

**WOMEN LABOURERS AND TRADE UNIONISM IN THE ERA OF
GLOBALISATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
ORGANISED AND UNORGANISED SECTORS**

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Labour of women contributes one third of the GDP of the world economy. They contribute both in paid and unpaid work fields. In this situation, contribution of women labourers and their involvement in trade union activities and trade unions' perception towards them and the impact of globalisation on them deserve special attention. In this study, the main theme has been the condition of women labourers in organised and unorganised sectors and their perception towards the trade unions and globalisation.

Globalisation is a phenomenon which integrates nations, economy, culture, trade, and the whole lot including labour. Irrespective of gender, labourers of organised and unorganised sectors are increasingly under the influence of this phenomenon. The nature of work, rules and regulations which deal with working conditions, wages and other benefits, security of jobs and so on are affected. Similarly, trade union activism has also been witnessing a decline in its vigour in terms of influence, functioning, relations with government and employees, capacity to influence decision making, and above all the ability to mobilise workers under their banner. In this situation, the impact of globalisation on labourers, especially women labourers, and trade unions occupies special significance.

No doubt, globalisation offers to women labourers' diverse employment opportunities. But most of these opportunities are generated in the unorganised sector. That means, the major portion of the women labourers in the unorganised sectors are outside the purview of the established protective rules and regulations. Even though certain rules and regulations are available for the benefit of them, because of the informal nature of their work, lack of permanency in jobs and absence of strict rules, they do not enjoy the proper protection of such provisions.

In the case of organised labour sector, before the advent of globalisation, workers enjoyed a pro-labour treatment from the part of governmental machinery.

Trade unions also used to exercise a precise influence over various decision making bodies of those days. But after the introduction of liberal economic policy, trade unions slowly began to lose their influence over the workers as well as governments.

The new reform policies adopted by the governments are mostly in favour of the interest of the investors than labourers. Many permanent posts in the organised sector are under the threat of downsizing. This has caused to the loss of permanent employment opportunities especially in the lower grade categories. As women employees are concentrating in the lower grades, it negatively affects their employments aspirations.

Introduction of schemes like VRS, Golden Shake Hand Policy, out sourcing, modernisation, etc., negatively affect the strength of employees in the organised sector. In fact, trade unions conducted strong agitations against anti-labour policies. But their agitations could not bring adequate solution to the problems raised by globalisation.

Still, trade unions are struggling for preventing the negative impact of globalisation to safeguard the interest of the working class. The efforts taken by the trade unions to prevent the anti-labour policies followed by employees could not make much success. It is required that they must develop new strategies which can help them to overcome the negative impact and capture the attention of the labourers and employers including the government.

Women labourers need more active interference of trade unions in the labour issues in general and gender issues in particular. It can be seen that trade union movements give much importance to organised sector only. Unfortunately, they do not give that much importance to the unorganised sector.

Organised sector employees are in a condition to enjoy the benefits of various established rights without obstacles. But unorganised sector employees are not in a condition to enjoy this. But trade unions give little importance to the issues raised by the labourers of that sector so far. This is because of a variety of reasons.

Employees of unorganised sector remain scattered in variety of working areas. They represent complex-multi socio-economic condition and interests. Because of

the loose nature of their employment and absence of established practices and norms, trade unions could not develop a base in that area.

It is very easy to maintain the details and other issues of trade unions in the organised sector. Trade unions have the capacity to easily address the issues of them and can make a link between their employer for the rectification of the issues of organised sector. The labourers of unorganised sector are away from such facilities.

Traditionally, women labourers have less attraction towards organisational activities compared to the male members. But, at present the women labourers have developed better understanding and awareness about various issues faced by them and they are interested to address the issues to the trade unions. If women labourers get proper opportunity to interact with labour unions, they can convey clearly about their needs and rights. They want trade unions to rearrange their priorities in favour of protecting the interest of the women labourers.

In other words, women labourers seek more gender friendly approach from the part of trade unions. They give too much importance to the role of traditional role of trade unions as protector of labour rights.

