



DIGNITY OF INDIAN LABOUR WITH STRUGGLE AND A STORY TO BE A BRIEF ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Dignity of labor is one of the contemporary issues that have been debated extensively by the scholars. Though the term labor accords a deep sense of dignity to the working persons, nevertheless, the wisdom of moral and ethical commitment of the private ownership market economy is released by its virtue to value human beings as one of the resources. This paper examines and recounts the experiences of Indian labour (from both unorganized and organized sectors who have been ruthlessly compelled to take up the forms of forced, bonded, migrant and contract labor) vis-à-vis the universal application of the expression 'dignity' and the decade old deliberations of the State through its legislative, judiciary and constitutional safeguards.

Keywords: Dignity of labor, working persons, Indian labour, legislative, judiciary and constitutional Safeguards.

INTRODUCTION

The word 'dignity', which is etymologically derived from the Latin word Dignus or Dignitas, Means 'a certain respect or worthy of esteem and honour'¹. The expression 'human dignity' is used by heterogeneous groups coming from all spheres of life and has been applied in wide and Diversified contexts². It has different levels of meaning based on the perspective of its application and the context in which it is used³. It was not negotiated and intrinsically valued in some relative turmoil of human conflict, but also uprooted at several junctions of human civilization⁴. What may call the struggle for dignity has many features in common with the struggle for freedom⁵. The removal of a positive reinforcer is aversive and when people are deprived of credit, admiration or the chance to be commended or admired, they respond in appropriate ways⁶. The expression of human dignity encapsulated in a few words like "assigning equal worth to all, without any distinction of gender, caste, creed, color, language, race, ethnicity, or any other situation variables" faces the eventuality of rough interpretation and a continuous equivocation of the term 'dignity'⁷. The prevarication that has crept into the meaning of the expression 'dignity' seriously questions the relevance of the context in which a particular set of meanings is assigned to the expression⁸.

Application of the 'Dignity'

'Dignity' is as a relative quality, either granted at birth or earned in adulthood, depending on the society in question⁹. The universal application of the concept of dignity includes several philosophical and ethical viewpoints that have nonetheless confounded the civilized society in assigning a universal meaning to the expression 'the dignity of the human being'¹⁰. Theological forums continued to contest the idea of linking a person's sacredness with his or her basic dignity while recognizing and making others also realize that religion does not

empower or enlighten one with a knowledge of 'dignity' or accentuate the intrinsic human dignity¹¹. Although this over-emphasis on natural law was firstly understood as a thought for the existence of a system of moral beliefs open to the cause of the human being, believed to be free from divine revelation, the focus later shifted towards defying the existence of God while holding up the natural law¹². Likewise, the Aristotelian self-perfectionist approach views dignity as a matter of how a rational man does something as a fulfilment of his human capabilities which he can achieve by positively undertaking large, diverse, virtuous work and practices during his real existence, which afford him a feeling of moral accomplishment¹³.

The economists' view of dignity itself can be debated among that of different schools like the neo-classical, contemporary and welfare economic theories, whose philosophical standing can be distinguished from that of other groups if a meaning is assigned to the expression 'dignity'¹⁴. In the context of economic rights, the term 'human dignity' refers to a claim for income, food, clothing, shelter, employment and even a guaranteed livelihood with social security that an individual deserves just by virtue of being a human being¹⁵. In a society that vows to work for a residual system of welfare by offering services only when one of its institutions starts malfunctioning, the wisdom of entitlement principally legitimizes the ownership of such services¹⁶.

The argument is that adequate resources should be made available to satisfy the basic needs of individuals and families. Here the concept of human dignity is linked to the material needs of a human being and to the concept of distributive justice that would require satisfaction of the essential needs of everyone¹⁷. A large part of the literature of dignity is concerned with justice, with the appropriateness of rewards and punishment¹⁸. The welfare system of economy that forms the basis of egalitarian social norms is also more concerned about justice and equality than caring about individual dignity¹⁹. Furthermore, as the problem with respect to determining the standards to be used for measuring the basic needs for human dignity seems insoluble, and as there is no possible categorical minimum measurement standard that is applicable at different places and points in time, the welfare state wanted to formulate new rights to apply to new situations citing 'dignity' as the source of human rights²⁰. This claim of positive rights is meant to impose on some people the positive obligation to provide goods for others that is a positive right of one person to food, employment and shelter impose a positive duty on others to take positive actions to sustain the welfare of those who are in need²¹.

