groups.

- 'Main workers' i.e. those who were engaged in economic activity for the major part of the year i.e. for a period of six months (183 days) or more and
- 'Marginal workers' i.e. those who had worked for some time but not for the major part during the last year.

An attempt was also made to find out whether those who were non-workers or those who were marginal workers were seeking or available for work. While formulating the economic questions in the 1991 Census, it was decided to adopt the same long reference period of 'one year' for both seasonal and regular activities besides continuing the concepts and definitions used in the 1981 Census. Further, it was also adopted to incorporate the words 'including unpaid work on farm or in family enterprises' to the main question relating to the work, with a view to capture the unpaid contribution by women and children in their family farms and family enterprises. According to Resolution No. 1 of the 13th International Conference of Labor Statisticians, 1982, the 'economically active population comprises persons of either sex, who furnish the supply of labor for the production of economic goods and services as defined by the United Nations'.
According to this definition, economic activities can be market activities or non-market activities. Market activities are those in which one produces goods or services for pay or for profit. The non-market economic activities are:

- Production of primary commodities for own consumption.
- Processing of primary commodities for own consumption.
- Own account production of fixed assets.

The NSSO has defined 'work' or 'gainful activity' as the activity pursued for pay, profit or family gain or in other words, the activity which adds value to the 'national product'.
The NSSO has adopted three different approaches to measure employment and unemployment. The three approaches are:

- 'usual status' approach, with a reference period of 365 days preceding the date of survey;
- 'current weekly status' approach, with a reference period of seven days preceding the date of survey;
- 'Current daily status' approach, with each day of the seven days preceding date of survey as the reference period.

Strictly speaking, this approach attempts classification of person-days and not persons. Of the above approaches, the measurement of employment and unemployment based on the 'usual status approach' is the one that can be broadly compared with the Census classification. The 'usual status approach' has a reference period of one year. In this approach, the activity on which a person spent relatively longer time of the preceding 365 days, prior to the date of survey, is considered as the principal status of the person. Accordingly, a person's principal 'usual status' is considered as working or employed, if he or she was engaged during the reference period of 365 days, in any one or more of the work activities. A person is considered as 'seeking or available for work' or 'unemployed', if he or she was not working but was either seeking or was available for work for a relatively longer period of the specified reference period. A person is considered as 'not in labor force', if he or she was engaged for a relatively longer period in any one of the non-gainful activities.
Importance of Visibility of Women's Work: The invisibility, unproductivity and unpaid nature of women's work push them to a marginalized position in a capitalist society and accord lower status. Thus, on one hand, invisibility of women's work leads to lapse in policy implications where their contribution is marginalized, making her a 'dependent' economic entity. On the other hand, women face oppression as a result of performing work that is not directly adding to family income. Thus, women face 'double whammy' as a consequence of her invisibility of work due to conceptual as well as operational biases. Even when they take up work outside of the private space, they are abundantly absorbed in those sectors/services where the benefit of economic activity is not accrued to women employees.
In India, to understand why and where women get employment, one has to account for the growth pattern of the Indian economy. In India, planning emerged soon after Independence and the model

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