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## PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF PETTY TRADE WOMEN – A STUDY

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**Abstract:** The present paper discusses the problems and prospects of petty trade women particularly a study in khammam district of Telangana state. Street vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell. In India, the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors/Hawkers notes that street vendors constitute approximately 2 per cent of the population of a metropolis. The main objective of the present paper is to examine the different problems of petty trade women in the khammam urban area and also analyzed their socio-economic conditions to understand their present status in the society. Finally, this paper reveals that the position of women who are in the petty trades is low when compared to the organized sector women as well as salary based private sector women.

**Keywords:** ILO, Informal Sector, National Policy, Petty Trades, Street Vendor.

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**Introduction:** Street traders are a feature of urban life throughout the world i.e. developed or in developing countries. (Govt. of India) The census of informal sector (IS) activity, invariably found that majority of the 'IS' participants were in commerce – as petty traders in the market places and on the streets of the Third world. Though the street traders in the market places and on the streets fill an important function in providing goods and services at relatively low prices to lower income city dwellers, the problems faced by these petty traders are numerous. While some are minor, others are serious, causing varying degrees of disruption to the smooth flow of their petty trade operations (Sharit K Bhowmik).

One of the most important features of the urban informal sector (UIS) as identified by International Labour Organisation (ILO) and others (Khema Sharma) is supposed to be 'ease-of-entry'. But this aspect does not mean that anybody can enter in the urban informal trade sector at any time and operate in any locality. Very often, the new entrants are restricted in certain 'Central Business Districts' known for petty trading activities. A street vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell. In India, the National Policy for Urban Street Vendors/Hawkers notes that street vendors constitute approximately 2 per cent of the population of a metropolis. The total number of street vendors in the country is estimated at around 10 million. This number is likely to increase even further. The reports from the Asian countries show

that there was a jump in the number of street vendors after the financial crisis of 1998.

At the same time it should be noted that street vending survives not merely because it is an important source of employment but also because of the services it provides to the urban population. For the urban poor, street vendors provide goods, including food at low prices. Hence, we find that one section, namely street vendors, subsidizes the existence of the other sections of the urban poor by providing them cheap goods, including food. Middle-income groups too benefit from street vending because of the affordable prices offered. In Mumbai (SNDT & ILO), the studies show that most of the women street vendors belong to families in which the male members were once employed in better paid, secure jobs in the formal sector. They were unemployed when their enterprises closed. Their wives took to street vending to make ends meet. There is no clear picture of the number of women vendors, except in Ahmadabad where around 40 per cent of the 80,000 street vendors are women. In other cities they are an invisible category. The male vendors are more visible as they sell greater varieties of goods – clothes, fruits, household items etc. most of the food vendors are males. The level of unionization is higher among them and they are thus able to protect themselves better than the women vendors. Therefore, there is a need to make a proper assessment of women vendors. At a rough guess, they should constitute 30 per cent of the total population. They are mainly small vendors and they are hardly unionized (except in Ahmadabad). These factors add to their invisibility. It is observed that a petty trade

woman with a lot of initial problems before she could set off on a petty trading activity. Even after resolving the initial problems and embarking on the venture, there still remain quite a few problems she has to contend with in the course of carrying on with his activity. Moreover, new problems keep cropping up forcing the owner to go from pillar to post in pursuit of a solution. Some petty shops fold up in the process, some change into an alternate line of activity and others may well shift to new locations. The present paper makes a modest attempt to identify the problems as perceived and voiced by the sampled petty trade women they and subsequently their prospects are also identified.

**Objectives of the study:** The main objective of the present study is to examine the problems of petty trade women in the study area. The study further

aims To discuss the socio-economic conditions of selected petty trade women; To find out the occupation and income status of the selected respondents; To understand the saving as well as debt position of selected respondents; and To examine the problems of selected respondents;

**Methodology:** The present study depends upon primary sources of data. The selected Khammam district belongs to Telangana State. To elicit detailed information as to petty trade women, a structured questionnaire has been prepared and administered. Further, participation and observation methods are also adopted to collect real information about their lives. Khammam district urban area has been selected for the present study. The details of the socio-economic conditions of the selected petty trade women has been presented in Table - 1

S. No	Particulars	No. of Women	% to total
<b>1</b>	<b>Age (in years)</b>		
	<30	12	20.00
	31-40	24	40.00
	41-50	16	26.67
	Above 50	08	13.33
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Education</b>		
	Illiterates	18	30.00
	Primary	26	43.33
	Secondary	12	20.00
	Intermediate & Above	04	06.67
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>		
	Married	48	80.00
	Widowed	09	15.00
	Separated	03	05.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Study