People have positive rights only at the expense of someone else's natural rights. When economic rights as positive rights are brought into the framework of human rights, the result is a reduction of rights to "moral" claims²². People who consider the state as the granter of these rights become wards of the state whenever they require assistance, and in doing so, they sell into dependency and lose their dignity²³. Moreover, there is a contest as to whether human dignity takes precedence over human rights²⁴. The opinion in favor of this argument suggests that the universal possession of human dignity is a qualitative aspect to justify the universal entitlement to human rights or human rights refer to a specific social custom whose objective is to bring the human dignity to fruition while others, particularly the modern secular

scholars, argue against the nature of human dignity by describing human dignity as the intrinsic worth of a person for his/her own sake²⁵.

Human rights give a description of a specific social custom with the intention to achieve the lofty ideals of egalitarianism. Such idealism is conceptualized from the notion of an accepted political belief that is based on theoretical reasoning rather than actual observation²⁶. The argument against this backdrop is that equity cannot be conceptualized in an abstract form keeping in view the unique characteristics of the actual existence of real human beings²⁷. Therefore, it is the personal relations based on mutual self-interest, and not on the abstraction of any political idealism, which should be the foundation for protecting human dignity²⁸.

Labor Dignity

The concept of 'dignity of labor' is one of the contemporary issues that have been hotly debated by people coming from different sections of the society²⁹. The term labor accords a deep sense of dignity to the working persons³⁰. Nevertheless, the wisdom of moral and ethical commitment of private ownership in a market economy is realized by its virtue of valuing the human being as one of the resources and hence, valued sensibly and developed³¹. This is in conjunction with the popular opinion of treating the human being as a unique individual competent and competitive, which weighs the efficiency rather than the equity³². Equity or equality in the workplace is a corollary to the dignity of labor as contended in most of the economic theories. On the contrary, neo-classical economists had come a much more clear-cut observation on choosing either equity or efficiency, thereby negating the likelihood of reconciling equity at the workplace and efficiency of human beings at work³³.

In economic theories, the term equality signifies a social standing wherein people demand without treating such claims either as a request to superiors, or as a command to inferiors³⁴. In his illustrious observation on the human tendency "to truck, barter, and exchange", Adam Smith stressed on the point that in a so-called capitalist contract, the individual acquires a good or service by appealing to the others' interest, and not their honor, consistent with the dignity of both the parties³⁵. Therefore, when people's relations with others are based on mutual self-interest, one can shun the steep price in personal dignity that comes from the person's dependence on others' goods or services. So, from the point of view of ethical commitment of capitalism that may not be most apparent or accepted, it is considered that a common man can put food on his table with no obligation to the aristocrats of society, and in doing so can revolutionize the social standing that signifies a greater egalitarian society³⁶. The logical fallout of the shift from the aristocratic to capitalistic ethic in the highly developed democratic system is a perceived cultural transformation³⁷.

This alleged transformation has rejuvenated the ethos of dignity in the profit-making relationship wherein dignity is measured in terms of value and non-positional good as compared to the aristocratic system, which measures it in terms of honor and positional good in an economically stagnant social system³⁸. But this alleged transformation that put down the feudalistic interpretation of dignity, has in addition also engendered the larger issue of entitlement where by again a certain section of the sentient and educated work force could make use of the market, restricting laws on the grounds of natural rights to protect their dignity, thereby creating a subset within the set of entitled human beings³⁹.

Ownership relations constitute a kind of entitlement relations⁴⁰. In the private ownership market economy, especially a person's ownership of a square meal comes to him with dignity only if it is accepted in several links in the chain of entitlement relations that 'legitimie' one set of ownership by reference to another, or to some basic entitlement in the form of enjoying the fruits of labor¹⁹. But, when any of the links in the chain of entitlement relation fails to get legitimized, the absolute acceptance is in danger, causing indignity¹⁹.

The concept of dignity is found to have been entrenched in many social documents across civilizations, boundaries, and politico-cultural upheavals that have reinforced the concept. These documents include the Charter of the French Revolution that resulted from one of the bloodiest revolutions in human history, or as also the highly acclaimed documents of international polity and law such as the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights that has been consecrated for peace post-World War II, or the constitution of the ILO and the Declaration of Philadelphia that have as their objectives social justice, equality of treatment between men and women workers, ensuring a living wage and the social security of workers²⁰.

