

ISSN: 2278- 2311



LITERARY FINDINGS

A PEER REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH



Women Harassment in India

July 2023

Special Edition, Volume - 12

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VOL: 12

JULY - 2023

ISSUE: 7

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Volume - 1

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HARASSMENT OF FISHERWOMEN IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY OF KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

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Abstract

In the fishing community of Kanyakumari district, as in other communities of the country, women live in a traditional second-class status. However, as the trend towards small families grew, the role of fisherwomen in the family economy became more important than earlier. Their role in many direct economic activities like net weaving, fish auctioning and marketing is significant. If she is the sole earner in the family, the finances of the house come under the control of the woman. With a few rare exceptions, family decision-making is dominated by patriarchy. The role of women in fisheries development fields such as fish marketing, fish processing and fish product manufacturing is still not recognized by the society. Her labor is not considered a profession. A woman takes upon herself the responsible task of taking care of the family. A field trip by a majority of women plays an essential role in fishing. The problems related to fisher women in Kanyakumari district can be understood from the social structure and cultural background of the community. The responsibility of housework binds them to the home. They have no freedom. They are effectively denied the right to stand on their own feet, to earn their own income through self-employment. A woman who calmly endures whatever happens to her and submits is accepted by the (patriarchal) society. Her social leadership character, selfishness is not accepted by the society. She doesn't even get a chance to prove herself. It is impossible to list the miseries faced by fisherwomen involved in the fishing industry.

Key Word: Fisher Women, Fishing Industry, Work Shop.

Introduction

The problems related to fisher women in Kanyakumari district can be understood from the social structure and cultural background of the community. They are subjected to various forms of harassment and untold harassment at work sites. Such squeezes have entered many forms in fish processing plants. Heavy workload, night shifts, minimum wages, unsanitary workshops, miserable accommodation etc. Feminist Erayumanthurai Rachel mentions that women who enter fish sales centers as petty traders are subjected to various atrocities

in Kanyakumari district. Middlemen, peddlers and the conservatives of the society have no small arrows on them. They are subjected to various forms of abuse like physical abuse, sexual assault, violation of limits, obscene, double meaning speech. Even the businessmen have to pay high entry tax because they wander around day and night without any fixed time for work and come home late at night. Her husband's negligent handling, doubts about her morals- how many troubles she had. A majority of Kerala women work in fish processing factories at the national level. This is believed to be due to their special skill in fish processing. But the majority says that they learned the skills after joining the profession. Fish processing plant managements understate the number of workers employed in their units for income tax evasion. The women contract workers working here are not provided any labor welfare benefits. Factory managements employ this strategy to significantly reduce their unit operating costs and generate profit margins. The fish brought to the fish processing unit operating in Thoothoor area is weighed and stored in crushed ice blocks. At seven o'clock that evening the women workers arrive and remove the shrimp and the unwanted entrails and pack them into boxes with crushed ice. They will send it in vehicles to places like Kollam and Thoothukudi. According to the unit management, one kilogram of shrimp is cleaned, frozen and boxed at Rs 50. In respect of the fish processing factories located in the West Coast region, the administration there does not maintain any register of contract labor. Even though some units employ more than 400 women workers in certain seasons, there are no records of these in the tanning units. Cleanliness and quality of the fish hatchery. It greatly affects the health and life of the workers working there. In most of the tanneries the accommodation for women workers is located on top of the tannery or in a small shed attached to it.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to highlight the problems and sufferings of the fisherwomen in kanyakumari district.

Literature Review

Already there are some books which have been written on this area. However this topic is just different from others.

The works like the S. Patnaik and Baral J.K, socio economic status of fisherwomen continuity and change "gives a summary of fisherwomen. It does not give much information about the hurdles of women in fishing community.

1. The work A.C.Perumal, D.Stephen, "Alaigalinoodai" also gives a small description of the sufferings of fisherwomen.
2. Vareethiah Konstantine, "Neithal suvadukal" also gives a brief history of the condition of fisherwomen in kanyakumari district. It does not explain the miseries of the fishing community women.

Methodology

Historical, Analytical and Questionnaire methods are used for writing this article.

Women in Unorganized Sectors

93 percent of Indian workers work in unorganized sectors, under precarious conditions. Majority of them suffer in the realities of low wages and bonded conditions. Whereas in integrated sectors, many work in higher wages and better working conditions. Gender disparities exist even in non-integrated sectors. In our country, all sectors like cashew nut industry, rope spinning industry, fish canning depend on women workers. Migrant women workers are engaged in work such as grading, shelling etc. for the fishing industry. Here very few are looking after the management and maintenance of tanning unit as permanent workers. The majority of migrant women workers were from the state of Kerala till recently. At present, women are brought in from states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka through agents and tenants and engaged in these works. In whichever unit they are called to work, their work is under the control of these agents.

Results and Discussion

Fish processing factories operating in various parts of our country bring in large numbers of women from Kerala for short-term work. There is no direct recruitment in this industry. Tenants contract with factories on the basis of which women are employed. Very few of them have a chance to get permanent job after long service periods. Employees are recruited here at three levels,

- (1) Administrative and clerical staff,
- (2) Machinery and Maintenance Division and
- (3) Daily wage category.

The women contract workers working here are not provided any labor welfare benefits. Factory managements employ this strategy to significantly reduce their unit operating costs and generate profit margins. The fish brought to the fish processing area as are weighed and stored in crushed ice blocks. At seven o'clock that evening the women workers arrive and remove the shrimp and the unwanted entrails and pack them into boxes with crushed ice. They will send it in vehicles to places like Kollam and Thoothukudi. According to the unit management, one kilogram of shrimp is cleaned, frozen and boxed at Rs 50.