Now, the organised sector employees have developed a kind of apathy towards trade union activities. This is because of the reason that the employees of organised sector are comparatively better conditions in terms of working environment, availability of protective rights and special facilities, and welfare packages and other service conditions etc. Therefore, they feel that the trade unions are not required no more and prevent them to develop strong affinity and commitment towards their trade union activities.

The labourers of unorganised sector are having a different perception towards the trade unions. It is only a small per cent of this class who have trade union membership. But majority of them are interested to be part of the trade unions. Absence of such unions in their area prevent their entry into the union activities. Women workers feel that through trade union membership, they can acquire the legally applicable working conditions and wages to them. They are disturbed over the fact that many of the rights and privileges applicable to them are available only in paper. For availing these rights, they need the support of trade unions. They

consider trade unions are powerful channel of communication between labourers and employers. It has the capacity to act as a powerful negotiator. They are of the opinion that the reason behind not getting adequate attention on the basic issues faced by them is lack of a powerful trade union to represent them in front of the government and the employers.

In this way, the expectation of the women labourers from the unorganised sector is different from the women labourers of the organised sector.

Women labourers are mainly concentrated in the lower strata of employment cadre both in organised and unorganised sector. This is because of many reasons like, patriarchal character of society, lack of enough exposure to reach the higher levels easily, willingness to adjust with poor salary, readiness to undertake jobs in the poor working conditions etc.

In the organised sector, above Ninety per cent of the employees have trade union membership, whereas in the unorganised sector only Thirty One per cent have trade union membership.

In organised sector, the employees consider the trade unions are the platform to share their problems and prospects. It is the venue which amalgamate various opinions and strictly observe and discuss the new developments in their areas. Membership in trade union and various meetings provides enough chances to employees of organised sector.

The employees of unorganised sector consider trade unions have the capacity to check the existing exploitation in their sector. The employees of unorganised sector are suffering serious discrimination in the field of working conditions, wages, allowances and other benefits. The absence of trade union in their areas negatively affect their job prospects. In this situation, they strongly demand for formation of trade unions in their areas to address and check their problems carefully.

In organised sector, labour rules are strictly implemented. This is because of the efforts taken by the Governments and at the same time the pressure exerted by the trade unions has also contributed to the promotion of such conditions. Trade unions with the strong support from the members develop a kind of bargaining capacity and are able to successfully negotiate with their employers. It also exerts a

kind of check while the employers attempt to cut short the available services and privileges due to the employees.

But in the unorganised sector, trade unions have no such effective capacity to perform its role as the representative of the workers. This is because of the meagre representation of labourers in trade unions, attitude of the employers, and even the attitude of the members or other employees of the concerned Firms. The large majority of the employees of unorganised sector are outside the purview of trade union membership which curtail the bargaining capacity of trade unions as the true representative of the labourers.

In this regard, women labourers are the real losers. Because, their condition is worse than the condition of male workers. There is no other agency to represent the interest of the women workers. Their service is always depended upon the mercy of their employers. The employers have the capacity to cut short their wages and other benefits and at any time they can be even removed from pay roll, depending upon the existing market conditions.

Trade unions' role of protector of workers from exploitation also deserve special significance. The employees of unorganised sector face severe disparity because of the flexible nature of the sector. The employers have the freedom to easily hire and fire employees. Due to lack of permanency in jobs and absence of other established rules and practices, the labourers have little capacity to question their employers and demand for the labour rights.

The employees have enough scope to select employers because of the large availability of the poor women labourers in this sector. The employees of this sector show least effort to improve the quality and competency of the workers as they can be easily removed from their job and fresh recruitment could be easily made. So, the employees are always under threat of removal because of lack of updating of their knowledge in that field. On the other hand, labourers of organised sector have enough chances to improve their competency sine the Management provide enough chances to improve their quality in work. In organised sector, there is special departments offering training to employees and make them fit with updated knowledge in the concerned fields. If not, the employees have the facility to attend

classes or undertake special training outside the firm for the same purpose. The flexible arrangement Management in the work schedule or other kind of earned leave measures for this purpose help them to meet the needs without any difficulty.

