



STATUS OF WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN DINDIGUL CITY, TAMILNADU, INDIA

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Introduction:

Status of unorganized female workforce in developing societies is of peculiar character in nature as they constitute majority of the workforce, and also most neglected one in the male-dominated societies. “The Census of India 2011 returned 41 million women as workers. As many as 37 million, i.e. 91 per cent of the total female workforce is engaged in the unorganised sector, 81.4 per cent in agriculture and the rest in non-agricultural occupations. While some data are available regarding agricultural workers, information on non-agricultural occupations in the unorganized sector is scanty and not very reliable”. Among the non-agricultural sector unorganised female workforce women construction workers are not studied yet from sociological point of view.

Women construction worker’s is a significant group of women in unorganized sector of India. National Committee on “Status of Women in India” has made following observations:

The unorganised sector women workers suffered from insecurity of employment lack of standard minimum wages, excessive hours of work and absence of any welfare amenities”. As the women from this unorganized category do not enjoy any facilities or amenities as the workers in the organized sector enjoy. As these women are unorganised, naturally they are not able to better their life situations. The number of women in the construction industry is substantial. Majority of

women construction workers are either contract or casual labour, the problem of ensuring minimum protection and security for them has proved to be an extremely different task”. So the research work was undertaken by the present research on the topic “Sociological study of women Construction Workers”.

The purpose of studying these women construction workers was to see whether these women belonging to lower class are enjoying the benefits of democracy or modernisation.

Methodology:

Women construction workers in Dindigul city were chosen for this study. Dindigul is one of the developing districts of the southern district of Tamil Nadu. So the universe was women construction workers in Dindigul city. As the absence of a list of construction workers, purposive sampling technique was used. As the sampling was purposive one, researcher approached women construction workers, wherever they were found on the site. Information was collected from one hundred respondents; with the help of highly structured interview schedule as the respondents were illiterate. The nature of the research work was formulative one. Information was collected on the familial aspect, work condition, socio-political life, economic condition, religious life etc. Entire data were coded and hand processed. As the research was formulative in nature, and there was a lack of data, researcher could not frame definitive hypothesis.

Personal and familial aspect of w.c.w

Most strikingly, it is revealed by the analysis of the data collected, that this most neglected women labour force, is far away from the impact and benefits of modernization and social policy, in spite of living in the city like Dindigul.

S.L	Age distribution	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	<20	10	10%
2	21-30	45	45%
3	31-40	15	15%
4	41>	20	20%
	Total	100	100%

Considering the age wise breakup of the respondents, 80 per cent were within the age group of 15 to 38 years. It means most of women construction workers were young.

S.L	Literacy	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Illiterate	77	77%
2	Primary	18	18%
3	Secondary	5	5%
	Total	100	100%

Among the total respondents 77 per cent were illiterates, 18 per cent were primary education and remaining 5 per cent were secondary education level. Distribution according to caste indicated that 75 percent of total respondents were from SC, 15 per cent of were from MBC, and remaining 10 per cent were BC, both in Indian rural areas and in the towns, the female construction worker are low caste women of rural origin. In this study 79 percent of the respondents were living in the near by villages of Dindigul district.

S.L	Marital Status	No. Respondent	Percentage
1	Unmarried	12	12%
2	Married	80	80%
3	Widow	8	8%
	Total	100	100%

Almost all women construction workers were got married before attaining 16 year of age. Only 10 per cent of them were married within the age limit 18-22. The percent researcher had come across the frightening bare reality of Indian Society that 87 per cent of respondents were married below the age of 16 years, against lawful marriage age for female in India being minimum 18 years. Most of the husband's of these women were also construction workers (80 per cent with 69 per cent of them were illiterate and 79 per cent were habituated to Tobacco, Beedi, and Alcohol).

Analysis of the data collected indicates that 70 per cent of the respondents were having 4 children and 9 per cent were having 5 remaining 21 per cent of them having below 3 children when Government of India propagates limit of 'only two' most of these poverty-ridden women were 'double' than the limit. Small children for the women workers are always liability. It

becomes very difficult to work outside, when children are small or under the age of six. The present researcher found that 40 per cent respondents were having small children and they were taking them at the site of the work. It was observed that there were no amenities of child care, no cradle arrangements were made by the employers for looking after and keeping their small children at work site.

It is also noteworthy that 59 per cent of respondents were doing their household work before and after the work. If parental occupation is seen, it was found that 34 per cent parents were in construction industry and 57 per cent were doing the farm work, i.e. 91 per cent parents of these women construction workers were belonging to the toiling labour class, living in the huts.

As these women construction workers have to work outside more than eight hours, they have to complete household work before they start for their work outside. 89 per cent of the respondents were getting up before 5 a.m. and were used to do household work after returning from the work till late in the night.

Naturally these most sufferer class of women workforce, due to their strenuous nature of work 81 per cent of respondents were facing pains in different parts of the body.

It is revealed from the data collected that they were deprived from even religious activities. Religion seems to be luxury of the higher classes. These poor women had no time even to worship or go to the temple every day, their entire life seems to be working life.

Even more shocking is the fact that the recreational activities were also luxury for them. We have general impressions that in India, most of the masses of labour force has films as their only recreational item. But these female women construction workers were found also deprived from even seeing films. It is most tragic on their part that 96 per cent of the respondents were unable to spare time for seeing films regularly. This is nothing but their cultural exploitation.

While considering their political life, it is found that most of these women said that they exercised their vote in the elections. According to the dictation of their men folk 89 per cent

respondents were found not giving vote voluntarily. It is clear from this observation that mandate of masses in India is male-dominated and women of lower classes are not even having autonomy of franchise in the democracy.

As most of these women were illiterate, they were not aware of 'minimum wage Act' also they were not aware of the discrimination which the employers do for male and female workers. It is observed that 100 per cent discrimination existed in the wage rate of male and female workers.

Observations:

1. Normally these women work for 8-9 hours a day at the site with less Rs. 60 as daily wage rate, nature of work being casual.
2. These women workers were belonging to the socially and economically unprivileged castes, migrated from rural agricultural labour families.
3. These women were unaware of political, social and economical legitimate rights provided to them by welfare state.
4. These women were unable to spare time for religious recreational activities.
5. These women workforce was found living in the minimum standard of living.

So conclusion can be made by these observations that even after 58 years of independence these women still belong to weaker section of the society. Independence, modernization of urban life has not brought any change in their lives. This shows that constitutional and legislative measures benefiting the class have not reached to them. Few legislative measures and so-called constitutional guarantee of better life are just on paper and not in practice. These are naked indicators about status of women workers in developing societies of their multifaceted sub-human status, far away from the basic human rights and fruits of modernization, social policy measures.

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