

CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS FACED BY FEMALE WORKERS IN NAGARPALIKAS OF GUJARAT

(IN THE CONTEXT OF FEMALE WORKERS ON CONTRACT)

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to the unorganised economy of India, the group of women as Nagarpalika contract female workers is by far the most disregarded. In addition to the fact that they are not given any legal rights or benefits, they are deemed to be working in an informal capacity that requires little to no ability. When it comes to human rights, Nagarpalika contract female workers are at a greater risk than other workers because of the awful conditions in which they are forced to live and work. Although they put forth a significant amount of effort, they are often underpaid. Unfortunate realities for women working in the Nagarpalika contract female industry include being subjected to discrimination, exploitation, and abuse in the job. Despite the fact that everyone is exploited, women are more likely to be victims of it than males because of their gender. Unnoticed, underappreciated, and underpaid are the most common characteristics of Nagarpalika contract female workers, who are disproportionately female. The fact that a significant percentage of women who are hired as Nagarpalika contract female workers are from lower socioeconomic levels and castes has been the subject of extensive observation. Nagarpalika contract female workers are characterised by a number of characteristics, including but not limited to: ignorance, conventional attitudes, illiteracy, a lack of skills, different types of physically demanding labour, long hours for little pay, wage discrimination, no minimum wage guarantee, insecure employment, abuse, and so on. This article discusses the challenges that female Nagarpalika contract female workers in India confront on a daily basis.

KEY WORDS: Marginalized, Vulnerable, Nagarpalika contract female workers, Social inequalities, Workforce, Unorganised sector, living conditions, socio-economic profile.

INTRODUCTION

The predominance of informal employment in Gujarat's labour sector has been a notable manifestation of the state's labour market. It is estimated that the unorganised sector contributes about half of the gross employment of the state. In accordance with the most current estimate provided by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS), the contribution of the unorganised sector to the gross product (Nagarpalika contract female workers) is around fifty percent (NCEUS; 2008). In spite of the fact that the majority of workers

in this business are excluded from the applicability of labour laws, they have been subjected to terrible exploitation. When governments attempt to get rid of difficulties or eliminate hurdles, they usually run into problems because they do not have access to trustworthy data and information that is accurate about these individuals. As a result of the new global economic order, which is characterised by cosmopolitan cities, new patterns of division of labour, and demographic diversion, paid Nagarpalika contract female work is gradually replacing unpaid production activities and services inside Nagarpalikas. This is primarily the case for Nagarpalikas with low incomes, and women in particular are doing the majority of these jobs. As a result of this, Nagarpalika contract female work is a key profession in defining the function that the family plays in the dynamics of the open economy.

It would seem that the vast majority of women in India who are of working age would end up working in India's cities as Nagarpalika contract female workers. As a result of the fact that they are not visible to the general public, many persons who work as Nagarpalika contract females get poor salaries and are not afforded any legal safeguards for their working circumstances. According to the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS, 2007), Nagarpalika contract female workers are employed in the unregulated domain of a private agencies, and the majority of them do not have any protection from national labour legislation. This makes it possible for their employers to mistreat their female Nagarpalika contract female workers without fear of repercussions. When it comes to the job, women are often subjected to very strenuous labour and extended hours. It is a distinct likelihood that they will be confined to their places of employment. Nagarpalika contract female workers are not subject to the labour rules that handle important issues related to employment, such as working conditions, wages, social security, provident funds, old age pensions, and maternity leave. These restrictions do not apply to Nagarpalika contract female workers.

NAGARPALIKA CONTRACT FEMALE WORKERS DEFINED

Various definitions of Nagarpalika contract female workers have been proposed over the years. The following are a few explanations:

1. An act presented in *Rajya Sabha* (Upper House of the Indian Parliament), entitled “The Cleaning and Nagarpalika contract female Servants (Conditions of Service and Welfare) Act”, GOI 2004, defined Nagarpalika contract female workers as:
 - “Nagarpalika contract female servants means any person who earns her livelihood by working in Nagarpalikas that act as employer and doing cleaning chores”, and
 - “Female cleaners means women servant who performs cleaning chores for a wage”.
2. The International Labour Organization (ILO) broadly defines a Nagarpalika contract female worker as “someone who carries out cleaning work in return for a wage” (Kundu, 2007).
3. Unorganized Non-Agricultural Workers’ Conditions of Work and Social Security Bill, 2007, have included the Nagarpalika contract female servants into the category of wage workers.

