Status of Working Women in India

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Status of Working Women in India

Edited By
Dr. Awadhesh Kumar
&
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Degree College, Bhadohi

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Foreword

It is matter of immense pleasure for me to know that the proceedings of National seminar on 'Status of working women In India; Issues, Challenges and Solution ' organized by Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Government Degree College, Bhadohi is going to be published in the form of book. Gender inequality is very common not only in India but everywhere in the world. Gender equality is an important development objective. Various research shows that when women work, they have greater agency and voice in every sphere of life. The under representation of women in work force is both a social and economic loss. India being on a path of rapid economic growth happens to be accompanied by higher educational accomplishments among women. These advances should lead to increased participation of women into the workforce.

History is a proof that there has always been reluctance towards the working tendency of women outside their homely affairs. Alfred Tennyson, a famous English poet of the eighteenth century goes to the extent of saying that, "Man for the fields, women for the hearth; Man for the sword, for the needle she; Man to command, women to obey. All else confusion." It is relevant to point out that gone are the days when women used to restrain their whole lives only in the service their husbands and children. The twenty first century women keeps her step outside their homely work place and stand shoulder to shoulder with men and even devote for the multi-dimensional growth of the country.

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The new women though bold and fearless to encounter all hardships whatsoever faces various challenges in the work force. Regional and demographic differences across the country, decline of jobs because of wider economic issues in India, and family responsibilities are some of them. Violence against women and sexual harassment are major factors which put barrier in the path of working women.

In order to cope up with the issues and challenges confronted by working women in India, various initiatives have been taken by the Indian Government country wise and complied by state governments at the level of their respective states. As a consequence thereto the condition of working women has, no doubt, been bettered, though certain more endeavours are still required for the same. There is requirement of creating equal opportunity for access of natural resources both for men and women so that the goal of greater gender quality could be achieved.

It can be summed up that though obstacles in the path of working women have always been there yet new women of India today has emerged like a milestone in every field whether it is politics, education, sports, science and technology or any other field.

I hope the proceedings would be useful for shaping future policies pertaining to status of working women. I congratulate the Principal of the College, editors of the book, all the authors and all faculty members of the college for publication of the book.

With Best Wishes

Dr. Vandana Sharma
Director, Higher Education,
Uttar Pradesh, Prayagraj

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Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherji
Government Degree College,
Bhadohi

Message

Prof. (Dr.) Murli Dhar Ram Date 16.03.2020
Principal

Status of working women in India has always been a topic worth debating over. Gender equality among working men and women is not a woman's issue but a social, economic, and business issue. In this era of technological advancement the women are doing their best to carry their responsibilities. The problem of gender inequality is global. Despite the challenges of different spheres of life the representation of women is on rapid growth. Increasing the number of women in work places is important for every country's growth. By means of various schemes run by our central/State governments, issues concerning with working women have been solved to a great extent.

I convey my best wishes to research scholars, academicians and all contributors for publication of book.

Prof. (Dr.) Murli Dhar Ram
Principal

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Acknowledgement

The book is an outcome of compilation of research papers presented in National seminar on Status of Working Women In India, Issues, Challenges and Solutions held on 1-2 March 2020 at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Government Degree College, Bhadohi. Through this book an attempt has been made to discuss the various issues and challenges of working women as well as their solutions. We are extremely grateful to Dr. Vanadana Sharma (Director Higher Education, U.P,), Dr. Amit Bhardwaj (Joint Secretary, Government Of U.P.), Dr. Hirendra Pratap Singh (Joint Director, Higher Education) and Dr. Rajeev Pandey (Joint director, Higher Education) for their consistent support. We take this opportunity to our sincere thanks to Dr. Bindrawan Lal Sharma (Assistant Director), Dr. Shailendra K. Tiwary (Assistant director) and Dr. Sanjay Singh (Assistant Director).

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March 2020

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—Dr. Tarit Agrawal

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1

Status of Women Under the Colonial Rule with Special Reference to Women Labourers

Dr. Awadhesh Kumar

Under the Colonial rule a large number of women labourer were engaged in different working places but their historiography has almost been unavailable. In spite of significant contribution in production of different areas gendered nature of participation on working places remained unnoticed by the historians. Through this paper an attempt has been made to investigate the participation and status of women labourer under the colonial rule. Before starting the discussion on women labourer it would be appropriate to analyze the status of women in general under the colonial rule.