In the era of globalisation, improvement of quality and competency is the first principle expected from the part of employees. Trade unions and management make certain arrangement for imparting special training to the labourers according to the demands and needs of their labour fields. This training may be technical or theoretical. In some cases, it is intended to reduce the stress and strain and to build up over all wellness of the workers. But in unorganised sector, very rarely managers pay attention to such matters. That reduces the chances of employees to improve their skills in the fields and keep them ignorant of the latest development in their specialised areas. The trade unions must have the responsibility to fill the gap in this matter.

Trade unions are association of like-minded people performing same economic activities. In this group, their problems and aspiration are likely to be the same. So, trade union front develops a kind of fraternity among the members of the union. During the crisis situation, trade unions act as the agency to support and offer assistance to the members. Most of the respondents from organised sector expressed faith in this role of trade unions. It is only a very few respondents from unorganised sector who held an image of trade unions as a supporter in crisis situation. It can be assumed that it is due to lack of enough experience or exposure with trade union that labourers in the unorganised sector discards the fraternity angle in this matter. Meagre representation of members in trade unions could not develop such a kind of fraternity among the members of unorganised sector. Due to the established practice of trade union activity, the members of organised sector possess a strong affinity towards their unions. They consider trade unions as their best friend during the situation of crises. With the proper representation, trade union can effectively win the reliability and trustworthiness of the labourers of unorganised sector.

In organised sector, trade union can play a positive role while taking decisions related with wage and other benefits. During the period of negotiation with the stakeholders, the trade unions of organised sector get enough chance to articulate

their views related with such matters. In this situation, trade unions also try to aggregate the interest of the majority of their members. In organised sector government and employers are always give due importance to the opinion expressed by trade unions in the negotiation table. But in unorganised sector, trade unions very rarely get the chance to take part in the negotiation for salary reforms and other benefits.

The condition of the labourers both inside and outside their firm seriously affect their productivity and morale. From ILO's emergence as an International Association for labour welfare, special importance is attached world over to the working condition and other facilities for the employees offered by the employers. In India, various Acts like Factories Act 1948, the ESI Act and such other Acts, and various constitutional provisions give much importance to the improvement of working environment of labourers of both organised and unorganised sectors. On the basis of these provisions, a number of steps have been taken by the Government and employers for the promotion of decent working condition to the labourers. But in the case of decency of working environment employees of both sectors point out serious issues unaddressed by their employees so far.

Obviously, organised sector employees enjoy far better condition than employees of unorganised sector. The progress achieved by these employees is not the result of a single strike of pen. They along with trade unions and other like-minded groups and individuals struggled for years for achieving the conditions available now. Still, the employees of organised sector have grievance regarding their working milieu and draw attention to the need for improvement.

Unorganised sector employees have only limited facilities in this regard. In many cases, their work place and surroundings are not hygienic and clean up to the minimum standards. There are severe issues like lack of enough number of toilets, clean water, waste disposal facility and space for taking food and rest. The unclean and toxic environment and dirty working conditions compel some of them to seek another job by giving up their existing job.

In the unorganised sector, the employees are a heterogeneous group, comprising a great variety as in the case of education, technical knowledge, wage, accessibility to benefits and many other matters.

The employees of organised sector receive comparatively better wages and other facilities. On the other hand, the employees of unorganised sector have neither better wages, nor other facilities. This is due to the presence of a large number of job seekers with the same qualification and willingness to adjust with the poor salary. Job seekers consider that any salary is better than none and discard the adverse conditions to get the same.

Women labourers are the victims of poor salary and other deteriorated service conditions, no enough leaves or holidays, lack of enough facilities to perform their work well. Without the availability of these condition, the workers of this class are always frustrated and compelled to seek other jobs. Because of their family and children are settled in a particular place it does not permit to leave away from the present job and find out a new one. Women are compelled to adjust for a lot for the benefit of their family and children.

