



## Hema Committee Report on Malayalam Film Industry

**For Prelims:** Hema Committee Report, [Employment](#), [Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace \(Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal\) Act 2013](#), [Cyberthreats](#), [Privacy](#), [Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita](#), [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences \(POCSO\) Act, 2012](#), [Internal Complaints Committee \(ICC\)](#).

**For Mains:** Prevalence and Impact of Sexual Exploitation at Workplace and their Redressal.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

- Recently, the **Hema committee report** on the **Malayalam film industry** was released. It has revealed alarming instances of [sexual abuse](#), [gender discrimination](#), and **inhuman treatment of women** in the Malayalam film industry.
- It was led by retired Kerala High Court judge **Justice K Hema**, with members including veteran actor **Sharada** and retired IAS officer **K B Valsala Kumari**.

### What are the Key Issues Highlighted in the Report?

- **Sexual Abuse:** It include unwanted **physical advances** even before commencing work, **rape threats**, code names for women who would agree to **compromise** among other shameful acts.
- **Casting Couch:** The report highlights the prevalence of the casting couch, where women are often forced to **exchange sexual favours for job opportunities**.
  - Directors and producers often coerce female actors into making compromises, with those who comply being termed "cooperating artists."
  - Women were forced to work with **abusers**, resulting in significant **emotional trauma**.
  - The casting couch is a euphemism for the practice of **soliciting sexual favours** from a job applicant in exchange for [employment](#) in the entertainment industry, primarily **acting roles**.
- **Safety on Film Set:** Many female film workers frequently bring their **parents or close relatives** to the set due to fears of **sexual demands** and harassment.
- **Criminal Influence:** The report indicates that the Malayalam film industry is plagued by **criminal influence**.
  - Many industry men, sometimes under the influence of liquor or drugs, insistently knock the hotel doors of female artists, causing significant distress.
- **Fear of Consequences:** Although such crimes are covered by the [Indian Penal Code](#) and the [Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace \(Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal\) Act 2013](#), women in the film industry are apprehensive about the consequences of lodging an official complaint.
  - The stigma surrounding **sexual harassment**, particularly for public figures, frequently deters actors from reporting such incidents.
- **Cyberthreats:** [Online harassment](#) poses a significant challenge for women in cinema, with both female and male artists facing **cyberbullying, public threats, and defamation**.
  - Social media platforms become avenues for vulgar comments, images, and videos, where

female artists are especially targeted with explicit and threatening messages.

- **Inadequate Facilities:** Female artists often refrain from drinking water on set due to **inadequate toilet facilities**, especially in outdoor locations.
  - The situation worsens during **menstruation** when female artists struggle significantly with changing or disposing of their sanitary products.
- **Inhumane Working Conditions:** The junior artists lack a **minimum remuneration**. Junior artists are in some cases **"treated worse than slaves"** with work extending up to 19 hours. **Intermediaries misappropriate a good part of their payments**, which are not given on time.

## What is the Legal Framework to Address Sexual Exploitation in the Film Industry?

- **Indian Penal Code, 1860 (now replaced as [Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita](#)):** Sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment) and 509 (word, gesture, or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) deal with sexual offences.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013:** This law mandates the establishment of [Internal Complaints Committees \(ICC\)](#) in workplaces to address complaints of sexual harassment.
- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** [IT Act](#) addresses the publication and transmission of **obscene material** in electronic form, which can include digital content in films.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:** This act specifically **protects children** from sexual exploitation and abuse, including in the context of films.
- **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA):** This act aims to prevent trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.

## Casting Couch

- The term "**casting couch**" refers to a practice in the entertainment industry where individuals, usually **women**, are expected to provide **sexual favours in exchange for job opportunities**, particularly **acting roles**.
- This **unethical and exploitative practice** involves a person in a position of power, such as a **director, producer, or casting agent**, using their authority to coerce or pressure aspiring actors into compromising situations.
- The term highlights the **abuse of power** and the **exploitation** that can occur in the casting process within the film, television, and broader entertainment industries.

## What are Key Recommendations of the Report?

- **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC):** It proposed the mandatory establishment of the [Internal Complaints Committee \(ICC\)](#) under the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013**.
  - It should include members from **Film Employees Federation of Kerala (FEFKA)** and **Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA)**.
- **Independent Tribunal Proposal:** Some members advocated for an **independent tribunal** to handle cases of **harassment** and **discrimination** in the **cinema industry**.
  - The report also advocated **in-camera proceedings** at the tribunal to ensure complete **privacy**, with names being withheld from media reports.
- **Written Contracts:** Signing **written contracts** to protect the interest of all those who work in cinema should be made **mandatory** for all categories of employees including coordinators of junior artists.
- **Gender Awareness Training Program:** It should be made mandatory that all cast and crew attend a basic [gender awareness training program](#) before starting the production work.
  - Training materials could be made in both **Malayalam** and **English** and can be made available online.
- **Women in Producer Role:** There should be adequate and timely budgetary support to

incentivize movies that are predicated on [gender justice](#) both thematically and in the production process.

- A **single-window system** should be established to provide **loans at nominal interest rates** for movies produced by **women** (not by proxies of men) and to **streamline permissions** for shooting. This will simplify production and encourage more women to enter the film industry.

**Drishti Mains Question:**

Q. Discuss the issue of sexual exploitation of women in India with particular reference to the entertainment industry. How can they be redressed given the rising cases of sexual exploitation at the workplace?

**UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Mains**

**Q.** What are the continued challenges for Women in India against time and space? **(2019)**

**Q.** Is the National Commission for Women able to strategize and tackle the problems that women face at both public and private spheres? Give reasons in support of your answer. **(2017)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/hema-committee-report-on-malayalam-film-industry>

