UNIT 8 MOBILISATION AND RESISTANCE

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Structure

8.1 INTRODUCTION

You have earlier read about resistance and struggle by women in MWG 009, Block 3, Unit 4. Here, we will discuss mobilisation movements and resistance put up by women as workers. You have read how Sylvia Walby has argued that the household itself is hierarchical, where the position of breadwinner relates to 'the man' and women gets relegated to the status of 'secondary wage earners'. Women enter into labour force, over and above, their ascribed role of being a 'provider and natural caregiver' to the family and also their community roles. The secondary status further gets extended to economic institutions where women are considered as 'reserve army of labour' or their association with occupations akin to their role of nurturer and care giver, thus leaving them marginalized, discriminated and also oppressed .

In this Unit we shall dwell upon instances by way of case studies and narratives regarding women's efforts to organize and mobilise themselves as workers and how they garnered resistance to bring about a change in their work scenario. Let us look at the objectives of reading this Unit.

8.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this Unit you shall be able to:

- Define and explain what is understood by mobilisation and resistance;
- Discuss how women have overcome their struggle by organizing themselves; and
- Explain the outcome of struggle movements at international level.

8.3 BACKGROUND: RESISTANCE AND MOVEMENTS

World over and especially in developing countries of the world, a large percentage of workforce in unorganised sector do not get benefits of labour protection laws and policies. This renders them vulnerable in matters of their rights and also in case of exigencies. The problem of long work hours and monotonous work is compounded by low wages. Women workers who form the major chunk of labour in informal economy suffer more because of their gender roles and expectations.

Historical evidence points to the fact that material progress in any society tend to improve socioeconomic conditions of women. But, improvement in socio-economic status doesn't automatically does not translate into equality and gender justice. The ability of women's movement to fight for gender rights and empowerment has been conditioned by broader economic processes that have determined the explicit participation of women in the labour market. The dominance of finance capital, the emergence of new trade links, the expansion of global production chains and production processes across different locations have all dramatically changed markets across the world. (Custer, 2014)

Unfair work demands and low paying, dead end jobs, moved a large number of working women towards collective action, challenging system of expectations and the pattern of inequality it perpetuated. These struggles produce an unprecedented assault not just on unyielding patterns of occupational sex and race segregation and the economic inequality stemming from them but also on the gender system that sustained men's power and women's disadvantages. These associations led men and women to have some sharply different experiences of what it meant to be 'working class'. (Mclean, 2011)

The relations of humans to each other in the production and distribution of goods to meet their material needs varied in different historical periods. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2011, p. 178) writes that ' the end of 20th century may be characterised by the exacerbations of the sexual politics of global capitalist domination and exploitation, but, it is also suggestive of dawning of a renewed politics of hope and solidarity.

8.4 THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In its analysis of social inequalities and exploitation, Marxism highlights the social relations of work in different economic modes of production. Within capitalism, Marxists argue that the logic of profit derives the bourgeois class into changing productive forces of land, labour and capital by expanding markets, thus, turning land into a commodity. This forced the working class to switch from feudal and independent agrarian production into wage labour.

Friedrich Engels in his writings during as era of mass factory-based production, argued that women's entry into the public sphere of the market place would free them from the patriarchal constraints of the domestic economy and promote their collective action with male workers around sharing class interests. The trade union movement that came into existence during the era of standardized assembly line production certainly engaged in collective action on behalf of its working class membership, but is was, and remained, a male-dominated membership.

But, the unions failed to reach out to the vast majority of workers, both male and female, in countries where informal activities were characterized by easy entry, low earnings and the absence of a clear cut employer- employee relationship.(Kabeer, Sudarshan and Milward, 2013, p.2)

Kabeer et al. further write about the reasons why trade union membership was so much lower among women workers than men because labour markets were highly divided along gender lines and women workers disproportionately concentrated in the informal activities that trade unions largely overlooked. (2013, p.8) Also, limited labour market opportunities and the absence of legal protection and social security in most informal jobs made any form of organised protest by women a high-risk activity. The fight for the 'family wage' for male workers as primary breadwinner and the imposition of various 'protective' restrictions on women's capacity to work, all contributed to the near- absence of women in ranks of trade unions.

Since the 1970s, changes in the world economy by way of fragmentation of production processes and the pursuit of flexible labour market strategies have replaced the concentrated and stable workforce of the earlier period with a disaggregated, dispersed, largely informal and increasingly female workforce. The structure of such work inhibits the emergence of collective identity and collective interests.