In one form or the other, one can observe a growing manifestation of torment that has given birth to these laudable aims. However, it is arguable whether these rights that claim to protect the entitlement to dignity apparently remain as the basis for the continued existence of the workforce or whether they lay down a deeming fiction of hedonism. In particular, with the anticipated changes in working conditions induced by globalization and liberalization of the economy, the existence of a group of people who are almost undetectable behind the rhetoric of global citizenship undermines any approach towards the right to dignity at work²³.

The Indian Strategies

"Laborer, a middle-aged daily wage laborer who migrated from Eastern Bihar, is waiting to get work for the day. He is waiting for his 12-year-old son, Mukesh to come and join him and to begin one more day of business with the bargain hunters, who are getting hold of laborers at their cheapest rates. The labor of Jeevanlal and many other migrant daily wage laborers is on sale for one more day in the history of mankind when their villages have no work for them. Their agricultural income has been scuffled by the untimely monsoon, or drought, or a sudden fall in the price of agricultural commodities, or an unexpected rise in the price of seeds, followed by farmers' suicide in their neighborhoods". Such myriad examples of hundreds and thousands of Jeevanlals haunt the epitome of social justice and protective labor laws in India. These so-called stringent laws, are vouched for by the country's democratic forums while the eagerly awaiting global contestants have no words to delimit their its drawbacks. The new economic dynamic social system could bring with it the fortune of growth that is invisible to Jeevanlal and his fellowmen. In fact, the stumbling block in the way of curtailing the government subsidy on crops and agricultural commodities could at least prevent the rampant migration of millions of Jeevanlals from across regional boundaries and form a new congregation of the poor who are not accustomed to the misery defined under any poor law for the poor. Along side the vulnerability of migrant laborers, the tale of rural Uttar Pradesh narrates the life of Harya, a 19-year old Dalit bonded laborer who works on the farming land and cattles head of the upper caste village aristocrat. The unkind nature of his



labor, regardless of his age-old in debted family, underneath the catastrophe of the caste system in rural India, is waiting for infiltration by a media and TV channels ' because of their routine quest for breaking news. The dominant caste system does not permit Hari to leave his caste-based occupation, dis owning it caused him to make an in appropriate departure from his village and ending up in the neighboring village in the solace of captivity of 17 hours of hard labor.

The two cases of Jeevanlal and Hari may apparently be different, yet both represent the widespread, widely prevalent practice of forced labor in the form of contract labor and the bonded labor system. Such prevailing systems have encroached on the uncertain existence of Jeevan, Hari and millions of others like them.

Bonded labor and slavery-like conditions have existed in India for centuries, particularly in rural areas, where the ruthless poverty compels the under privileged to look for money fortheir basic subsistence and to follow certain social customs. Furthermore, inequity created bythe socially forced segregation of society into the caste hierarchy is an over arching facet of the social and economic relations in rural India. Such caste discrimination leads to the categorization of converts into a vast majority of bonded agricultural laborers belonging to the 'ScheduledCastes' (SCs) and 'Scheduled Tribes' (STs), and others who are placed at the bottom of thesocial order. Most of them have no formal employment status and are virtually left with noactual rights to organize or demand a livelihood, since making any such unusual attempts under the political leadership of peasant organizations would cause their dismissal, or if persisted with,could be fatal, as in the case of the 1997 Laxmanpur Bathe village massacre – Jehanabad in Bihar, when Dalit agricultural laborers of the village organized themselves to take over and till fallow land, government land and the surplus land of private landowners. Consequently, higher caste landlords in Bihar have organized private militias in the name of countering the Naxalite threat to retaliate against such lower-caste movement, and on the night of December1, 1997, the Ranvir Senashot dead 16 children, 27 women, and 18 men in the village. Such *Senas* are believed to be responsible for the murders of many hundreds of Dalits in Bihar since1969. One of the most prominent militias, the *Ranvir Sena*, has been responsible for the massacre of more than 400 Dalit villagers in Bihar between 1995 and 1999.

