
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ERADICATION OF DISCRIMINATION

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Abstract: In India, Discrimination against Women Can Start In the Womb. Gender based discrimination against women, female children is pervasive across the world. Gender inequality, patriarchy, caste system, dowry system is an acute and persistent problems; It is seen in all the strata of society and manifests in various forms in India. The persistence of hunger and abject poverty in India and other parts of the world is due in large measure to the subjugation, marginalization and disempowerment of women. Women suffer from hunger and poverty in greater numbers and to a great degree than men. At the same time, it is women who bear the primary responsibility for actions needed to end hunger: education, nutrition, health and family income. Looking through the lens of hunger and poverty, there are many major areas of discrimination against women in India: Gender based discrimination, patriarchy, dowry system, Malnutrition, Poor Health, and Lack of education, Overwork, Unskilled, Mistreatment, and Powerlessness. These are all the main barriers to women empowerment, and their socio economic sustainability. Without eradication of discriminations from the globe, the women empowerment is impossible. Gender equality and women's empowerment remains a universal challenge and requires actions by all. So our interventions try to enhance governments' abilities to improve women's education, political participation, economic sustainability, social and financial security, access to assets, markets, services and decent works are gives women the independence, they need to take informed decisions for themselves and their families.

Key words: women empowerment, gender based discrimination, caste based discrimination, caste system, dowry system, Sexual assault, Emotional abuse.

Introduction: The mind of the female child. Some argue that due to this inferior treatment the females fail to understand their rights. This is more predominant in India as well as other lesser developed or developing countries. Sex selection of the before birth and neglect of the female child after birth, in childhood and during the [teenage] years has outnumbered males to females in India and also in countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and South Korea¹. There are 1029 women per 1000 men in North America² and 1076 women per 1000 men in Europe³ but there are only 927 women per 1000 men in India⁴. A declines in the child sex ratio (0-6 years) was observed with India's 2011 census reporting that it stands at 914 females against 1,000 males, dropping from 927 in 2001 - the lowest since India's independence. These numbers tell us quite an unkind story about neglect and mistreatment of the female child in India. Women have a biological advantage over men for longevity and survival; however, in spite of this there are more men than women⁶. The figures above support that gender discrimination of female child is a basic facility area. Though the demographic characteristics do not show much or in some cases, anti-female bias, there is always a woman who receives a small piece of the pie. Today, approximately 125 countries have laws that penalize domestic violence - a great advance from a decade ago. Yet 603 million women around the world still live in countries where domestic violence is not a crime, and up to seven in ten women are targeted for physical or sexual violence, or both⁷.

Gender based discrimination: Gender based discrimination against women, female children is pervasive across the world. In India, discrimination against women is an extremely prevalent issue. This sexism can be viewed as implicit discrimination due to cultural practices. The embedded sexism in the Indian

culture is especially evident in the recent increase in abortions of female fetuses. In Indian society there is an evident preference for boys over girls. This is due to various cultural aspects. First, boys are expected to provide an income for their families and thus are valued for financial purposes (Roy, 2011)⁸.

Domestic violence in India: is endemic and widespread predominantly against women⁹. Around 70% of women in India are victims of domestic violence, according to Renuka Chowdhury junior minister for women and child development¹⁰.

National Crime Records Bureau reveals that a crime against a woman is committed every three minutes, a woman is raped every 29 minutes, a dowry death occurs every 77 minutes, and one case of cruelty committed by either the husband or relative of the victim occurs every nine minutes¹¹. Physical injury is the most visible form of domestic violence. Worldwide, the percentage of women who suffer serious injuries as a result of physical domestic violence tends to range from 19% - 55%¹². Physical injuries as a result of domestic violence against women are more obvious than psychological ones, and can be more easily discerned by health professionals as well as courts of law in the context of legal prosecution. Emotional abuse has been gaining more and more recognition in recent years as an incredibly common form of domestic violence. According to a study by the National Centre for Biotechnology Information, suicide attempts in India are correlated with physical and psychological intimate partner violence¹³. Sexual assault is another common form of domestic violence in India. Sexual violence can include a range of forceful and non-forceful acts. Abuse was most common among men who also had extramarital affairs, and among those who had STD symptoms. Abusive sexual behaviours were also found

to be correlated with an elevated rate of unplanned pregnancies⁴. In 2013, a court in Mumbai ruled that *depriving a woman of sex* is a form of cruelty⁵.

