



HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN DOMESTIC SERVANTS IN RAICHUR CITY

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ABSTRACT :

Unorganized sector is major sector in India which employed large population of women in India and in urban areas, women domestic servants are playing important role in household works. Domestic work is unskilled and it attracts many women to this work. Though there are more employment opportunities in domestic work, many of the problems are faced by women domestic servants. They include exploitation, discrimination, even sexual harassment, lower wages, lower status and wage discrimination. In this way, there is violation of human rights of women domestic servants in India. To look into the human rights violations of women domestic servants in Raichur city, present survey was made. 120 women domestic servants working in Raichur city were interviewed to collect the primary data. It is found that there are massive violations of human rights of women domestic servants. Hence, it is suggested to execute the legislations to protect the human rights of women domestic servants. independence through legislative measures.

KEYWORDS : women in India , Human Rights , Women

Domestic Servants.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic work includes mental, manual and emotional aspects, including care work communities (Anderson, 2000). Domestic work is thus viewed as reproductive work that creates not only labour units but also people and social relations. Domestic work, however, is still undervalued. It is looked upon as unskilled because most women have traditionally been considered capable of doing the work, and the skills they are taught by other women in the home are perceived to be innate. When paid, therefore, the work remains undervalued and poorly regulated. By contrast, studies that provide space for domestic workers to speak often reveal their belief in the dignity of their hard work, and, as such, it warrants recognition and respect and calls for regulation (Roberts, 1997).

Domestic workers in India look access to sufficient and effective statutory measures and institutional mechanisms for their protection. Steps have been taken by the government both at the national and state levels to protect their rights. Nevertheless, the few labour laws enacted by the national and state governments addressing domestic workers face the challenge of implementation. This is aggravated by the discriminating attitude of many employers against the domestic workers, including caste prejudices. As a result those who carry out domestic work are largely ignored working sectors often specially excluded and economically exploited (John, 2014).

Human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. These moral claims are articulated and formulated in what is today known as human rights. Human Rights are commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being. The status of woman and depressed classes has visibly improved with respect to education employment opportunities and many other social and economic rights (Mugali, 2014). In case of women domestic servants, many of the problems of human rights violations are faced. They include

discrimination, exploitation, in few cases sexual harassment, lower wages and wage discrimination. These problems clearly show that there is violation of human rights of women domestic servants.

It is emphasized that majority of the work in informal sector is done by women living below poverty line. Compared to all the other informal work, the domestic workers or household workers or domestic servants are highly exploited and their lives are vulnerable and are extremely exploited by their employers. To a large extent, women are engaged in domestic work, household work or domestic helps. The laws and human rights related to their wages, working hours, job security, sexual exploitation, different kinds of harassments are violated frequently. Even though there are many legislations such as Minimum Wages Act, 'abolition' part of the Contract Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1970, or the prohibition of night work for women except where specifically attempted, Equal Constitutional rights, The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983, The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986, The Suppression of Immoral Traffic of women and Girls Act, 1956 etc are formulated for the welfare of the women in informal sector, still they are not executed properly. This is so, because, they are illiterates and not aware about these rules and regulations and welfare policies of the government. Further, they have no strong union to fight for their rights and privileges. Hence, the women domestic servants are most exploited labourers in the unorganized sector. As such the present study is a survey on the human rights of the women domestic servants in Raichur city.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The present study is made:

1. To know about the economic and employment status of women domestic workers;
2. To assess the awareness of women domestic workers on their rights; and
3. To analyze the real situation on the rights and privileges possessed by the women domestic workers at their workplace;

METHODS AND FIELD:

Human rights are disclosed from the working conditions including work load, discrimination, facilities at work place, income in terms of wages, status at work place, etc. In this respect, the questions covering all these issues are included in interview schedule designed to interview women domestic servants in Raichur city. The theoretical background related to human rights is gained from published secondary literature. A sample survey of total 120 women domestic servants working in Raichur city was made to collect the primary data and the collected primary data is analyzed, interpreted and discussed as under.

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION:

1. Age:

Age of the respondents refers to the level of understanding and work culture. Age also determines the awareness about the different laws, rights and privileges of the domestic workers. Hence the information on the age of the respondents is collected and presented as under.

