

The Plight of Women Workers!

While agricultural sector has been traditionally a big job provider for women of rural India, with the introduction of neo-liberal economic policies of imperialist globalisation participation of women in labour market has been considerably increasing and the textile-garment industry became the biggest job provider to the women in our country. The crises in agriculture has led to the migration of rural women to cities and industries seeking livelihoods. Particularly the vulnerability of women has attracted the textile-garments industry enabling them to exploit the labour-power of the women to a great extent in gaining its super-profits.

However the pundits and supporters of the neoliberal economic policies of imperialist globalisation claim that those economic policies have given more opportunities to women to enter in to economic sphere leading them towards their goal of empowerment and emancipation of women. They also complain that the present day rate of participation of women in employment is still not sufficient for economic growth of our country in to a developed nation and more and more women have to be drawn in to industrial employment which would further their cause. The international organisations like I.L.O. and U.N.O. too argue in the same lines, that it would bring out empowerment of women.

All these arguments and preachings appear to be more and more progressive towards promoting the interests of women. But the actual experience of women working in textiles, SEZs and other industries as well in agricultural sector expose the dubiousness and hypocrisy of such arguments in the context of our Indian semi-colonial, semi-feudal system over which the capitalist methods of exploitation of labour power are super imposed and the inhuman exploitation of women workers in carried out.

The women workers in textile and garment industry in Bangalore-Karnataka, in Tamilnadu, in A.P in BRANDIX company at Visakhapatnam are being subjected to inhuman and unbelievable working-conditions and ruthless exploitation of their labour power. The employers are making super-profits out of the exploitation of the women-workers.

These women-workers are not allowed to join in unions and organise themselves. They are made to work even in the night time with the connivance and acceptance of the concerned governments. They are made to work more than 10 hrs a day. They are even not allowed freely to go to toilets. They are harassed by their superiors in various forms. They are sexually harassed. They are even assaulted by the managers as has been an instance at Textport apparels LLP, 4th stage, Bangalore. They are not provided with housing arrangements near to their work-place, so they have to spend a lot of time every day to go and return from their work-places. Besides they have to pay considerable amounts for their to and fro transportation to their work-places from their paltry wages due to lack of sufficient public transportation. On the other hand they are forcibly made to work over time, but with a single pay for overtime work. They are denied holidays. Their work-load is increased constantly. Though their work-load mounts their wages are never raised. While initially the workers has to stitch 25 to 35 pieces in one hour, now even 70 pieces are not enough and the workers are subjected to verbal abuse and harassment if the worker do not reach the target fixed.

Women workers in their late teens and early twenties are being brought to the garment factories from northern and eastern states like Jharkand, Odisha, Assam and M.P under government sponsored schemes like Pradhana Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana or Skill India.

With these migrant women from north and east of the country, the employees taking the advantage of their vulnerability are keeping wages very low, even to the local women-workers and the garment industry is plagued with low and delayed wages, as well as physical and mental harassment at work.

This ruthless exploitation of women workers is not ending with the above methods of severe and inhuman exploitation only.

Recently the Thompson Reuters Foundation in its survey of Tamilnadu garment factories has found one more heinous method adopted by the employers on workers. It is found these garment factory woman-workers in Tamilnadu are forced to consume unlabelled drugs to enable them to work through menstrual pains without taking leaves, which is resulting in health complications of workers. This is how the garment industry has become rogue industry in exploiting the women work-force.

While such has been the plight of women-workers in textile-garment industry, some abhorrent feudal practices practiced in agricultural sector in Maharashtra that came in to light are much more dis-heartening and distressing.

It is natural that women workers during the period of their menstruation, for two or three days, cannot work hard like on the other days. This may cause less of income to the land owners. So the Maharashtra land owners are not taking women who tend to menstruation and are taking the women-workers who under-went uterus removal surgery only, (Hysterectomy?). With this we wont find women agricultural labourers cannot become pregnant. In the village of Hazpur and nearby villages you cannot find a young girl is a youth within 25 years who can be pregnant. The stunning fact is that some land owners themselves are even advancing loans to young girls to undergo uterus (?) surgeries, to enable them to work on their lands!

A shameful fact is that now the women who do not menstruate (due to surgery) and who satisfy the sexual needs of land-owners only are taken in to agricultural work on lands, which initially started in Beed district of Maharashtra has spread through-out Maharashtra state.

Now the danger of this evil practice is looming to spread to all the states in India.

This how the so-called bringing out of empowerment of women workers is being practiced in our country under the aegis of neo-liberal economic policies of imperialist globalisation.
