

HUMAN RIGHT STATUS OF HOME BASED WOMEN WORKERS IN ERODE DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU

Dr.B. KARTHIKEYAN* & Dr. S. DHARMARAJ**

Abstract

The educated Indian women have to go a long way to achieve equal rights and position because traditions are deep rooted in Indian society where the sociological set up has been a male dominated one. Despite all the social hurdles, Indian women stand tall from the rest of the crowd and are applauded for their achievements in their respective field. The transformation of social fabric of the Indian society, in terms of increased educational status of women and varied aspirations for better living, necessitated a change in the life style of Indian women. She has competed with man and successfully stood up with him in every walk of life and business is no exception for this. These women leaders are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. They managed to survive and succeed in this cut throat competition with their hard work, diligence and perseverance. In its onward march for the rights of the home-based worker, one of the noncritical interventions has been the effort to operationalize the right to work. Representing workers for whom the criticality of organizing is not for improving working conditions as much as to have work on a continuing basis, is therefore fundamentally different from the organized workers of the corporate world.

Dr. B.KARTHIKEYAN* Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Economics, A.V.C College (Autonomous) Mannampandal, Mayiladuthurai.609 305. Mail id: drbkavc@gmail.com

Dr. S. DHARMARAJ** Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Economics, A.V.C College (Autonomous) Mannampandal, Mayiladuthurai.609 305. Mail id: dharmarajks@gmail.com

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1.1 Introduction

Women emerged as a distinct interest group in the 19th century primarily because the bourgeoisie democratic revolutions of 17th and 18th century that excluded women from their concept of equality. This distinction was based on gender. Since then women as a commune had waged struggle for recognition of their rights as a human being. Women's execute multilateral role in the society i.e. as a breadwinner of her family, as a care taker of her family as a mother, wife, daughter and service provider to the society. In spite of the fact that the women's contribution to the country's development is equal to that of their male counterpart, still they experience a number of limitations that restrain them from comprehending their potential for expansion. It was against this background that the government's all over the world felt the need to prioritize the interests of women and their participation at every stage of the development process. Women as a core group of concern emerged as a major theme in the Millennium Development Goal. The Millennium Development Goal is the eight goals set by the United Nations in 2000 which will act as yardstick to determine the advancement in the direction of the obliteration of global poverty. UN stated that 'Gender Equality and Women Empowerment' as one of the Millennium Development Goals to be attained by the year 2015. The term Women's empowerment implies the ability of the women take all the important decisions independently related to her throughout her life span that will ensure her success in all aspects of life. However these goals are far from being realized in a country like India. In fact often women in India are deprived of their fundamental right to dignity also leave alone the question of gender equality.

Dr. B.KARTHIKEYAN* Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Economics, A.V.C College (Autonomous) Mannampandal, Mayiladuthurai.609 305. Mail id: drbkavc@gmail.com

Dr. S. DHARMARAJ** Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Economics, A.V.C College (Autonomous) Mannampandal, Mayiladuthurai.609 305. Mail id: dharmarajks@gmail.com

Though the women are physically hard working core, but there are unable earn attractive income and hence, their life style is highly pathetic condition. There are meeting innumerable trouble, sexual harass and paying high rate of interest to money lenders these home based women workers are not having unity. They are scattered, unorganized and work independently. Hence, these home based women are characterized under preventing section of a society and they have not possess short form to unite and think construct to solve their own problem and find the better issues faced by the solution for personal and occupational related issues. In order to find better solution for these home based women workers, the researcher has chosen this topic purposively and conducted an empirical research in this area. For this purpose a field survey technique was employed with the help of a well-structured questionnaire. Firsthand information was collected from 1000 sample respondents in the study area.

In Erode district, women are engaged in a wide range of home based production activities including the traditional and modern items. The data used in this study includes primary data collected among women home based workers engaged in manufacturing of different products in this district. A brief note on the selected home-based works is given in the following paragraphs.