One of the most powerful barriers to organizing women worker in informal economy is 'fear' that women imbibe from their life experiences. Women have been brought up in fear of their men - at home, their employers and their communities. As a result, they live in constant fear of losing their livelihoods, of starvation, of losing their children to illness and of being thrown out of their houses. They have little legal or social protection to help them confront entrenched asymmetries of power both at home and in the wider economy. (Kabeer et.al., 2013, p.7)

The challenges of mobilisation and resistance in the informal economic system are further worsen in cultures where women are brought up from childhood to comply with cultural norms about female docility where their lives are controlled by the decisions of other dominating family members, most of the time who are male. Thus, there is little in their upbringing to give them the courage to stand up to powerful actors in the public domain.

International Labour Organization has noted (ILO, 2004, p. 45), 'the needs and problems of such a diverse work force are as varied as the barriers and constraints they face in organizing'. Yet, various kinds of mobilisational movements have emerged in recent decades to address these challenges and to raise status of women in terms of socio-cultural, political and economic rights. Yet, their position has not improved to be on par with that of men.

Box No. 1

At the international level, the United Nations has contributed a major share to bringing to universal notice the status and the condition of women and incorporated women's issues in all development agendas. Eleanor Roosevelt raised the issue of women's rights in the United National General Assembly in the year 1948. The women's rights movement started as a movement for women's suffrage during the 19th century. The Inter-American Commission on the status of women, established in 1920 was one of the groups that were

instrumental in getting equal rights provision into the charter of the newly established United Nations. The International Council of Women and International Alliance of Women were among the Non- Governmental Organizations which had consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and therefore membership in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which was established to satisfy the mandate of the UN charter in 1947. In 1946, the United Nations set up the Commission on the Status of Women. It was to have two basic functions: to 'prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields'; and to make recommendations on 'urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights' (United Nations 1996:13). The concern of the Commission remained essentially the same until 1987 when it was expanded to include advocacy for equality, development and peace and monitoring of the implementation of measures for the advancement of women at regional, sectoral, national and global levels (United Nations 1996). Three international movements, namely, the Women's Rights Movement, the Human Rights Movement, and the Movement Against Colonialism and the women who were part of the struggle paved the way for the starting of the women's movement. Along with them, women who had been part of the independence movement joined men in building their nations in the so-called third world countries.

Before reading ahead take up the following exercise to assess your understanding of the last couple of sections.

Check Your Progress:

1) *Why do men and women face mobilisational challenges differently?*

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2) *What is UN's contribution towards realization of women's economic rights?*

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In the following sections you will read about instances where women workers organised themselves to bring about change in their work scenario.

8.5 MOBILISATION AND RESISTANCE: HISTORICAL SCENARIO

Read the following case studies (source: http://womhist.alexanderstreet. com/absV8N1.htm) to understand the kind of mobilisation and resistance put up by women of 19th and early 20th century in the West.

Gender and Family Divisions among Shoeworkers Shape the 1860 New England Strike

Mary H. Blewett writes that the adaptation in 1852 of the sewing machine to stitch light leather and its use in early steam-powered factories that resulted in the deterioration of the pre-industrial work of women shoe binders who sewed by hand at home in rural New England and in shoe centers such as Lynn, Massachusetts. Outworkers quickly identified and opposed the threats (of mechanization and centralization) to their ability to earn wages and contribute to the family wage economy. For other women, the emergence of mechanized stitching in small factories offered a chance of full-time work outside the home at relatively high wages. Like the women operatives in early New England textile factories, shoe stitchers, drawn to factories in Essex County, Massachusetts, demanded factory reform. Both groups participated in the New England shoe strike in 1860, the most powerful demonstration of labour unrest prior to the Civil War.

The incident demonstrates the potential during the process of mid- nineteenth-century industrialization of a gender and class coalition among women labouring at home and in shoe factories.

