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शक्तिउत्थानआश्रमलखीसरायबिहार

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EMPLOYMENT : GROWTH, INFORMALISATION AND OTHER ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

People do a variety of work. Some work on farms, in factories, banks, shops and many other workplaces; yet a few others work at home. Work at home includes not only traditional work like weaving, lace making or variety of handicrafts but also modern jobs like programming work in the IT industry. Earlier factory work meant working in factories located in cities whereas now technology has enabled people to produce those factory-based goods at home in villages.

Why do people work? Work plays an important role in our lives as individuals and as members of society. People work for 'earning' a living. Some people get, or have, money by inheriting it, not working for it. This does not completely satisfy anybody. Being employed in work gives us a sense of self-worth and enables us to relate ourselves meaningfully with others. Every working person is actively contributing to national income and hence, the development of the country by engaging in various economic activities — that is the real meaning of 'earning' a living. We do not work only for ourselves; we also have a sense of accomplishment when we work to meet the requirements of those who are dependent on us. Having recognised the importance of work, Mahatma Gandhi insisted upon education and training through a variety of works including craft.

Studying about working people gives us insights into the quality and nature of employment in a country and helps in understanding and planning our human resources. It helps us to analyse the contribution made by different industries and sectors towards national income. It also helps us to address many social issues such as exploitation of marginalised sections of the society, child labour, etc.

WORKERS AND EMPLOYMENT

What is employment? Who is a worker? When a farmer works on fields, he or she produces food grains and raw materials for industries. Cotton becomes cloth in textile mills and in power looms. Lorries transport goods from one place to another. We know that the total money value of all such final goods and services produced in a country in a year is called its gross domestic product for that year. When we also consider what we pay for our imports and get from our

exports we find that there is a net earning for the country which may be positive (if we have exported more in value terms than imported) or negative (if imports exceeded exports in value terms) or zero (if exports and imports were of the same value). When we add this earning (plus or minus) from foreign transactions, what we get is called the country's gross national product for that year. Those activities which contribute to the gross national product are called economic activities. All those who are engaged in economic activities, in whatever capacity — high or low, are workers. Even if some of them temporarily abstain from work due to illness, injury or other physical disability, bad weather, festivals, social or religious functions, they are also workers. Workers also include all those who help the main workers in these activities. We generally think of only those who are paid by an employer for their work as workers. This is not so.

Those who are self-employed are also workers. The nature of employment in India is multifaceted. Some get employment throughout the year; some others get employed for only a few months in a year. Many workers do not get fair wages for their work. While estimating the number of workers, all those who are engaged in economic activities are included as employed. You might be interested in knowing the number of people actively engaged in various economic activities. During 2011-12, India had about a 473 million strong workforce. Since majority of our people reside in rural areas, the proportion of workforce residing there is higher. The rural workers constitute about three-fourth of this 473 million. Men form the majority of workforce in India. About 70 per cent of the workers are men and the rest are women (men and women include child labourers in respective sexes). Women workers account for one-third of the rural workforce whereas in urban areas, they are just one-fifth of the workforce. Women carry out works like cooking, fetching water and fuelwood and participate in farm labour. They are not paid wages in cash or in the form of grains; at times they are not paid at all. For this reason, these women are not categorised as workers. Economists argue that these women should also be called workers. What do you think?