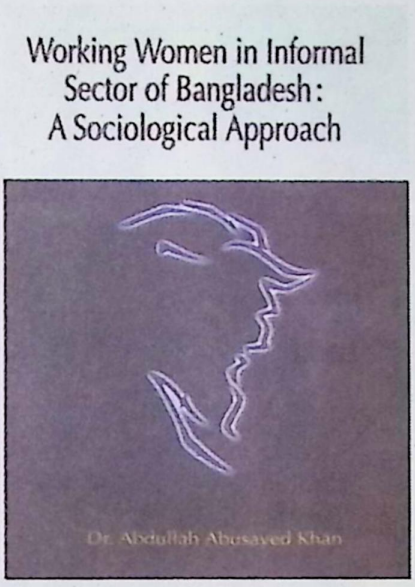
Gender Segregation and Women Wage Worker in Informal Sector of Bangladesh: A View from Within

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THE term Informal Sector (IS) is an important addition to the development sector, especially in developing countries like Bangladesh. IS is not an isolated sector; it has interdependence with the Formal Sector (FS). That is why it is not only surviving, but also increasing day by day. The word 'informal' has already demanded that we should change it into 'formal 'form. ILO report aptly remarked "The entry of women into the labor market permitted a majority of the households to cope with the reduction in real income provoked by the economic crisis". The real status of women workers can be determined through the occupational distribution of employed women. According to the World Bank report 2001 around 65 percent of total employment in Dhaka City is in informal sector. The Human Resource Development report (HRD) 2002 has brought out to light that "the monetization of non-market work of women is more than a question of justice". Patriarchy is one way to explain these societal realities.



Over the last few years there has been increasing interest of international organization such as ILO in the field of informal sector, particularly in developing countries. The present study is the result of these developments in Bangladesh, which is one of the few countries in Asia where there is high workers participation in informal sector economy. The political expediency and development requirements provide ample rational to undertake such a study.

The present study is a modest attempt to understand and explain the working conditions of female work force in construction and construction related economic activities in informal sector in a regional context in Bangladesh. The study is organized around certain fundamental sociological variables of family, marital status, education, income and payment structure, gender relations and status of women and developing economy. This is a study of theoretical dialogue between the traditional forces of society and economy and modern legal state and international context of equality and human rights. These two sets of forces are systematically interacting giving a new shape to society, economy and culture in a developing society. Women and particularly working women constitute an important component of sociological study in such a context.

The recent International Labor Organization (ILO, 2008) report shows a female earns 21 percent less than her male colleague in Bangladesh. While the largest male-female wage gaps in the informal sector were found mostly in the construction, hotel and restaurant industries in which women earn an average of 30 percent less than male workers. The smallest gaps are in education, health and social work sectors. The study shows that when women's education increases, the male-female wage gap decreases, as women tend to see more benefits from additional education in terms of earnings than male workers.

Low social and economic position of women is usually attributed to patriarchy in developing society. Bangladesh is no exception to it. Various indicators of low socio-economic position like literacy, participation in employment, payment of wages, decision making capacity etc are systematically examined for the understanding of the status of women in IS in Bangladesh. The gender inequalities and discrimination is manifested in the wage earned by the male and the female. The operations that fetch higher wages are preserved for males, whereas women do work of arduous nature accumulating lower wage. The same thing is happening to the construction workers apparently due to the bourgeoisie nature of capitalism in the social phenomenon. This situation complicates the problems of female workers in informal sector as governmental intervention in this regard is poor and the workers are not aware of the problems.

Gender exploitation particularly at work place is a common phenomenon in developing societies. Patriarchy is one way to explain these social realities. There are reports and information from different organizations and agencies conducting survey and research in labor welfare sector that confirm the common man's observation that exploitation of women at work place is known to almost everybody. So now is the time to recognize their rights, paving the way for their development.

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