International Ladies Garment Workers Union and Chinese Garment Workers Unite to Organize the 1938 National Dollar Stores Strike

Although the labour movement in California had demonized Chinese immigrant labourers, countervailing pressures gave trade union leaders reasons for seeking to organize Chinese workers. The very existence of a low-wage Chinese sector in San Francisco manufacturing was a cause for concern among labour leaders in the city and that concern grew in periods of high unemployment such as the Great Depression. There came a time when the concerns of a national union, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), and the aspirations of Chinese women garment workers came together and resulted, first, in a significant organizing campaign, and, second, in a successful strike against the largest garment manufacturer in San Francisco's Chinatown. The National Dollar Stores strike marked an important transition in the labour history of Chinese and Chinese-American women in the United States, demonstrating that Chinese women garment workers could organize to improve wages and working conditions and establishing a link between Chinese women garment workers and the nation's leading union in the women's garment industry.

Review of literature from the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), to the present, it is found that social movements and individual feminists migrated across land and sea, generating a powerful new context for the advancement of women's rights.

In the following sections you will read about instances of women's mobilisation and resistance in different parts of the world with specific case studies from India.

Take up following activity to assess your understanding of mobilisation and organisation by women workers

Activity

Google search and read Sujata Gothoskar's paper "Domestic workers Organising" in *International Domestic Workers Network*, E-newsletter No. 9 and 10.

Critique the paper in light of theoretical assumptions discussed in the Unit.

Let us now read about women's expereinces with regards to organising, mobilising and putting up resistance to change their work situation.

8.6 WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES: MOBILISATION AND RESISTANCE

If feminism is taken to be the recognition that women as a sex suffer inequalities and a commitment to elimination of these sex-based hierarchies, then the struggles of union women for pay equity and for mechanisms to lesson the double burden of work and home should be as central to 20th century feminism as the battle for gaining Equal Rights Amendment.(Maclean, 2011, p.181)

The following case studies will show how women collectives could change not only change the situation for themselves by organizing themselves but also paved way for better workers' rights for later generations of workers in their occupations.

SEWA — A Case Study of Women in Rural India

(Source: Everett and Chalton, 2014)

Micro-finance programs, which offer credit and savings services to the poor, originated in the 1970s when the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the Working Women's Forum in Indian, and the Grameen Bank and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in Bangladesh began to offer small loans mainly to women in the informal economy.

Sewa organizes on the basis of the objective interests of the poor women workers. The emphasis on the extension of cooperative (democratized) principles to poor women the effort is to focus on political and legal literacy, education for critical and collective consciousness and developing strategies for collective struggle, makes SEWA a deeply feminist democratic and transformative movement. (Mohanty, 2011, p.176)

SEWA members come from more than eighty occupational groups from three main categories of work: 61 percent are casual day labourers in agriculture or construction, 28 percent are own-account workers (street vendors, rural producers, waste pickers), and 10 percent are industrial outworkers (for garments, hand-rolled cigarettes known as bidis, etc.). SEWA member are poor, although they are not the most destitute. SEWA has made a difference in the lives of its members by enabling them to accumulate assets, protect themselves against risks, and acquire strength through collective power.

A 2007-2008 study found that SEWA member were more likely those comparable nonmembers to have a savings account and health insurance, they had grater access to credit at lower interest rates, and they exhibited more confidence.

SEWA combines advocacy efforts at local, state, national, and international levels with developments services for its members. It has pushed for a minimum wage for the various groups of casual wageworkers, successfully partitioned the Indian Supreme Court to prevent police and local government harassment to street vendors negotiated with government officials to improve the situation of industrial outworkers and successfully lobbied that state government for a pension plan for construction workers. At the international level, SEWA was a central player in successful lobbying of the ILO to get the International Convention on home-based work in 1996. Today, SEWA offers a wide array of business services. Beginning with micro-finance, SEWA formed its own bank in 1975 and promoted savings. It has developed an integrated package of insurance products for its members covering illness, maternity, property loss, and death. It has organised cooperatives and developed a design and marketing program for rural embroiderers. SEWA also offers social services such as child care and adult literacy classes.

A major focus of SEWA activities is organising and capacity building of its members. The organisation recruits members into local primary groups (based on occupation and locality), which meet regularly to identify needs and strategies to address them. From these groups, grassroots leaders emerge; they receive training and become para-professionals in the organisation and/or are elected as representatives to SEWA's governing bodies. SEWA has approximately one elected representative for every two hundred members and considerable diversity in the organisation's leadership. For example, in 2006 the president of SEWA was an agricultural labourer, and the general secretary was also a SEWA member, a college-educated daughter of a tobacco worker.