The position of women under the colonial rule was miserable. Purdah system was prevalent in the Indian society. Under the colonial rule the girls were married at early age. In the nineteenth century serious efforts were made by the social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Dayanand Saraswati to improve the status

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of women in Indian society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy attacked on Sati system while Ishwar Chandra focused on remarriage of widows.

Normal age for marriage of the girls was between ten and fourteen years. Schools for girls were also not available. Normally they did not have opportunity to get education. They were unable to get education. Education was available for them mainly through tuition at their home. Significant effort was made by Drinkwater Bethune, Legal Member of the Governor-General's Council by starting a girl school in Calcutta and he devoted £10,000 from his personal funds.[1] Later on the school established by Bethune proved to be most successful institution for imparting education to girls. Apart from individual level, there were some organizations like Brahm Samaj, Parthana Samaj and Sharda Sadan which made efforts for improving the status as well as education of women. The Girls and boys were taught together in Primary level. With the passage of time, in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta universities were established for imparting education. The women were admitted in the universities for higher education. The girls of upper classes were provided education at home while the girls and women of lower class were instructed through religious truth. [2]

Under the colonial rule women were engaged in various kind of productive works like agriculture, spinning and weaving, making cotton and silk clothes. The women labourer were less paid than that of men labourer. In Eastern Mysore spinning and weaving was one of the most profitable occupation of all classes and so, men and women were engaged in it.[3] Women of all caste except Brahmin used to buy cotton wool from market and after spinning it threads were sold to the weavers. In Northern Mysore it was found that a man labourer earned 4s a month while a woman

labourer 3s 4d.[4] Thus, women were engaged in spinning and weaving at large scale and so, the de-industrialization affected women spinners up to greater extent. Due to de-industrialization the depression in the wages of spinners was witnessed and a number of women spinners became unemployed.[5] In Northern India too, Spinning and weaving was one of the most important industry. A large number of women were engaged in this industry. According to Dr. Francis Buchanan, in Patna (during1805- 1815A.D.) all the spinners were women and their number was 330,426. He observed, "By far the greatest part of these spin only a few hours in afternoon, and upon the average estimate the whole value of the thread that each spins in a year is worth nearly Rs.2,367,277 and by similar calculation the raw material at the retail price will amount to Rs.1,286,277 leaving a profit of Rs.1,081,005 for the spinners, or Rs. 3 ¼ (6s.6d. the year) for each as the demand, therefore, for fine goods has for some years been constantly diminishing, the women have suffered very much." [6]

After establishment of colonial rule in India some new industries came in existence. These industries included cotton industry, jute industry and tea plantation industries. In these industries not only men but women were also employed. Wage of Women labourer was comparatively cheaper and so the industrialists preferred them. In order to secure employment some families including women migrated from United Province, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh to Bengal as some industries were established in Bengal.[7] Not only in India but also in China and Japan the industrialists preferred women labourer for cotton industry as they could be easily controlled at workplaces apart from lesser wage payment was needed. Women labourer were preferred in tea plantation industry due to their reproductive capability and

thus were able to maintain the availability of labourer in the industry.

With the extension of Railways jute industry flourished and the demand for women labourer also increased. After establishment of various factories there was requirement of a large number of workers and so women labourer and even children were employed in the industries at large scale. On the basis of the data M.D.Morris recorded that in 1884 women were of 22.2 percent of the workforce while the women constituted 20.27 percent of the work force in 1913A.D.. The increase in the ratio of women labourer was also recorded in 1893 and subsequently in 1896 A. D.. [8] It is also important to note that the percentage of women labouerer in the Burdwawan –Jharkhand coal mines in 1929A.D.was 23 per cent. The percentage of women and children labourer in the factories registered under Factory Act has been shown below in table 1.

