

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF MUSLIM WOMEN BEEDI WORKERS IN VALLUVAR NAGAR IN TIRUCHIRAPPALLI DISTRICT- A STUDY

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Abstract : Beedi Industry is famous among the Muslim Women in Valluvar Nagar and Tiruchirappalli district as it gives employment opportunity for Muslim Women who are a marginalized section in the society. The Muslim women work in Beedi industry for several reasons. It gives employment opportunity for them within their homes which falls under the ruling of Islam. They can earn money as well as they can take care of family, children and their household chores since they belong to very backward and poor fringe of society. The research paper indicates that Muslim Women are the deprived section in the society face exploitation in this industry. This study is aimed at highlighting the socio-economic condition of Muslim female beedi workers in Valluvar Nagar in Tiruchirappalli district. The research paper suggests strategies which can be implemented with the government agencies, NGO's and welfare organizations like STEPS Women's Jamat, Khajamalai Ladies Association etc. for the welfare of the beedi workers.

Index Terms - Muslim Women, Beedi industry, marginalized group, social, Economic, Exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

Beedi industry is very famous in Tiruchirappalli district especially in Valluvar Nagar as it constitutes more number of beedi workers. Beedi industry in Valluvar Nagar is an unorganized sector where the workers get their necessary raw materials like tendu leaves and tobacco from the owners and the beedi work is carried out in their dwelling houses. Muslim Women occupies a prominent place in the beedi industry. Beedi rolling is the main source of income for the Muslim Women as it provides employment opportunities for them. Muslim Women felt that beedi rolling work is very fit and comfortable for them. The reasons are firstly, beedi work is done generally from home and they need not to go out of their house and at the same time they can do their household works and take up the responsibility of family and children. Working at home is within the content of Islam. Secondly, majority of the beedi industry owners like Hautin beedi, Chippi beedi, Steam beedi, Engine beedi, Rasool beedi etc are Muslims and they wanted to give employment opportunity for their own community women. They were engaged in the beedi work from childhood on the other hand the income from the beedi work is insufficient for them. The Muslim Women beedi workers are in a subordinate position in the society. They are not allowed to move freely in the society. The condition of beedi workers in the past as well as in the present has not been very good. The government has initiated many laws for the protection and welfare of the beedi workers; however the entitled benefits are not enjoyed by the workers. They do not have any awareness about the laws and are exploited in many ways.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the demographic profile of the Muslim Women beedi workers.
- To examine the socio - economic condition of Muslim Women beedi workers.
- To describe the various exploitations faced by Muslim Women beedi workers.
- To give suitable suggestions for their improved social status and economic stability.

METHODOLOGY

To give a justifiable frame work for this research paper entitled "Socio – Economic condition of Muslim Women Beedi Workers in Valluvar Nagar", the researcher has adopted the descriptive, explanatory and analytical methods.

Data Collection

The data was collected by both primary and secondary sources. For collecting the primary data a structured questionnaire was prepared and information was collected through it. Interviews were conducted with contractors, middle men and male Muslim beedi workers. The collected data were analyzed systematically. For the secondary source data was collected from various books and journals. Information was also collected from the internet through search of various articles, journals and blogs.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Since the aim of the research paper was to analyze the social and economic condition of the Muslim Women beedi workers in Valluvar Nagar, convenient sampling method was adopted for data collection. A sample of 45 Women was drawn by using systematic sampling from the universe of 80 Muslim women who were involved in beedi rolling as house based industry.

BEEDI INDUSTRY IN VALLUVAR NAGAR:

Muslim Women in Valluvar Nagar are engaged in beedi making to meet the economical needs and expenses. They are very poor and live in a miserable condition. They are economically very poor and backward. Beedi making is the main source of income for the Muslim Women in Valluvar Nagar. Beedi rolling is their traditional job as it has been passed down by their parents. They are engaged in household work and also beedi rolling and live under conditions of poverty.

Muslim Women in Valluvar Nagar get employment from beedi companies situated in the vicinity. They are: 903 Steam beedi, Engine beedi and Chippibeedi. Other than these three companies there are minor beedi companies like Thambibeedi etc.

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the research paper indicate that the condition of the Muslim Women Beedi workers in Valluvar Nagar in Tiruchirappalli is appalling. They are not entitled to even basic facilities and are in the unorganized sector which does not provide them a stipulated salary / wage and the working hours are above the prescribed standards of labour law. About 93% of the respondents are willing to leave the beedi work and switch over to other suitable jobs which can be done at home. Beedi industry is fast deteriorating in Valluvar Nagar. Many beedi companies were shut and Muslim women who were depended upon the beedi became unemployed. They are forced to look for alternative jobs in other sectors in order to meet their family needs. Some of them work in Bakeries and are into domestic work. Many traditional Muslim women do not seek employment in other sectors even if it not monetarily benefitting. However, they are feeling that ample opportunities of switching over to new job are missing in Valluvar Nagar. In most of the streets in Valluvar Nagar beedi work is no more carried out. Thus the Muslim Women are forced to look for employment in other sectors.

FINDINGS:

The following are the findings of this research paper.

