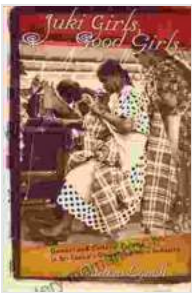


# Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry: A Critical Analysis of Women's Labor and Social Justice

The global garment industry is a complex and dynamic sector that has undergone significant changes in recent decades. One of the most notable shifts has been the increasing participation of women in the workforce, particularly in developing countries like Sri Lanka.



## Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry by Caitrin Lynch

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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Sri Lanka has a long history of textile and garment production, dating back to the colonial era. In the post-independence period, the garment industry has emerged as a major export earner for the country, with a workforce that is predominantly female.

While the garment industry has provided employment opportunities for many Sri Lankan women, it has also raised concerns about labor exploitation, gender inequality, and social justice. This article critically

examines the experiences of women workers in Sri Lanka's global garment industry, highlighting the challenges they face and the need for systemic change.

## **Gender and Labor Exploitation**

Women workers in Sri Lanka's garment industry often face a range of labor exploitation practices, including low wages, long working hours, and unsafe working conditions. Many workers are paid below the minimum wage and are forced to work overtime without compensation.

The garment industry is also characterized by a high level of informality, with many workers employed on a contract or subcontract basis. This informality leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as they are not covered by labor laws and social protection mechanisms.

## **Cultural Politics and Gender Norms**

Gender inequality and cultural norms also play a significant role in shaping the experiences of women workers in Sri Lanka's garment industry. Traditional gender roles and expectations often limit women's access to education, training, and career advancement.

In addition, Sri Lankan society often views women's primary role as being in the home, rather than in the workplace. This can lead to discrimination against women workers and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

## **Social Justice and Feminist Movements**

Recognizing the challenges faced by women workers in Sri Lanka's garment industry, a number of international actors and feminist movements have emerged to advocate for workers' rights and social justice.

These groups have played a critical role in raising awareness about labor exploitation, gender inequality, and the need for systemic change. They have also provided support to workers' unions and organized campaigns for better working conditions and wages.

## **Towards a More Just and Equitable Garment Industry**

Addressing the gender and cultural politics that shape the global garment industry in Sri Lanka requires a multifaceted approach that involves a range of stakeholders, including governments, employers, unions, and civil society organizations.

Firstly, there is a need for stronger legal and policy frameworks that protect workers' rights and promote gender equality. Governments must ensure that labor laws are enforced and that women workers have access to social protection mechanisms.

Secondly, employers must commit to respecting workers' rights and providing decent working conditions. This includes paying fair wages, reducing working hours, and improving safety standards.

Thirdly, unions and civil society organizations must continue to play a critical role in advocating for workers' rights and raising awareness about the challenges they face. They must also work with employers and governments to develop and implement effective solutions.

Finally, there is a need for a broader cultural shift that challenges traditional gender roles and expectations. This requires education, awareness raising, and dialogue that promotes gender equality and social justice.

The global garment industry is a complex and dynamic sector that has a significant impact on the lives of millions of women workers. In Sri Lanka, the industry has provided employment opportunities for many women, but it has also raised concerns about labor exploitation, gender inequality, and social justice.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves a range of stakeholders. By working together, we can create a more just and equitable garment industry that respects the rights of all workers.

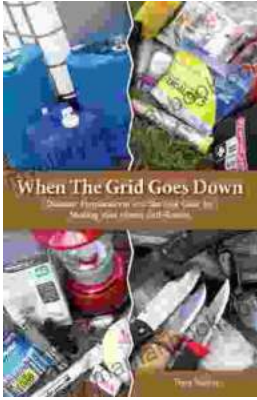


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