According to Article 23 of the Indian Constitution, all forms of forced labor are prohibited. Still cases of bonded labor like those of Hari are widespread throughout the country, where in order to pay back the loans, such workers pledge they labor and deliver life long service, often for no wages at all. And as the debt amount increases, Hari's efforts to pay off debts willsoon be supported by his family members, who too will be compelled to enter into the similar bonded relationships with their masters, characterized by compulsion, long hours of work without adequate rest and food, and often faced with their masters' aggressive behavior. Likewise,despite the fact that in 1950, the Indian Constitution abolished the practice of "untouchability"by the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1950, the imposition of social disabilities on persons byreason of their birth in certain castes still remains very much a part of both rural and urbanIndia. "When we are working, they ask us not to come near them. At tea canteens, they have separate tea tumblers and they make us clean them ourselves and



make us put the dishes away ourselves. We cannot enter temples. We cannot use upper-caste water taps. We have to go one kilometer away to get water... When we ask for our rights from the government, the municipality officials threaten to fire us. So we don't say anything. This is what happens to people who demand their rights", says a Dalit manual scavenger in Ahmedabad district of Gujarat. Dalits are relegated to the most menial tasks, as manual scavengers, removers of human waste and dead animals, leather workers, street sweepers, and cobblers.

Dalit women face the triple burden of caste, class, and gender. Today, there are more than 20 million laborers in debt bondage in India, despite the frequent attempts by state government officials to deny the existence of bonded laborers in their respective states (notably in states like Rajasthan, Bihar and Gujarat). According to the report of the 60th Session of the UNHRC's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the integrity of the Report of the Government of India to this Committee is particularly undermined when it states, "As per the reports received from State Governments, the total number of bonded laborers identified and freed was 2,56,000 of whom 2,23,000 have been rehabilitated" with the simple implication that there are only 33,000 bonded laborers in India awaiting rehabilitation.

The UNHRC's report affirms that the reality is starkly different. The preliminary report of the Supreme Court on bonded labourers in the state of Maharashtra gives details of an estimated 6,00,000 bonded laborers, who is employed by approximately 130 factories from which they receive an advance through contractors. The contractors provide loans at exorbitant rates of interest, which keep the laborers in a perennial state of debt, forcing them to return to the sugarcane fields year after year, usually to work with the same contractor. The slavery-like conditions of labor have taken on several other forms beyond the ancient caste-based obligation of bonded laborers. These other forms of forced labor manage to survive within the most exploitative work systems ranging from contract labor systems engaging migrant laborers on construction sites, or on farming lands, to the employment of child bonded laborers who serve in small or medium factories, local industries and shops, or as domestic servants.

The construction industry, being the second largest employer in the country, alone utilizes about 32 million informal workers. Besides being subjected to terrible working conditions of work, most of the laborers employed in these construction sites are migrants with no definite place to reside. Among the causes of the deaths and serious injuries of these laborers are falls, being crushed under collapsing structures, getting buried under mud, and electrocution.

With over 250 million child workers, India appears to be sadly isolated in the global forums on Human Rights, as its set of ratifying conventions is hardly accepted or applied in the true spirit. The children who are pledged or are bonded more or less belong to the most beaten under privileged sections of society, people either in both the rural and or in urban communities, who have had hardly any opportunity to participate in political processes and who are mostly condemned to the bottom of the social order. In rural areas particularly, these children who are treated as the 'security' for the loan taken by their parents from a moneylender, are often pledged to their masters in their local industry or shops, who, in turn, are well connected to the money-lender, thereby forcing these children to work in inhuman



conditions, and exposing them to abuse and exploitation. Furthermore, three of the enumerated hazardous industries rely heavily on bonded child laborers, who have either migrated from other states or are from small town slums.

The Ministry of Labor and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) estimate that there are around 55 million working children, including 25 million children employed in the agricultural sector, 20 million in service jobs (such as hotels, shops, and as servants in homes), and 5 million in the handloom, carpet-making, gem-cutting, and matchmaking industries, other than those working directly with their parents. The miserable light of migrant women workers engaged in the export-oriented fish processing industry, symbolize one more category of the workforce working in deplorable conditions and faced with a high risk of physical and moral suffering. Although the fish processing industry falls in the organized sector, its workers fall in the category of informal labor due to their migrant status, though there is no logical reason why this makes it impossible for labor laws to apply to them.

The existence of such practices of forced labor and deplorable working conditions of labor are not just contrary to the fundamental concepts of freedom, dignity and justice, one of the most comprehensive Constitutions laid down by in the world's largest democracy, but in the words of Justice P. N. Bhagwati, it is also totally incompatible with the new egalitarian socioeconomic order which the Indian democracy has promised to build.

