

# Senior Citizen's Right to Work and Access to Labour Market

## Indian Perspective

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**Introduction:** Labour is a measure of work done by human beings. Labour economics looks at the suppliers of labour services (workers) & the demanders of labour services (employers) & attempts to understand the resulting pattern of wages, employment & income. Kinds of labour are – (1) Physical & mental labour (2) Skilled and unskilled labour and (3) productive and unproductive labour.

Labour market is also known as job market, refers to the supply & demand for labour in which employees provide the supply & employers the demand. It is a major component of any economy and is intricately tied with markets for capital, goods & services. In India the labour market basically spread across the agricultural sector and the urban formal (organized) and informal (unorganized) sector. About 94% of working persons are part of the unorganized sector. Only about 20% of elderly has monthly income more than 5000/= Rs., 72% are financially dependent, out of all only 12% engages in economic activity. So, huge number of our elderly are not engaged in economic activity. Taken into consideration of disabled elderly, it is assumed that a huge number of elderly can engage themselves in jobs if scope is available. Our constitution has provided right for work without discrimination to sex and prohibition of abuse of health & strength. There has been labour laws in existence. If senior citizens could be engaged in income generating activities by an organized way then it would impact remarkably on the graceful living of Indian elderly.

### Prevailing situation in India :

India has constitutional provisions regarding right to work, nondiscrimination according to sex, equal wage for equal work, prohibition of forceful vocation for elderly. We have labour laws relating to terms & condition of work, working hours, minimum wages, leaves etc. We do not find provision for leaves expressly for elderly in relevant laws. There is no govt. employment exchange office for elderly. It is seen that some private organizations has started advertising for job vacancies for senior citizens (it is not confirmed whether they are doing good or not, because elderly are soft target & role of govt. in this regard

is not specified). Among our senior citizens, more than 60% are illiterate, only about 6% have studied beyond secondary level & 1.2% are graduate and above. Majority of job seeking engages themselves in agricultural sector without proper wages. Jobs in other unorganized areas are – consultancy, part time teaching, tutorship, attendant in shops, cashier, security guards in housing complexes & other establishments, as family care giver etc. In majority of situation elderly has been abused by giving less wage, abnormal working hours, verbal abuses etc. Although there is a tremendous need for job for our senior citizens, organized activity in terms of data collection (what is done in employment exchange offices for youngsters) regarding job seekers, job vacancies, wages etc is not evident till date. No facility for training of senior citizens for making them competent for job. No law has yet been enacted for senior citizens job. We can say organization of labour market for senior citizens in India is at rudimentary stage.

**For redressal** there are forums in ministry of Labour & ministry of social justice & empowerment in India; also there are other forums like – grievance redressal committee, Works committee, conciliation officers, board of conciliation, labour courts, tribunals etc are in existence in India.

### **Proposed action to be undertaken :**

- (1) Since elderly problems are multifaceted & vast and since problem will be in rise keeping pace with rise in number of elderly hence there should be a ministry exclusively for senior citizens in all ageing countries. United Nations have been urged to adopt a resolution regarding separate ministry for senior citizens affairs in all ageing countries.
- (2) Separate ministry for elder's affairs so established will also look after the matter related to access of senior citizens in labour market and matters related to it including training & redressal mechanism.
- (3) A new law for senior citizens need to be enacted that will encompass relation between employees & employers, matters of wages, leaves, contract related to job etc.

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