Women labourers of both organised and unorganised sector have many complaints about their working condition and environment. Among them, one of the foremost is about the deprivation of proper sanitation facilities. Respondents from both organised and unorganised sectors have made complaint about the sanitation facility available in their work place. It is one of the severe and predominant issues raised by women workers from the unorganised sector. In the unorganised sector, women labourers are more concentrated and the toilet, wash and rest room facilities are not proportionate to the number of the employees. In spite of the distress, the helpless women labourers adjust with the available facilities of their firm and sometimes wait to use toilet and other wash room facilities after their working hours. The incinerator facility to destroy used sanitary napkins is also unavailable in the unorganised sector.

Majority of the trade union leaders and members of the trade unions are menfolk. Being so, it is they who actively take part in the meeting and other trade union related matters. This has gradually developed a view that trade unions are

male friendly organisation. Nonetheless, there are a few trade unions entirely composed of women members and active women leaders. And, there are indeed a few active women in the leadership level of trade unions as well. Still, the general trade union scenario is visibly male friendly in nature. A large majority of the women leaders are satisfied with the posts strictly reserved for them on the ground of gender considerations. This shows that reservation is essential for maintaining women representation at leadership level.

But women members have clear cut idea about their condition and issues and the view of trade union in these matters. At the same time, they expect a particular kind of power distribution from the part of trade unions.

Generally, the schedules arranged for the trade union meetings and activities are not conducive to the timing of the women labourers. Usually, union meetings are held in the evening, after the working hours or at night. Obviously, such timing does not suit women labourers. After spending their working hours at firm, the women labourers reserve most of their time for the care of their family and children at home. Thus, women labourers refrain from the daily trade union activities. It is the responsibility of the trade union leaders to arrange the timing of the meetings conveniently, so as to accommodate with the time schedule of the women workers.

Because women labourers consist a major share of the workers of the organised and unorganised sector. Trade union activities within the working hours that means more utilisation of break period.

Women labourers have faith in the capacity of trade unions to protect their rights. They also possess some sort of understanding that without the support of effective trade union activism, the working class could not protect their available rights and proceed further to achieve the unattained rights so far. Labour unions are the institutions which have true interest in the welfare and progress of the working class. So, the existence and survival of this institution is essential for protecting the rights of the working class.

As large as Sixty per cent of the respondents from organised sector and Seventy Seven per cent of the respondents from unorganised sector of the study area observed that trade unions have the capacity to protect labour interest.

Gradually, withdrawing from the position of promoting pro-labour policies towards the position of a mere settler of issues between the employers and the employees; the state is changing its role from a welfare institution to a facilitator. As a result, the labourers are slowly losing their support of a state. In this situation, their expectations are high from the trade union front. Because, trade union leaders are the people with clear knowledge about the condition of women labourers. Or they think that trade union leaders can easily understand the problem of workers and they think that improvement of condition is mutually helpful to the labour class and to the trade unions.

Generally, the women labourers consider trade unions pay attention to the opinion of the workers on their various issues. However, the trade union leadership is not paying enough attention to the special issues of the women labourers. They also think that women folk do not get adequate role in the decision-making process. Only with the due attention to the opinion of the affected women workers, trade unions can effectively find out solution to their problems. The under representation of women in decision making process negatively affect the interest of the working women.

The absence of women in the leadership level is also negatively contributing to the under representation of women issues at the decision-making process of trade unions. There are women who are willing and interested to be in the leadership of the trade union front. But they do not get enough chances to exhibit their leadership calibre because of many reasons. If adequate number of women are in the leadership, it would definitely contribute in focusing attention on working women's basic issues. Women labourers of both organised sector and unorganised sector share the complaint about the under representation of women issues at the decision-making table of the trade union front. At present, women leaders are found only at the specific posts which are reserved for them. Many women in the working sector have adequate leadership qualities. Unfortunately, they are deprived and denied of the opportunities to exhibit their leadership skills. If a conducive atmosphere is created to freely articulate and express their views, definitely they will become an asset to the labour movement, because they are the persons with thorough knowledge about the fundamental problems of the labourers.