Note: Figures in Parentheses state percentage to total respondents

Table - 1 indicates that 40 per cent of selected women are in the age group of 31-40 years while it is lowest in the age group of above 50 years i.e. 13.33 per cent. As much as 43.33 per cent of the selected respondents stop their study at primary level while 30 per cent are illiterates. Further, 20 per cent could study up to secondary level and only 6.67 per cent of the selected respondents could get the opportunity to study at the level of intermediate and above. This clearly indicates

low level of literacy rate among women, despite so many measures taken up by the government to provide the educational facilities for people in general and women in particular. There is a lot of gap in the women's education in terms of achieving the goal of 'Education for All'. As high as 80 per cent of the selected respondents are married. The percentage of widowed is 15 per cent while 5 per cent are the

separated. The details of the various trades have been shown in Table 2

S. No	Trade Details	No. of Women	% to total
1	Vegetable Sellers	32	53.34
2	Fruit Sellers	12	20.00
3	Plastic goods	08	13.33
4	Steel Material	05	08.33
5	Bangle Sellers	03	05.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Field Study

It can be seen from the Table - 2 that as much as 53.34 per cent of the selected respondents occupation is vegetable seller while 20 per cent are the fruits sellers. Further, 13.33 of the selected respondents are selling plastic goods where 8.33 per cent are in the steel material business and only 5 per cent are the

bangle sellers. It is to be observed that all the selected women they bring material from the local wholesaler then they go to field in various localities in the selected study area. The monthly income of the selected respondents have been presented in Table - 3

S. No	Trade Details	Below 1000	1001-2000	2001 -3000	Above 3000	Total
1	Vegetable Sellers	05	15	08	04	32
2	Fruit Sellers	02	04	05	01	12
3	Plastic goods	01	05	01	01	08
4	Steel Material	01	03	01	00	05
5	Bangle Sellers	02	01	00	00	03
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: Field Study

Table-3 reveals that as much as 28 out of 60 of the selected respondents could get monthly income in between Rs 1001 to 2000 while 11 respondents could get Rs below 1000 per month. Further, 15 respondents could get their monthly income in between Rs 2001 to

3000 and only 6 respondents could get above Rs 3000. It clearly indicates their low economic status of the selected respondents. The information in regard to the debt and saving has been presented in Table-4.

S. No	Trade Details	Debt Status			Saving Status		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
1	Vegetable Sellers	26	06	32	12	20	32
2	Fruit Sellers	08	04	12	03	09	12
3	Plastic goods	06	02	08	04	04	08
4	Steel Material	04	01	05	02	03	05
5	Bangle Sellers	01	02	03	01	02	03
	<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: Field Study

The above Table illustrates that as high as 45 out of 60 of the selected respondents are in debt trap while 15 of the selected respondents are not having debt. It

is to be observed that only 22 of the selected respondents have the savings where 38 of the remaining respondents do not have any savings.

Moreover, the petty traders face a number of problems during the purchase of commodities to be sold to the ultimate consumers. The major problems encountered by them have been presented in Table – 5

S. No	Trade Details	Problems at purchasing			Problems in selling		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
1	Vegetable Sellers	20	12	32	15	17	32
2	Fruit Sellers	08	04	12	05	07	12
3	Plastic goods	02	06	08	05	03	08
4	Steel Material	03	02	05	04	01	05
5	Bangle Sellers	01	02	03	02	01	03
	<b>Total</b>	34	26	60	31	29	60

Source: Field Study

Table – 5 that as much as 34 of the selected respondents out of 60 are facing problems when they purchasing the material while 26 respondents are in exemption in this condition. Further, 31 respondents are encountering problems in their fields where 29 of the selected respondents are not encountering any problem in their selling area. Buying necessary assortments is only one aspect of marketing. As far as the petty traders are concerned, another aspect and a more important one indeed, is the selling activity because it is through this activity that a petty trader is able to eke out a decent living for himself and his other family members. But, we find that problems faced by the petty traders while engaging in selling activities, are numerous are highlighted by them.

**Conclusion:** In the present study almost all the surveyed petty traders complained that there was too

much competition among them for selling. This could indicate that there was no further scope for setting up new units in this sector in the study area. On the other hand, seen from the profitability point, this activity continued to yield reasonably good profits to these self-employed petty traders. Thus, stiff competition, harassment and non-availability of suitable locations in public places have restricted the growth of petty trading activities in the study area are which have a great potential to offer employment opportunities especially to the youth from lower economic strata, irrespective of their education, experience and financial background. Finally, the petty traders have high expectations from the government to solve all their problems. The government as well as NGO's participation is necessary to solve the problems of the petty traders.

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