According to the bill “wage worker means a person employed for a remuneration as an unorganized non agricultural worker, directly by an employer or through any agency or contractor, whether exclusively for one employers or more employers, whether simultaneously or otherwise, whether in cash and or in kind, whether as a temporary or casual worker, or as a migrant work, or workers employed by cleaning including Nagarpalika contract female workers” (GOI, 2007).

Based on the information provided, it can be concluded that a female individual who does cleaning chores at Nagarpalikas is considered a Nagarpalika contract female worker. They have the option to work either part-time or full-time for a modest pay. Their responsibilities may include tasks such as cleaning streets, collecting garbage, etc.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There has been a noticeable shift towards women's economic participation around the world, regardless of their level of education. Their works, however, continue to be restricted. One example of this type of employment is Nagarpalika contract female work, in which women work either part-time or full-time in the homes of their employers. “Cleaning contract work” is defined by the “International Labour Organisation (ILO)” as a job that is done at streets or for a home earning of one or more people (womenalliance.org). Every woman who does cleaning chores as part of their job at Nagarpalika is considered as Nagarpalika contract female workers. In addition to dealing with issues at work, Nagarpalika contract female workers encounter a wide range of personal challenges. They work long hours for low wages. They are not guaranteed employment. It is possible to fire a Nagarpalika contract female worker for taking time off, regardless of the reason. As a result of their employment, Nagarpalika contract female workers often experience a wide range of health problems, including respiratory illnesses, muscular aches and pains, stress, strain, and skin diseases. Wars, poverty, and debt define their family existence. Women in the workforce sometimes misunderstand their rights and privileges because of their lower levels of education and deal with a lot of hidden issues.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

To the extent that many cleanings would be unable to function without the assistance of Nagarpalika contract female workers, the role that Nagarpalika contract female workers play in the functioning of Nagarpalikas is of such critical importance. Employing Nagarpalika contract female assistance has become an essential necessity. Due to their own hectic schedules or physical constraints, urban inhabitants frequently hired contract female workers to assist them with cleaning activities. This was done in order to take care of their responsibilities. As a consequence of the changes in lifestyle that the developing middle classes have adopted, there has been an increase in the need for contract female workers. Nearly sixty percent of the people who work in contract female service in Gujarat are women, according to a survey conducted by

the “Ministry of Labour of the Government of India”. A considerable majority of Nagarpalika contract female workers in the states of Karnataka (87.09%), Gujarat (82.38%), Kerala (75%), and Andhra Pradesh (90.78%) were discovered to be overwhelming in number, as shown by a survey that was carried out across the entire nation by the “Department of Social Work”. There are a great number of cities, regardless of their size, that do not have the necessary statistics. The purpose of this article is to analyse the situations that certain Nagarpalika contract female workers find themselves in, cleaning workers who are not supported by documentation and whose impact to the expansion of the state's economy has not been quantified.

- In order to investigate the labour conditions of Nagarpalika contract female workers in Gujarat state.
- To gain knowledge about the economic and social challenges faced by women in Nagarpalika contract work.

METHODOLOGY

Women who work as Nagarpalika contract helpers are the main subjects of this research. In order to examine its main goals, this article has used a descriptive and exploratory design. Journal articles, magazine articles, policy briefs on women, newspaper pieces, and official documents were among the secondary sources used to compile the data. The impact was evaluated and policy recommendations were made after consulting these sources.

