

After Effects of Covid -19 in the Lives of Coir Spinning Women in Ponnani Region of Kerala

Prof. N. Manimekalai, *Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University*
Linshi.P , Ph.D Scholar, *Department of Women's Studies, Bharathidasan University*

Abstract

This paper describes how Covid-19 affects coir spinning women in Ponnani. It's also looking the influences of the pandemic in the lives of working women. Women are the major portion of workers coir industries. It explains about their real life experiences with a gender lens. This paper trying to understand about women's health care, Social and Economic conditions during the struggling time of Corona virus.

Key Words: Coir industries, Spinning Workers and Women.

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I. Introduction

Among Indian states, Kerala's social infrastructure places one of the best because Kerala has high literacy, lowest infant mortality, etc. In the case of industrial infrastructure, the state has set up industrial parks, industrial estates and developed special economic zone in Kochi. Kerala has a high proportion of small scale industry engaged in processing its agriculture produce. The state has the largest production of rubber, cocoa, pepper, is a nut, coconut and cashew.

Coir is one of the traditional industries in the state with 360,000 workers. In which 76 percent workers are women. Public sector units and Co operatives play a dominant role in this industry. In the case of Malabar, coconut and coconut products like copra, coconut oil, coir and coir products were the second important set of items exported from Malabar during the early decades of the 20th century (Prakash 2018). Industries registered a steady growth at this time. The best variety of coir yarn in Malabar was produced in Vadanappalli and Venkidangara village in Ponnani Taluk. Coir, rope making, mats and matting's were the second largest employment providing activity under the cottage and small scale industry in this region before independence. (1951 Census Handbook –Malabar district) After independence this area lost its power slowly in the case of coir industries.

As per coir development board's coir project report 2017-18, 15 coir spinning units and 12 mechanized husk units are registered under this project,. The project divided mainly as two circles, namely, Ponnani and Tirur. As per 2017-18 report, in Ponnani circle all the units are working with loss. Purang society has 1955905 rupees loss within it. This is the highest amount among its. In the case of Tirur Units, Vallikkunnu, Keezhayil, Kadalundi Nagaram and Thenjipalam societies have trade profit, but when we look at the accumulated profit/loss, all the societies are working with loss.

In the case of infrastructure, few societies are working in shed. Others have their own building. Vallikkunnu CVCS has 76 cent land. It is the highest land owned society under Ponnani Project. Kayar Boovastram is one of the main markets for coir nowadays. Local bodies of the Government taking initiatives to renovate water bodies with it.

Objectives

- To analyse the economic status of women coir spinning workers during the pandemic period
- To understand the social condition of women coir spinning workers at the time of COVID 19

II. Methodology

Qualitative analysis used for the present study. Analysis has been done based up on the telephonic interviews of 40 working women in the Ponnani coir project. All the respondents are belongs to the age group of 35-55 categories.

COVID-19 lock down measures have paused coir co operative units daily work as well as other industries. This pandemic has meant no employment benefits. As a agro based traditional industry, coir

spinning units are already subject to low pay, poor working condition, lack of social protection like health care facilities, an employment insurance etc.

In coir co operative industry of Kerala, women are the major portions in working force. they are leading this traditional industry now. They have got a space of interaction in the spinning units before the pandemic but now they are lost their friendly talks with the co workers. It leads to a kind of loneliness among them. Women workers, mainly senior citizens are working and they had a space in units but pandemic changed it. Majority of the aged women workers in the Ponnani Project are widows.

Respondents reveal that women have getting social connections and they become visible in society because of this work. They are participating in festivals, marriages and involving other social organisations like kudumbasree, Janasree . Nowadays this situation has changed. They restricted their mobility within house. Corona news creates a kind of insecurity and fear among them.

In the case of occupational status, majority of the respondents opined that this not a job for them. They are spinning from home as a part time job because earnings are pending from government. Workers are vaccinated but a kind of fear affecting to them. Occupational freedoms lost during this time because of all the family members are jobless and they are sitting in home. It changed family atmosphere. So heavy household chores are leads to busy days for the women. Low pay, already pending earnings are gives un respect to women's work from family members.

Women workers in this spinning field are sitting longer time for their work in the atmosphere of dust. It creates health problems for them. Pandemic related anxieties increase the level of health conscious among them. They have worry about what will happen to them on next days. The respondents are sharing their concern about health is that, majority of the workers are from economically poor background and without a daily income it's not easy to sustain life. The Covid affected peoples are facing its after effects like tiredness and body pain but more than that they have fear about its long term after effects.

III. Conclusion

Pandemic deeply affected women workers all over the world. Its impacts are visible in coir industries of Kerala. It affected economically, socially and politically in the lives of these backward working population. It had some health influences both physically and mentally. As a traditional industry with its own difficulties to sustain, this pandemic creates a kind of double burden and long term effect for the industry and for the workers.

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