

Theoretical Perspectives on the Program of Protection & Promotion of Women in India

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines female labor force participation ratio in India covering both the public and private sectors and critically examines the measures meant for them to protect them at the workplace along with promotional measures aiming at increasing their participation. Using the data outlined by World Development Indicators, Ministry of Statistics and programme Implementation in its report, Demographic characteristics and educational level among female, State Policy, the measures which are being prevalent for them has been significantly analyzed and such other measures supposed to undertake recommended in the light of study by the researchers.

Key Words:

Female Labor Force Participation, State Policy, World Development Indicator, Demographic Characteristics.

INTRODUCTION:

Women constitute half the population of the society and it is presumed that best creation belong to the women. Women may appear in front of us as a mother, daughter, sister or wife. If we came out of family relationships women are playing vital role in every aspects of social life like in the field of politics, economy, education, sports etc. But it is a harsh reality that women have been ill-treated in every society for ages and India is no exception. Women are deprived of economic resources and are dependent on men for their living in many cases. From the cradle to grave, females are under the evil eyes such as discriminations, oppressions, violence, within the family, at the work places and in the society. The World Development Indicators in its report indicated ratio of female to male labor force participation rate @ of 34% in the year 2011-15, which is just 1% less as compared to 1996-2000.

Taking into account the total ratio of workforce participation, the importance of protective measures for the women could be rightly remarked. Again efforts have to be made to strengthen the economy of our nation through active involvement of the female participant.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Although the impact of gender inequality in education, on economic growth has been studied extensively by the researchers, very few studies have been conducted which could explore the relationship between women's labour force participation and measures meant for them to protect them at the place of work as well as promoting their participation in both public and private sector in India. Moreover, the results from these studies do not always present a uniform picture which is partly attributed to data constraints and econometric issues surrounding reverse causality. Considering the impact of labour market inequality on growth, a recent study by Klasen and Lamanna (2009)¹ used two measures of labour force participation – female share of total labour force and the ratio of female to male economic activity rates for 93 countries, covering 1960 to 2000.

The study results broadly suggest a negative impact of gender discrimination in the labour market on growth. Balamouni-Lutz (2007)² results reinforce the need to carefully consider the impact of the country or regional context while interpreting the results. The only study in the Indian context was undertaken by Esteve-Volart (2009)³. Using panel data from sixteen Indian states over 1961-1991, she finds that gender discrimination in the labour market, as measured by female to male ratio in managerial roles and non-agricultural workers has a substantial negative impact on per capita income. Female labour force participation has been hypothesized to decline initially with economic development, then plateau before rising again giving it the U shape.

This is argued as being reflective of the structural shifts in the economy, changing influence of income and substitution effects, and an increase in education levels of women in the population (Goldin 1994)⁴. In a low-income, agriculture dominated economy women are active participants in the labour force through their roles as contributing family workers on family farms or enterprises. There is no monetary remuneration for this work, but is recognized as being part of the labour force. This phase of economic development also coincides with relatively high fertility rates and low educational levels for women. Economic growth is usually accompanied by a changing sector composition; there is a greater focus on industrialization while agriculture starts losing its primacy which has the effect of lowering women's participation in the labour market. Agriculture related activities are easier to combine with other household duties that women are responsible for.

Further, the jobs available during the early stages of industrialisation are not attractive to women largely because of the social norms against their participation in blue-collar activities. Household incomes increase with economic growth and women tend to drop out of the labour force as they are not needed to contribute monetarily to the household. As the economy grows, several changes take place that once again encourage women's labour force participation. Their educational levels improve leading to more and improved employment opportunities, fertility rate drops reducing the burden of child-rearing on women and new socially acceptable service sector jobs open up for women. With increasing wage levels, the substitution effect dominates the income effect. In a recent comprehensive review of the literature, Gaddis and Klasen (2012)⁵ note several shortcomings with the panel data applications as well as the empirical specifications used to test this relationship. They argue that rather than aggregate GDP, sector specific shifts in GDP should be investigated for its impact on women's labour supply. They estimate the relationship between female labour force and economic development using the 4th, 5th and 6th edition of the International Labour Organisation's Estimates and Projections of the Economically Active Population.

WELFARE MEASURES FOR WOMEN AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL:

Welfare measures for women were provided in very first five year plan launched in 1951.