Health of Women Workers

The presence of water, ice and freezers in fish processing factories has basically adverse effects on the health of workers. Workshops are damp and wet. It seems that the women who work here for long hours have skin diseases like rash and itching. Management does not take care of any medical expenses for occupational diseases. In respect of the fish processing factories located in kanyakumari, the administration there does not maintain any register of contract labor. Even though some units employ more than 400 women workers in certain seasons, there are no records of these in the tanning units. Cleanliness and quality of the fish hatchery. It greatly affects the health and life of the workers working there. In most of the tanneries the accommodation for women workers is located on top of the tannery or in a small shed attached to it.

This arrangement facilitates the immediate employment of women workers regardless of the amount of input received at any time of the day. Thus, the health of women workers is greatly affected by the environmental pollution prevailing in the tannery unit and its adjacent shed. The workshop is overcrowded in the majority of the units. The workshop consists of long tables with aluminum plates. Grading machines are often installed near it. Fish products that have been placed on ice (without hand coverings) must be handled after standing for several hours. During the interview, it was revealed that after such long hours of work, many of the women workers suffer from puffy eyes and shortness of breath. Work for long hours while sitting in the environment of pouring cold water in grading areas. They mention that they often suffer from body aches, headaches and colds. The Marine Products Export Development Authority, Kochi has clearly laid down the minimum norms to be followed by fish processing plants. These include creating a clean and hygienic work environment and requiring employers to provide gloves, masks and overalls to wear during work hours.

It is very difficult for the women workers to handle fish products with sharp spines and scales which have been frozen for a long time in the workshop without even gloves, with their bare hands. Bruises, scrapes and blisters on the fingertips are common when leaving work. They also endure unbearable pain in situations where there are no other job opportunities. Administrations only partially meet basic health conditions during inspection from fish product exporting countries in large investment factories. Toilet facilities here are pathetic. In some seasons, the tanning units operating in the Vallavilai area have 300 women workers working in a single unit. But no toilet facility is provided in any unit here. It seems that infections in the urinary tract of women workers are caused by standing and sitting for long hours in damp places without listening to the natural urge. Proper facilities for cleaning the body or clean drinking water were not provided after completion of the work.

Some realities are evident regarding the women working in fishing units in Kanyakumari region,

1. Violation of human dignity and human rights Working environment.
2. Details of working women in fishing units not registered properly.
3. Women as permanent daily wage earners in these fields for more than ten years without registration are working
4. Pay scale is being followed against nationally agreed norms.
5. Being unregistered and non-permanent, women workers do not get any economic benefits from the management of the unit or from the government.
6. Social security schemes for working women nothing is in practical

The Government of Tamil Nadu Department of Fisheries is implementing many Protective and Promotional Programs for coastal fishermen and fisherwomen. However, the women who are involved in the sale of talaichumudu fish in Kumari district have not registered with the cooperative societies, who have been working in the fishing stations and netting stations for many years. More than 1200 fisherwomen cooperative societies are functioning in Tamil Nadu. It is to be noted that there are only nine fisherwomen cooperatives

in the Kumarikatalora region, which has 24.75 percent of the coastal communities of the state. The travails of fisherwomen in the workplace are buried in individual cases. It is impossible to gain or retain rights unless these are formed into a movement as a slogan. The information sector, especially the press, has a duty to convey this message to the target population and mobilize them into a movement. Voluntary movements and charitable organizations have many duties to perform focusing on fisherwomen. Awareness and proper knowledge transfer can mobilize these people.

The Coastal Peace and Development Center

The Coastal Peace and Development center which is a subsidiary organization of Kotaru Catholic Christian Diocese in Kanyakumari district has established a Tailachumuttu Tailachumuttu. The role played by its former director Aruthiru Mariyasusai in this work is commendable. While this effort should continue, it is also necessary to properly register all the unorganized fisherwomen working in the fields in the circle and form a cooperative movement. In Kanyakumari district there are more than ten network centers, numerous fish processing units and all women involved in non-fish production should be involved in these activities. Awareness campaigns should be conducted regarding the rights of working women. Charitable movements with the courage to advocate with government departments should be created for them.

Conclusion

There is a noticeable gap between the labor welfare laws enacted in the country and the prevailing workplace reality. Promote civil rights and occupational rights of women workers in workplaces they need some basic measures to function as human beings and to protect their health. Factory managements are not paying attention to protecting the interests of women workers who are vital to the power export industry, which earns the government tens of billions of foreign exchange every year. To improve the situation, industries and government can consider some suggestions. Simplification of the existing Industrial Acts.

Ending the managements using the terms and conditions of these Acts to escape from their basic obligations. Focusing on unresolved workplace issues, the workers, factory management and the government hold tripartite negotiations and suggest measures to resolve the issues. To sensitize women workers about basic labor welfare laws.

The government should monitor the implementation of workers' welfare facilities in the factories; instead, monitoring committees should be formed for labor unions at the national level. The fact that women workers labors are not getting even the minimum wage should be seriously considered. Fish processing administrations should be advised that industrial units not adhering to basic hygiene and work practices will be rejected by fish importers in future. Also there should be generality in the processes of these industries. Basic medical facilities should be provided to the workers in industrial units. To change the plight of women workers in tanning units who lose their hard-earned money to the lottery operators in their villages, the management should establish safe savings schemes for these workers.

All unorganized tannery women workers should think about their future together. They should come forward to join the charitable that are working at regional and national levels highlighting the lives and rights of women workers. The traditional fisher women who are involved in all the work like fishing , fish processing , fish sale , fishing equipment manufacturing and maintenance in the district should form and register fisher women cooperative societies in every village and try to get all their privileges. Women workers working in fish processing units operating in Kanyakumari district are included in the labor welfare list as per Trade Union Act of eight hours.

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