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EMPLOYMENT TO WOMEN IN INDIAN BEEDI INDUSTRY AN OPPORTUNITY OR THREAT: A CASE STUDY OF NIZAMABAD DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Beedi Industry is an agro-forest based, labour intensive industry characterized by low fixed capital requirements, high wage sensitivity and a strong tendency to shift towards cheap labour. This industry encompasses workforce involved in the collection and processing of the two main raw material, tendu leaves and tobacco. There are various estimates which indicate different situation on the number of workers involved in this industry according to Ministry of Labour estimate 41 lakhs or 4.1 millions are involved of these 90% workers are women therefore, it is regarded as women based industry. The Beedi Industry is spread across the country. Most of the beedi making work is carried out under the contractual, home based, piece rate system. Women and children predominate, employed for their proficiency, yet ironically paid lower wages and subject to various exploitation practices, such as rejection of beedies, issue of underweight of raw material, inferior quality of raw material, non-implementation of various legislations some of which exclusively related to women workers. The objective of this paper is to explain the background of the beedi industry, predominance of women in this sector as basic operational level workers, living conditions of beedi workers especially Women, Health Hazards in the Beedi Industry, various Legislative Provisions, Unionization, Scope of the paper is to discuss the issues related to women workers in the Beedi Industry and to find findings and offer suggestions on the Employment of Women in Beedi Industry

KEYWORDS

Women Workers, Unorganized Sector, Exploitation Practices and Diversification of Work.

INTRODUCTION

BEEDI INDUSTRY
 Bidi or Beedies are slim, hand-rolled, unfiltered cigarettes. They are also called “beeris” in countries such as Bangladesh. A beedi consists of about 0.2 gram of sun-dried and processed tobacco flakes, rolled in a tendu leaf (*Diospyros elanoxylon*) or tamburni leaf and held together by a cotton thread. The tobacco rolled in beedies is different from that used in cigarettes and is referred to as beedi tobacco. Dark and sun-dried tobacco varieties are used in beedi production. Beedies are available branded and unbranded.

The tendu leaf constitutes 60% of the weight of the beedi. The beedi is four to eight cm in length. The diameter at the closed end is 0.6-0.8cm and the width at smoking end is 0.7-0.9cm. The relatively low combustibility and non-porous nature of the tendu leaves requires more frequent and deeper puffs by the smoker to keep beedis lit, and is therefore harder on the smoker's lungs than cigarettes rolled in paper. Tar levels delivered by beedis are high, at 45-50 mg/beedi. One study found that beedies produced approximately three times the amount of carbon monoxide and nicotine and approximately five times the amount of tar as cigarettes. In India, a beedi costs as little as 20-30 Paise and bundle of 25 beedies costs Rs.6-8, thus beedis are known as the “poor man's cigarettes” as they are smaller and cheaper than cigarettes.

Tribal people of ancient India used to smoke tobacco in a pipe made from leaves of trees, from where the practice of wrapping tobacco in a leaf probably originated. Beedi smoking was mentioned as early as 1711. The description referred to a product the size of the little finger, containing a small quality of tobacco wrapped in the leaf of a tree and sold in bundles. Beedis first appeared along the east coast of India in the early part of the eighteen century and were sold in bundles of 20 to 30 beedis.

In India, the beedi industry is regarded as being in the ‘unorganized’ sector. The term ‘unorganized’ is used particularly in India, and has no formal definition. It is a commonly used in two different contexts firstly to describe the system of industrial production, and is similar to the definition of enterprises in the informal sector. The Central Statistical Organization separates each major sector into ‘organized’ and ‘unorganized’ for purposes of calculation of value added. In that sense, it has a statistical rather than a conceptual usage. However, the term more or less concludes with the definition of the informal sector proposed by the 15th International Conference of Labour Statistics.

In the beedi industry, a large number of unregistered and home-based enterprises coexist with factory-based manufacturing enterprises. A complete census or a comprehensive nationwide database capturing important statistics of registered and unregistered enterprises is not available. The only available database is partial and fragmented, which makes it difficult to construct a time series on production and employment in this industry encompassing all types of enterprises. However, the conditions of work in the beedi industry raise serious concerns about unethical labour practices which run contrary to the spirit of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights, at Work- a declaration adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1998. The Declaration calls on ILO member States to respect and promote freedom of association and collective bargaining, the abolition of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of all forms of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. Isolated case studies and media reports indicate that the Beedi Industry employs a large number of women and children in inhospitable and exploitative conditions. Labour laws are grossly flouted. The worker's living conditions are also poor. The industry therefore presents a typical case where concerned social action on the part of the government, workers, employers, civil societies and international organizations is needed to promote and realize the goal of decent work.

