

PREFACE

There is vast gap between women's economic contribution and their economic status, world over. This thesis attempt to work out the factors behind low economic status of women in urban informal sector in Baroda. Through an integration of women's perspective in economic analysis of the urban informal sector, I also attempt to contribute to a new conceptualisation of economic reality.

I believe that it is important to integrate women's perspective in economic theory not only to provide recognition and legitimate share to women but also to enrich and enlarge the scope of economic theory itself. Feminist scholarship has shown how the absence of women in economic theory results in skewed and often faulty understanding of economic reality. This thesis is guided by the idea that any theory, which cannot explain the situation of half the world population, is not an efficient theory.

My attempts to combine my concern for women and economic theory dates back to 1985 when I was studying in the Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts, M. S. University Of Baroda. In our compulsory seminar paper, Prof. Hashim encouraged me to present a seminar on "Status of Women in Various Modes of Production." Appreciation given by Dr. V. N. Kothari provided an inspiration to me. I am thankful to both of them as well as all other teachers of the Economics Department from whom I learnt Economics for five years.

I am grateful to my guide Prof. P. R. Pancholi for accepting me as a student and for providing a very conducive environment. Because of my other responsibilities and ill health during pregnancy, my research work sometimes became very erratic. I am thankful to him for his support and useful comments at every stage of my work inspite of his various commitments. Without his constant support, I would not have been able to complete this work.

I am also grateful to Prof S. K. Singh, Head, Department of Business Economics and Prof. K. R. Shah for their encouragement and their support on various occasions.

I am thankful to Women's Studies Research Center, M. S. University of Baroda, where I worked as Junior Research Fellow. The former Hon. Director Prof. Amitaben Verma and former Program Officer Ms. Bhavana Mehta provided the freedom and space to continue my work. I am also thankful to the present Director Prof. Parulben Dave, for her interest in my work.

Without the support and friendship of present Program Officer Ms. Nandini Manjrekar I could not have completed this work. She went through each and every page of my thesis, provided critical comments and also did grammatical corrections. Her encouragement gave me the strength to complete my work.

I also thank the staff members and librarians of Women's Studies Research Center, Hansa Mehta Library, Baroda and Research Center on Women's Studies, SNDT, Bombay.

In particular, I would like to thank Comrade Maganbhai Desai for extending his valuable library and house during my research and writing stage. His tremendous efforts in the compiling and filing of subject-wise articles from various important research journals saved me a huge amount of labour.

At various stages of my research work I got support and inspiration from several people. All of whom I could not mention here but I would particularly like to thank Dr. Ghanshyam Shah and Dr. Kalpana Shah for their support in the initial stage of my research.

Dr. Neeraben Desai provided comments and valuable material from her personal library. Her warmth and care proved equally conducive as her comments.

Sunita Soni and Sangeeta Patel accompanied me during my fieldwork. Their help during interviews was invaluable. I am thankful to them.

More than anyone else, I thank the respondents from the slums of Baroda who have shaped my understanding of the subject. The information, which they so generously shared with me, has formed the backbone of my thesis.

I am thankful to my colleagues of Sahiyar (Stree Sangathan) for their ideological and moral support throughout my work.

The timely help and valuable moral support from, Deeptha Achar, Santosh Dash was very crucial and cannot be explained in words.

I acknowledge the support given by Sheetal Ghelani Chirag Shah, Jyantibhai Solanki, and Gopalbhai during the last and critical phase of my work.

I acknowledge a deep sense of gratitude to my parents, brother and bhabhi. Without their support and care at every stage, I could not have completed my thesis on time. I acknowledge yet again my indebtedness to my mother who has always patiently borne my irritability and bad temper during periods of stress. My companion Rohit Prajapati had cheerfully made adjustments with his activism and academic work so that I can complete my work in time.

My child Manav has coped with the disruptions entailed by my thesis with calmness and good humor and it is his smile, which has helped me to complete my thesis.

- Trupti Shah