1.2 Protection of Women's Human Rights by the Constitution of India

The constitution of India confers special rights upon women. The constitution makers were well aware of the subordinate and backward position of women in the society. They made some efforts for uplift of women in our society. The state is directed to provide for maternity relief to female workers under Article 42 of the Constitution, whereas Article 51-A declares it as a fundamental duty of every Indian citizen to renounce practices to respect the dignity of women. Indian Parliament has passed the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 for the proper implementation of Article 51-A. Indian Parliament over the years have taken significant steps for through legislations to achieve the goal of empowering the women in India. The significant among them are the Equal Remuneration Act, the Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act, the Sati (Widow Burning the rights of) Prevention Act, and the Dowry Prohibition Act etc. Apart from these, the 73rd and 74th Constitution (Amendment) Acts¹⁴ provided for 33% reservation for women in both pachayat and Nagarpalika institutions as well as for the positions of chairpersons of these bodies. These two amendments removed the bottlenecks from the paths of women empowerment at the local level. In fact it has been found that the Karnataka sends maximum

number of women to the PRIs followed by Kerala and Manipur. In order to facilitate equal participation of women at the national and state level politics, the bill providing for 33% reservation of seats for women in national and States legislatures has been introduced in Parliament¹⁵. Besides this, the government in India has enacted a variety of laws like Dowry Prohibition Act, Sati prevention Act to guarantee the rights of the women. Apart from this, in India, National Commission for Women had been established in 1990 to look into the women's problem. NCW have engaged them to deal with the cases relating to the violation of women's rights. They have pressurized the government to pass stricter laws to deal with the rape cases, domestic violence and to create a separate criminal code for the women etc.

1.3 Significance of the study

Home-based workers are characterized by irregular or seasonal availability of work, extremely exploitative conditions of work and outrageously unfair wages. Since home-based women workers work from their homes, they view themselves not as workers but as wives or mothers trying to make their little, additional contribution to the family income. Contractors deliver various types of outsourced, sub-contracted work to such women in their neighborhood or to their doorsteps and get away with paying a pittance. Since such workers are drawn from home based women who have been house wives and whose labour has never been valued in terms of money, they are easy prey for exploitation since it is taken for granted that even very little payment gives them a sense of some worth. Most women indeed motivate themselves for such backbreaking work so that they can give better food to their children or meet little household expenditure. Rising prices of essential commodities, lack of opportunities for gainful employment and growing local household indebtedness have contributed to this trend. Women employees generally suffer from a double burden of work that involves both running their households and earning a livelihood. Very limited studies are conducted by the researchers on this important problem. Hence, it is essential to focus our concern on this issue.

In India, the majority of the home based workers are living below the poverty line and their socio-economic and working conditions are really bad. Hence there is a need to improve the living conditions, as well as to promote decent working conditions of the home based workers. In this context an attempt is made in this study to understand and analyze the socio-economic conditions and human rights status of the female workers engaged in home based work.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

The overall condition of home based women workers is extremely exploitative lacking job security, apart from social security like old age pension, health insurance or provident fund, long hours of work and no implementation of the minimum wages norm. Women who do home based work regularly suffer from health hazards like acute backaches and failing eyesight. Their employers are making more profits by paying lower wages to these women and incur an additional profit saving the costs of operating a work place like rent payment, power tariff, water charges, equipment and other maintenance costs. On the other hand they are facing shrinking work availability and reduction in piece rates. They are unable to bargain better wages or to even protest against falling price rates, because thousands of others are ready to replace them, if they turn demanding.

1.5 Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the human rights status of home based women workers.
2. To study the problem faced by the home based women workers
3. To characterizes the key problems faced by home based women workers.

1.6 Methodology

6.1 Selection of the Sample

The study was confined to the Erode District of Tamil Nadu. Basically, it is an agricultural based and textile based region. Based on the basic character of this district the following home based industries are chosen for the present study.

1. Towel making,
2. Tailoring,
3. Beedi,
4. Blanket Weaving,
5. Mat Weaving,
6. Bamboo Products Making, and

7. Coconut leaf weaving

6.2 Collection of Primary Data

In order to analyze the objectives of the study, primary data were collected from 1000 home based women workers using a well-structured interview schedule. A pilot study was conducted and the interview schedule was tested and modified. Before and after conducting the pilot study, the researcher obtained the opinions of the experts concerned.

A women doing home based work in her house for a contractor or for a middle man or for her husband’s/family member’s shop was considered as the respondent and they were selected using simple random sampling. Face-to-face was interview was conducted.

