



## Gender Discrimination In An Unorganised Sector.

### KEYWORDS

Gender Discrimination, Unorganized Sector, Sexual Harassment, Construction Labourers

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### ABSTRACT

*Women in ancient period particularly during the Vedic period enjoyed a position which was whole much satisfactory than in the later periods. The status of women in society symbolises its level of progress but the study of the history of human society reveals that in no society of the world women enjoyed absolutely equality with men. Every where they were subject to exploitation, discrimination and inequality. Today in villages and in cities a large number of women are going out of the four walls of the household and becoming workers. The global work place continues to exploit worker in this century and women remain the primary victims. One among them is sexual harassment which most of the working women face in the work place. Sexual harassment is an ugly form of gender discrimination. At the work place in order to make the women withdraw from the competition or to subordinate she to one's whims and fancies then such an act is construed as sexual harassment where the basic cause is gender discrimination this affects the organisation tremendously besides causing emotional, physical and psychological problems to the victims. As the whole atmosphere becomes unhealthy for work relation. This paper tries to highlight the Discriminations faced by working women in the organization.*

### INTRODUCTION

"You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women".-

#### Jawaharlal Nehru.

The labour force in all developing economics consists of two broad categories; the organized and the unorganized. The organized sector are those sector consisting of activities carried out by the corporate enterprises and the government at central, state and local levels, solely with the help of wage paid labour which, in a great measure, is unionized. The unorganized sector on the other hand covers most of the rural labour and a substantial part of urban labour. The size of the unorganised sector has been growing over the past few decades. Almost 400 million people (more than 85% of the working population) work in unorganized sector and of these about 120 million are women. According to an estimate, by the National Commission on Self-Employed Women (1988a), of the total number of women workers about 94 percent are in the informal or unorganized sector whereas just 6 percent are in the organized or formal sector. Thus there is no intensification in saying that the unorganized sector in India is the women's sector. Women workers play an essential and significant role in the economic structure of the country and have done so throughout its history but their efforts and accomplishments have not been acknowledged. Women have been invisible workers. Their labour and skills have been considered insignificant in relation to those of men. Problems of women working in unorganised sector have been increasing recently. A vast majority of working women population is in the unorganised sector and is consequently unprotected that is women are more prone to gender discrimination that refers to the acts of disfavour on grounds of sex.

If a female is discriminated against on the grounds of being a female either in recruitment or promotion or salary hike then it is "gender discrimination". Sexual harassment can be used as a tool for gender discrimination for example: to prevent women from competing for a job, or promotion or prize winning/ career oriented competition so that the changes of

men are brighter. But sexual harassment refers to misconduct by a male colleague or superiors or a subordinate or co-passenger towards a women in the day to day functioning in the work place. Sexual harassment is an ugly or vulgar form of gender discrimination. If women is harassed or discriminated against because she is a woman then it is gender discrimination. Gender equality for women and men to own land and assets, to earn money and to participate on working life, are essential for sustainable and democratic development. As a larger portion of women than men live in poverty, efforts to reduce poverty are inseparable from aspirations to greater equality between men and women. Women's economic participation can be mentioned in the field of production of goods and services accounted in the national income statistics. Women work mainly for economic independence, for economic necessity, as some women are qualified enough to work, for a sense of achievement and to provide service to the society. Most Indian women by and large undertake "productive work" only under economic compulsion. The International Labour Organisation says that women represent :

- i) 50% of the population
- ii) 30% of the labour force
- iii) Perform 60% of all working hours
- IV) Receive 10% of the world's income
- v) Own less than 1% of the world's property.

Most of the women are found to be employed in the unorganised sector. The employment of women is high in the unorganised sector such as part time helpers in households, construction centres, tanneries (setting, parting and drying), match and beedi industries etc. An estimate by the World Bank shows that 90% of the women working in the informal sector are not included in the official statistics and their work is undocumented and considered as disguised wage work, unskilled, low paying and do not provide benefits to the workers. They work roughly twice as many as many hours as men. Woman has to work beyond working hours, even in advanced stages of pregnancy, and there is no leave facility. Due to their inability to work for long hours they are not employed in sensitive or

crucial positions. Another problem that Women face in the unorganised sector is sexual harassment women have to work at night and are sexually physically abused. HIV AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, respiratory problems, silicosis, tuberculosis, leukemia, arthritis and reproductive problems are more prevalent among women workers. The problem of sexual harassment relates not so much to the actual biological differences between men and women, but to the gender or social roles, which are attributed to men and women in social and economic life, and perceptions about male and female sexuality in society. Inequalities in the position of men and women exist in nearly all societies and sexual harassment at work is clear manifestation of unequal power relations.

#### **DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN:**

Work environment and working condition:

Women are more likely to be working in men's jobs' than the contrary and this again increases the chances of sexual harassment of women at work. As a rule, women are employed in a narrow range of occupations than men. In occupations where women are determined, such as teaching, they are usually in lower hierarchical positions. They take over in clerical and secretarial jobs and in low-end occupations such as shop assistants, maids, hair dressers, and dress makers women are often seen in the lower categories of the job hierarchy. Women are given work which is often unskilled and low skilled. They have to work under very poor working and living condition. Women workers have very poor bargaining power and that is why they cannot pressurize the employers for their rights, which leads to exploitation.

#### **Wage discrimination:**

The women are paid lower and marginal wages than the male workers. Women are given work which is often low paid. Discrimination exists not only in terms of wage rates, as well as working conditions are poor and substandard. Low levels of skill on entry, lack of access to on-the-job training, bearing and raising children, time off to care for family members and the assumption that men are the primary earners all add to the embedded assumption that women should be paid less than men.

