

Lok Sabha Debates

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Shri Gurudas Dasgupta Called The Attention Of The Minister Of State In ... on 6 May, 2010

Title: Shri Gurudas Dasgupta called the attention of the Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour and Employment to the situation arising out of deplorable condition of working women, particularly the poor women workers in unorganized sector and steps taken by the Government in this regard.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA (GHATAL): Madam, I call the attention of the Minister of Labour and Employment to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

â The situation arising out of deplorable condition of working women, particularly the poor women workers in unorganized sector and steps taken by the Government in this regard.â

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MADAM SPEAKER: Shri Gurudas Dasgupta, if you have received a copy of the statement, I would request the hon. Minister to lay it on the Table, if you agree.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI HARISH RAWAT): We have submitted the copies of the statement.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Madam, I have no objection.

MADAM SPEAKER: He says that he has no objection.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: I lay the statement on the Table.

*According to the survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in 2004-05. the total employment in both the organized and the unorganized sectors in the country was 45.9 crore, of which 2.6 crore are in the organized sector and 43.3 crore (about 94%) are in the unorganized sector. Out of total workforce in the country, 31.6% are women workers which are mostly employed in the unorganized sector.

In rural areas women are mostly employed in agriculture. UnderÂ—employment in the agricultural sector, seasonal nature of employment and other socio-economic factors, result in particularly poor conditions and workers of this category have little to fall back upon in later years of life when they are unable to earn their livelihood. Though agriculture is a State subject and Labour is in the Concurrent List, the Central Government is alive to the situation and is taking appropriate action to provide for their better working and living conditions.

Presently, many existing labour laws like the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) ActÂ 1979, the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 etc. are applicable to unorganized workers. For taking care of the rights of working women, the Government has enacted the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 to provide for payment of equal remuneration to men and women for the same work or work of similar nature and for the prevention of discriminationÂ onÂ groundÂ of sexÂ againstÂ womenÂ Â inÂ theÂ matterÂ of employment. Under the Maternity Benefit Act, women employees are entitled to maternity benefit at the rate of average daily wage for the period of their actual absence up to 12 weeks due to the delivery. In cases of illness arising due to pregnancy, etc.Â they are entitled to additional leave with wages for a period of one month. They are also entitled to six weeks maternity benefit in case of miscarriage.Â Â The Maternity Benefit Act also makes certain other provisions to safeguard the interest of pregnant women workers.

There are some schemes for the working women being implemented by various Ministries/Departments, The Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana provides for bringing the assisted poor families (Swarojgarees) above the poverty line by ensuring sustained level of income over a period of time. Allotment of houses under Indira Awas Yojana is made to the female member or alternatively in the name of both husband and wife. These and such other schemes ensure access to economic resources and social security to the rural workers, including women workers.

Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), administered by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, is a safe motherhood intervention under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). It is being implemented with the objective of reducing maternal and neo-natal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among the poor pregnant women. The Yojana, launched on 12th April 2005 is being implemented in all states and UTs. JSY is a 100 % Centrally sponsored scheme.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment have constituted the Welfare Funds for some categories of workers like beedi, cine and non-coal mine workers in the unorganised sector. The Welfare Funds are utilized to provide for financing of measures to promote the welfare of workers, including women workers engaged in these occupations. The welfare measures include health and medical care, insurance, housing, education, recreation, water supply, maternity benefits, etc. In addition, women beedi workers are eligible for maternity benefit amounting to Rs. 1,000/- per delivery for the first two deliveries. Widow of beedi workers are also eligible for financial assistance of Rs. 5,000/- on each occasion for marriage of first two daughters.

The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008

The Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 was enacted on 31.12.2008. The Act provides for constitution of National Social Security Board which shall recommend formulation of social security schemes for unorganised workers/categories of unorganised workers from time to time. Women workers will also be benefited from these schemes.

The National Board was constituted on 18.08.2009. The Act provides for women representation on the Board.

'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana'

The 'Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana' was launched on 1st October, 2007 to provide smart card based cashless health insurance cover of Rs. 30000/- per annum on family floater basis to BPL families (a unit of five) in the unorganized sector. The enrolment of spouse is mandatory under the scheme. The scheme became operational from 01.04.2008. As on date, 26 States/Union Territories have initiated the process to implement the scheme. More than 1.45 crore cards have been issued. The RSBY covers maternity package of Rs. 2500/- for normal delivery and Rs. 4500/- for caesarian.*

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SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Madam, I have got a copy of the statement. I am sorry to say that the statement is too timid, too much blind to the facts of life and too much lukewarm to the problem that I seek to raise.

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â The question is not whether there are laws to benefit the working women in the country; the question is whether these laws are being implemented and enforced and whether there is machinery in the country to look after the problem of the working women. That is the main issue.

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â According to my statistics, Madam Speaker, total workforce in the country is 46 crore. Out of 46 crore workforce in the country, unorganized labour accounts for 43 crore. Women constitute

one-third of the workforce in the country as a whole, but in the unorganized sector, according to my estimate, 40 per cent of the workforce are women.

Madam, if you kindly permit me to say, I have looked into the proceedings of the House for the last several decades and not on a single occasion, the problems of working women have been taken up in the House. It is a greater tragedy than the tragedy that arises out of the deplorable condition of the working women. What is their condition? In this regard, I am quoting a report of the Government, not mine. The report is prepared by a committee of the Ministry of Labour. The report says:

Women workers constitute a marginalized category within the class of workers.

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Further, it is said that : Among the workers, women workers are much worse off. This is the finding of the Committee.