1.7 Occupational Profile of the Sample Respondents

In this study an attempt was made to analysis the occupational profile of the selected sample respondents. The main focuses of the study aims to analysis socio-economic condition of the selected home based women workers in this study area. For this purpose 7 major occupations were selected namely towel making, tailoring, Beedi rolling, blanket-weaving, Matt weaving, Bamboo product making and coconut leaf weaving simple percentage analysis was used and the details are furnished in the following table.

Table-1:Occupational Profile of Sample Respondents

S. No	Occupation	Frequency	%
1.	Towel making	177	17.7
2.	Tailoring	160	16
3.	Beedi Rolling	135	13.5
4.	Blanket Weaving	140	14
5.	Mat Weaving	142	14.2
6.	Bamboo Products Making	122	12.2
7.	Coconut Leaf Weaving	124	12.4
Total		1000	100

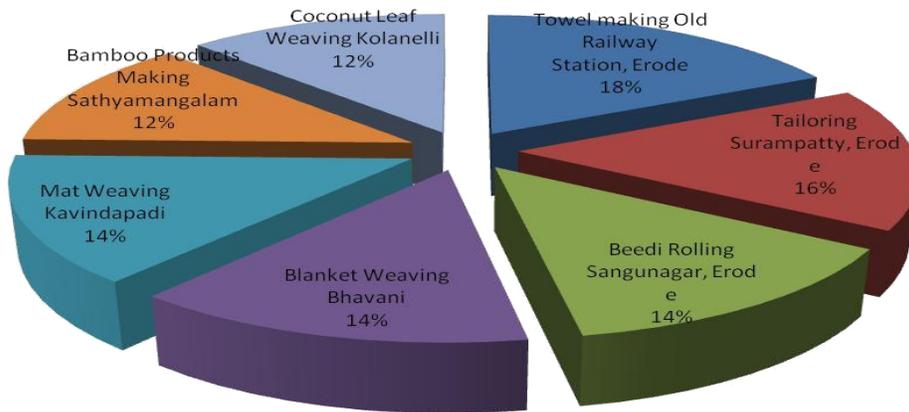
Source: Primary data

The above table reviles that 17.7% respondents were involved in towel making. It is followed by tailoring with 16% of the respondents. The home based jobs such as Beedi rolling,

Bucket weaving, Matt weaving and Bamboo product making were represented 13.5%, 14%, 14.2% and 12.2% respectively. On the other hand, 12.4% of the respondents were involved in coconut leaf weaving.

The following Figure shows the size of the samples collected from 1000 respondents belonged to different home-based industries.

Figure-I- Occupational Profile of Sample Respondents



1.8 Human Rights Status of the Home Based Women Workers

One of the main objectives of this study is to know the human rights status of the home based women workers. In order to achieve this objective questions related to human rights were asked during the time of interview. The responses and opinions of the home based women workers were tabulated and analysed with the help of percentage analysis and the results are presented in the table 1.

Table -2: Human Rights Status of the Home Based Women Workers

Right on Income Earned	Frequency	%
Yes	525	52.5
No	475	47.5
Selection of work		
Own Choice	767	76.7
Compulsion	233	23.3
Wage Disparity Based on Gender		

Yes	120	12.0
No	880	88.0
Right to Join Labour Union		
Yes	233	23.3
No	767	76.7
Right to Criticize		
Yes	528	52.8
No	472	47.2
Total	1000	100.0

Source: Primary data

1.9 Problem Faced By the Home Based Women Workers

The home based women workers have faced different type of problem. For the purpose of the study eight different problems faced by them was studied. In its onward march for the rights of the home-based worker, one of the noncritical interventions has been the effort to operationalise the right to work. Representing workers for whom the criticality of organizing is not for improving working conditions as much as to have work on a continuing basis, is therefore fundamentally different from the organized workers of the corporate world. They are the income earned by them or not enough severely affect daily due to hectic house hold works, suffering by specific health problems like headaches, hip and knee pain, tuberculosis, disease and skin diseases. No frequent orders to work continuously, shortage of raw materials, not enough space for work, no proper machinery for equipment and no problem requesting from house hold members Henry Garret ranking techniques was employed to assassinate the magnitude of the problem.