WORKING ABOUTS NAGARPALIKA CONTRACT FEMALE WORKERS

An estimated four million individuals in India are employed as Nagarpalika contract female servants, operating within an unorganised and unregulated sector that lacks the necessary laws and regulations to provide assistance and protection for them. Compared to other industries, they receive meagre wages and lack adequate social safeguards. These individuals frequently experience slavery, mistreatment, abuse, and unfavourable working circumstances. Nagarpalika contract female workers in Gujarat who migrate from other states are one of the most marginalised and underprivileged population in the country. Due to their high susceptibility, a significant number of individuals lack land ownership and education. Furthermore, the bulk of these individuals belong to the Dalit group or other marginalised castes and tribal communities. Nagarpalika contract female workers are highly vulnerable to human rights breaches worldwide when it comes to their working conditions. They often work long hours for inadequate pay and have limited access to social benefits. Approximately 30% of Nagarpalika contract female workers globally lack protection under any form of labour legislation. The working conditions of Nagarpalika contract female workers are determined by personal relationships and are defined by arbitrariness and imperialism. Nagarpalika contract female workers can be classified into three primary categories: residential Nagarpalika contract female workers, part-time workers, and full-time workers. Individuals who are employed by the government and the military are likewise

encompassed within this classification. They can be further classified based on their specific responsibilities, such as persons who solely engage in cleaning or garbage collection. Abuse and exploitation often arise due to inadequate task specifications by the employer.

Among the many difficulties faced by Nagarpalika contract female workers are inhumane working conditions, exploitation of labour, abuse, and human rights breaches. According to the 2011 Convention, states are obligated to take several steps to ensure Nagarpalika contract female workers are treated fairly in the workplace, while also protecting their basic human rights and principles. There was an emphasis on the most important policies regarding wages, working hours, migrant Nagarpalika contract female workers, and maternity benefits. (Theobaldo, 2010) By supporting Nagarpalika contract female workers through programmes that aim to improve their skills, encourage self-sufficiency, and lobby for national policies and assistance, the project helps to strengthen the efforts of self-help groups and NGOs. In order to improve and sustain better and longer-lasting working conditions for Nagarpalika contract female workers, the “International Labour Organisation (ILO)” offers a range of policy advising services. Technical support projects at the national level, research and knowledge building, and campaigns advocating for and recommending policies are all part of these services. Important areas covered by this policy include regulations, processes, and programmes pertaining to Nagarpalika contract female workers' working hours; health and safety; work-life balance; rest; wage protection (including minimum wage); and the establishment of employment practices that outline the conditions and terms of employment for Nagarpalika contract female workers.

DIFFICULTIES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS FOR WOMEN WHO WORK AT HOME

PROBLEM OF CASTEISM

In addition to economic hardship, Nagarpalika contract female workers frequently confront societal prejudice. The caste dilemma has them trapped in an endless loop. Casteism and classism, the refusal to respect individuals based on their socioeconomic status or caste, are the root causes of the brutal abuse Nagarpalika contract female servants endure at the hands of their employers. Employers in the Nagarpalika contract female service industry subject their employees to hazardous working conditions and verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. The social structure that establishes people's 'entitlements' is the root cause of this impersonal attitude. In many of the employer's cleanings, there are casteism sentiments that are evident in the practice of keeping glass and plate separate. Since the majority of the workforce is comprised of members of the so-called lower caste or Dalit population, this perspective on pollution is understandable.

PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Male colleagues or male relatives may also engage in sexual harassment and abuse towards Nagarpalika contract female workers during their working hours. Nagarpalika contract female workers frequently experience a sense of powerlessness when subjected to abuse by male members of the cleaning because to their apprehension about jeopardising their employment. They are compelled to continue working in a hazardous environment until they are able to obtain alternative employment. The legal safeguards for women in the workforce, including those employed in Nagarpalika contract service, have been significantly underutilised since the enactment of the “Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act in 2013”. Instances of sexual harassment do indeed take place, however, victims often choose to keep silent, and in cases where the harassment is exposed, employers commonly ignore the issue and unfairly shift the blame onto the women. At times, the workers face allegations of theft from their employer and are subjected to treatment akin to that of criminals. The aforesaid predicament of Nagarpalika contract female workers is widespread throughout the state; however it differs depending on the region, locality, employer status, and social hierarchy.