Second five year plan recognised special needs of women workers such as maternity benefit and crèche facility for their children. The third and fourth five year plans focused on expansion of women's education. The fifth five year plan elaborated upon some of the reasons for fewer employment opportunities for women. During the sixth five year plan a variety of programmes, were taken up under different sectors of development to ameliorate the working conditions of women and to raise their economic and social status. The seventh five year plan also provided that the women labour has to be given recognition and be provided with the requisite facilities for bringing them into the mainstream of economic growth. The eight five year plan continues to identify certain thrust areas for women's development. The ninth and tenth five year plans have empowerment of women as a focus. Eleventh plan focus on women empowerment and gender justice. The National Commission for Women was set up as statutory body in January 1991. This works as an ombudsman for safeguarding the rights and interests of women in India. MahilaSamakhya, 1987 Scheme seeks to bring about a change in women's participation about themselves and the society. JagoBahnaScheme has created awakening among women to protect the rights of their girls. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche Scheme for the children of working mothers, 2006, envisages setting up of 7000 new crèches during the period from 1st January to 31st March 2006.

The aim of National Maternity Scheme, 1997 was to improve thenutritional status of mother. Under Ladli Social Security Pension Scheme, on the birth of second girl child, the mother as well as the new born girl child would get an incentive of Rs. 5000 a year for a span of the years. The government has initiated a maternity benefit scheme called JananiSuvridhaYojana for pregnant woman in urban slums. The aim of JananiSurakshaYojana, 2005 was reducing maternal and infant mortality by increasing the number of institutional deliveries among women from families living below the poverty line. The goal of NationalPolicy for the Empowerment of women, 2001 was to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. To address the problem of under nutrition among adolescents girls and pregnant women and locating mothers, the Planning Commission in the year 2002-03 launched the Nutrition programme for Adolescent Girls. The Punjab Government in 2007 launched the 'Mai BhagoStri Shakti Scheme' for uplifting the socio-economic standard of women in the State. Delhi Ladli Scheme, 2008 introduced for the protection

of girl child. Thus various efforts have been made at national level through different five year plans, development programmes, policies and schemes to improve the situation of women and women workers. But unfortunately, the performance of the plans, development programmes, policies and schemes have been poor due to several reasons. One of the main reason is the lack of effective planning and co-ordination not only between the Central and State Governments but also various ministries and departments of the Central Government and also with field level implementing agencies. Another reason for the poor performance of these programmes is the lack of awareness amongst targeted groups about the schemes. Attention has been paid towards the women workers not only at national but also at the international level.

Since its inception in 1945, the UN has been playing a very important role in the process of bringing awareness about women's unequal position in society. UN charter established gender equality as fundamental human right. ILO Resolution concerning ILO action for women workers includes strategies to eliminate continuing barriers to the equal participation of women in employment. A number of Conventions and Recommendations dealing exclusively with the protection of women workers have been adopted by the ILO. These Conventions and Recommendations are as follows : Equal Remuneration Convention and Recommendation 1951, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, and Recommendation, 1958, Workers with Family Responsibilities, Convention and Recommendation, 1981, Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) 1952, 2000 and Maternity Protection Recommendation, 1952, 2000, Maternity Protection (Agriculture) Recommendations, 1921,

The Plantation Convention, 1958, The Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970, The Protection of Wages Convention 1949, Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention 1952, Welfare Facilities Recommendation, 1956, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. All these Conventions, Recommendations and Resolutions adopted by the UN and the ILO from time to time make it amply clear that they have been fully conscious of the growing problems of working women. Thus, the Conventions, Recommendations and Resolutions came as a boon to the working women by guaranteeing income protection, medical care and maternity relief. But unfortunately, it is painful that these efforts have remained on the papers.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON STATUS OF EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA:

The literacy rate needs to be widening among more number of female in a country like India, which will act as back bone. Again the demographic characteristics of Women in India can't be overlooked, if we think about educating them and their active involvement in economic system. The total ratio of female in 1991 in India was @ 40.7%, 49.6% in 2001, 58.7% in 2011 as per the report published by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Central Statistics Office Research & Publication Unit, New Delhi for the year 2015. As per the Survey conducted in 2011 only 59% of rural population in aggregate were literate, which about 21% less than the literacy rate in urban. The literacy rate is quite downtrodden among Schedule Caste female in comparison to their male counterpart i.e. @ 71.6% and 48.6%. Number of reason could be cited behind the backlog conditions of girl child in the field of education like lack of education among the parents, geographical disadvantages, poor economic conditions and lesser scope for earning money, which could meet with bare needs in their day today life. Therefore the Govt. is spontaneously dealing with the social evils by supplementing financial assistance to the schedule caste people not only at the grass root level but also for pursuing Higher Education at University or College level under various schemes like Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship, National Fellowship for S.T. and it is obvious the amount of fellow disburse to the girl child is somewhat more to create spirit of anxiety.