Therefore, trade unions must develop strategies to bring out the best qualities of the women activists in the labour front. Special care is to be taken to arrange the timing and venue of the union meetings and discussions to suit the convenience of women members. Awareness about the new policies and programmes of the government and the employers is to be created. Care is to be taken to avoid all those factors which restrict the entry of women into union leadership level. The leaders of the trade unions must ensure the conditions which are helpful to overcome the barriers to women participation in unions and its leadership. Because, the under representation of women in trade union leadership affects the role of this agency as the true representative of the working class. At the same time, women labourers must also be ready to take the pain and strain of the burden of the leadership role. Inclusion and exclusion of women in the nation building process is based on their over-all socio, economic and cultural aspects and status. Participation of women in the trade union activities and at the leadership level will certainly provide a fertile training ground to such a kind of quality improvement.

Globalisation has provided new opportunities to working and job aspiring women. But the market economy created by globalisation gives too much importance to the highly competitive and updated technology ridden services. In this setting, the deprived, unskilled and less competitive women labourers may get side-lined and may even lose their jobs. So, they need assistance from the part of trade unions to improve their skills and knowledge updating which would make them fit to adjust with the changing situations.

Trade unions must act as the vanguard of gender equality among the working sector and in the society. The Constitution of India, and many other statutes including the international agreements made by the ILO and the UN initiatives stand for maintaining this principle. Still the condition of the working women, especially those who are working in the unorganised sector, is not better. Trade unions must take the responsibility for bringing and protecting gender equality among the working class.

Decision making capacity of women labourers is influenced by the male members of the family and male members of the working environment.

The women labourers of organised sector get enough chances to be in touch with the new initiatives which occur in their fields because of the trade union influence among them. Trade unions take active interest to spread awareness about the policy changes and threats created by the globalisation over their field. In contrast, the labourers of unorganised sector very rarely get such chances to get knowledge from the trade unions because of the lack of union activities among them.

Women labourers, especially those who are in the lower strata, having less education and belonging to backward socio-economic conditions, lack the courage to take decisions of their own in the work place. Their legal illiteracy, ignorance, economic backwardness, lack of confidence, poor self-image and the like prevent them from collective bargaining for protecting labour rights. It is very easy to exploit them physically and economically. In this situation, through legal awareness and collective support of trade unions they can improve their confidence, capacity and calibre to attain better stature and become more productive and contribute to the economic development.

There are a large number of social security rules and regulation ensuring the security and prosperity of women, especially for working women in our nation. However, the existing social security measures are not reaching to the grass root level of the working class because of the lack of effective implementation of them at that level. Trade unions must engage in efforts to improve the condition of women labourers and must conduct programmes for creating awareness among them about their rights related with work, working conditions and other benefits, health, sanitation, nutrition and so on.

There are many protective laws which ensure welfare of the labourers irrespective of their gender and sector. But in actual practice, women labourers are deprived of many of the benefits of such welfare programmes or rights. This condition is worst in the case of unorganized sector. This is due to many of the reason. Basically, this category of labourers have no idea about the well-defined and structured social security rights. Globalisation has been instrumental in the informalisation and casualisation of work. As a result, workers from both organised

and unorganised sector face severe problems. The available security schemes and welfare programmes are under threat. Globalisation brings more contract nature of appointments and outsourcing of work, negatively affecting the welfare package enjoyed by the workers earlier. The newly appointed contract labourers and those who are in the outsourced centres are deprived of the welfare schemes applicable to the labourers of the organised sector previously. In the case of unorganised sector, a number of security provisions were included in the Unorganised Sector Labourers Act of 2008. But in practice, majority of these available to the workers did not get the benefit of these Acts. The governments must take effective steps to implement these policies strictly. The trade unions also strictly observe and take guard of the actions taken by the government and employers to implement these acts in real terms and should impose pressure on them to implement it effectively at the earliest.