Educational discrimination: India has grown from leap and bounds since its independence where education is concerned, the gap between women and men are severe. While 82.14% of adult men are educated, only 65.46% of adult women are known to be literate in India.

Women's and girls' education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Not only is an illiterate woman at the mercy of her husband or father, she also does not know that this is not the way of life for women across the world.

Caste based discrimination: Caste discrimination is one of the most discouraging factors for women empowerment. Even today also, in most of the backward areas there are two glass and three glass systems are implementing for untouchable castes particularly more for women, in some times in urban areas also the untouchable caste people are unable to get the house for rent. Caste-based discrimination is a violation of international human rights law affecting more than 260 million people worldwide; mainly in South Asia particularly low caste based women are facing more discrimination than forward caste women. Structures of caste and the continuation of caste discrimination lead to poverty, violence, caste-based slavery, and economic, social and political exclusion, poor work conditions, and limited access to basic services such as water, sanitation and employment.

Dowry system: Most important cultural aspect that leads to favouring of boys is the dowry system. The dowry is money, goods, or property that a woman gives to her husband before their marriage as a means to establish their new home. Due to the 1992 economic liberation, dowries have become additionally extravagant and husbands expect more from their future wives⁶. Therefore, for parents, having a girl means that they eventually will need to pay a dowry, which can be a financial burden on their family.

For this reason a boy would be favoured over a girl because they would not bring the responsibility of paying this money. In recent years, the emphasis on a larger, more valuable dowry has led to violent consequences if that dowry is not met. There are many reports of women murders because the husband and his family wanted a bigger dowry ("Shameful Act Still Prevalent in the Indian Society", 2010). Therefore, it is of great concern in India if families are not financially able to produce a large enough dowry for their daughters. In fact, dowry deaths have increased from 5,800 killings in 1998 to 8,172 killings in 2008 (Roy, 2011). Therefore, it is evident that the dowry system works to

reinforce the discrimination against women in Indian society. It also increases gender-based violence.

Discrimination in Cinema: Look at the skewed manner in which women are projected in Indian cinema. The first thing a woman or girl would think of after a rape or sexual assault is to run to the well or the top of a cliff to commit suicide. The male would go to the ice-cream parlour or beer pub to talk of his exploits. This is a retrograde picture which cinema projects and expects the society to live up to this image. The female brings the bad omen to the family, the girl needs to be settled through early marriage, the female entices the otherwise innocent boy and the new bride as the cause of the divided family are the myths which continue to be bombarded through our cinema even today⁷.

Eradication of discriminations: The women are facing not only the above said discriminations; she is facing a lot of discriminations in various ways and forms in the society. The main reasons for discrimination against women are cultural, traditional, cast, poverty, illiteracy and so on. For eradication of the various discriminations in the society against the women, governments' must enhance the abilities to improve women's education, political participation, economic sustainability, social and financial security, access to assets, markets, services and decent works are gives women the independence, they need to take informed decisions for themselves and their families.

The Government of India has passed several laws to protect women's constitutional rights including the Hindu Succession Act (1956) and the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961). In addition, the government has provided several welfare measures to empower women that include the Indira Mahila Yojana (1995), the DWACRA Plan (1997) and Balika Samridhi Yojana (1997). Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of these programs at the national level is not an easy task.

Women empowerment: In my opinion women empowerment means where the women has equal priority, dignity, honour, and make independent decisions on their personal development as well as shine as equals in society. To achieve women empowerment, one of the most important elements is poverty alleviation. Poverty and illiteracy is predominant factor for various discriminations in the society.