Another concern, which has been voiced frequently in the media, by the beedi associations and the trade unions, relates to the future prospects of the beedi industry. Fears have been expressed regarding uncertainties facing this industry due to competition with the cigarette industry and likely impact on the beedi market of tobacco-free initiatives and anti-tobacco legislation. Competition with cigarettes is likely to be fierce when restrictions on import of cigarettes into India are withdrawn, in compliance with World Trade Organization obligations. Any threat to this industry, if real, has very serious implications in terms of loss of income and craning opportunities for millions of poor unskilled workers consisting of women and children in overwhelming proportions. These workers, with hardly any savings or asset base no insurance coverage, would be thrown into destitution.

BEEDI INDUSTRY IN NIZAMABAD

Andhra Pradesh is the largest beedi producer after Madhya Pradesh. It has 6, 25,000 beedi workers (1995) of whom most are in the Telangana region. Out of these, about 4, 27,000 are in the Nizamabad district alone (EPF records). Beedi manufacturing in Nizamabad started in 1901. Manufacturers like Bandi Laxami Bai Beedi Factory, Shamal Gangaram Beedi, Lalappa Narayana and Tara Sahab all started manufacturing beedies here in the 1920s. However, the total strength of labour of these factories did not exceed 2, 00,000. Prior to 1947, two manufacturers from Gujarat, M/S. Kishan Lal Ram Swaroop and Shah Himmat Lal set up production but their output was also very meagre. Still later, two manufacturers Char Bhai Beedi, Saiyed Lal Beedi and Police Mallaiah Beedi also started production in the district. After 1952, many came from Gujrat as well as from Maharashtra. Heera Lal Prabhu Ram (Gujrat), Sable Wagire (Sambaji Beedi) and Thakur Savkar (Langar Beedi) all started production in 1952. Desai Brothers then entered in to the fray in 1953 and even today it is the largest beedi producer here. Since then, every year one or two manufacturers have been setting up business in the area, and within a decade beedi rolling became one of the main occupations after agriculture. In Nizamabad 90% of the Employers are from Maharashtra and Gujarat, and they said that they preferred Nizamabad, partly

because labour laws were enforced much less strictly than in their home states, and partly because workers were so disciplined here. Beedi rolling is still a major occupation here and the survey revealed that there had not been any decrease in the number of workers.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study assumes significance because on one hand women are getting highly educated and getting employment in various good employments on the other hand women are illiterates or semi-literates who have no other means of work except beedi work and social sanction do not permit them to aspire and grow like other women. Beedi industry is male dominated in terms of power and administration even though 90% workers are women and it increases the chances of exploitation of women workers at various stages which is another significance of the study.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Present study is carried in the Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh in which problems of women beedi workers are discussed taking into overall view of beedi industry prevailing in India. As nature, cause and effect of problems are common in every place of beedi works therefore a conclusion can be drawn from present the study which is concentrated in Nizamabad district, this district has highest beedi workers and beedi establishments in Andhra Pradesh and second largest in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives of the present are as follows

1. To study the origin, growth of beedi industry in India and in Nizamabad district.
2. To study the employment of women in the beedi industry, various rules and regulations relating to them and their implementation.
3. To find the nature, cause and effect of various exploitation practices prevailing in the beedi industry in respect of women workers.
4. To suggest the suggestions for eradication of problems relating to women beedi workers for their betterment and find the possibility of diversification of employment.