The existing rate of female participation in Higher Education is as follows:

Table No. 1

Female Participation Rate in Higher Education (2012-13)		
Sl. No.	Courses	Ratio of Enrolment
1.	U.G.	45.9%
2.	Management	35.6%
3.	PhD	40.5%
4.	Law	32.0%

(Source: World Development Indicators Report for the year 2012-13)

The role of female participants could be stress back in different sectors of Indian economy like Agriculture, Service, IT and Manufacturing sectors. In 2012 60% of female were the active participant in the field of agriculture which is one of the informal sector. But if we look into the Statistics outline by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation shows downward trend linking to such participation.

Table No. 2

Overall Labor Force Participation Rate		
<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Ratio of Participation</i>
1.	2011-12	24.8%
2.	2009-10	29%
3.	2004-05	37%

(Source: India in figures 2015, Govt. of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Central Statistics Office, Research & Publication Unit, New Delhi)

Out of total labor force participation 13.4% under the regular salaried job as compared to 21.2% of working men aged between 15-59. India will add 110 million people to its labor force in the next 10 years, including youth & women entering the workforce. Over the next 40 years, India is projected to add 424 million working age adults. If India can increase women's labor force participation by 10% points (68 million more women) by 2015, India could increase its GDP 16%.

STATUS OF WOMEN AT WORK: From 2008-2012

Table No. 3

<i>Year</i>	<i>Labor Force Participation Ratio of Women</i>	<i>Sector</i>
2008	19.7%	Urban
	37.6%	Rural

(Source: World Development Indicators Report for the year 2012-13)

During the concern period the average wage rates of such female workers was 75% of men's wage rate and which was enable them to contribute only 25% of family income.

Table No. 4

<i>Year</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Labour force Participation rate</i>	<i>Gender</i>
2009-10	Rural	26.1%	Women
		54.7%	Men
	Urban	13.8%	Women
		54.3%	Men

(A publication by the Central Statistics Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. Central Statistics Office, National Statistical Organization (2012) "Women and Men in India", Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Govt. of India highlights: NSS 64th Round)

Taking into account the above statistics the rate of women participation in labour force both in rural as well as urban areas in India is moreover less as compared to their male counterpart.

Organised Sector and Participation of Women in 2010

Table No. 5

<i>Public Sector</i>	<i>Private Sector</i>
17.9%	24.5%

(National Sample Survey 64th Round)

It seems to have participation of Women in Public Sector undertaking is nearly about only two third of the Private sector.

Rural Sector:

Table No. 6

<i>Type of Employment</i>	<i>Male participation rate</i>	<i>Female participation rate</i>
Self-employed	53.5%	55.7%
Regular Wage earner	8.5%	4.4%
Casual Labour	38.0%	39.9%

(Central Statistics Office, National Statistical Organization (2012) “Women and Men in India”, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Govt. of India highlights: NSS 64th Round)

The above Statistics shows the rate of women participation under Casual nature of employment is somewhat more as compared to male counterpart but the female participation ratio as regular salaried/wage earner is 50% less than the male counterpart. It proved that the female participants are at the state of disadvantages.

LFPR of Women across all age group for the year 2009-10

Table No. 7

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Rural	Male	54.8%
	Female	20.8%
Urban	Male	55.6%
	Female	12.8%

(National Sample Survey 64th Round)

Statistics reveal participation of female both in rural and urban sectors in India is quite lower as compared to their male counterpart. In case of rural ratio is less than the half and urban, constitutes one fifth which states the rate of unemployment among women is more as compared to men which could be justifiable taking into account the statistics given below.

Unemployment Rate:

Table No. 8

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Participation in the workforce</i>
Rural	Female of all ages	2.4%
	Male of all ages	2.0%
Urban	Female of all ages	7.0%
	Male of all ages	3.1%
Female Job Seekers registered with the employment exchange for the year 2009		32.5%

(National Sample Survey 64th Round)

Following are the Statistics showing employment under central Govt. scheduled commercial Banks for the year 2009&2010, average salary received by regular wage/salaried employees of age 15-59 years per day by both male as well as female both in urban and rural areas, self-employed under the SWAROJGARIS assisted under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swaraj Yojna & MGNREGA for the year 2011-12.