The impact of globalisation on trade unions is multi-dimensional. Globalisation offers a chance to develop a kind of “we feeling” among the trade union community, as it created a kind of alarm and fear among the labour class, especially labourers in the unorganised sector. The demand for requirement of employees witnessed a change from less skilled to more skilled. Opportunities are reserved for those who have higher efficiency and adaptability to the changing professional requirements. Skills are defined in connection with quality of education, experience or specialisation. Those who fit in these categories, receive attractive salary, but without any surety about its permanency or continuity. In this situation, frequent job loss and unemployment become prevalent among the less skilled, especially poor women workers in the unorganised sector. On the other hand, globalisation produces both winners and losers. Employers give too much importance to hike in production at the same much attention to reduction of number of work force. Labourers are witnessing pathetic working conditions or related issues and heavy work pressure on the employees of both organised and unorganised sector.

Organised sector employees are also witnessing the positive and negative impact of globalisation over their employment. Retrenchment of the employees, ban on new appointments, freezing of posts, outsourcing of work, reduction of benefits including pension, VRS and the like are the globalization related policies which

provide tension to the employees of this sector. The trade unions of organised sector are trying to give much importance to these issues and they organised strikes and protests in connection with this. They are always trying to create awareness about these developments and its consequences among the employees of organised sector, including the newly appointed employees also. So, trade unions in the organised sector work hard for protecting the interest of the labour class of this sector.

However, due to the loose nature of the trade unions of the unorganised sector, union activities could not succeed in getting wide attention among the employees of this sector. It is the first responsibility of the trade unions of this sector to develop confidence among the members.

The credibility development should really enhance the role of trade union as an agency of protecting the labour interest among the members.

In unorganised sector labour rules are weak. The employer has the capacity to hire and fire employees in accordance with his needs and convenience. It creates a kind of permanent uncertainty among the labourers of this sector. In this situation, only with the support of trade unions that the labourers can be able to protect their rights. Trade unions have enough scope to exploit the possibilities of the situation and capture the confidence of the labourers of unorganised sector. With the support of the great majority of the work force of the unorganised sector, trade union can emerge as the powerful pressure groups to exert influence and pressure over the governmental machinery.

In short, globalisation offers problems and prospects to trade unions too.

This study postulated the hypotheses that women labourers of both organised and unorganised sector are always a neglected folk of society even though there are laws and rules for safeguarding the interest of them; compared to the organised sector labourers women labourers in the unorganised sector face many crucial problems which are unique and which the trade union hardly care to address; in trade union front the women labourers are marginalised and they seldom rise to leadership or policy making bodies; and trade unions are at a pretty pause as the manner in which they should confront the challenges posed by globalisation. These hypotheses are validated in this study.

Many sections of women consider themselves as a group excluded and marginalised in the mainstream of socio- economic and political life of the society. It is also reflected in the case of women labourers of both organised and unorganised sector. International statutes, constitutional protections and other rules and regulations are in favour of the welfare and prosperity of the women labourers. But in reality, their condition is far away from what is expected to be.

The burden of the women starts from family onwards. Majority of the respondents of both the sectors opined that they are overburdened with the tasks at home and workplace. It is a common phenomenon of the developing world. The working women shoulder most of the work of the family like caring of the children, age old people, and all other routine works related with home making like cleaning, cooking, washing and so on. The traditional role of a “good woman” is expected from her even in the era of globalisation. Working women are finding it very difficult to play these roles together. However, the working women of both organised and unorganised sectors strategically manage to show justice to their household or the so called traditional role at the cost of their rest and leisure time, energy and health, and personal conveniences. Often society ignores or neglects the sacrifice made by the working women. Our modern society must address these kinds of issues of working women and must find out ways to ease out their hardships and enable them to follow a more comfortable life. It is to be remembered that the well-being of womenfolk is a class is essential for the well-being of the society as a whole.

Most of the working women of both the organised and unorganised sectors are facing various problems like over burdening with work, extreme stress and strain, absence of enough rest and leisure to refresh their body and mind, physical and mental illness related with work and many other minute problems as well. Enough rest and leisure facilities, pure water for drinking and other washing and cleaning purposes, medical care etc., are the legal rights of workers. But these rights are not available in many of the firms. These labourers who are in dire need of meeting their both ends are not in a capacity to address or articulate their issues strongly. In this situation, trade unions can effectively intervene to help them.