1. It is found that 55% of the beedi workers fall into the age group of 40 to 60 years and 24% of the workers are above 60 years. They are the last generation beedi workers.
2. It is found that 58% are married. Out of the remaining 31% are widows and 7% are divorcee. Only 4% are unmarried.
3. The study reveals that 58% of the Muslim Women beedi workers are illiterate and 42% of the workers have at the most completed 10th standard. The low educational qualification and illiteracy led to the miserable condition of the Muslim Women beedi workers in the society. Muslim Women are not encouraged to get education by their family. Muslim parents think that education is not important for girls.
4. The comparison between the Muslim Women beedi workers and their children regarding educational qualification reveals that there is an increase in the educational level. This shows that the workers do not want their children to do beedi work. They want their children to get educated and go for good jobs. At the same time children of the beedi workers do not have interest in beedi work.
5. Muslim Women beedi workers are given secondary status in the family. It is observed that 92% of the workers reported that they are in secondary position and are restricted in so many ways by the male member in the family. They lack social interaction.
6. Beedi work is not as popular as before. Inadequate income, over exploitation and age factor led to the less popularity of the beedi industry.
7. Beedi industry is ruining rapidly. Many beedi factories are closed due to governmental regulations. And many have become unemployed. Only few beedi companies are running today. This has become a threat to traditional beedi workers who are dependent only on beedi work.
8. Income from the beedi work is not adequate for the family. Their monthly income is between Rs.1000/- and Rs.2000/- which is very low. All the respondents have expressed their opinion that only very few family needs are met by the income from the beedi work. Many Muslim Women left the beedi work due to inadequate income. Number of Women doing beedi work has come down.
9. Most of the workers live under below poverty line. Major cause for their poverty is because beedi work is inherent in nature. Apart from this other causes such as low income, lack of beedi work, unpopularity of beedi work are also responsible for their poverty.
10. 64% of the respondents have good health and 34% have some health issues because of their age. The study reveals that majority of the respondents do not face health problems.
11. The Beedi workers do not have any awareness about the various schemes and acts enacted by the State and Central governments.
12. Muslim Women beedi workers are ready for the change of work as the income from the beedi work is low. 89% of the respondents have shown interest in accepting different work. They expect the work which can be done at home.

SUGGESTIONS:

The following are the policy recommendations and suggestions proposed for the betterment of the Muslim Women beedi workers.

1. The beedi workers are paid Rs.140/- per 1000 beedis which is very low. The state government should take necessary steps to increase the wages of the beedi workers.

2. All the raw materials including thread rolls, folding stick, cutting plate should be given by the owners.
3. The owners should take responsibility for damaged leaves. The workers should be given undamaged tendu leaves.
4. Muslim Women beedi workers are not aware of the rights granted by Islam. The ignorance about their rights led to their secondary status in the society, Muslim Women beedi workers should be given awareness about their rights which are granted by Islam.
5. Government should take initiatives to improve the condition of unorganized beedi workers.
6. NGO's along with the help of Government officials can give awareness programmes to the workers.
7. Government agencies, NGOs like STEPS Women's Jamat, Khajamalai Ladies Association etc and beedi owners must take necessary steps to explore opportunities and give the Muslim Women beedi workers who are facing the situation of under-employment the skills to take up other works.
8. The miserable condition of Muslim Beedi workers can be solved only through the identification of new job opportunities. Muslim Women naturally possess skills like embroidery, tailoring, craft making, toy making, jewel making, doing home care services, child care, cooking, packing snacks, processing pickles and other eatables etc.. Government institutions, NGOs and SHGs like STEPS Women's Jamat, Khajamalai Ladies Association etc who are working for the welfare of the Muslim Women can take initiative to enhance these skills and create employment opportunities for the Muslim Women beedi workers who are in a miserable position in the society. The positive note is that 89 percent of the respondents want to acquire these skills to find suitable opportunities.

CONCLUSION:

The Socio-Economic condition of Muslim Women beedi workers is very miserable. Beedi industries lost its importance due to the introduction of cigarette owned by corporates and rigid governmental policies. After the downfall of the beedi industries Muslim Women have become unemployed. The number of workers in the beedi industry became rapidly decreased. The income from this beedi work is not enough for them. If this situation continues the condition of Muslim female beedi workers will be more economically miserable than their present condition. There is an urgent need for the protection of Muslim Women and they should be given awareness about their rights in Islam and governmental policies. The Government institutions, NGOs like STEPS Women's Jamat, Khajamalai Ladies Association etc should take an initiative to provide them with training and development programmes like tailoring, embroidery work, jewel making, Agarbatthi making, packing snacks, etc. Collaboration with MSME will increase their skill capability and hence would enable them to find alternative employment in case of retrenchment or unemployment. This could fetch them an improved economic condition rather than live on the fringe of poverty.

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INTERVIEWS:

1. Interview with Paritha Banu, Beedi worker, Valluvar nagar on 10th June 2018.
2. Interview with Nazima Beedi worker, with Valluvar nagar on 14th July 2018.
3. Interview with Fathima Begum, Beedi worker in Valluvar nagar on 21st July 2018.
4. Interview with Samina, Beedi worker in Valluvar nagar on 24th July 2018.