SEWA is a trade union of women workers, so women's leadership has always been central. A trade union of poor workers in the informal economy looks very different from trade unions in factories or agribusiness. Men and women working in the informal economy have set up a variety of local organisation-cooperatives, and issue- based associations. SEWA incorporates several of these organisational forms to address the needs of its members.

SEWA looks at itself as a social movement and a development organisation, struggling to advance the interests of poor working women and providing services to promote the economic development of its members. In this way, SEWA combines labour movement and women's movement goals. Ela Bhatt has said that without the inclusion of self-employed women, the labour movement "is no movement worth its name"; and work "is strategically the most effective way of organizing large members of women according to issues which are relevant of them."

Box No. 2

Grass root Mobilizations: there's more to the Indian Women's Movement than meets the eye

To all those who feel the women's movement in India is on the wane, perhaps a more accurate assessment is that it is more dispersed, has deeper roots, and has shifted from being urban and middle class to more hinterland and, often, even more rural.

If the 1980s-1990s were a time of consciousness raising, the 2000s may well be about actively working towards change, not just in laws but on the ground, in society.

The movement is older now, more mature, and the environment has changed. We're in a globalised, connected India today, and forms of protest and mobilising, of negotiation and intervention, have had to take this into account.

In a country as complex and vast as ours there can be no single women's movement. There are many movements, in many parts of the country, and women will take up those issues that are critical to their region and context. Women in the North-East have intervened directly in political negotiations because of the nature of struggles there, the presence of the armed forces, and protracted militancy. This cannot be compared to, say, the work that Nirantar (Delhi) does with rural women in sundry districts of UP, helping them publish their own newspaper, Khabar Lahariya, or what Pennurimayi Iyakkam, working with the urban poor in Madurai, does on shelter and housing, But they are all, in the final analysis, aimed at empowering women, whichever route they take.

Source: *http://feministsindia.com/tag/ritu-menon*

In the following pages we are discussing two case studies on domestic workers, one in Brazil and the other one in Bangalore. You will read how leadership and resistance emerged from the oppressed lot of domestic workers in the first case and in the 2nd case mobilisation and organisation was carried out by non state agencies.

Case Studies on Domestic Workers

Organising domestic workers has been tried in many ways by many groups in different contexts, and even in relatively similar ones, there have been movements, unions, small associations and committees. One of the reasons for the variety in ways of organising is that there is so much heterogeneity within the sector. It is a sector where employer-employee relationships are very dynamic, flexible and arbitrary. Domestic workers are often hard to reach, spending most of their time in the 'private' sphere of the home; and in some contexts, the non-monetary aspects of agreements between employers and workers may have particular significance. These are some of the many challenges to organizing. Let us read a couple of case studies to discuss how domestic workers were organised and mobilised with truthful results.

Both the case studies have been sourced from "Organising Women Workers in the Informal Economy: Beyond the weapons of the Weak". (See Reference in Section 4.9).

Case Study I

International Resistance and Mobilisation by Domestic Workers in Brazil

Shaped by the legacy of slavery, and associated with distinctive forms of gender, race and class exploitation, the domestic workers' struggle for rights and recognition has been complex and difficult.

Brazil's domestic workers constitute 17 per cent of the country's women workers; 93 per cent of these are women and the majority are black. They are the largest professional

category in the country at 7.23 million workers, and are amongst the most poorly paid, marginalized and exploited.

Most work for monthly pay, many working more than 44 hours a week. A growing number, a fifth of all domestic workers in some municipal areas are 'daily' cleaners, who experience precarious employment security and have no access to labour rights such as sickness or maternity pay.

The quest for domestic workers' rights in Brazil began in the 1920s. Black women organised themselves in the Brazilian Black Front, arguing for the recognition and status of paid domestic work, with rights and duties as in any other work. This movement resulted in the creation in 1936 of the first Domestic Workers' Association in Campinas.

For the domestic workers' movement activists, these associants created opportunities for engagement with the women's movement and the black movement, which in turn influenced and provided support for their struggle for rights. The result was what came to be called the 'Citizens' Constitution': one of the longest and at that time (in 1988) the most progressive in the world. In the Constitution were inscribed rights that domestic workers have been fighting for.

In recent years, the government has worked with FENATRAD to implement the Domestic Workers' Citizenship Programme. Proposed by domestic workers and aimed at professionalizing domestic work and raising awareness of domestic workers' rights, the programme has been transformed into a policy.