The issues of women labourers in the unorganised sector is worse than the condition of women in the organised sector. Because of the weak nature of their appointment, loose rules and regulations related with the part of employment, lack of legal literacy and confidence from the part of workers- all these negatively affect their work condition. In many firms, most of the legally available rights are not implemented. Employees of organised sector, irrespective of their gender identities, are enjoying these rights. But they constitute only a minute per cent of the total work force of the nation. The unorganised sector labourers constitute the majority of the work population and their contribution to the GDP of the Nation is also having a big share. In this situation, the labourers of unorganised sector are deprived of all the available benefits within the country. Globalisation also contributes to the vulnerability of the workers, especially the women labourers. The 'hire and fire at will' principle of modern management always operates as a kind of threat among the labourers. Their working conditions are also far below the required standards. The welfare schemes for workers are also completely absent in this area. Lack of enough sanitation facility, shortage of water, complete absence of medical and other kinds of accident insurance etc., always impose a threat over the employees of unorganised sector. In the case of women labourers, they are the first victim of all these issues. For example, a mandatory body like anti-harassment mechanism is completely absent in the unorganised sector. Only a very few per cent of the employees of this sector have any idea about this provision. The employees of this sector are not ready to express their issues related with sexual abuse because of their shame and fear and societal prejudices.

Absence of the legal condition of rights, poor wage compared to organised sector, absence of insurance coverages, lack of permanency of employment and so on are the problems faced by the women employees of the unorganised sector. Only with the enhancement of collective bargaining capacity and strong effort from the part of government and other NGOs, the condition of labourers can improve. Awareness and legal literacy to women labourers also contribute for emancipating them from the traditional gender biases that exist in our society manifested at various layers which lead to physical, social, cultural and economical exploitation of women.

Traditionally, trade union activity is considered as a male dominated affair. This is because of the argument that men have enough time and energy for such activity. Women labourers are always busy with their family and other household chores during spare time. There are other arguments also like women are deliberately prevented from the organisational activities of trade unions. Whatever it may, it is the responsibility of the trade unions to promote women participation in organisational leadership. With the entry of more and more women as leaders, the gender related specific labour issues can be addressed not only within the union, but also at government and management level.

Many of the women issues are unaddressed by the trade unions because of the absence of women at the decision-making level. There is a tendency in every sector that decisions and policies are made in favour of those who have more bargaining capacity. Women labourers with their large majority in the informal sector can effectively influence the decision-making system, if the leaders of the unions are from their same gender. It is the best way to enhance the confidence level of the women employees and they can gain the strength for making demands affecting their specific sphere, including their age-old neglected demands. Assumption of leadership position in the trade union level is surely one of the ways to empower womenfolk and it is a training ground to be the decision makers in other higher bodies including legislature.

Because of the absence of adequate number of women leaders in trade unions, the exclusive issues of women labourers are often neglected or ignored. If issues are common, the male dominated leadership intervene and with their bargaining power strive find solutions. But if it is the specific gender related issues of women, they do not show the same enthusiasm. Thence, therefore, affirmative actions are essential for including women in the responsible positions and decision-making bodies of the trade unions. If all other conditions are favourable, the women leaders can surely prove their leadership capabilities.

Globalisation offers unlimited chances to trade unions to be the sole vanguard of the labour rights. The government or other NGOs have their own broader objectives to look for other than the interest of the labourers. But, labour union's

ultimate aim is the protection of the interest of the labour classes. The period of globalisation raises many challenges before the labourers, especially to the women labourers. In this situation, with the experience of the past years, trade union can find out new strategies to exploit the situation for the benefit of the classes they represent. With the support of its members and amalgamation of resources physical and human, trade union can easily create awareness about the globalisation and its impact on the labour front. It is also the need of the time to spread trade unionism among all categories of workers and labour fields.

Trade union with its capacity to influence the decision-making process of the government can easily push up for legislation which is helpful to the weaker classes of society, especially the women workers. Globalisation brings the condition, which require updating of knowledge and skills of workers always. Trade union can easily act as the agency to create understanding about these conditions and help to arrange training and sharing of knowledge through various means. In this manner they can popularise themselves in their supplementary role as educators among the members. Through positive social interventions, trade union can become powerful pressure groups so as to mobilise public opinion in favour of the interest of the working class.