There is a second assessment by the Committee of the Government. It says :
(Interruptions)

Madam, I will appeal to you to kindly restore order in the House.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please, let us have order in the House.

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(Interruptions)

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : The second comment in the Report of the Committee on Labour appointed by the Government says that : The reproduction role of the women workers are less visible in the society and less recognized. What does it mean? It means that the role played by the women to carry forward the civilization is not taken note of by the political system and the economy of the country.

Madam, what is the tragedy of the Indian democracy? I am constrained to say that the political super-structure of the country is headed by a woman. We have a woman as the Rashtrapati; the principal political party of the country is led by a woman; the principal opposition party has chosen a woman as their leader; and we have the august presence of a leader in the temple of democracy who is a woman to take care of the deliberations of the House. In such a situation where woman Rashtrapati; woman Speaker; woman as the leader of the principal party; and woman as the opposition leader are there, but the Government and the society is so indifferent towards working women. This is the tragedy.

Madam, the question is this. Why the country is so indifferent? I would like to ask this from the hon. Members of Parliament. Why this default? Why this utter neglect of the problems of the working women? Why this political blunder? Who is to be blamed? Madam, kindly allow me to blame all the leaders and the parties who are parading the corridor of power. They are to be held responsible for this utter and grim neglect of the women who work. (Interruptions)

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SHRI LALU PRASAD (SARAN): You alone are enough.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Lalu. But what are the problems of the working women? Their problem is wage discrimination as men get more than women. What are their problems? It is harassment at the working place. If a woman is young and she has an elegant look, then she becomes victim of the masculine greed everywhere in the country.

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Madam, they are under-paid and overloaded with working conditions. In addition, there is denial of maternity benefit. The maternity benefit is a law, but it is denied to 90 per cent of the working women of the country.Â Â They are forced to keep away from trade unionism, and they suffer from alarming job insecurity. These are the problems which nobody can ignore in the country. It is there in the Government report which the Government has presented before the country.

The hon. Leader of the House may kindly take note, he is also the Finance Minister, that the Government is not having a model role. Let me give you an example. The women stringers, the women correspondents, who work with Akashvani, who work with Doordarshan are denied of maternity benefit. Can you imagine? They are denied of maternity benefit. They lose their job, if they say that they are pregnant. They are all subjected to uncertain payment which is dismally low.

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Madam, the point is the disease that has affected the private sector has also affected the public sector, even the Government. There are hundreds of contract labour working with different departments of the Government, who are also not paid the minimum wages. In some cases, provident fund is denied.

Let me give you some bare statistics. Fifty lakh women are employed by the Government as social workers â anganwadi and ASHA karmi workers. Out of them, the largest segment is anganwadi; their number is nearly 23 lakhs. What is their job? It is to look after the child-bearing women, to organize vaccination for the children, and to enforce the supplementary nutrition programme. It is a day-long job; they have to move one place to another in rain and sun. What is the payment? The minimum payment is Rs. 1500; in many cases, it is Rs. 2,000.

PROF. SAUGATA ROY (DUM DUM): In case of anganwadi, it is Rs. 900.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I am right; Rs. 1500 is the payment given by the Central Government. Hon. Minister Saheb, I always speak on record. An amount of Rs. 1500 is given by the Government, and additional money is given by the State Government. Generally, it is between Rs. 1500 and Rs. 2000.

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Hon. Speaker, you are aware of the plight of the depressed sections of the community in the country. These anganwadis get a payment of Rs. 2000, whereas the Cabinet Secretary gets Rs. 80,000 per month. May I ask you, hon. Speaker, is it social justice? Is it inclusive growth? Is it gender equality? Is it service to the nation? Is it not a case of gross discrimination?

MADAM SPEAKER: Shri Gurudas Dasgupta, please ask your clarificatory question.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I will ask, but let me quote the facts as a horror to the House. Let us feel ashamed; let tears roll down our cheeks; let us say what we have been doing all these years, and let us feel ashamed.

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Madam, the point is anganwadi workers are doing more than what they are supposed to do. They are employed for votersâ list revision. Now, they are doing Census work; they are doing additional work, but they do not get any additional payment. There is a Supreme Court order that any additional work that they will do, they should be given additional payment. It is not done in many cases, may not be in all. â ! (Interruptions)

শ্রী গুরুদাস দাসগুপ্তা : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন

হ্যাঁ ! (অবিরাম প্রশ্ন-উত্তর)

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হ্যাঁ ! (অবিরাম প্রশ্ন-উত্তর)

MADAM SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record.

(Interruptions) হ্যাঁ !*

শ্রী গুরুদাস দাসগুপ্তা : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন

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SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : I join everybody in the House including my friend Kalyan Banerjee, Shrimati Deepa Dasmunsi and everybody. If there is any dereliction of duty on the part of any Government including West Bengal, I stand to demand that they should also pay a reasonable amount. I am saying that. It is not West Bengal Government that we are discussing. We are discussing the human problem, the basic human problem of the Anganwadi workers. We are discussing it. (Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY): You attack the West Bengal Government.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Madam, hon. Minister is shouting.

হ্যাঁ ! (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Member, please ask your clarificatory question.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, for the information of the hon. Member, in our State we are giving Rs.4000 for the Anganwadi workers হ্যাঁ Rs.1,500 by the Central Government and Rs.2,500 by the State Government.

শ্রী গুরুদাস দাসগুপ্তা : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন : শ্রী মন্ত্রী-এর কাছে প্রশ্ন

হ্যাঁ ! (Interruptions)

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! (Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: No. The rule does not permit under the Calling Attention.Â Please you cannot ask.

â (Interruptions)

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