The decades-old deliberations on the abolition of such systems endorsed by legislation like the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1976, remain futile and have successfully carved out an exception for the business in a typical unorganized sector, where 20 million people are estimated to be trapped in the form of debt bondage. Some problems are too big to be handled alone, and the dignity of labor among the Indian unorganized and organized workforce is one of them. Needless to say, in a country with over 90 per cent of the workforce engaged in unorganized sectors with no specific legal framework to govern the work and the condition of labor, the difficulty of government machinery involved in subjugating the critics looks apparently too big. The absolute lack of knowledge of the laws by the laborers and general disregard of such laws by the employer or contractor explicitly confirms the intricacy in implementation by the law enforcement machinery of the government.

In the organized and formal sector of employment, the practice of 'dignity of labor' has a different set of meaning. In order to counter the inequity in employment, the government, under the aegis of its reservation policies, has reserved a few jobs, which require a minimum qualification. But one of the casualties of this policy is perhaps the 'dignity of labor', where in only the superiors enjoy 'dignity', by camouflaging it as an honor, signifying political and patriarchal power, thereby making 'dignity' for the privileged the basis of indignity for the poor and less privileged. As a result of such policies, the people belonging to low castes are perpetually caught in menial jobs like those of chaprasi (peons), whose work is confined to chores like getting tea for the babies, carrying mail to other offices, hauling files from one desk to another, and at times even house keeping jobs, which are regarded as degrading and undignified jobs by the rest of the office. Therefore, in such situation, a superior will never take on the job of his subordinates, as it is believed to be below the dignity of his position in the workplace.

The Constitutional Assurance

The Constitutional safeguards in the form of fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 14, 15, 16, 19(1)(g), 21, 23, and 24 of the Indian Constitution constitute the very basis of all judicial interpretations in the history of litigations against any form of forced labor. While Articles 14, 15 and 16 confer the right to equality and equal treatment of individual citizens, thereby largely prohibiting any system of discrimination and forced labor, Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution confers the freedom of an individual citizen to practice any trade, business or occupation, which, at times, becomes a subject of debate on whether the morality and dignity of the trade should be judged before conferring such freedom. In the recent case of a ban on Mumbai's dance bars, The court offered respite to hundreds and thousands of bar dancers by striking down the ban that came into effect on August 15, 2005, keeping in view the fact that such a ban infringes on the fundamental freedom conferred by the Article 19(1)(g).

The judgment of the Bombay High Court quashing the Bombay Police Act, 1995 held that – “The State does not find it offensive to the morals or dignity of women and/or their presence in the places of public entertainment being derogatory, as long as they do not dance. The right to dance has been recognised by the Supreme Court as part of the fundamental right of speech and expression. If that is so, it will be open to a citizen to commercially benefit from the exercise of the fundamental right”.

The purpose here is not to equate the condition of bar dancing with any form of forced labor and to justify the argument put forth by the State Government, but in the quest to find a suitable interpretation of the fundamental rights conferred by the Constitution, the judiciary and legislative sometimes invalidly use the term ‘dignity’ to argue for positive rights, besides over-emphasizing the value of an individual's right to freedom as the one and only way to protect the dignity of the human being.

Article 21 guarantees the right to life and liberty and the right to liberty is often interpreted by the judiciary to include, among other things, the right to free movement and work, the right to be free from inhuman and degrading treatment, the right to the benefits of protective labor legislation, and the right to speedy justice. Thus the employment of any form of forced labor violates all of these constitutionally-mandated rights.

As regards the two Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on Forced Labor – Conventions 29 and 105—India has, through Article 23 of the Constitution, translated them into the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1976, and has also ratified the Forced Labor Convention 29 of 1930 on November 30, 1954, and the Abolition of the Forced Labor Convention 105 of 1957 on May 18, 2000. India has also ratified ILO Convention 111 – Discrimination Convention of 1958 on June 3, 1960 even though caste discrimination still exists in many ways in the workplace. Together, Articles 23 and Article 24 are placed under the heading “Rights against Exploitation,” one of India's most constitutionally proclaimed fundamental rights. Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines and other hazardous occupations. Beside these, Article 39 requires the state to “in particular, direct its policy toward securing that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength”.