***Organising the Change*:** Domestic workers' activism in Brazil, a trajectory can be traced when the first actions developed by domestic workers' leadership, were centralized into a workers' mobilisation around labour rights and social welfare. Domestic workers started gathering in neighbourhoods, schools and churches. These meetings were strategies to build the organisations in each town and in different states. These groups were extended and the struggles consolidated.

The creation of unions by the domestic workers' rights movement enabled the movement to gain a space, although, one of continued marginality within the central workers' union.

Two specific aspects are, worth noting here.

- The first is the power of situating the struggle of a particular group within a broader struggle for rights and freedoms. The domestic workers' struggle became representative of the struggle of black, working-class women, and drew solidarity and alliance from other movements seeking to address inequality and discrimination in Brazil.
- The second is the opportunities that cross-movement solidarity and connection can bring. Through alliances forged in political spaces that brought other social movements together, these domestic workers became acquainted with middle-class feminists who knew about proposal writing, sources of funding, avenues for support, and with the black movement activists who were such a source of political sustenance.

It is to be noted here that external organisations played a role in this, but domestic workers themselves led the struggle. Operating from a position of extreme marginalization, domestic workers recognized that they needed to engage people in

positions of power in their struggle, and sought to make themselves visible to them. The challenges they faced within a union movement dominated by men, and by categories of workers who themselves employ domestic workers and who would themselves be affected if domestic workers won greater rights, should also be understand.

Case Study 2

Mobilisation of Domestic Workers in Bangalore

Domestic work is one of the most unorganised and invisible categories of work. Paid domestic labour, because of the personal, intimate and continuous nature of the work, involves a unique relationship between workers, employers and the workplace. In India domestic workers form an invisible backbone of the economy, and their numbers in India have increased sharply in the last two decades. This increase is linked to the shift from agriculture to an economy based on services and manufacturing, with greater in-migration into urban areas bringing a supply of domestic workers.They are commonly referred to as 'servants', a term that has associations with bondage and serfdom, rather than as 'workers'.

Inspired by women's movement of the 1970s, Stree Jagruti Samiti initiated and built the Karnataka Domestic Workers' Union (KDWU). Since then, the Organisation has been mobilizing women in slums in Bangalore, raising their awareness of their rights, and organizing them around various issues including domestic violence. KDWU was set up in 2004 in order to concentrate efforts with the group of women. The goals of the union was to achieve basic rights for domestic workers; to change the wide-spread perception of domestic workers from being 'servants' to being 'workers'; and to ensure that employers and governments recognize them as workers with entitlements to social security.

Although men were also providing domestic services but their were far more women working within homes. Moreover there is a gendered pattern to domestic work, with men working as cooks/gardeners/security guards, and rarely in the tasks of cleaning floors, washing clothes and child care. It was found that women initially were enthusiastic about joining a union, and were proud of their identify cards, but it was difficult to sustain their participation or get them to engage actively with issues around wages and conditions of work. The workers needed to 'unlearn' many things and this took time. For example, they were used to a relationship between employers and domestic workers that was very flexible. This was an advantage on both sides as it allowed women workers to deal with unexpected demands on their time in their own homes; or it allowed them to ask for a loan or an advance on pay when needed.

There were several different categories of domestic workers namely, full- time or residential workers living with their employers or in the premises of their employers, full day time workers going home at night, part time workers working at many houses. So, mobilizing them was very difficult.

The organisation regularly learnt of harassment and grievances from domestic workers, but there was no law or redressed mechanism to protect domestic workers prompting the idea of an umbrella committee to address the question of domestic worker's rights. Several NGOs came together to form the KDWU.The main focus of the KDWU was on building up collectives. For the voices to be heard, increasing membership strength

was essential. For recruitment to KDWU, women themselves were expected to spread the word.

Upon joining, an identity card was issued to each person with photo and address and a database was maintained on the workers, their workplace and other details. The card was valued for its symbolism of becoming a member of trade union and for its practical uses like female domestic workers have been able to confront the place, the employer and local political heavyweights such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) owners with great confidence, because they were able to show a card and have an identity, and could call on the KDWU office bearers if needed.