To improve the living standards of the rural poor, establishment of Micro Enterprises, encouraging the Self Help Groups (SHG), creation of employment opportunities to under privileged classes to raise their income levels, are need of the hour. Micro Enterprises are generators of quality employment and sustainable creators of wealth and therefore, Micro Enterprises are a powerful tool of poverty alleviation.

Role of governments in promoting Micro-Enterprises: The Government policies towards the promotional efforts of micro-enterprises are excellent on paper, but when it comes to implementation, the story is entirely different. Lack of implementation of rural development programs on the institutional front the

most important problem is the inadequate administrative machinery for implementing effectively the rural development projects. Government is implementing many schemes but these are not so popular due to unawareness and non-practical in nature. The schemes may have been prepared without the feedback of the state organizations or industry associations, national training institutes, regional training institutes and entrepreneurs.

The training centres are located in district head quarters or far places from rural areas, so most of the rural women entrepreneurs are not showing interest to go too far away places to get the training. From the entrepreneur side most of them illiterates or below primary educators hence they are unable to acquire adequate knowledge about the various schemes of central and state governments, and various opportunities in the market and also they are not ready to learn new skills due to lack of motivation. The schemes which are formulated by the Central and State Governments are complex in nature, Unable to reach the needy people in rural areas. The reasons are from both sides. Government is running many schemes but these are not so popular due to unawareness and non-practical in nature. The schemes may have been prepared without the feedback of the state organizations or industry associations, national training institutes, regional training institutes and entrepreneurs. But, there must be a mechanism to get feedback about a scheme once they are implemented and they must be revised from time to time according to the feedback. The advertisement programmes are not so effectively formulated to reach the genuine women micro-entrepreneurs, all the training programmes which are designed for the promotional efforts to develop the micro enterprises became nominal and budget oriented.

Challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs: Women entrepreneurs engaged in business due to push and pull factors. It encourages women to have an independent occupation and stands on their own legs. Women in India are faced many problems to get ahead their life in business. A few problems can be detailed as;

- A kind of patriarchal – male dominant social order is the building block to them in their way towards business success. Male members think it a big risk financing the ventures run by women.
- Most of the rural women are illiterates, they don't know how to maintain the accounts and records, to know the position of the enterprise. It is one of the main barriers to run the enterprise successfully.

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4. <http://en.worldstat.info/Asia/India>

- The financial institutions discourage women entrepreneurs on the belief that they can at any time leave their business and become housewives again. The result is that they are forced to rely on their own savings, and loan from relatives and family friends.

- The male - female competition is another factor, which develop hurdles to women entrepreneurs in the business management process.

Conclusion: Gender inequality, patriarchy, caste system, dowry system is an acute and persistent problems; It is seen in all the strata of society and manifests in various forms in India. The persistence of hunger and abject poverty in India and other parts of the world is due in large measure to the subjugation, marginalization and disempowerment of women. Women suffer from hunger and poverty in greater numbers and to a great degree than men. These are all the main barriers to women empowerment, and their socio economic sustainability. Without eradication of these discriminations from the globe the women empowerment is impossible. Gender equality and women empowerment remains a universal challenge and requires actions by all. So our interventions try to enhance governments' abilities to improve women's education, political participation, economic sustainability, social and financial security, access to assets, markets services and decent works are gives women the independence, they need to take informed decisions for themselves and their families.

Suggestions: The following are the some of the suggestions for the development of micro enterprises, achieving inclusive growth and women empowerment.

- In opportunities like government schemes, employment opportunities in public and private sector, politics etc., at least 50% reservation may be provided to women to improve the financial strength among the women and to achieve the women empowerment.
- It is suggested that necessary steps must be taken to make a proper survey about the existing Micro-Enterprises organized by women entrepreneurs in rural and urban area. Proper identification will necessarily lead to proper implementation of developmental actions, chalked out for them.
- Public sector banks have been advised to open at least one specialized branch in each Mandal to promote the women enterprises by providing financial support.
- Credit programs for women entrepreneurs shall be separate from the other male entrepreneurs.

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