EFFECT OF LAWS

The legislative provisions to ensure the dignity of labor come from a wide array of social and labor legislations and many national policies and projects like the National Child Labor Project, which are broad in intent but vague in content. The ILO's Declaration of 1998 affirming the everyone's right to conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and social opportunity, which form the basis of 'decent work' with long standing governmental support in the forms of its ratified conventions, which have been mostly translated into legislations and projects. Some of the important social and labor legislations that were enacted in order to bring about legitimate prohibition and prevention among the forced labor system, and there by purporting ensuring dignity in the workplace, are the Bonded Labour System Act, 1976, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, Children Act, 1933, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act, 1989; Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955; *Beedi* and Cigar Workers Act, 1966, Contract Labour Act, 1970, Inter-state Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, Factories Act, 1948, Plantation Labour Act, 1951, Shops and Establishments Act, 1961, Minimum Wages Act, 1948, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

In conjunction with these legislations are some of the strong-willed and landmark judgments of the Supreme Court like the People's Union for Democratic Rights vs. Union of India; *Neerja Choudhury vs. State of Madhya Pradesh*, 1984; *D. S. Nakara vs. Union of India*, 1983; *Steel Authority of India vs. National Union, Waterfront Workers*, 2001; *BALCO Employees Union vs. Union of India*, 2002; and *Vishakha vs. the State of Rajasthan*, 1997 that has led to the introduction of the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Bill, 2004, which is in keeping with the principle of equality, freedom, dignity, life and liberty as enshrined by the Constitution. These rulings have indisputably set a trend for the future cohort of adjudicators. Pursuant to these landmark judgments, the government attempts to bring amendments or to introduce new legislations that work as support for millions of underprivileged who seek justice. Several of these landmark judgments, which have set a precedence for post-adjudication disputes, provide respite to the downtrodden through the defenses of a reformed judiciary.

The lack of a political will in implementing the programs alongside the deficit in terms of the employment gap, rights gap, and social protection and social dialogue gaps continuously negate all the government's efforts to protect the dignity of labor. The rights gap, an acute problem faced by nearly two out of five countries in the world without almost any freedom of association, is slowly creeping into the workforce in India with the government's determination for reform which is likely to diminish the existing legal safeguards to laborers. The tradition of forbidding the contract workers and laborers in unorganized sectors from joining unions, together with the changing composition of the workforce and decentralization and deregulation, adversely affected the union density. The strength of the bargainable quarter of the labor population is steadily declining across all sectors and states in India. This not only creates a huge rights gap, but also leads to a state of social exclusion with less than eight per cent of the labor population participating in social dialogue, and workers facing the problem of the representational gap having no or little voice.



Conclusion and Future Scope

The concept portraying the failure of state governments, and of the administrative mechanisms set up to abolish forced labor, has left a vacuum which needs to be filled by civil society organizations like NGOs and groups of individuals concerned about the plight of forced labor and their dignity. Many of these agencies contribute effectively through a number of ways like research, awareness generation through campaigns and social advocacy, filing FIRs with the police, helping state governments in rehabilitation work, and social advocacy through the use of public interest litigations (PILs), which carry the weight of the judgments of Writ Courts. The Central and State governments should work more closely with the judiciary in the direction of improving the working conditions of laborers, which would be instrumental in improving itself that is believed to consequentially improve the state of their dignity.

The government's initiative in bringing the employers in the unorganized sector under the caveat of labor laws needs to be followed up by immediately enforcing the Unorganized Sector Workers Social Security Bill, 2005. Some of these commendations made by the international community to the Government of India on improving the general conditions of work and thereby protecting the equity and dignity of the workforce include the recommendations of Antislavery International, Human Rights Watch, UN Human Rights Committee, etc., which should be taken up more seriously. The deep-rooted parochialism of the market-driven society, which is engulfed by the social catastrophe of the age-old caste system, alongside the evolution of individualistic social norms typical of the middle class, can barely keep the people from restraining their desire to be extra visible on the globe and make them step back in time to introspect over the 'dignity', which has been crushed under the burden of compulsion, duty, patronage, charity, mockery and oppression. In a society, which is massively burdened by decades of oppression, either of hunger or famine, or of the modern bureaucracy, the meaning of 'dignity' is often buried some where underneath the burden of the struggle to stay alive. Therefore, in the struggle for dignity, if one believes that dignity is worth having, then it is worth fighting for. "This is not just a fight for workers; it is a fight for all of us who wish a democracy responsive to the people rather than rule by corporate flunkies".

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