#### **Sexual Harassment:**

In a survey done by National Commission for Women of 1,200 women, nearly 50 percent complained of gender discrimination and physical and mental harassment at work. The life of unorganized sector worker is very tough. They are exploited in many ways. The exploitation is not only carried on the class lines but also on the lines of male domination over females. Many women as a result find them vulnerable and are caught between the glass ceiling of discrimination above and the landmines of sexual harassment below. There are growing numbers of complaints from women working in factories and offices, that they have to suffer affronts to their dignity ranging from verbal 'passes' to physical assaults. Large mass of problems remains sunken because of the unequal power situation of women in the workplace.

#### **Lack of social security:**

Women working persistently day in and day out, have no legislative protection, not even the guarantee of a minimum wages. The elements of job quality, job security, good working conditions and remuneration proportionate with the work, loyalty to worker's rights, social protection are missing for women working in the unorganized sector. Women work the year round with no regular employment and are not entitled to any social security benefits. They toil for more than eight hours a day, without the luxury of weekend holidays. They number in

millions, yet they are not part of any list, register or master roll.

#### **Dual Responsibility:**

The major problems for working women rise out of the dual responsibility of house work and the office work. Even though the employment of women is accepted, most of the in laws and majority of the husbands have not accepted the changing life pattern. They are not prepared to share the responsibilities of the household and of looking after children. Hence a kind of conflict arising from a lack of adjustment between two competing roles is likely to be faced by those women who have to comply with dual obligations at a time.

Health problems of women:

Statistical studies showing the perception of women about their status with male:

The notion of gender discrimination as perpetuated by patriarchy prohibits them to come par with their male counterparts at work place. The findings show that 72.5 percent of men have felt that women are not equal to men. Working women reported that these men felt that they are not comfortable in taking orders from female this is quite natural that when women is not treated equal by males at workplace then women cannot be treated as more intelligent to males at workplace. There were 56.5 percent, 52.5 percent and 62.1 percent of the women reported that they were treated inferior to males at the workplace respectively. 82.9 percent of the women have been reported that males treated them as poor performers. 48.0 percent of women surveyed revelled that the male feels that the female workers are getting more salary than their performance. 62.0 percent of the respondents have been said that the women were treated as show piece and of easy moral at the work place by the males. 83.0 percent of the women have reported that the male did not pay them respect and misbehaved with them just because they were women.

#### **Some of the common effect on the victims due to discrimination is;**

- ◆ Psychological stress and health impairment and Decreased work
- ◆ Discrimination causes lack of motivation to excel further as the women has to struggle every time for her right.
- ◆ Those who protest against the discrimination, fight for their rights and are vocal become aggressive and most of the time looked down upon by the society.

#### **VARIOUS PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN:**

Poverty Alleviation/Income Generation programmes for women: poverty alleviation programmes should essentially focus on women as they are economically more disadvantaged than men and chronically poor. These alleviation programmes should be designed to meet women's needs with strengthening of SHGs, easy access to cheap credit, equal wages for equal work and a judicious mix of cash and non-cash in the wages etc. With the advent of mega poverty alleviation schemes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, more and more women are coming forward to work. It is important that the workplace should be made safe from harassment and women-friendly with adequate provision of sanitation.

The LokSabah on September 3rd, 2012 passed the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2012. The Bill was introduced by Krishna Tirath, the Minister of Women and Child Development. The Factories Act, the Mines Act, The Dock Workers' Act etc are some of the laws, which contain provisions for regulating the health of the workers in an establishment. The Employees' State Insurance Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act provide health benefits and compensation to the workers in

cases of ill-health and injuries etc. But in the unorganised sector where the majority of women workers are concentrated, no occupational safety and health safeguards are in place. Even in the organised sector, where these are applicable, safeguards are rarely provided for the workers, either male or female. Usually the safety devices are designed keeping the male workers in view and become unsuitable for women workers. Besides, the social aspects of work are not considered risk factors. As a result, more emphasis is given to work related accidents than to illnesses.

#### **GENDER BUDGETING:**

Gender responsive budgeting or gender analysis of budgets is a very useful tool being used to promote gender mainstreaming. Gender budgeting refers to presentation of budgetary data in a manner such that the gender sensitivities of budgeting includes carrying out an impact analysis of government programmes and its budgetary allocations on the overall socio-economic status of women in the country.

#### **MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT:**

In 2004-05, MWCD adopted the mission statement of budgeting for gender equity. Since then, several initiatives have been taken by MWCD to operationalize gender budgeting.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The female labour force constitutes one third of the rural workers in India. Women workers face serious problems and constraints related to work such as lack of continuity, insecurity, wage discrimination, unhealthy job relationship, absence of medical and accident care etc. The exploitation of female labourers in rural regions happens both horizontally and vertically. It is time to address the issues and discuss the kind of policy reforms and institutional changes required for the emancipation and empowerment of rural female labour force. Empowerment should aim at changing the nature and direction of the power structures which marginalise the women labourers." Though more and more women are coming out in search of paid employment as their families need their income, the attitude towards women and their role in the family has not undergone much change. Women continue to be perceived as weak, inferior, and second-class citizen. It is the need of the hour that government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) must come forward to actively and efficiently deal with the plight of these women. The Trade Unions and Voluntary Organizations can play a vital role in making them conscious of health, education and above all their rights. Women should be provided education and training to enhance their sense of self-worth and self-esteem and to enlighten them regarding their right of equality and good health. Therefore a credible employment strategy needs to focus to enhance educational level of the workers, social status of workers including women, specific industries that can absorb a higher proportion of males and females and creation of quality job.

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