V-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION OF THE STUDY

The technique of random sampling is used in which sample size is 150, which is selected from the home based and factory based beedi rollers because women are around 90% employed in beedi rolling to collect the primary data for which questionnaire was prepared for them and to other related people in the beedi industry. Secondary data is collected through official records government notifications, books, journals, net search, previous research works done in this area etc. relating to beedi industry and women workers in beedi industry.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Beedi Industry work is totally occupied by the presence of women workers, in other words this industry runs due to the involvement of women at basic operational level i.e. 90% women are engaged
- Women from backward castes, SCs, Muslims and illiterates are involved at large number this makes them for low bargaining power and less aware of various provisions for them which causes for their exploitation at various stages.
- As Administration work is totally dominated by the male therefore, there is a high possibility of exploitation of women beedi workers at various stages such as underweight, inferior quality of raw material and deliberate rejection of rolled beedies and other evil practices result in low socio-economic profile of beedi workers
- Beedi rolling work is done mostly by contracting and sub-contracting systems therefore, it is difficult to establish employer and employee relationship, which will cause for non-implementation of various schemes, provisions and regulations established by the government for women beedi workers. It need to be properly checked and implemented
- Health provisions, Hospitals, Medical facilities are very much less and are not availed by the workers due fear of loss of working hours
- In Nizamabad some women engage in beedi rolling as full-time occupation and are able to roll 800-1000 beedies during an 8-12 hour day. Other women work part-time while taking care of household activities roll 400-500 of beedies a day
- Beedi rolling is good work for those women workers who do not wish to go out in search of work. Similarly while taking care of the household activities beedi rolling work is carried on and help of other family members can also be taken i.e. it provides employment in house for such women workers
- The demand for facilities under the health scheme reigning supreme over the demand for other facilities reflects the poor state of health of the beedi workers. Their state of poverty increases their vulnerability to tobacco-related and other occupational diseases which leads to their incapacity to do other work and to death
- By and large women roll beedies in their own homes, which are kaccha, small partly lit and with little ventilation. They cook in the same place, children play near them, handling the tobacco and tendu leaf and the younger ones sleep beside them, all of them inhaling the tobacco dust almost continuously
- While the beedi workers Welfare Fund has the potential to contribute towards the betterment of the living conditions of the workers, the size of the fund is too meagre to meet the needs of such large numbers of women beedi work spread over
- Workers in the industry, on the other hand, cannot think beyond their present, cannot envisage a future without the beedi production. For them, beedi making is more than a profession it is a way of life, inalienable from their existence
- Government of Andhra Pradesh has made many provisions to uplift the living standard of the workers of beedi industry. In this process government initiated scholarship for beedi workers childrens, housing schemes for beedi workers, ESI hospitals, Hospitals for Beedi Workers, Minimum wages act from time to time but they are not practiced and implemented by the beedi establishments.
- Periodicity of payment varies from place to place, mostly weekly and in some places daily. Fortnightly or monthly wages are paid in the work shed/factory systems generally. There have been reports of non-payment, irregularities in paying wages. Women, therefore, have to make frequent visits and are harassed in the process.

SUGGESTIONS

- Effective Unionization is needed to voice loudly about the women workers, as they are subject to various exploitations, health problems and other problems.
- Enactment of provisions to uplift women standard of living and effective implementation of such provisions are highly needed at this stage.
- Possibility of employment diversification can be looked in a positive so that lakhs of women workers are suitably replaced with proper re-employment without affecting their socio-economic status.
- There should be establishment of employer-employee relationship irrespective of method of working, this will automatically make them eligible to various benefits provided under the various acts relating to labours and women beedi workers
- Exemption given to unbranded and small manufacturers who produce less than 20 lakh beedies per annum should be withdrawn as it is mostly misused this initiative will bring some opportunity to the women beedi workers.
- Maternity and other facilities for which women workers are eligible in other sectors are to be made in the beedi industry irrespective of their method of working.

- Issue of adequate, good quality, of raw material should be ensured as per the law; this will bring economic stability to the women beedi workers.
- Proper wages should be given, there should be registration of the workers so that they can get the benefits and identity cards should be issued so that the workers know which company they are working for.
- Arrangements for free education to the childrens of beedi workers should be made, Primary education should be imparted to women beedi workers as well.
- Crèches and child care centres should be established to look after female workers' children so that the children are not exposed to the hazards
- All the labour laws applicable to beedi industry should be properly amended from time to time in view of the various changes taking place in the society.

CONCLUSIONS

Devising an appropriate social policy and a plan of action to remedy the continuing evils of exploitative practices in this industry and protect the workers from any threat of prospective, unemployment through sustainable diversification strategies and skill development require a diagnostic study on the working and living conditions of the workers. Assessing the threat potential and possibility of their rehabilitation through employment diversification strategies through enactment of various legislations in the interest of women beedi workers will definitely cause for the employment in beedi industry otherwise employment in beedi work will be a risk factor or a threat to the womens.