After examining the various aspects of working women and trade unions in the era of globalisation, certain observations are worthwhile to mention. It is the responsibility of the Governmental Machineries, Trade Unions, NGOs, Managements and Civil Society to ensure gender equality in all walks of life including work. Women constitute half of the population and contribute a big share to the GDP of the nation through paid and unpaid work. It is the responsibility of entire humanity to protect and uphold the dignity of working women. Trade unions have a crucial role to play in protecting the right of the workers both in organised and unorganised sector.

In the era of globalisation, trade unions must find out new strategies to possess the credibility of the workers both in the organised and unorganised sectors. In the organised sector, to a certain extent, a minimum level of certain basic rights is implemented and is available to both men and women workers. But in

unorganised sector many of these rights are still only in black and white. Trade unions must give adequate attention to take over these matters and bring solution to this problem at the earliest. Globalisation imposes many of the tension over both the employees of organised and unorganised sector. The available rights of the employees of organised sector are under threat like permanency of the service and welfare provisions like statutory pension packages. At the same time, employees of unorganised sector are not yet gained many basic rights so far and under threat in losing jobs and livelihood. Gender issues assume new dimensions under globalisation. So, it is the responsibility of trade unions to find out new techniques and strategies to capture and possess the interest of the workers. At the same time, they must attempt to ensure a kind of influence over the governmental machinery through various means like lobbying, imposing pressure and many other means.

During the period of globalisation, the traditional means of pressure and bargain techniques have become invalid and feeble. So, the trade unions must find out new pressure exerting mechanisms to satisfy the collective interest of the labour community. Adopting conventional methods like work shunning strikes need rethinking. Unions must use the help of modern technological development in the communication field and use it as a powerful means to attain the goals and to spread messages. Trade unions must also give priority to confidence building among the women labourers.

Globalisation requires high efficiency and competency from the part of employees. Women labourers have lesser chances to keep in touch with the development and new knowledge occurring in their field. Trade unions have the capacity to give proper understanding about these matters and to provide enough facilities to keep in touch with latest developments in their career fields. This will help them to develop a kind of positive attitude towards their occupation.

There is an absence of women leaders among the trade union front. There should be genuine effort to provide enough chances to women to become the leaders and trade unions must take deliberate steps to attract women in to the leadership level. The arrival of women into the leadership level will definitely improve the confidence of other women in the union and also will be helpful to

address their grievances effectively. It is also a training ground to women leaders to take part in the decision-making process concerning them.

The condition of women working in the unorganised sector is far below the employees of organised sector. There are many rules and regulations for the welfare of them but it is not properly implemented in many of the sectors especially among the lower strata of the workers. So, trade unions have enough scope to penetrate into the issues of women in these sectors and become the vanguard of these classes.

The contribution of women labourers in the economic development of the country and welfare of the society cannot be underestimated. They have the right to enjoy all benefits of the progress achieved by the humanity. They are not the category of population which can be kept away from the rights and welfare enjoyed by the other half of the population. Globalisation brings prospects and problems to women labourers of both organised and unorganised sector. But only a limited per cent of the women workers are the real beneficiaries of it. It is the responsibility of trade unions to find out new strategies to overcome the problems raised by globalization and act as the supporter of workers, especially the women workers. Trade unions are weak in the unorganised sector and must seriously take over the issues of them and penetrate among them. Such an endeavour offers unlimited scope for trade unions to regain the lost image of as the protector of labour interest.

The Research area is women Labourers and Trade Unionism in the Era of Globalisation : A Comparative Study of the Organised and Unorganised Sectors. During the course of this research many other avenues of this field all to be integrated and solutions to be suggested. In this research work the researcher is tried to pay maximum justice to the subject area. But there are many new avenues which require serious attention of the researchers of the future. For example, the role of trade unions into the new generation employment sectors like software, insurance, retail, hospitality, the absence of women in the decision making bodies, role of updation and specialisation of employment skills etc. So this research work to be turned inspirations to such researchers.