The idea of 'unionization' worked very well at one level, because it started to gain some recognition for these women as workers, but, it was found that this was not enough to sustain their membership. Increasingly there was a feeling that unionisation and struggling for rights could not be the only activity of any union. Distributing economic benefits to members was not possible, but some services were needed in the form of skills training, stability, regulation of work and contractual placement. This led to starting a placement cell by KDWU operated by the members themselves. Setting up a placement cell was a strategy, a way to get women used to the idea of bargaining, developing new processes and norms and conditions for domestic workers.

The KDWU often had to deal with overt forms of harassment faced by workers. Thefts were the most common issue brought to the union's notice. The KDWU's presence made a difference in the negotiations that workers engage in. If wages were pending, members would go and negotiate the salary, or sometimes went to the police station.

When there were cases of sexual harassment, the matter was taken to the police station if the women wanted to take it forward. Women were in touch with organisations offering counseling and support. Action have also been used with some success to change common practices by employers. Domestic workers then started getting a bonus at the time of the Diwali festival.

While the husbands of domestic workers could see the benefit of being in a union when they saw their wives earning higher salaries, but they were less supportive when the women took on larger issues such as the PDS struggle, where there could be conflict with the authorities and there was a risk of being penalized.

The biggest macro challenge remained the question of legal and policy recognition of domestic work at both state and national levels. It became apparent to KDWU that a much bigger force was required to have influence at the level of the government, a larger geographical spread was needed and much greater numbers was required to be an effective voice. Therefore, it was decided to focus energies on affirmative community action.

8.7 MOBILISATION IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

The strategy of mobilisation and putting up collective resistance has continued in post globlisation period too. But, we see a change in face of the strategy as women are more open to directly confront the state agencies who perpetuate oppression, like in POSCO and Vedanta cases, by eroding sustainable livelihood options for women in the name of developmental activities, as you will read in the following section.

Anti Posco Resistance by Tribal women of Odisha

Women, both young and old, but all frail, stood up to the police blows and got injured in the lathicharge. These women from villages in Odisha threatened to strip en mass if police action was not withdrawn. These women belonged to Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti (PPSS) which has spearheaded the anti-Posco agitation for the past more than eight years. The stir was against the State government's drive for land acquisition which involved clearing betel plantations in the villages. The villagers mostly were armed with chilli powder, broken bangles and prevented state government from using force.

Thousands of villagers, mostly women and children of the Govindpur village in Orissa are protesting against government backed land acquisition by steel giant POSCO. While the government has decided to temporarily halt the acquisition, villagers vow to fight for their land till the end. (Source: http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/india-women-children-lead-posco-protests#Mg)

A Stir Against Vedanta by Women of Chhattisgarh

Hundreds of protesters, including primitive Dongria Kondh tribals, staged demonstration protesting setting up of alumina refinery. The Vedanta Group wanted to set up a refinery unit in Lanjigarh in Kalahandi District and extract bauxite ore from Niyamgiri hill, which has rich bio-diversity.

Niyamgiri is source of 36 perennial streams and two rivers. These water resources have enriched agriculture in Kalahandi as well as in other western Orissa districts. The proposed mining operation would have destroy livelihood of lakhs of people. Agitation was launched by Green Kalahandi, a forum to oppose the project. Many environmentalists and scientific communities had expressed concern over the ill effects of the proposed mining on Niyamgiri Hill. (http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-otherstates/primitive-tribals-join-stir-against-vedanta/article1870553.ece)

"We have lived here for so long. How can the government sell our donger (forest) now," Lashkiya Sikata, a middle-aged woman, said in the meeting held under heavy security cover of state police and central paramilitary forces. Another villager, Rikota Bhali said, the forest was the abode of their lord, Niyam Raja and that their culture would vanish if the forest was taken away from them. Kutruka Kunjhi declared, "No one has the rights to our forest neither the government nor the company. We will shoot down with our arrows those who force us to give up our forest." (http://businesstoday.intoday.in/story/orissa-niyamgiri-rejects-vedanta-entry-impact- reasons/1/197972.html)

8.8 LET US SUM UP

After reading this Unit you will understand that although women's ability to mobilise and organise has been conditioned by economic processes and also by their explicit participation in labour market. Scholars and thinkers have discussed social relations of work in different economic modes of production with two reasons prominently emerging as a dampher in case of women workers cultural barriers and concentration of women workers in informal economy. But, there have been movements like SEWA that have changed the situation from grassroots to policy level.

8.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

Discuss how women workers become instrumental in changing their work rights. Cite examples from the Unit in support of your answer.

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