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ANNEXURE

TABLE NO. 1: DISTRIBUTION OF BEEDI WORKERS RELIGION AND CASTE WISE

Sl. No.	Category	Percentage
1.	Schedule Caste	15.2
2.	Schedule Tribe	3.3
3.	OBCs	50.3
4.	Other Hindus	10.1
5.	Muslims	20.2
6.	Others	0.9
	TOTAL	100.00

Source: Dass S.K. 2000

TABLE NO. 2: BEEDI MANUFACTURING STATES IN INDIA

Sl.No.	States	% of share
1.	Andhra Pradesh	14.00
2.	Assam	0.20
3.	Bihar	9.00
4.	Gujarat	1.00
5.	Karnataka	8.00
6.	Kerala	3.00
7.	Madhya Pradesh	17.00
8.	Maharashtra	6.00
9.	Orissa	4.00
10.	Rajasthan	2.00
11.	Tamil Nadu	14.00
12.	Uttar Pradesh	10.00
13.	West Bengal	11.00
14.	Tripura	0.17
	Total	100.00

Source: Ministry of Labour Government of India

TABLE NO. 03: NUMBER OF BEEDI WORKERS IN NIZAMABAD DISTRICT

Sl.No.	Year	No. of Workers
1.	2007-2008	4,28,499
2.	2008-2009	4,37,713
3.	2009-2010	4,46,524

Source: Asst.P.F Commissioner EPFO Nizamabad

TABLE NO. 04: NUMBER OF BEEDI WORKERS ENROLLED IN NIZAMABAD DURING LAST 3 YEARS

Sl.No.	Year	No. of Workers enrolled
1.	2007-08	9368
2.	2008-09	8,612
3.	2009-10	9,214

Source: Asst. P. F.s Commissioner EPFO, Nizamabad

TABLE NO. 05: WAGES STRUCTURE OF BEEDI ROLLERS PER 1000 BEEDIS FOR URBAN BEEDI ROLLERS (In Rs.)

Sl.No.	Particulars	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
1.	Basic Wages	50-35	50-35	50-35	55-35
2.	V.D.A.	9-80	15-30	24-50	24-50
3.	BASIC +V.D.A=	60-75	65-65	74-85	79-85
4.	Bonus	5-1	5-47	6-24	6-65
5.	Leave Wages	3-1	3-28	3-74	3-99
6.	NFA	1-33	1-31	1-50	1-60
7.	TOTAL	69-37	75-71	86-73	92-09

Source: Field Survey

TABLE NO. 06: BASIC WAGES OF OTHER CATEGORIES WORKERS IN BEEDI INDUSTRY

Sl.No.	Category of Employee	Basic Wages (Rs.)
1.	Tobacco Distributor/Beedi Sorter/Tray Filler/Gampawala/Watchman etc.	4000.00
2.	Packer (Minimum time rate)	4500.00
3.	Clerk/Typist/Cashier	4500.00
4.	Furnace man/Bhattiwala	5500.00
5.	Accountant	5500.00
6.	Manager	7000.00

Source: Notification of Government of Andhra Pradesh dated 30th Nov.2010

TABLE NO. 07: COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE

1. For piece rates workers (Beedi Roller & Beedi Packers etc)	Rs.0.19 Paise per point per day
2. For monthly paid workers	Rs. 5.00 per point per month

Source: Notification of Government of Andhra Pradesh dated 30th Nov.2010

TABLE NO. 08: EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES CONTRIBUTION TO EPF (Rs. In Crores)

Sl.No.	Year	Employer's	Employee's
1.	2007-2008	24.80	24.80
2.	2008-2009	19.08	19.08
3.	2009-2010	30.69	30.69

Source: Asst.Commissioner, EPFO, Nizamabad

TABLE.NO. 09: NUMBER OF BEDS AVAILABLE IN BEEDI WORKERS HOSPITALS

Sl. No.	No. of Beds	Place of Hospital	State
1.	65	Dhuliyani	West Bengal
2.	50	Kodarma	Jharkhand
3.	50	Mysore	Karnataka
4.	30	Sagar	Madhya Pradesh
5.	10	Gursahaiganj	Uttar Pradesh
6.	30	Mukkadal	Tamilnadu
7.	30	Bihar Sharif	Bihar
8.	15	Jhalda	West Bengal

Source: Press Information Bureau Government of India

TABLE.NO. 10: NUMBER OF DISPENSARIES FOR BEEDI WORKERS

Sl. No.	Name of the Region	No. of Dispensaries
1	Ajmer	16
2	Allahabad	18
3	Bangalore	34
4	Bhubaneswar	15
5	Hyderabad	38
6	Jabalpur	27
7	Karma	21
8	Kolkata	18
9	Nagpur	17
	TOTAL	204

Source: Press Information Bureau Government of India

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