

SPOTLIGHT

The Construction worker

"I will never tire of repeating this: what the poor need the most is not pity but love. They need to feel respect for their human dignity, which is neither less nor different from the dignity of any other human being." **Mother Teresa**

The topical news is gradually shifting from the current pandemic to the after effects of lockdown - the reverse migration of workers. This issue's focus is on **HUMAN DIGNITY**. Construction workers are not respected, recognized and appreciated for their contribution to city building by all of us.

What drives any profession is dignity and respect in society, a sense of feeling appreciated and being recognized for the work done, secured income (not necessarily high income), being associated with the final outcome of our profession and most importantly, a growth-path in the profession.

If a person is employed as a labourer/helper initially, then he/she can be trained to move ahead along the path as an apprentice mason, junior mason, senior mason, executive mason, master mason and eventually as a mentor mason or a trainer mason. The roles and responsibilities under each cadre can be defined. There could be focused and continual skill-imparting training offered to the construction workers. The workers can be awarded with diplomas and degrees after they reach a certain level. The hotel and hospitality industry have shown this in an exemplary manner, for housekeeping and cooking too. Being a chef is more respected than a 'cook' and one can become a Director of housekeeping! A "hair stylist" is more respectful than "barber", a "chauffer" is more respectful than a "driver". In our own Indian Railways, earlier, a person who used to shovel coal into the furnace of a boiler of a locomotive used to be called respectfully as "fireman" graduating from "watertender" to "stoker" to "leadstoker" to "stoker petty officer" and to "chief stoker"!

There is a need for well-known construction companies to sponsor dedicated TV shows on masonry, carpentry fabricating, plastering, concreting, machine operation works, etc. In this pandemic period we don't hear of our beloved nurses migrating back. They are selflessly working in the midst of extremely uncertain and vulnerable situations. They are indeed respected - they protect our lives. Similarly, we need to start considering construction workers as "nurses" of the construction industry.

The entire industry must come together in making an earnest beginning to provide dignified housing and a dignified career for the people who create our infrastructure.

Hoping for a new era where human dignity is a non-negotiable!

I am a Construction worker

Anonymous

Of the same planet, but living worlds apart

You reap what I toil and sweat

Exhausted, I get back to my shed

Amid filth, with dread

I wonder: What makes me less human than the other?



Co-creating construction labour communities: Towards Dignity & Empowerment!