Table No. 9

Central Govt. Employment ratio of Female participants	2009	10.0%
Scheduled Commercial Banks		15.9%
	2010	16.6%
Self-employed under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swaraj Yojna	2011-12	69.4%
MGNREGA	2011-12	48.3%
Average Salary received by regular wage/salaried employees of age 15-59 years per day in Rural Areas	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
	249.15/-	155.87/-
Average Salary received by regular wage/salaried employees of age 15-59 years per day in Urban Areas	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
	377.16/-	308.79/-
Number of Accounts operated in all Commercial Banks	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
	487.37 Crores	153.18 Crores
Deposit Amount	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
	1838826.25 Crores	517209.74 Crores

(National Sample Survey 64th Round)

In order to improve the condition of women in India, Legislature enacted the large volume of enactments pertaining to industry or work which contain special provisions for women such as: The Employees Compensation Act, 1923; Payment of Wages Act, 1936; Factories Act, 1948; Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; Minimum Wages Act, 1948; Employees State Insurance Act 1948 and Pensions Act, 1987; etc.

PROVISIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN UNDER LABOUR LAWS:

Under the Industrial laws the women have been bestowed the special position in the view of their unique characteristics, physically, mentally and biologically. Some of the Acts related to employment were enacted during British period as well as after independence. The main objectives for passing these laws are to enable the women to increase their efficiency, to increase their participation in useful services, to ensure their infant welfare and to provide equal pay for equal work. The important labour legislations covering the women are:

1. The Factories Act, 1948

The Factories Act is a part of protective labour legislations wherein measures have been laid down to be adopted in connection with the health, safety, welfare, working hours, leave and employment of young persons and women. Exclusive provisions for women have also been incorporated in the Act keeping in view their soft and tender personalities.

Provisions for welfare of women:

- Prohibition of employment of women during night hours.
- Prohibition of work in hazardous occupations.
- Prohibition of employment of women in pressing cotton where a cotton opener is at work.
- Fixation of daily hours of work at nine.
- Fixation of maximum permissible load.
- Provision for crèche

In every factory wherein more than 30 women workers are ordinarily employed, shall provide suitable room for the use of children below the age of six years of such women.

- Provision for washing and bathing facilities: The Act provides for separate and adequately screened washing and bathing facilities for women.
- Provisions for toilets: The factories Act must make it obligatory for any factory owner to maintain an adequate number of latrine and urinals separate for women.
- Provisions for mandatory benefits.

All the above provisions are simultaneously provided under The Plantations labour Act 1951, The Mines Act 1952, The Beedi and Cigar workers (conditions of Employment) Act 1966, The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970 and The Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and condition of services) Act 1979.

2. The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948

The Employees' State Insurance Act, one of the most important social security legislation in India, it has been enacted to provide for various benefits in different contingencies of life. Under this Act, insured women workers get sickness benefit, disablement benefit, medical benefit and funeral expenses along with insured men workers. However, in addition to these benefits, insured women workers also get maternity benefit in case of certain contingencies arising out of pregnancy, confinement, miscarriage, sickness arising out of pregnancy, premature birth of child or miscarriage and death. The duration of maternity benefit available to insured women in case of confinement is 12 weeks, of which not more than 6 weeks shall precede the expected date of confinement. The maternity benefit is paid subject to the condition that the insured women do not work for remuneration on the days in respect of which the benefit is paid, In the event of the death of an insured woman, the maternity benefit is payable to her nominee or legal representative for the whole period if the child survives, and if the child also dies, until the death of the child.

The Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 provides a scheme under which the employer and the employee must contribute a certain percentage of the monthly wage to the Employee state Insurance Corporation that runs dispensaries and hospitals in working class localities. It facilitates both outpatient and in-patient care and freely dispenses medicines and covers hospitalization needs and costs. Leave certificates for health reasons are forwarded to the employer who is obliged to honor them. Employment injury, including occupational disease is compensated according to a schedule of rates proportionate to the extent of injury and loss of earning capacity. Payment, unlike in the Employees Compensation Act, is monthly. Despite the existence of tripartite bodies to supervise the running of the scheme, the entire project has fallen into disrepute due to corruption and inefficiency. Workers in need of genuine medical attention rarely approach this facility though they use it quite liberally to obtain medical leave. There are interesting cases where workers have gone to court seeking exemption from the scheme in order to avail of better facilities available through collective bargaining.