Table 2: Problems faced by the Home-based workers

S. No	Problems	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
1.	Income is not Enough	70570	70.57	I
2.	Affect daily household works	57771	57.771	III
3.	Specific Health problems	59760	59.76	II
4.	No frequent orders	54375	54.375	IV

5.	Shortage of raw material	47334	47.334	V
6.	Not enough space for work	41755	41.755	VI
7.	No proper machinery/tool/equipment	38443	38.443	VII
8.	No proper recognition from household members	25992	25.992	VIII

Source: Primary data

The above table reveals that among the eight problem "income generated by the home based women worker was mention as not enough" was rank first with the Garret score of 70570 points. It is followed by 'specific health problems based on the nature of work, which respondents with 59760 points. The problem such as affect daily household work, no request order to get continues job", shortage of raw materials and not enough space of work were rank in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth position. With a Garret ranking assure of 57771, 54375, 47334 and 41755 points respectively. On the other hand, no proper tool equipment was rank in the seventh place with a Garret score of 38443 points. Lastly no proper regression for home based workers was rank in the eighth position with a Garret sure of .25992 points. From the analysis it is concluded that the problem such as income earned by the home based workers is not enough, specific health problems and affect daily house hold work are the most burning issues represent by the home based women workers.

1.10 The key problems faced by Home based workers are characteristically as follows:-

- Invisible to policymakers and to the general public, as well as to the final consumers of goods and services they provide.
- Lack of voice.
- Lack Collective bargaining skills
- Low and/or irregular incomes.
- Lack of social security not being covered under most of the social protection schemes.
- Low productivity and poor technology
- Lack of capital to make improvements in tools, technologies, raw materials, storage areas, and other livelihood-related necessities.
- Lack of sufficient resources for health, safety, security and other needs that allow Home-based workers to pursue their economic activities.

- Inadequate housing and habitat (environmental) conditions:- work from home in poor, cramped spaces with bad lighting and ventilation.
- Many Home based workers are overworked and are exposed to dangerous chemicals and unhealthy and even toxic substances. Family members, including children, are also exposed to these occupational hazards, thus they lack occupational health and safety.
- Home based workers – especially women workers -- have little access to education and skills, including the information and skills needed to sell their own products in the market.

All these problems help create conditions that allow the exploitation of Home-based workers by middlemen and contractors. It is important to reverse these contributing factors to enable Home based workers to avoid exploitation, and become empowered and take charge of their own futures.

1.11 Suggestions

- Age wise analysis reveals that middle aged Home based women workers are earning more income than the young and old category of respondents. Hence, it is suggested that the young category of respondent should be given more entrepreneurial training programme to become tiny and small entrepreneur simultaneously, the old age Home based women workers' capacity should be identity and jobs may be provided accordingly to earn better income.
- The respondents having middle school level education are earning better than other category of educational respondents. Hence, it is suggested that a good counseling may be offered for graduate and above category the respondents having primary school high school and higher secondary school should be given orientation programme and provide job opportunity through making a trip with the huge industries and ancillary industries or allied unities.
- The analysis of marital status of the home based women workers proves that marital category earn more than the unmarried and divorced. Hence it is suggested that good suggest should be extend they should helped through adequate financial

support especially for the divorced and widow category. The banks should come forward to keep the unmarried Home Based Women Workers from providing loans without security.

- The analysis of respondent's type of family reveals that the respondents of joint family system have earned Maximum amount of income than the nuclear family respondents'. Hence it is suggested that the nuclear family respondents may associate with the relative and concentrate huge in productivity of home based manufacturing work to earn better income.
- It was learnt from the analysis that the respondents having spouse position in the family are earning at the maximum income than the position than the other category. Hence, it is suggested that equal employment opportunity including main members and head of the household.

1.12 Conclusion

The home worker is often an exploited lot, earning much below the subsistence levels. Additionally, a large number of home-based workers are women—obedient, docile and invisible. However, when home-based workers have organized, improvements in earnings and working conditions have been achieved. In conclusion, it needs to be noted that the informal economy workers including the home-based workers and the workers of the formal sectors are not two distinct economic sectors without direct links to one another. The reality is more complex. The formal and the informal parts of the economy are often dynamically linked. For instance, many home-based workers produce for the formal enterprises: through direct transactions or subcontracting arrangements. Therefore, in conclusion, we can say that the division between workers – formal/Informal, organized/unorganized, rural/urban is not watertight. The entire world of work is a continuum, a constant moving link, an interdependent one industry – where all working population contributes to the national economy and, therefore, is rightfully entitled to food security, work security, income security and social security.

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