Table No. 1. Age

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18 Years	16	13.33
19 to 25 Years	20	16.67
26 to 35 Years	31	25.83
36 to 45 Years	40	33.33
46 to 55 Years	13	10.83
Above 55 Years	--	--
Total	120	100

On the age of the women domestic servants, it is found that, of all the respondents, 16 (13.33%) are of

less than 18 years, 20 (16.67%) are between 19 to 25 years, 31 (25.83%) are between 26 to 35 years, 40 (33.33%) are between 36 to 45 years and 13 (10.83%) are between 46 to 55 years. It is surprising to note that about 13.33% of the respondents are female child workers. Even though law prohibits the child labour, these child workers are working as domestic workers.

2. Education:

The present study is made to analyze the knowledge of the female domestic servants on human rights. Hence, to know about their rights, there is need for education on the part of the female domestic servants. The information collected on the level of education of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 2. Education

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	53	44.17
Primary	67	55.83
Secondary	--	--
Under-Graduate	--	--
Total	120	100

Education of women domestic servants disclosed that, 53 (44.17%) are illiterates whereas, 67 (55.83%) have completed primary education.

3. Marital Status:

Marital Status is an important criterion while deciding the social status of the respondents. The study revealed that there are also widows, separated, single and divorcees, who are considerable in number in the domestic work. The collected data on the marital status is shown as under.

Table No. 3. Marital Status

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarried	24	20.00
Married	70	58.33
Separated/ Divorcee	09	7.50
Widows	17	14.17
Total	120	100

The marital status revealed that 70 (58.33%) of the respondents are married and living with their husbands followed by, 24 (20.00%) are unmarried, 17 (14.17%) are widows and 09 (7.50%) are separated and divorcees.

4. Domestic Work Experience:

Domestic work experience helps to assess the experience and expertise of the women domestic servants in their occupation. As such, it helps to know about the opinions of the respondents, regarding their rights and privileges. The information collected on the household work experience of the respondents is shown as under.

Table No. 4. Domestic Work Experience

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 05 Years	21	17.50
06 to 10 Years	73	60.83
11 to 15 Years	26	21.67
16 to 20 Years	--	--
Above 20 Years	--	--
Total	120	100

On the domestic work experience of the respondents, 21 (17.50%) are working since 05 years, 73 (60.83%) are working between 06 to 10 years and the remaining 26 (21.67%) are having work experience between 11 to 15 years.

5. Monthly Income:

Monthly income shows the economic power of the family. Further, it also depicts the economic security of the family. If the monthly income low, there is lower economic security and lower economic power, and vice versa. It is an important criterion to decide the livelihood of the family. The monthly income of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 5. Monthly Income

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below Rs. 1000	28	23.33
Rs. 1001 to Rs. 2500	50	41.67
Rs. 2501 to Rs. 5000	42	35.00
Rs. 5001 to Rs. 7500	--	--
More than Rs. 7500	--	--
Total	120	100

Monthly income of domestic servants surveyed revealed that, 28 (23.33%) have monthly income of less than Rs. 1000, 50 (41.67%) have monthly income between Rs. 1001 to Rs. 2500 and the monthly income of 42 (35.00%) of the respondents is between Rs. 2501 to Rs. 5000. The collected data clearly revealed that majority of the respondents are living below poverty line.

6. Hours of Work:

Hours of work determines the extent of work and remuneration or wages they are getting. The hours of work also depicts the extent of exploitation from the employers. If the working hours are more and wages paid is less, then there is chance of exploitation of the domestic servants. The information collected on the hours of work of the respondents is presented in the following table.

Table No. 6. Hours of Work

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 04 Hours	27	22.50
5 to 6 Hours	65	54.16
7 to 8 Hours	28	23.33
9 to 10 Hours	--	--
More than 10 Hours	--	--
Total	120	100

On the hours of work in a day, 27 (22.50%) of the women domestic servants are working for 04 hours daily, 65 (54.16%) are working for 05 to 06 hours in a day and 28 (23.33%) are working for 07 to 08 hours. Though working for longer hours, the women domestic servants are getting lesser wages. It shows the violations of human rights of women domestic servants.

7. Wage Discrimination:

There is discrimination in wages paid by the employers that is between male and female, also between lower caste and higher caste in the society. Hence, it was asked to the respondents that whether they are getting lesser wages compared to other workers in the similar work and the collected information is presented in the following table.

Table No. 7. Wage Discrimination

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	120	100
No	--	--
Total	120	100

Surprisingly, it is highlighted from the above table that all the women domestic servants have agreed that there is wage discrimination. No standardized rates are fixed for the payment of the Wages for the unorganized sector that is too, for the women domestic workers. Hence, there is wage discrimination.