3. The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

Economic dependence of women is what gives rise to their subordination in society today. Hence to remove such subordination and lay the foundation of equality

women too must be made economically independent and must take an active role in all sectors of business today. Problem faced by women in the economic sphere of life are mostly relating to unequal wages and discrimination resulting from their biological role in nature of childbearing. To curb such problems and protect the economic rights of women the legislature introduced the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. A maternity benefit is one that every woman shall be entitled to, and her employer shall be liable for, the payment of maternity benefit, which is the amount payable to her at the rate of average daily wages for the period of her actual absence. The Maternity Benefit Act aims to regulate of employment of women in certain establishment for certain periods before and after childbirth and provides for maternity and certain benefits. Women can claim benefits under the act everywhere except in factories and the other establishment where the Employee's State Insurance Act is applicable. Women who are employed, whether directly or through a contractor, have actually worked in the establishment for a period of at least 80 days during the 12 months are eligible to claim the benefits under this act. Cash benefits to women who are absent from work during the maternity leave, are not be less than two-thirds of her previous earnings.

Discharge or dismissal during maternity leave is considered to be void. When pregnant women absents herself from work in accordance with the provision of this act, it shall be unlawful for her employer to discharge or dismiss her during, or on account of, such absence, or give notice of discharge or dismissal in such a day that notice will expire during such absence or vary to her disadvantage any of the conditions of her services. Dismissal or discharge of a pregnant woman shall not disentitle her to the maternity benefit or medical bonus allowable under the act except if it was on some other ground. Failure to pay maternity benefits or discharge or unemployment of woman due to maternity will result in imprisonment of the employer for not less than three months which may extend to one year and a fine of rupees two hundred which may extend to five thousand. In *Air India v. Nargesh Mirza* [AIR 1981 SC 1829; 1981 (4) SCC 335], the Supreme Court struck down the provision of rules which stipulated termination of service of an air hostess on her first pregnancy as it arbitrary and abhorrent to the notions of a civilized society. The ongoing argument in some circles is that the wage differential between women and men is caused by the need to compensate the higher labour

costs employers incur by hiring women, in accordance with special laws to protect maternity. Employers prefer to hire a male instead of female, without the burden of these additional monetary costs. This is however not enough as many employers do not hire married women or dismiss them before pregnancy. The act provides some protection to women economically especially today in an age where single mothers are becoming more prevalent it gives them stability in their lives to have their wages and the security of returning to a steady job. My personal views are that this act is not enough to guarantee women equality and economic security but it is definitely a starting step and though there are several bridges to cross.

4. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

Equal pay for equal work for women and men is a vital subject of great concern to society in general and employees in particular. There was a common belief that women are physically weak and should be paid less than their male counter parts for the same piece of work. Women all over the world, had till recently been very much in articulate and were prepared to accept lower wages even when they were employed on the same jobs as men. Even in the economically and socially advanced countries where remarkable progress has been made, discrimination still exists. In India, in the initial stages when legislation for the protection of workers was hardly thought of, factory owners taking advantage of the backwardness and poverty, recruited women on a large scale at lower wages and made them work under inhuman condition. International Labour Organization has evolved several conventions to provide protection to employed women. A number of ILO conventions have been ratified by India and some of these though not ratified have been accepted in principle. The principle of ILO has been incorporated in the constitution of India in the form of Article 39, which directs the states to secure equal pay for equal work for both men and women. To give effect to this constitutional provision the parliament enacted the Equal Remuneration Act, 1975. Under this law, no discrimination is permissible in recruitment and service conditions except where employment of women is prohibited or restricted by the law. The situation regarding enforcement of the provisions of this law is regularly monitored by the Central Ministry of Labour and the Central Advisory Committee.

5. The Employees Compensation Act, 1923

In any industrial society the problem of labour management relations becomes so important that

some sort of social insurance becomes necessary to provide adequate protection from losses caused to the labourers by accidents. With a view to improve the condition of the workmen some social insurance legislations have been enacted. The Employees Compensation Act 1923 is one of the earliest pieces of labour legislation, adopted to benefit the labourers. It covers all cases of accident 'arising out of and in the course of employment' and the rate of compensation to be paid in a lump sum, is determined by a schedule proportionate to the extent of injury and the loss of earning capacity. The younger the worker and the higher the wage, the greater is the compensation subject to a limit. The amount of compensation payable depends in case of death on the average monthly wages of the deceased workman and in case of an injured workman both on the average monthly wages and the nature of disablement. The Act intended to ensure the rehabilitation of the workman himself or of his dependent. The dependent can claim compensation in both cases i.e. death or injury. This law applies to the unorganised sectors and to those in the organised sectors who are not covered by the Employees State Insurance Act, 1948 which is conceptually considered to be superior to the Employees Compensation Act.