Table 1 Gender and Age composition of Factory Labour

Year / Percentage	Total	Women	Boys	Girls
1895	37,101	54530	19,812	2,923
%	100	14.69	5.34	0.79
1905	632,636	93431	32171	5807
%	100	14.77	5.09	0.92
1910	792,511	115,540	43,273	8,753
%	100	14.58	5.46	1.10
1915	1,004,126	150,356	50,906	10,886
%	100	14.97	5.08	1.08

Source : Habib, Irfan, 2006, p.120

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It is evident from the above table that not only women labourer actively contributed in the factories but girls were also engaged in significant ratio. The workers in factories were largely recruited from eastern U.P. and western Bihar.

In Bengal the participation of women in working places was considerable. Table 2 reflects participation of women in working places in Bengal under the colonial rule.

Table 2 Male and Female working force in Bengal,1881-1931

Year	Workers in '000		Workforce as % of population		Sex Ratio of Workers (females per 1000 males)
	F	M	F	M	
1881	1827	11172	10.1	61.4	163.5=164
1901	1697	12793	8.2 (31.7)	59.5 (61.9)	138
1911	1947	13972	8.8 (33.7)	57.8 (61.9)	152
1921	2058	14063	9.1 (32.7)	58.2 (60.5)	155
1931	1792	12398	7.4 (27.6)	47.6 (58.3)	156

Note Figures in brackets refer to All-India percentage share

Source-Mukherjee, Mukul, *Women's Work in Bengal, 1880-1930: A Historical Analysis.* In Ray, Bharati (ed), *From the Seams of History : Essay on Indian Women,* Oxford university Press, New Delhi, 1995, p. 219-52 cited in Dutta, Priyanka*, Locating The Historical Past of The Women Tea Workers Of North Bengal,* The Institute For Social and Economic Change, Banglore, 2015, p. 2

It was found that in jute mills both men and women were engaged in preparing yarn. [9] Upto 1870 A.D., the labour for mills in Bengal was easily available from Calcutta and neighbouring areas but after 1880, shortages of labour was experienced by the mill owners. And so, the East India Company appointed contractors of different kinds for hiring labourers. The labourers were supplied to the mills through the contractors, who played role like a middle man. In search of employment men and women migrated from neighbouring areas. Women migrant labourer included widows and deserted wives of low castes like Haris and Muchis.[10] Later on some labourer migrated from distant regions. In Bengal, 62 percent worker were employed from outside Bengal in 1897A.D. while in 1921 the percentage of workers from Bihar was 33.44 and that of U.P. and Orissa was 23.25 and 11.42 respectively.[11] Almost same pattern was reflected in the cotton industries of Bombay. In 1911 there were 3 percent workers in cotton industry situated at Bombay who migrated from U.P. while in 1921 the percentage raised from 3 percent to 9.42. Thus a number of worker migrated from U.P. and Bihar to Bengal and Bombay for employment. The contractors used to take some part of wages of labourer for ensuring their presence in the mills.

Through the first Factory Act of 1881A.D., an attempt was made to regulate the working hours of children and limit of nine hours for the children below twelve years was imposed. The Factory Act of 1891 was important for women labourer as it regulated the working hours of women. Through this Act, provision was introduced that length of working hours for women would be nine hours. This reflects that there was significant role of women in different industries and

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therefore a distinct provision for women was incorporated under Factory Act of 1891. The East India Company claimed that after establishment of the colonial rule the prosperity of Bengal was increased and there was great rise in the wages of the labourer.[12] The rise in the wages were noted only after when railways and other works were started but the rise was local and temporary in nature. The wages of the rest of the country remained almost unchanged. The wages of labourer working in the industries and unskilled was very low. In 1866-67 the daily wages of unskilled labourer in different part of Bengal paid by the public works department were as follows:-

Table 3 Daily wages of unskilled Labour of different districts of Bengal

Districts of Bengal	Daily wages of unskilled Labour	
	Annas	Pies
1st Division Grand Trunk Road Division	2	6
2nd Division Grand Trunk Road Division	2	0
Patana Branch Road Division	2	0
Barrakar Division	2	2
Trihoot Division	1	6
Behar Road Division	2	0
Barrackpore Division	2	8
Purneah Division	2	6
Bhagulpore Division	2	6

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