8. Relationship with Employer:

The relationship with the employers shows that there are favourable or unfavourable working conditions. As such, if the working conditions are best or cordial, then there is possibility that there are good working conditions. Further if there are unfavourable or bad relationships with the employers, there is possibility that there are poor working conditions for the women domestic servants. Hence the information was collected on the relationship of the women domestic workers with their employers and tabulated as under.

Table No. 8. Relationship with Employer

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Best	22	18.33
Cordial	38	31.67
Satisfactory	44	36.67
Bad	16	13.33
Total	120	100

On the relationships with their employers, among all the domestic servants covered under the study, 22 (18.33%) have expressed that the relationship with their employers is best, 38 (31.67%) have stated that the relationship with their employers is cordial, 44 (36.67%) have mentioned that the relationship with their

employers is satisfactory and only 16 (13.33%) have remarked that the relationship with their employers is bad.

9. Exploited and Harassed by the Employer:

Working women are harassed by their authorities, generally by their higher authorities or employers. In Organized sector, there are rules and laws, which reduced the exploitation and harassment at their workplace. But in unorganized sector, even though there are laws to curb exploitation and harassment, due to lack of security in the work, such exploitation, or harassment cases are rarely reported. There are also rare occasions of punishment for the employers in case of unorganized sectors. The collected information on the exploitation and harassment of the women domestic workers from their employers is shown as under.

Table No. 9. Exploited and Harassed by the Employer

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	60.00
No	48	40.00
Total	120	100

Surprisingly, it is emphasized from the above table that, majority that is, 72 (60.00%) of the women domestic servants are exploited and harassed by their employers, whereas 48 (40.00%) are not exploited and harassed by their employers. Even though the Government has passed legislations against the exploitation and harassment at the work place, still the present study revealed that more than half of the respondents are being harassed or exploited by their employers.

10. Knowledge about Human Rights related to Women and Women Domestic Workers:

To protect the interests of the women in general and women domestic servants, there are different legislations and rights. Hence, information was collected from the respondents that whether they are aware about the human rights related to the protection of the interests of women and women domestic workers and tabulated as under.

Table No. 10. Knowledge about Human Rights related to Women and Women Domestic Workers

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	--	--
No	120	100
Total	120	100

It is surprising to note from the above table that none of the respondents covered under the present study are aware about the human rights related to the women and women domestic workers.

11. Work Satisfaction:

A person should work efficiently, if he or she is satisfied with the work, working conditions and economic benefits. As such it was asked to the female domestic workers covered under the present study on their level of work satisfaction and the collected responses are tabulated as under.

Table No. 11. Work Satisfaction

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Fully Satisfied	36	30.00
Satisfied to a Greater extent	55	45.83
Not Satisfied	29	24.17
Total	120	100

On their work satisfaction, of all the women domestic servants surveyed, 36 (30.00%) have agreed that they are fully satisfied with their work, 55 (45.83%) have mentioned that they are satisfied to a greater extent and 29 (24.17%) have stated that they are not satisfied with their work.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Against the backdrop of the poor socio-economic conditions and multifaceted problems, the domestic servants goes through crisis for the performance of domestic chores, starting from their home to the workplace, is deplorable and especially going on in an alarming rate, if no serious thought and actions given for its halt.

A massive campaign should be launched by the government or in collaboration with some voluntary organizations and local elites to make domestic servants aware of different legislations like Minimum Wages Act, Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008, Laws on Sexual Harassment of Women (Prevention) at Work Place, Child Labour Act, Human rights, etc. Again the legal aid should be provided to them free of cost under Government patronage as they are they are the marginalized section of the society.

A Code of conduct must be clearly drawn either by the concerned department at the government level or by non-governmental agencies with credentials for the employers as well as for the employee. The violation of the code of conduct should be viewed seriously may be with a penal punishment, which should be binding to both the employers and the domestic servants.

The domestic workers are being deprived of the welfare amenities, especially during sickness they do not have any medical facilities. They are also not entitled to leave with wages and if thrown out of jobs, they have absolutely no security in the society. At the outset, there should be a "welfare fund" to be set up either by Government or Non-Government agencies from which, they can get financial assistance for welfare amenities including social security and housing facilities, at a nominal rate of interest.

The domestic servants, owing to their heavy ordeal of work remain sick or when they get sick, they are not in a position to avail of health facilities meant for them, free of cost. So a health insurance scheme shall be promoted by the Government or Non-Governmental Organizations under the patronage of government including compensation for accident should be available to these marginalized sections. Health cards should be distributed among them and through this, they would be entitled to receive health care of their choice at any public health centre like ESI Hospital, Government Hospital, Specialized Hospitals, Primary Health Centres, Sub-Centres, etc.

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