6. The Minimum Wages Act, 1948

The minimum wages Act was passed for the welfare of labours. This Act has been enacted to secure the welfare of the workers in a competitive market by providing for a minimum limit of wages in certain employments. The Act provides for fixation by the central government of minimum wages for employments detailed in the schedule of the Act and carried on by or under the authority of the central government, by railway administrative or in relation to a mine, oilfield or major port, or any corporation established by a central Act, and by the state government for other employments covered by the schedule of the Act. The object of this Act is to prevent exploitation of the workers and for this purpose it aims at fixation of minimum wages which employer must pay. The Act contemplates that minimum wages rates must ensure not only the mere physical need of the worker which would keep him just above starvation but must ensure for him not only his subsistence and that of his family but also preserve his efficiency as a worker. It would therefore, provide not merely for the bare subsistence of his life but the preservation of the workers and so must provide for some measure of education, medical requirements and amenities.

7. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

The Government of India enacted National Rural Employment Guarantee Act whereby anyone who is willing to provide manual unskilled labour will be offered wage employment for 100 days. This Act provides the enhancement of the livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Priority is given to women in the allocation of work. Gender equality is one of the core elements of this poverty reduction plan which stipulates that at least one third of the labour force should be women with equal wages for both men and women. Various gender related objectives such as provision of hygienic work environments, safe drinking water, and childcare facilities at the work-site, distance of work-place not exceeding two miles from home, health care and nutrition are emphasized. Women engaged in agricultural farming have to spend long hours under the hot sun but are invariably paid less than their male counterparts. Women's participation in the labour force with no wage discrimination and direct control of resources and assets can substantially enhance her health, child welfare and socioeconomic status. This employment policy if properly implemented can certainly bring momentous changes in the lives of women. The employment scheme undoubtedly has a positive impact on gender equity and power equation within the household. An alternative model of development must focus on the enhancement of living standards of rural India where majority of the population resides.

8. The Contract Labour (Regulation & Abolition) Act, 1970

Provisions of crèches were made where twenty or more women are ordinarily employed as contract labour. Female contract labour is to be employed by any contractor between 6.00 A.M. and 7.00 P.M. only with the exception of mid-wives and nurses in hospitals and dispensaries.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

In present day context, female workers are generally regarded as distinctive groups. The women workers are employed in different sectors like in agriculture, plantation, mine, beedi rolling, construction, livestock, crafts sector, home based work, food processing, textile and garment industry, street vending and rag picking, lock industry,

thermometers industry, agarwati industry, handloom industry and various other service sectors. But unfortunately, there are various factors that have caused women lagging behind men. Social attitude, traditions, customs, marriage, domestic chores, immobility, childcare, dependency, accommodation, education, training, unionism, infrastructure, payment, supplementing income, technological development, gender based division labour, biological differences, child rearing, insecurity, lack of confidence, and sexual harassment fear are most important factors which are responsible for low level of women's employment. Despite of these hindrances women are and will continue to remain in labour force. Although, working of women outside their homes solved their economic problems to some extent, it gave rise to many other problems and difficulties due to their peculiar social, biological and psychological conditions. Basically Society in India does not favour employment of women as they are still looked upon as reproductive and not productive actors. The problems and difficulties of working women at work place are multidimensional. Women workers at work place face the problems of low and discriminatory wage, exploitative working conditions, lack of secured employment, sexual harassment. Sexual harassment at the workplace affects the wellbeing and economic livelihood of the women employee, while also affecting the moral productivity and integrity of the work place.

Lack of awareness about the law and their rights is one of the fundamental causes behind the powerlessness, bias, and exploitation that women face at their work. It is therefore, realized that conditions of women workers cannot be improved unless they are giving special protection. The Constitution of India has given special attention towards the needs of women to enable them to exercise their rights on an equal footing with men and participate in national development. The founding fathers of our Constitution granted freedom, liberty and equality to women. The founding father expressed the fear that discrimination will continue even after enacting Article 14, which provides equality before law and equal protection of law. They, therefore, prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex etc. by providing Article 15(1). The framers were also conscious of the fact that the pitiable condition of Indian women cannot be improved by only prohibiting discrimination on the ground of sex. It can be improved by giving special protection in the form of discrimination to the women. Thus they provided Article 15(3), which empowers the State to make special laws in favour of women.

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