ABSENCE OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

The majority of female Nagarpalika contract female workers still lack self-sufficiency, particularly in financial affairs. The primary constraint of home responsibilities hinders the financial autonomy of women, as their financial contribution to the family does not translate into financial freedom. Frequently, the male member of their family, such as the father, spouse, or brother, confiscates their hard-earned money and assumes the authority to choose its allocation. Female Nagarpalika contract female workers experience a deficiency in both economic and individual autonomy.

ABSENCE OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Nagarpalika contract female workers are a particularly vulnerable demographic, and social security benefits are not available to them because of this. There are no social security benefits for Nagarpalika contract female workers, including a minimum wage, paid time off for childbirth, health insurance, a pension, or a provident fund. This is because their employment status is subject to the whims of their employers. Nagarpalika contract female workers have not seen wage rises in a while, even though inflation has been a problem.

INADEQUATE CHILD CARE FACILITIES

The International Labour Organisation reports that, according to cultural norms, women workers around the world are expected to take on a larger share of child care obligations than males. When women work hard and start their own businesses, it boosts the economy and makes the country richer. Working mothers frequently experience burnout, anxiety, and stress due to their heavy workloads and the constant worry for their children's well-being. Inadequate labour

protections typical of the formal sector enhance the difficulty of balancing work and child care. Nagarpalika contract female women in the informal sector run the danger of cutting back on their hours worked, which would result in a loss of revenue, if they do not have access to good childcare facilities. They are to be given sufficient child care services.

LACK OF MATERNITY CARE

Women are left emotionally and physically vulnerable at childbirth due to the recurrent disregard for their health during pregnancy, which forces them to borrow money and incur exorbitant interest costs. Unfortunately, her health often takes a nosedive after giving birth since she doesn't get enough sleep and goes back to work too soon. This has resulted in a high prevalence of maternal mortality and terrible health conditions among these women who work as Nagarpalika contract female servants.

WORKING LONG HOURS

In times of economic and social instability, women are often compelled to work long hours, even though their age does not necessarily allow it, in order to ensure the financial stability of their families. But getting older means losing her health and seeing a spike in the expense of medical care, in addition to losing or having her income diminished.

LOWER PAY

A Nagarpalika contract female worker's pay is based on the hours worked and the duties accomplished. The majority of Nagarpalika contract female chores as view beneath their ability level. Ten hours of work typically pays between Rs 325 and Rs 350 per day. Some skilled workers may make a little more. The harsh reality, though, is that the majority of Nagarpalika contract female workers do not receive paid leave and make pitiful wages.

CONCLUSION

A state's progress is directly proportional to the level of development that it achieves in its informal sector. As a result of the absence of government protection, Nagarpalika contract female workers are exposed to risk and are unequally protected. Although there are a number of laws that have been passed to protect the rights of workers, such as the “Bonded Labour System Act (1979), the Interstate Migrants Workmen Act (1979), and the Minimum Wages Act (1948)”, Nagarpalika contract female workers are not included in the protection that these laws provide. They follow the directions that have been given to them by their bosses with great diligence. When a situation like this occurs, both the workers and the employers experience a sense of anxiety due to the situation. In addition, Nagarpalika contract female workers face a number of obstacles, including working circumstances that are below acceptable standards, a lifestyle that is demanding, employment insecurity, and the possibility of being unfairly stigmatised as criminals and blamed for any theft that takes place in their employer's residence. On the other hand, they have difficulties not only within their own cleaning but also in particular social settings. This paper sheds attention on the challenges that are experienced by women who work in Nagarpalika contract service. Because of their lack of knowledge, it has been found that they are uninformed of the opportunities that are available to them as well as the rights that they are already entitled to. In order for them to take advantage of the many different plans and policies that the government has in place, it is absolutely necessary for us to promote awareness among them.

There is a tremendous amount of importance placed on the part of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and semi-governmental organisations in this particular subject. As people, it is of the utmost importance that we show respect for other people, work together with them to make it easier for them to carry out their tasks, and provide them the freedom to enjoy their lives without interference.

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